

# Oneirocriticism of Richard Wright's *The Long Dream*\*

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Richard Wright, *The Long Dream* [Uzun Bir Rüya]' in  
Rüya Analizi

## Özet

Bu çalışma Richard Wright'ın *The Long Dream* [Uzun Bir Rüya] adlı romanında ortaya koyduğu ırk, aile ve ulusal aidiyet konularını irdelemeye ve eserde bahsi geçen linç kültürü, melezleşme, ırk/etnisite kökenli ulus söylemi, cinsel kimliklerin oluşumu gibi konu ve olguları, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin sosyopolitik ve sosyokültürel yapılarını oluşturan kölelik, Jim Crow, Ulusal Bağımsızlık Günü ve Amerikan Rüyası gibi tarihsel dönüm noktaları ışığında analiz etmeye çalışır. Ayrıca, kişiye özgü olduğu düşünülen rüya analizleri ekseninde ırk/ırkçılık, vatandaşlık kavramlarının edebi ve toplumsal tezahürleri üzerine bir tartışma sunulmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Afrikan Amerikan Edebiyatı, Irkçılık, Cinsellik, Vatandaşlık, Psikanalitik Edebiyat Eleştirisi.

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## Abstract

This study offers an exploration into the issues of race, family, and national belonging in Richard Wright's novel *The Long Dream* and seeks to address the contentious topics of lynch culture, miscegenation, race/ethnicity oriented national discourse, and the formation of sexual identities in light of the sociopolitical and sociocultural milieus of the United States, specifically, the watershed moments of slavery, Jim Crow, Fourth of July, and American Dream in the United States history. Furthermore, along the axis of dream analyses, which are purported to be idiosyncratic manifestations, a discussion on race/racism, citizenship and their literary representations, and public demonstrations is offered.

**Key Words:** African American Literature, Racism, Sexuality, Citizenship, Psychoanalytic Literary Criticism.

## 1. Introduction

When *The Long Dream*, Richard Wright's last novel written during his expatriate years in France, came out in 1958, it was met with mixed reactions within the academic circles of the United States. Some critics believing Wright to have lost touch with the racial reality of the country, found fault with his treatment of the matter in the novel. An African-American critic, Saunders Redding, sensing a danger of softening in Wright's fiction of self-inflicted exile, claimed Wright to have "cut the emotional umbilical cord through which his art was fed, and all that remains for it to feed is the memory, fading, of righteous love and anger" (Redding, 1958, p. 329). Maxwell Geismar, while

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agreeing with Redding's thoughts and believing Wright's previous works of fiction (*Uncle Tom's Children*, *Native Son* and *Black Boy*) to be "solid, bitter, savage, almost terrifying fictional studies of the Negro mind," regarded *The Long Dream* as "a surrealistic fantasy of paranoid and suicidal impulses, veiled in political terminology" (Geismar, 1958, p. 333). Despite the rampant criticism thus directed against Wright, some scholars defended him and found merit in *The Long Dream* to praise. Roi Ottley, regarding the novel as "a social document of unusual worth," believed it to be a realistic rendering of the lynching, police brutality and a race riot transpiring in a small town of Mississippi in the mid twentieth century. (Ottley, 1958, p. 327). A more intriguing praise though came from a reviewer in *Best Sellers*. Paul Kiniery lauded the realistic characteristics of the novel on the grounds that Wright did not only sketch a true to life picture of racial strife in the U.S. but also gave a detailed account on the amorality of black characters' indulging in "irregular but frequent sexual relations." Kiniery, however, was anxious to add that Wright blamed such idiosyncrasy of the blacks on the white characters as well (Kiniery, 1958, p. 327).

Whether on the right track or not in capturing and depicting the racial reality of the U.S. in the late twentieth century, Wright's *The Long Dream* should not be reduced to a singular interpretation of racial realism alone. An avid reader of psychoanalytic theory, especially that of Freud, Wright is known to have incorporated some notions of psychoanalysis in his writings. Freud's thoughts on the subject of dreams and on the triad of ego-id-superego obviously influenced Wright's creation of his black boy characters among whom Rex Tucker, who is nicknamed Fishbelly and addressed thus throughout the narration, of *The Long Dream* came as the last child of his psychoanalytical experiments. Introducing Fishbelly as "a black human plant forced to grow and live under completely abnormal conditions" (Wright, 1993, p. 198), he further explained the abnormality in another dialogue: "Remember he is an African-American, speaks English, and in spite of everything is forced to look at life from a unique angle" (Wright, 1993, p. 198). Rex Tucker's elongated dream beginning with his childhood years down to his adolescence and finally to his maturation ending up in France is a long trajectory of finding out whether he is still dreaming or face to face with the harsh racial reality of his country. The tell-tale chapter names, "Daydreams and Nightmares...", "Days and Nights...", "Waking Dream" mention indeed the educational process of Fishbelly, caught up in the snares of dreaming and waking life. The first part provides detailed information on him and his parents, especially on his father Tyree Tucker who owns a funeral house and buries black bodies and also runs a clandestine brothel in the black section of Clintonville, Mississippi. His mother, though, a devout Christian, and a moralist housewife, is the antithetical character to his father, as Emma Tucker tries to instruct her son in the doctrines of Christianity and the mores of lawful, normative, racial and sexual practices. Rex Tucker's first dream, which also hints at his attainment of the nickname, is crisscrossed by sexual representations, or rather, *tertium comparationis*, symbols standing for his parents and for the racial identities of Clintonville. In part two of the novel, the continuity of half-dreaming and half-awake state of Fishbelly could be traced, though with some significant adjustments to his perception of the racial and sexual realities of his environment. After the lynching of Chris by a white mob and the local police force, and his initiation into a race-strict sexuality by his father, Fishbelly's dreams take a different turn. He drops out of school at the age of sixteen, and

makes plans to live a life like his father. He dreams of having a mulatto mistress just like Tyree, and his father makes him work by collecting the rent of his brothel and boarding houses. Part two ends with yet another dream of Fishbelly and his father's murder plotted by the police chief, Cantley. Bereft of Tyree, and all alone to face the corrupt chief and illicit business operations, Fishbelly finds himself at a loss how to deal with the brutal and racist environment. *Waking Dream*, the final and the shortest part of the novel recounts Rex Tucker's imprisonment and his journey to the relatively race tolerant France where his childhood friends reside at the time.

As the novel is freighted with dream elements, and for the author's obvious use of Freud, the present article cannot help but offer a psychoanalytic reading of Wright's *The Long Dream*, and it is proper to add that in doing so, it draws from Wright's own interpretation of Freud. Wright's interpretation, as he makes it clear in "Psychiatry Comes to Harlem," is one that turns "Freud upside down" (Wright, 1946, p. 49). Contrary to the customized clinical practice Freud held with his patients, Wright believed in extending the realm of psychiatry to the masses, especially to the 400.000 black residents of Harlem which made up the 53 percent of juvenile crimes registered in Manhattan. Such extension however, would not prove useful in resolving the idiosyncratic problems of the residents, but help the African-American population of Harlem in dealing with neurosis.

[...] and that the powerful personality conflicts engendered in Negroes by the consistent sabotage of their democratic aspirations in housing, jobs, education, and social mobility creates an environment of anxiety and tension which easily tips the normal emotional scales toward neurosis (Wright, 1946, p. 49).

Indeed, Wright's efforts to introduce psychoanalysis to the downtrodden, underprivileged communities correspond to one of three moments during which African American intellectuals "turned to psychoanalysis to forge both memory and identity: the Harlem Renaissance, the Popular Front, and postcolonialism" (Zaretsky, 2015, p. 39). The Lafargue Clinic, established in 1945, in Harlem by Wright and Dr. Frederic Wertham, sought to move beyond the class-based aspirations of the Harlem Renaissance, of the "rising Negro bourgeoisie" and in an attempt to combine Marxism with Freudianism, the clinic paved the way to base the individual ailments of "hysteria", "neurosis", and "anxiety" on "historical and social" processes (Zaretsky, 2015, p. 52-59). Yet, both Wright in "Psychiatry Comes to Harlem" and Ellison in "Harlem Is Nowhere" pointed the "inequitable American democracy" out as the "source of psychological dysfunction among marginalized citizens" (Ahad, 2010, p. 85). The story of Rex Tucker should stand as the epitome for the "powerful personality conflicts" inculcated in the African American community by the licit and illicit apartheid practices and by the "inequitable American democracy". His life could be taken as the case study of neurosis showing itself in the shape of alienation, tension, aggression, anxiety and self-contempt, the ailments which Wright believed to be also afflicting the residents of Harlem in the 1940s. The following analysis attempts to read Wright's contentious novel *The Long Dream* as an effort to identify the intra/inter racial dimension of neuroses, as Freud described and Wright used them, and to trace the evolvment of Rex Tucker's dreams and nightmares that verged on the conflict between his family's teachings and the punitive codes of his immediate, racial surroundings. The analysis will spotlight

the inner conflict he had to contend with; the conflict centered on the predicaments of sexuality, social mobility, and racial integration to the society, nation at large.

## 2. The Lure and Fear of Whiteness

Seshadri Crooks, in *Desiring Whiteness: A Lacanian Analysis of Race*, proposes an intriguing reading to the volatile issue of race by appropriating Lacan's formulation of gaze in relation to whiteness/race binary. Before unbuttoning Crooks's views further, a few words on Lacan's thoughts for the deployment of gaze should be also given. For Lacan, one of the characteristics of gaze (besides it being the object looking back at the subject) is its functioning as the lure, the screen that induces the subject to search for the 'Thing' behind and beyond the veil, thus leading to the formation of *object a* in the scopic field. The story of Zeuxis and Parrhasius he recounts in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* exemplifies the optical illusion a picture harbours in its frame.

Renowned for their skills in painting in ancient Greece, Zeuxis and Parrhasius are summoned to a contest to determine which of the two has greater artistic abilities. Zeuxis paints a bunch of grapes, so life-like and luscious in their depiction that even the birds are tempted to fly down and peck at them. In return, Zeuxis asks Parrhasius to brush aside the curtain that covers his painting and when he receives the answer that the curtain itself is the painting Zeuxis admits his defeat. Thus, for Lacan, the deception found in human cognition and in the field of scopic works so long as the subject asks for the object behind the veil, and then the triumph of gaze over look/eye becomes complete. (Lacan, 1998) One is tempted to identify a similar line of argument in Crooks's assumption that whiteness functions, just like the curtain of Parrhasius, as the veil that supposedly conceals and possesses the racial *agalma*. Her argument might ring true especially at the point when she claims that the racialized subject – regardless of the skin color – not only attempts at seeing the obscure kernel behind and beyond the curtain of Whiteness but also tries to retrieve the lost object of being.

This ineffable and excluded power of Whiteness, as that which makes perception possible but is itself the blinding possibility beyond the visible, should be explored as the "lure" that fuels and perpetuates racial visibility while holding out a promise of something beyond the empirical mark (Crooks, 2000, p.59).

To put it somehow differently, and still in Crooks's terms, chasing after the object cause of desire would be tantamount to impossible consummation between difference (on the part of the racial subject) and lack, resuscitated by the fantasy of whiteness. And she concedes the fact that the task would be ever impossible as the very endeavor is destined to fall short of its aim on account of the fabricated, cultural origins of the signifier which would have no purchase on the corporeality of the racial subject. I think the example she provides – taken from a news piece published by the *New York Times* in 1995- could summarize her stance well on the constructed origins of the signifier whiteness. A Dutch couple files a complaint against the University Hospital at Utrecht, Netherlands about their "anguish" after the *in vitro* fertilization procedure. Although the result of the operation is successful, and a pair of twins is conceived, the couple is shocked to find out that one of the twins

– Koen – is “black.” And the University Hospital in answer to the couple’s plight calls it a “deeply regrettable mistake” and admits that the mother’s eggs were accidentally inseminated from another man along with that of the father. As Koen’s skin gets darker and darker, the parents apply for a DNA test, and the result of the test reveals that Koen’s father is a “black” man from Aruba (Crooks, 2000, p. 11). Besides some hints to the mother’s sexual history from the neighbors, the parents had to face another, perhaps broader problem of discrimination: “Let’s be honest, dark people have less opportunity to get a decent job in our society, they have less chance to borrow at a bank” (*New York Times*, 28 June 1995, A3). Crooks uses the above given example to acknowledge the fabricated nature of race in creating differences and she directs two jump-off questions to race’s nonsensical but viscous characteristic: “Why do we hold on to race? What is it about race that is difficult to give up?” (Crooks, 2000, p. 4). And she comes up with the answer of “Whiteness” as master signifier in elucidating the irrational yet still potent presence of the epidermic evaluation. The question that needs to be raised at this point is: constructed as it is, would the master signifier whiteness still engender substantial results that would stick to the everyday reality of the racial subject? My contention is that besides the veil-like allurements of whiteness (offering “wholeness,” “unity,” even “humanity” etc.), one should bring up its libidinal, sensually charged aspect as well, involved in not only creating anxiety ridden differences but also providing the very paradigms of enjoyment. If, as Crooks aptly puts it, “Race is fundamentally a regime of looking” (Crooks, 2000, p. 2), generating the very antagonistic kernel of racial stratification via the perpetualization of racial difference in the scopic field, it is likewise proper to mention gaze/look’s function in inter/trans subjective interactions. Just like whiteness, gaze (Crooks uses the two terms correspondently) is also a constructed phenomenon and not a neutral activity in defining the social relations. As Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright, in *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*, have written: “Through looking we negotiate social relationships and meanings. Looking is a practice much like speaking, writing, or signing. Looking involves learning to interpret and, like other practices, looking involves relationships of power” (Sturken and Cartwright, 2009, p. 10). Besides having such influence in the determination of inter/trans subjective relations and social meanings, gaze/looking also serves as the precursor to sexual pleasure. In the *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex*, Sigmund Freud identifies such property of gaze/looking in respect to sexual instincts and sexual object choices and among the principle intermediate relations to the sexual object choices, he includes “touching and looking” as the activities leading to the act of copulation. (Freud, 1995). The sexual pleasure derived from looking, and being looked at in the form of scopophilia should be complemented with its counterpart, the morbid dread of looking, and being looked at in the form of scopophobia. The word scopophobia was first conjoined by the French psychiatrist Pierre Janet in 1903, who used the term to identify his patients ailed by the symptoms of a fear of being observed while performing daily chores of social relationships such as talking, writing, reading etc. Sociologist Erving Goffman proposed that being self-conscious of the offhand, passing glances in the street remained one of the characteristic symptoms of psychosis in public which he associated with scopophobic inclinations (Goffman, 1972, p. 415). The term scopophobia, as Goffman suggested, is also used for social anxieties and syndromes for persons shying away from public spaces. Perhaps, the Dutch couple’s predicament regarding their twin son Koen, is on account of such syndrome, of the fear of being looked at by the neighbors, by the public in general and not by the fact that Koen, with his black skin, would not get a decent job when

he comes of age. It should also prove useful to set a similar analogy between Rex Tucker's first dream and the psychosis of scopophobia as the manifestation of social and sexual anxieties. Rex Tucker's first dream, the dream of his childhood picturing a baseball game with Chris, (Chris who was later lynched by a white mob for sleeping with a white girl) can be taken as the starting point to delve deeper into Rex's ambiguous relation with the object of whiteness, his scopophilic and scopophobic engagement with the phenomenon. Before taking such leap however, it should prove useful to have a brief look at the Tucker family and the conditions preceding the dream with some detail.

Thanks to the father's lucrative and bizarre business operations, Tuckers enjoy the affluence of a middle class African American family. Tyree Tucker's strange combination of jobs, one burying the black bodies of the town, and one sexually exploiting those yet alive surely has scarring effects on Rex and on the fate of the entire family. In the first part of the novel, *Daydreams and Nightmares...*, Rex Tucker, then 5 years old, is initiated to the legal part of his father's job. The part opens up with such legally sanctioned business affair, and a color-free, suburban depiction of the family is given. Putting his son to bed, Emma Tucker whispers the usual, comforting words of a mother whose child would not like to fall asleep surrounded by the inimical darkness. Not willing to give in to the surrounding darkness and to find answers for the father's fishing trip, Rex directs child-like questions to his mother, the questions that would later haunt his dream.

"Mama, do fishes bite?"

"If you fool enough to put your fingers in his mouth, he'll bite you."

"Mama, what do fishes do?"

"Fishes are busy being fishes. Now, go to sleep, Nighty night" (Wright, 2000, p. 10).

Facing the thick darkness, Rex resolves to fight the monstrous fish image he conjures up from his picture book, the "wild, ugly, six feet tall and hankering to bite" fish image (Wright, 2000, p. 10), with which he falls asleep. As mentioned a few pages back, the fish dream is the first one Wright introduces in the novel, therefore it constitutes a significant part to begin the tracing of Rex Tucker's engagement with whiteness. Child as he is, Wright offers Fish's dream as a portentous warning of the events that will eventually see Chris lynched. Surely, the warning can also be taken for Rex as well, embedding deep within his sub/unconscious the message that the monstrous fish will come at him if he but dares to cross the color line. The longer version of the dream is as follows:

[...]and he picked up a baseball bat and got ready to hit the fish but when he looked it was not the fish but Chris the big boy who lived down the street and who always played with him and Chris had a baseball in his hand and said: "Rex, you want to play ball?" and he said: "Yeah, Chris!" and Chris said: "Okay Try and hit this one!" and Chris threw the ball and he swung his bat: CLACK!, the ball rose into the air and Chris said: "You only five years old, but you hit like a big-league player!" and he waited for Chris to pitch again only it was not Chris this time but a seven-foot fish who had

the ball and he was scared to death but he could not run and then the fish threw the ball and it hit him in the mouth wedging itself between his teeth and he could not take it out and could not swallow it and he knew that the fish had done to him what his papa did to fishes catching him on a hook and the fish was coming at him with gleaming red eyes and he tried to scream but could not and he could see the fish's mouth opening to swallow him[...] (Wright, 2000, p. 10).

Rex Tucker's fear of the dreadful fish, coming at him and threatening to gobble him up, can be tied to the sexual anxieties and terrors directed at Chris's and Rex's beings. Here, the irresistible yearning for looking, for getting at the mysterious and prohibited bodies of white women is reversed and transformed into its anamorphic opposite of morbid fear of being looked at, in which the ardent desire for looking is reflected back by the object of whiteness, reminding Rex and Chris of the looming threat of death. And the threat, expanding to all the male black characters of the novel, is not limited to death alone but to social stigmatization and judicial penalization as well. In the scopophilic aspect of looking, however, in Rex's fascination with the fish his father caught and his mother gutted, one can track down a trail of his sexual ontogeny. The nickname "Fishbelly" Rex earns due to his attraction to the white fish bladders may point to his bewilderment of peeping at the sexual lives of the adults and to his unquenchable desire to lay his eyes on the glittering world of the whites. For that matter, Rex's first acquaintance with the fish should be addressed in some detail. Poked out of his nightmare, his mother Emma urges him to come down and see the fish papa brought and on their way downstairs, Tyree accosts him and asks how he is doing. Rex answers with a question: "Where the fishes?" The father points in the direction of the "white bellied objects" and commands him to touch them.

"They bite" he wailed.

"Aw naw," his father said, laughing.

"Scaredy cat," his mother said.

"Watch me," his father said, lifting a fish that flopped to and fro in his fist. "Here.

Take it, Rex."

"Naw!" Then he sniffed distrustfully. "They smell!"

"Sure." His father chuckled. "All fish smell."

"But they smell like..." His voice trailed off.

His limpid brown eyes circled and rested wonderingly upon his mother, for that odd

smell associated itself somehow with her body (Wright, 2000, p. 12).

Seeing his son none too pleased with the fishes he caught, Tyree tries to amuse him by blowing into the fish bladder, making the bladder inflate and glow like a balloon. Excited, Rex tries one, but he re-names the bladder as belly and endlessly blows into the entrails. Despite the father and the

mother's corrections that it is a bladder not belly, Rex associates the balloon like object, somehow unknowingly, with the pregnant neighbor Mrs. Brown. In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud makes interesting observations with regard to the totem animal, the gender of the totem, and the child's association with the ersatz animal symbol standing for the parents and the totem's ambivalent symbolic position for the child. Freud's suggestions can be interlaced with the Tucker family and especially with Rex, alias, Fishbelly. Freud claims that the attachment to the totem animal might prove to be stronger than the ties to the family "[...] since the totem is as a rule inherited through the female line, and it is possible that paternal descent may originally have been left entirely out of account" (Freud, 1995, p. 484-5). Keeping close to the subject at hand, it is also appropriate to highlight the connecting dots between Freud's theories in *Totem and Taboo* and Wright's novel *The Long Dream*. Sigmund Freud suggests that the totem animal is not only matriarchal but also related to the mother's pregnancy period. The male, who is in total ignorance of procreation process and dumb on the male function in such circumstance, constitutes the one end of the totem, and the mother, with her "maternal fancies" makes up the other end by identifying with the child in her belly.

Accordingly, the ultimate source of totemism would be the savages' ignorance of the process by which men and animals reproduce their kind; and, in particular, ignorance of the part played by the male in fertilization. This ignorance must have been facilitated by the long interval between the act of fertilization and the birth of the child (or the first perception of its movements). Thus totemism would be a creation of the feminine rather than that of the masculine mind: its roots would lie in 'the sick fancies of pregnant women'. 'Anything indeed that struck a woman at that mysterious moment of her life when she first knows herself to be a mother might easily be identified by her with the child in her womb. Such maternal fancies, so natural and seemingly so universal, appear to be the root of totemism' (Freud, 1995, p. 487-8).<sup>1</sup>

The similarities between Freud's thoughts on totemism and Rex Tucker's attraction to the fish bladder are quite obvious. The fish bladder, or rather the 'belly', can be taken as Rex's choice of his totem animal which he relates with the vaginal odor of his mother and with the pregnant neighbor, Mrs Brown. The belly may also stand for the act of sexual intercourse as Tyree showcases how to blow into the bladder and encourages the son to follow his lead. The analogies thus far identified between Freud and Wright are shallow indeed for they only point in the direction of the obvious. If the totem animal is matriarchal and at the root of totemism lies in "maternal fancies," the father's role in the selection and retention of the animal symbol is much less clear. In the case of the male

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<sup>1</sup> Psychoanalysis's ties to the late nineteenth century European colonial expansion, unparalleled by any other century in its violence and greed, was a well-established fact, and Freud's analogy between "savagery" and "infantilism" made it only harder to resort to psychoanalysis as a methodology to write books on race. In fact, Freud did not shy away from appropriating the colonialist phrase "dark continent", used to refer to Africa, in referring to the women's sexuality. Ranjana Khanna, writing about the symbiotic relationship between psychoanalysis and colonialism, even argues that "psychoanalysis could emerge only when Europe's nations were entering modernity through their relation to the colonies" (Khanna, 2003: 10)

child, Freud's favorite subject of investigation of course, the totem functions as father surrogate, displacing the child's fears concerned with the father on to the animal symbol. The cause of such fears is sexual as the male child dreads a punishment from the father for, say, playing with his penis or harboring incestuous desires for the mother. The child's substitutive shift from the father to the animal, however, is highly ambiguous: "His attitude towards his totem animal was superlatively ambivalent: he showed both hatred and love to an extravagant degree" (Freud, 1995, p. 494). Once again, Fishbelly's case is analogous in many respects but this time introducing complications into the fray. Following Freud's surmises, it might be pertinent to claim that Rex's animal symbol initially represents the incestuous relation to his mother, as the vaginal odor, pregnant neighbor, and later his father's intervention and exemplification of an acceptable sexual intercourse may indicate. Perhaps more fittingly, it can be claimed that Fishbelly's dream of a giant and monstrous fish flying at him to devour his body could be said to be tied to the father's punitive and patriarchal threat. Truly, Fishbelly has such association with Tyree, bordering on reverence and trepidation. Yet, the real addressee of the monstrous fish image could also be claimed not to be his nucleus, immediate family but the taboo of miscegenation and the mock castration that would plague him and stand in his way on to becoming an African American 'man'. Miscegenation, the interracial fantasies of mutual procreation, is indeed posited as an incestuous taboo in the novel, the punishment of which is staged by the police chief Cantley and his gang in the shape of mock castration. And in the Oedipal formulations of race and family (recalling Heidi J. Nast's argument of the "menacing threat" of the "promiscuous black sons" to white mothers and daughters of the South) it would not be erroneous to claim that the consanguinity cannot be locked up in the intimate sphere of the first degree family lineage alone but wired to its second and third degrees of colonial and racial kindred as well. As Robert Young sums it up, race and family ties in the United States should not be thought of as mere "repulsion" of one racial group towards the other, but a source of attraction too:

Racism is perhaps the best example through which we can immediately grasp the form of desire, and its antithesis, repulsion, as a social production: 'thus fantasy is never individual: it is *group fantasy*' [emphasis in the original] (Young, 1995, p. 168-9).

Going over it once more, Rex Tucker's taking up of his animal symbol and thus earning the nickname Fishbelly can be said to be directed not to Tyree and Emma but to the racial milieu of Clintonville. Surely, one cannot discard the sway his parents have over Rex's maturation, especially that of his father who acts as an intermediary between him and the white world. Still, Rex has his own way of finding out about the superlatively ambiguous nature of whiteness. And the test, the first encounter with the color line begins with an errand, entrusted to him by his mother to be delivered to the father in the undertaking establishment. On his way to downtown, moving "creepingly, walking close to the buildings, trying to make himself invisible" (Wright, 2000, p.14), Fishbelly is picked up on by four white men, shooting dice. One of them, and probably the losing party, grabs him by the arm and leads him to the game ground where Fishbelly finds himself surrounded by four, pale and white faces.

Holding his breath, he stared at their dead-white *whiteness*... He had never been so close to white people before and they seemed like huge mechanical dolls whose behavior he could not possibly predict (Wright, 2000, p.14).

Believing a “nigger” at the age of five to be unsullied and thus possess luck, his captor forces him to roll the dice for him. Frightened and perplexed, Fishbelly obeys the command, causing his captor to win a considerable amount of money in return to which he is rewarded with a silver dollar. Released from the grip of whiteness, Fishbelly runs to the father’s office, lying about the coin and making up a story that he accidentally found it on the street, dropped there on the concrete probably by a white person. Giving credence to his son’s story, Tyree sounds amused that the son would now have some of the white luck. “Mebbe you going to be one of them that’s lucky in life” (Wright, 2000, p. 19). The episode, depicting Fishbelly in his first face off with whiteness, mentions an ambiguity dipped in fear. Taking the white figures to be automatons whose actions he cannot guess, he confuses the word luck his captor utters with that of the *f* word (Wright, 2000, p. 15). If it doesn’t sound inappropriate, the confusion of “luck” with that of the *f* word decides the course he would later have to face in a racial world: not only his life would be messed up in terms of his luck, the *f* word might also come to symbolize the sensuality over his intra/inter racial desires. In his second visit to the father’s office, Fishbelly experiences the above mentioned sensual initiation into adulthood. Seeking for the father’s presence in vain in the waiting room, he finally discovers the source of the strange humping sound in the guest room.

[...] bumpbump bumpbump bumpbump... His pupils dilated and he saw upon a bed the shadowy outlines of his naked father: two staring red eyes, a strained, humped back; and he heard harsh breath whistling in an open throat (Wright, 2000, p. 23).

Caught by the father at his involuntary peeping, Fishbelly is ordered to wait in the office and not leave till Tyree talks to him. While waiting, and wondering about the mysterious world the grown-ups hid from him, Fishbelly’s gaze fixes on the calendar photo, displaying a white, blonde girl “legs as white as bread... and rounded breasts billowing under satin” (Wright, 2000, p. 24). Recalling the black skin of the woman, lighted up by the sun rays seeping through the window shade, Fishbelly whispers to himself “But she’s black, ...And he was black... And his father was black... He sensed a relation between the worlds of white skins and black skins, but he could not determine just what it was” (Wright, 2000, p. 24). Wright does not provide explicit answers for Fishbelly’s surprise over his father’s engagement in a sexual intercourse with a black woman, and for the recognition that he too, just like the father had black skins. The speculative answer would be that Fishbelly did not know of the miscegenation taboo until then and his bewilderment as to the race-sex nexus was puerile still. And the first lesson on the color line and on the intra-racial class divisions comes from a childhood friend. Sam, whose father works as janitor, and probably the poorest kid of the gang consisting of Zeke, Tony and Fishbelly, makes his accusation general: “A nigger’s a black man who don’t know who he is” (Wright, 2000, p. 32). Frustrated that he was called nigger, Zeke growls at Sam if it was him he meant. After some back and forth altercation, the embittered Zeke lays bare the hot button

topic of the discussion: "Sam says we want to be *white*..." Later, the debate takes a different turn after Zeke makes his point and comes down to the predicament of being black and American.

"Nigger, you dreaming!" Sam preached. "You ain't no American! You live Jim Crow. Don't you ride Jim Crow trains? Jim Crow busses? Don't you go to Jim Crow restaurants? Jim Crow schools? Jim Crow churches? Ain't your undertaking parlors and graveyards Jim Crow? Try and git a room in that West End Hotel where Chris is working and them white folks'll lynch your black ass to hell and gone! You can't live like no American, 'cause you ain't no American! And you ain't African neither! So what is you? Nothing. Just *nothing*!" [emphasis in the original] (Wright, 2000, p. 35).

After Sam's delivering the hard facts about segregation in every social strata of the South and also hinting at the deadly consequences if one happened to cross the color line, the friends obviously make it up and decide to visit a circus in town. The visit, however, only pours salt on an open wound, for while enjoying themselves, and fascinated by the ad promising "the greatest sex show on earth" (exhibiting the naked body of a blonde girl) they realize that the show is not for the colored. Such racially charged and discriminative episodes would ultimately see Fishbelly's childhood friends driven away from the country to a distant and supposedly race-free France. Fishbelly's education in the racially strict United States though would have to continue and somehow painfully. Towards the middle of the first part, *Daydreams and Nightmares...*, perhaps the most contentious section of the novel, we are introduced to a race riot, following Chris Sim's lynching. As regards to Chris's lynching, some critics place it at the center of the novel "... where the negative lesson of Chris Sim's body serves to deconstruct – or "unmake" – the evolving masculine identity of the novel's protagonist, Rex" (Geiger, 1999, p. 197-8). And Jeffrey Geiger also maintains that "Fishbelly's body is systematically and symbolically deconstructed through witnessing the dissection of another body's discrete parts" (Geiger, 1999, p. 197-8). The problem with such approach, however, is that it reduces the breaking point of Fish, if there is one, to the autopsy scene alone, during which Chris's body was dissected and the fate of Fishbelly was supposedly sealed. Such reading, synchronic as it is, offers at best to freeze Fishbelly in time, and see his masculinity unmade regardless of other incidents that would befall him throughout the novel. Chris Sim's lynching and what transpires afterwards constitute indeed one of the main interludes of the novel, the consequences of which do not only affect Fishbelly, his father and the father's partner Dr. Bruce but the black community of Clintonville as well.

Chris Sims, the adolescent black man, and a figure of emulation for Fishbelly, Sam, Zeke, and Tony, gets killed for rejecting the taboo of miscegenation. Or, rather he falls victim to the predispositions on race and sexuality as stated above. Chris Sims, who teaches Fishbelly that the balloon like object he wraps around the stick he uses as a plaything is a used condom, and whose imminent death is hinted in two scenes - Fishbelly's dream and Sam's tirade - can be said to be the quintessential character, including in his racial inventory the history of the black males mentioned in the novel. The events leading up to the murder of Chris commence with the incursion by a white mob into the West End Hotel where Chris works, and the mob finds him with a white girl in the room, not involved in any actualized sexual activity, but flirting, or merely playing as Chris tells the mob.

Enough evidence to chastise him, Chris is dragged out of the room, down to the street, his body tied to the back of a vehicle driving him on the asphalt, shearing off his right ear, and finally taking him to the ground of the lynch ritual. Following Chris's death, Clintonville Police Department officially announces that Chris resisted arrest, and therefore had to face the harsh measures. The autopsy scene, undertaken in Tyree's funeral house with Fish and Dr. Bruce present, is surely one of the epicenters of the novel. Going slowly over Chris's mangled corpse, the scene initiates the reader into revolting and yet humane details on the left overs.

"The nose is almost gone," Dr. Bruce pointed. "Because of the rope knot against the neck, the head was flung about when they turned corners and the resulting abrasion destroyed the nose." Taking Chris's head between thumb and forefinger, the doctor twisted it around. "The left cheek has been split by a gun but." Lifting Chris's clawlike hands, he studied the blackened wrists. "His hands were tied; in fact, I wouldn't be surprised if they hit him 'im *after* they'd tied his hands." The doctor now turned the body on its side and, holding it in position, indicated a rupture through which a blob of pearly intestine gleamed. "I'd guess," Dr. Bruce spoke haltingly, impersonally, "that a kick did that, and it must've been delivered when he was already dead. In most cases of strangulation the stomach muscles grip the protruding intestine. But in this instance there seems to have been no muscular reaction." Dr. Bruce frowned, then resumed: "I'd say the toe of a shoe did that." He rolled the corpse upon its back and carefully parted the thighs. "The *genitalia* are gone," the doctor intoned [emphasis in the original] (Wright, 2000, p. 77).

Spanning two centuries, from slavery to Jim Crow, the history of lynching in the United States is as old as the foundation of the Republic. The termination point of the brutal practice is usually marked as the mid-twentieth century, late 1930s, with sporadic occurrences here and there till Barack Obama is elected president.<sup>2</sup> Not to deviate from the study of the novel, it should be interesting to cite a case that disturbingly stuck out of the country's relatively anti-racist, and tolerant twentieth century. James Byrd Jr., aged 49 then, was one of the last victims of white supremacy. On June 7, 1998, in Jaspers, Texas, Byrd accepted a ride from his would-be murderers, one of whom he was acquainted with from around town. The three men took Byrd to a desolate county road and severely beat him, after which they chained him to the pickup truck and dragged him for about 1.5 miles. The police reported that Byrd probably remained conscious during the painful dragging, and his body was terribly mutilated. His right arm and head were severed, and a trail of blood and body

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<sup>2</sup> It is hard to say that the lynch cases are now over in the United States. Lynching, or rather murdering of the black men (and even children), of a different kind can still be claimed to be the reality of the nation even today. On August 9, 2014, in Ferguson, Missouri, Michael Brown, an 18 year old black man was shot to death by 28 year old white police officer Darren Wilson, under the pretext of reasonable suspicion of robbery. The case, and later the acquittal of the officer, transpired into a local and nationwide protests against the police brutality towards African Americans. On July 17, 2014, in New York City, Eric Garner, was choked to death as he refused arrest for breaking up a fight. And on November 22, 2014, Cleveland, Ohio, 12 year old Tamir Rice was shot to death for playing with his toy gun.

parts stretched for 2 miles. Byrd's murderers dumped his torso in front of an African American cemetery in Jaspers and then drove off to a barbecue.<sup>3</sup> The event might sound an exception to the long forgotten and condemned racist practices, yet there are some curious details, some recurring patterns that should be addressed as well. Byrd's murder follows the ritualistic trajectory of its predecessors during Jim Crow, and interestingly enough, it resembles the way Chris Sims was killed. The fact that the three perpetrators of the crime enjoy barbecue after mutilating Byrd's body is best explained by Orlando Patterson in *Rituals of Blood: Consequences of Slavery in two American Centuries*. Drawing on the famous French anthropologist and ethnologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, Patterson also uses the analogy of the "raw" and "cooked" meat to distinguish "nature" from "civilization," the emotional and instinctive from the cultural based on social rules and conventions. Using the adjectives of the "raw" and "cooked" metaphorically, Lévi-Strauss seeks to identify the transformation of an object from its natural, raw origins into its culturalized, socialized and thus edible state. In a synchronic analysis of the Amerindian myths stretching over the South and North Americas before the time of Columbus, Strauss is concerned to unearth the mythical and communal world of the indigenous people constructed out of superstitious and actual associations, oppositions, transformations, and conjunctions. Bringing and applying Strauss's views to the contemporary North American context, Patterson puts forth a claim that the lynching ritual, a dominant practice in the neoslavery of Jim Crow, consisted of a fusion of religion, politics and economics. The lynching mob likewise, was not just made of senseless rabble but of a highly organized community of Ku Klux Klan, acting as the sacrificial cult in an attempt to revive the South's broken social fabric through the emasculation and sacrifice of African-American males.

Applying all this to the social and sacrificial treatment of Afro-Americans in the postbellum South, it is easy to see how the live Negro, in the Southern sacrificial and food symbolism, is uncooked nature in the raw- a beast, a savage, whose odor is to be avoided at all cost. On the other hand, the cooked Negro, properly roasted, has been tamed and culturally transformed and now can be eaten, communally, in imitation of the Euro-Americans' own God savoring his burnt offering (Patterson, 1998, p. 200).

Bearing on the sacrificial cauterization of African Americans, odor memory and perception are distinguished from other sensory perceptions. The sensations and memories a smell evokes in the individual, according to Trygg Engen, are contextual and ecological, serving the protective "function of making sure that significant events, involving food, people, or places are not forgotten" (Engen, 1991, p. 81). In its literal and figurative configurations, the flames and billows of smoke issuing forth the burning, sacrificed body of the victim were one way of consuming the "savage" body of the racial other, an attempt at recollection and relief. Thus adducing olfactory science, the symbolism of Christianity on the smell of the burnt offerings, and the prevalent, popular customs of barbecue

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<sup>3</sup> For the related news page please see the following link, accessed on September 16, 2014.

<http://edition.cnn.com/US/9807/06/dragging.death.02>

in the South, Patterson explains why lynching took hold in the region and an actualized form of cannibalism was dressed up in the garb of Christianity. Before delving deeper into the circumstances that led to Chris's lynching and the ensuing autopsy scene, it should prove useful to introduce some thoughts on the "sexualization of racism" in the United States that would uphold Patterson's thoughts. Calvin C. Hernton, in an effort to map out the reception of black men in white imagination, propounds that "[...] whites conceive of the [black] male predominantly in genital terms- that is, as a 'bull' or as some kind of 'walking phallus'" (Hernton, 1966, p. 3- 8). Voicing similar sentiments, Michele Wallace claims that "The big black prick pervade[s] the white man's nightmare" (Wallace, 1979, p.71).

The conversation Dr. Bruce and Tyree have over Chris's disfigured body might point in the direction of Patterson's thoughts between "uncooked," "repugnant" presence of the black men and their "cooked" and thus rendered edible, domesticated presence. Or, as Hernton and Wallace draw attention, Chris Sims posed a sexual threat to the already cringing white heteropaternal masculinity. Though it is equal to state the obvious, to say that the name Chris was picked up by Wright on purpose to refer to the sacrificed and sacrosanct flesh of Jesus Christ, a black Messiah, if you will, slaughtered for the pains of black Clintonville, it is also inevitable to focus on the details of Chris's dead body. Rolling Chris upon his back and announcing that the genitalia are missing, Dr. Bruce goes on to intone that murdering him was not enough for the mob.

You'd think that disgust would've made them leave *that* part of the boy alone...  
No! To get a chance to *mutilate* 'im was part of why they killed 'im. And you can bet a lot of white women were watching eagerly when they did it. Perhaps they know that that was the only opportunity they'd ever get to see a Negro's genitals [...] [emphasis in the original] (Wright, 2000, p. 78).

Taken aback by his partner's words, Tyree protests, and claims that there is no such way of loving someone. And Fishbelly, overcoming the initial shock of seeing Chris's corpse, immerses himself in the words of Dr. Bruce.

You have to be terribly attracted toward a person, almost in love with 'im, to mangle 'im in this manner. They hate us Tyree, but they love us too; in a perverted sort of way, they love us— (Wright, 2000, p. 78).

In Wright's oeuvre, the theme of violence surges up often, and it usually turns on the fulcrum of racialized death and sex. The two terms of death and sex are somewhat used interchangeably in the racial discourse as James Baldwin observes that "violence fills in the space in which sex is expected to be" (Baldwin qtd. in Gilroy, 1993, p. 175). Tyree's admonishment to Fishbelly after Chris's murder "NEVER LOOK AT A WHITE WOMAN!" testifies to the symbiotic existence of the death threat and the sexual cravings for a white woman. Yet, Tyree's warning falls on the deaf ears of his son, for Fish, enchanted by the reason that caused the death of Chris, comes upon a half-naked picture of a white girl in a pile of newspapers. He tears off the page and stuffs it into his wallet,

hoping to solve the mystery and allurements behind such prohibited object-cause of desire. The picture, however, Fish keeps as a namesake and a reminder, would later plague him when he has to face the local police force. Arrested for transgressing a private property, Fish and his friend Tony find themselves in the face of the dreaded local police force and Fish is signaled out as the primary target of the white supremacist state officials. In handcuffs, and waiting to be taken to the police station, Fish lays his eyes on a white waitress serving his arresters. Unable to take his eyes off the white waitress's blue eyes and inviting body, Fish is harshly warned by the tall officer, who threatens to castrate him and carries out his intent in a mock display. "I'm going to fix you so you won't *never* look at another white gal," the white man vowed through bared, shut teeth and moved to the rear door of the car and flung it open. "Nigger, I'm going to *castrate* you! [emphasis in the original] (Wright, 2000, p. 111). Seeing the gleaming blade swaying in front of his eyes, everything goes blank on Fishbelly and he faints much to the amusement, and bewilderment of the officers. The tall law enforcer, his tormentor, is particularly vexed that Fish passes out so easily, and it can be said that Wright intends here a reference to the slavery's view of the African American people as pack animals, not capable of human traits as fainting. As Keneth Kinnamon identifies Fish's dropping out of school as the turning point in his life or as Jeffrey Geiger claims Chris's death as the climax of the novel, it would not be wrong to introduce his arrest as another decisive instant that would change the tide of the events.

A clap of white thunder had split his world in two; he was being snatched from his childhood. The white folks were now treating him like a man... (Wright, 2000, p. 110).

Before releasing him, the white officer reiterates Fishbelly's grown up position, though somewhat cynically: "They made a man out of you today..." (Wright, 2000, p. 121). After the first scene of fainting, there is another rehearsal of mock castration before the unbelieving colleagues in which Fish passes out a second time, seized by panic and fear when he remembers that he still carries the picture of the white girl in his pocket. Not knowing what to do, and afraid that the officers could see through him, and find out his secret, Fish decides to eat the piece, gulp it down where it could not be seen in his black depths, forever invisible. "Yes; he had eaten it; it was inside of him now, a part of him, invisible" (Wright, 2000, p. 114). Before resuming the synopsis of the plot, I think it would not be impertinent to seek out an analogy between Fish's eating of the picture and Patterson's comments on *raw* and *cooked* bodies of African-Americans. While the 'heathen' propinquity of the blacks are tamed, 'civilized', and domesticized by lynching and murder, the presence of the whites could be said to be having a similar role for African Americans, at least in the case of Fishbelly. By eating the picture, he performs a similar ritual of cooking, thus turning what is strange and alien about the other race into a somewhat familiar form. And it is proper to add that the act of eating also includes a process of repression, as Fishbelly gives ear to the "reproving voice" of his would-be castrator and "[...] forces the photograph to descend slowly into his stomach" (JanMohamed, 2005, p. 246).

Brutal as his imprisonment is, Fish's stay at the police station is also short thanks to his father's business relations with the police chief. After a trial at the children's court, he and his friend Tony

are released, and on their way back to the black section of the town, they agree not to speak about the shameful incident to anyone. Then, Tony departs from the scene and heads down the road while Fish is left with time on his hands to mull over what had happened. His thoughts though are disturbed by a yelping sound coming out of the woods and he finds out that it is a puppy, wounded in the neck by a shard “sharp as a knife blade” (Wright, 2000, p. 132). While attempting to help the dog, he sees its broken and death-bound body, and he decides to let him go. What follows is a reenactment of the autopsy of Chris, examining “...the dog’s corpse as though trying to detect some secret that it harbored.” As he knelt, the dog’s dying associatively linked itself with another vivid dying and another far-off death: the lynched body of Chris that had lain that awful night upon the wooden table in his father’s undertaking establishment under the yellow sheen of an unshaded electric bulb...His father had buried Chris’s broken black body and had called it “a black dream dead, a black dream that could not come true” (Wright, 2000, p. 134-135). After acting out Chris’s autopsy on the dying dog, Fish leaves the woods and gains on the highway. As he quickens his pace towards the town, he hears a help call coming out of an overpass and when he nears the source of the call, he sees an injured white man, stuck in his overturned Oldsmobile. At first, Fish rushes to help the man but when he hears the following sentence, he has second thoughts.

“G-goddammit nigger, q-quick nigger!”....He stood undecided. Stifling panic, he approached the man again, his arm lifting slowly (Wright, 2000, p. 137).

The man calls him “nigger” many times, and each time he does, Fish has to withhold the pent-up anger and listen to his conscience. The racial slur is not what ultimately overrides his decision to help the dying man, it is rather the confession that taunts him to leave the white man to the angels of death.

“I-I was d-driving and tried not to r-run a d-dog... Maybe I hit the d-dog...I don’t know. M-my car went out of c-control...I smashed into the b-bridge, t-turned over, and rolled d-down here...All ‘cause of that goddamned d-dog..” (Wright, 2000, p. 137).

Once he leaves the scene, he feels a certain epiphany of reconciliation “...to the sky, the trees, the dusty road, and sensing his body as once more belonging to him” (*Ibid.*). To explicate what and how Fish feels, it is proper to borrow from Derridean terminology. Derrida’s use of the word *ontology*, to exist in a specific point in time and space, and within the cone of social and cultural paradigms of a certain country, includes both individual and national anxieties of belonging: “All national rootedness, is rooted first of all in the memory or the anxiety of a displaced – or displaceable – population” (Derrida, 2006, p. 103). Derrida’s definition of the word *ontology* in *Specters of Marx* deserves a quotation at length:

By ontology we mean an axiomatics linking indissociably the ontological value of present - being [on] to its situation, to the stable and presentable determination of a locality, the topos of territory, native soil, city, body in general (Derrida, 2006, p. 103).

By avenging himself, the dying dog he autopsies, and probably Chris's murder on the white man jammed in his overturned car, Fishbelly finds his temporal and spatial (however briefly) foothold in a life torn between dreams and nightmares, and decides to take the road his father follows and Tyree reluctantly accepts his son's resolve to work with him. In a scene resembling Jesus's being tempted by Satan, Tyree takes Fish to the highest point overlooking the town of Clintonville. Just like Satan offering Jesus dominion and authority over all humankind if he but worships him, Tyree points out the King's Street, dividing the black Clintonville from the white. He promises his son a kingdom of the Black Belt, if he plays the game right. And the rule of the game is simple enough. "'Fish, that's the key. How the white folks look at you's everything. Make 'em mad, and you licked 'fore you start. Make 'em feel safe, and the place is yours. Git what I mean, son?'" Tyree's voice was sad but urgent" [emphasis in the original] (Wright, 2000, p. 148). Fishbelly realizes at that point that his father is already castrated, and the "selfabrogation of his manhood" shields Tyree away from the white men that would never threaten him with castration. It is interesting though that his father's warning boils down to sexual abstinence from white women as well, for Tyree claims to be no difference between bodies as white as snow and black as tar. Satan demands deference for what he can offer, and Tyree does the same with a nuance. The father demands his son to kneel not before him, but before the white god he pays his homages to. Fish steps into his father's shoes in the closing pages of the part titled *Daydreams and Nightmares...* and the part comes to an end by yet another dream, in which seemingly disparate elements of his past and future come into play.

[...] he was shoveling coal into a roaring firebox and feeling the runaway locomotive rocking careening down steel rails and each time he scooped up a shovelful of coal he saw the countryside trees telephone poles houses lakes and then he glanced at the white engineer who was looking out of the window at the steel rails with his hand upon the throttle calling: "MORE COAL!" and he shoveled the shining lumps flinging them onto the glowing seething bed and the white engineer called again: "MORE COAL!" and when he scooped up coal the lumps rolled away and he saw the legs body face of a naked white woman smiling demurely at him and the engineer bellowed: "MORE COAL!" and he looked to see if the engineer saw the naked white woman then he was terrified as she seized hold of his shovel and smiled at him and the engineer bawled: "MORE COAL!" and he was standing between the two of them sweating fearing the woman would speak or the engineer would see the woman he had to do something either hit the woman or hit the engineer yes he could escape from both by leaping from the speeding locomotive the woman now pulled teasingly at his shovel and her lips opened to speak and he said: "Sh!" and the engineer yelled: "MORE COAL!" he dropped the shovel and leaped from the door of the cab into the whirling passing woods and he heard the white engineer and the naked white woman laughing as the train roared out of sight and he was tumbling over cinders finally hitting a wall and he was lying on his back looking up into the laughing face of Maud Williams who was saying: "Honey, you know better'n to try to hide a white woman in a coal pile like that! They was sure to find her..." (Wright, 2000, p. 159).

In *The Interpretation of Dreams* and *On Dreams*, Sigmund Freud identifies four activities as the driving forces behind the dream work. Condensation, displacement, pictorial arrangement and censorship have their unique roles in the formation of dreams and working in a fractious harmony, the elements transform the dream thoughts into the odd manifest contents in the dreams. The four elements, however, are not there to draw a line between reality and fantasy, but to provide an approximation, a simulation of reality in time and place. Yet the causal relation in dreams, between time and space, is confused and reversed, as the starting point can stand for the end or the end as the starting point. Following the confusion in cause and effect, Freud suggests a conjunction between the seemingly disparate scenes of a dream.

In the first place, dreams take into account which undeniably exists between all the portions of the dream-thoughts by combining the whole material into a single situation. They reproduce logical connection by approximation in time and space. A causal relation between two thoughts is either left unrepresented or is replaced by a sequence of two pieces of dream of different lengths. Here the representation is often reversed, the beginning of the dream standing for the consequence and its conclusion for the premise. [...] The alternative 'either-or' is never expressed in dreams, both of the alternatives being inserted in the text of the dream as though they were equally valid. I have already mentioned that an 'either-or' used in recording a dream is to be translated by 'and' (Freud, 1995, p. 157).

For Freud, the conjunction 'and' in dreams is crucial for the dream work, for it functions as an independent agent, instigating numerous other associations contrary to 'either-or', which would at best cause confusion over the origination of the dream thought. The grammatical structure of Fishbelly's dream, if one takes a closer look, is more or less connected with *ands* rather than punctuation marks or conjunctions like 'either-or' that would render a choice between two causalities inevitable. And if there is one phrase that traverses the dream from the beginning to the closure (needless to say that such phrases are also cutting through Fish's waking life) it is the repetitive command of "MORE COAL!" The use of the capitalized command might point out to various reasons and associations like the father's clear-cut injunction "NEVER LOOK AT A WHITE WOMAN!" to Chris's death or to Fish's arrest. And feeding coal into the engine, the locomotive image he dreams of could fittingly stand in for the *genitalia* and for the act of *coitus*. The image is surely reminiscent of the humping and bumping sounds he catches his father make during the sexual intercourse in the office, and secondly, as indicated in the dream, the continuous command of the white engineer pushes him to the anxiety of hiding the naked body of the white woman, just like the newspaper clip he swallows in the face of castration threat. No matter how hard he stokes, and tries to hide the presence of the naked white woman, he is caught red-handed, and in the closing stages of the dream he realizes that the engineer and the naked woman are actually into a clandestine agreement to ridicule him. Maud Williams, *mama* of the brothels Tyree own, appears – somewhat mockingly- to warn Fishbelly: "Honey, you know better'n to try to hide a white woman in a coal pile like that! They was sure to find her...." (Wright, 2000, p. 159).

After waking up, Fishbelly does not remember his dream, not a trace. And to complicate the matter even further, after Chris's murder and the mock castration he suffers under arrest, he is more determined to violate the taboo of miscegenation, and push its limits to the seams. Fishbelly's resolution can be observed to be fixed, approximately two pages before the dream scene, when he reconfirms his ambiguous take on whiteness.

That white world, then, threatened as much as it beckoned. Though he did not know it, he was fatally in love with that white world, in a way that could never be cured (Wright, 2000, p. 158).

For Fishbelly, such insatiable and incurable love happens to be represented by his (Gladys) and his father's (Gloria) mulatto mistresses. These women with their white skins and racially mixed ancestries stand for a desire too elusive to grasp and for a fear too horrifying to evade. In the last dream sequence of the novel, we find him seated at the desk in his father's office, going over the rent receipts when Gladys and Gloria enter. They procure bundles of green dollars out of their handbags and place them on the desk, telling Fishbelly to take them for they are all his. Declining to take the money, Fishbelly asks them where they got it. On learning that they stole it from the white men, he is seized with panic and fear first, but accepts to take the bundle and hide it due to the sweet talking of Gladys and Gloria. At this point, someone appears at the door of the office, and it turns out to be the police chief Cantley. Gladys and Gloria betray him immediately and inform on Fishbelly's taking the stolen money and stashing it away. In response, Fishbelly growls back with a curse "You bitches! You tricked me!" The mocking laughter of Gladys and Gloria, though, echoes in the halls of the parlor, and they have their own answer for Fishbelly's censure. "You're black and we're white and you'll believe anything we say!" Emma Tucker, the mother, appears in the nick of time to save his son, and advises him to hide in a coffin, it doesn't work out though, for Cantley, Gladys and Gloria find out Fishbelly's whereabouts and look down at him and Cantley steps up to deliver his sardonic parley: "All right, nigger. Either you're dead and we'll bury you, or you come out of there and go to jail!" (Wright, 2000, p. 278).

This last dream of the novel shares some common characteristics with Chris and the locomotive dreams. First, the dream is traversed by the taboo of miscegenation as the two mulatto women Gladys and Gloria, who were once the bridge for Fish and his father to the white world, turn against him, and hand him over to the corrupt state official. Second, it is charged with sexual tension and expectancy ending in the imagery of death and/or incarceration. In Chris Sims dream in which the monstrous fish attacks Rex Tucker, and it is appropriate to claim that the fish attacks his genitalia, and in the locomotive one Fishbelly hiding the naked white girl, and in the last dream in which Gladys and Gloria trick him into accepting the money, one can track down a sexual anxiety sometimes subtly and sometimes plainly given. The only difference between the last dream and the previous two is that the conjunctive structure of the dreams change, for the first and last time, from 'and' to 'either-or'. The last dream for the most part, just like the other two, is characterized by the 'and' conjunction, however, at the very end of the dream Fish and we readers are presented by a choice in the shape of "Either you're dead and we'll bury you, or you come out of there and go to jail." Wright's interference into the grammatical configuration of the dream, contrary to Freud's surmise

that the alternative 'either-or' is never expressed in dreams, might point out to Wright's concern to show that his protagonist of *The Long Dream* has (always already) to face the inevitable choice of falling for his dreams or renouncing them completely. That is to say, the causal relation 'and' indicates in the form of synchronic multiplicity, is turned into a diachronic singularity by 'either-or', implying a closure as regards to Fishbelly's life. As the police chief presents a choice between death and imprisonment, Fishbelly devises his own choice by resuming his father's role or leaving it all behind, thus finally breaking free of the unrelenting and vicious circle of 'ands.' In reality, however, Gloria, his father's mulatto mistress is the one who keeps the copies of the cancelled checks revealing the bribe traffic between Tyree and Cantley. For this reason, and for contacting McWilliams the lawyer, Cantley sets up a trap, along with the local police force, to kill Tyree in the brothel of Maud. To lure Tyree, Cantley makes Dr. Bruce, his partner in the business, call him, and Cantley shoots Tyree on the spot soon as he arrives. Bereft of his father, whom he loved and hated at the same time, Fish wakes up to his nightmare, and finds his strength of survival standing on thin ice: "Papa left me in the charge, and, goddammit, I'm going to take charge and all hell ain't going to stop me!" (Wright, 2000, p. 304).

With no one between him and the hostile world of the whites, and receiving the batch of checks from Gloria (which reveals the last five years of bribery between Cantley and his murdered father), Fishbelly shoulders the burden his father bequeaths to the son. The threat of incarceration which the police chief Cantley makes in Fishbelly's last dream finally comes to pass as the chief arrests him in order to learn about the fate of the hidden checks. A year and eleven months into his imprisonment, the chief finally decides to let Fishbelly go, convinced that he didn't have the checks after all. After his release from the jail, Rex "Fishbelly" Tucker sets for France, Paris, and the very last pages of the novel give us readers a picture of the overarching dream, that is, the famous American Dream which was (and perhaps still is) supposedly built on the tenets of individual freedom, egalitarianism and pursuit of happiness. We learn though that the very principles that defined such all-encompassing Dream of the nation have been Rex Tucker's worst nightmare all along.

Would he ever find a place that he could call "My Wonderful Romance"? That man's father had come to America and had found a dream: he had been born in America and had found a nightmare (Wright, 2000, p. 380).

### 3. Conclusion

The relationship between dreams and literary texts goes as far as back to ancient times, to the Babylonian epic, *Gilgamesh*, purported to be written circa 2150 – 1400 BC, and considered as the world's first truly great work of literature. Since earliest times, dream reports, literary texts and creative writing have been interfusing realms of human experience. The term *oneiremes* was first coined by anthropologist-poet Paul Friedrich to describe the dreaming elements in literature and the ways those elements contributed to the creation, or reformulation of literary contents and forms. In fact, all literary genres engaged with dream elements in one way or another. Dreams and dream reports are especially crucial in that they are woven into the social, cultural and political paradigms of a society, and could be utilized as a central tool to critique the "current social conditions,"

to envision “new possibilities,” to motivate “individual and collective action”, and perhaps more vitally, to have an impact on “the cultural paradigm in which they occur” (Rupprecht and Bulkley, 1993, p. 3).

Richard Wright was widely criticized for his expatriate life and for cutting his emotional and racial ties with his native country. The critics saw Wright’s literary choices and style in the last stage of his life as lenient in dealing with the highly volatile issue of race. *The Long Dream*, his last published novel before his death, also had its share from the criticism directed at his personal life. For the critics, the psychological portrayals of the black and white characters furthered the confusion and ambivalence of the novel, and even caused distaste for the text’s aesthetic direction (Ward and Butler, 2008). In the psychic register of the United States and in the country’s collective unconscious, dreams and nightmares hold some recurrent patterns of cultural passions, violence and anxieties. Therefore, it is wrong to limit the reach of the dreams and nightmares to individuals, let alone reduce their extent to the African Americans. On the oscillation of dreams of carnal desires and nightmares of sexual transgressions bring about, and threads through which the vile sections of U.S. history and politics merge, Shannon Winnubst concludes it best as regards to the nation’s dreams and nightmares and to the subsequent subject positions, which might also ring true for Rex Tucker’s elongated dream journey:

[...] a fantasy that structures and ensures the hegemony of a phallicized whiteness and as a horrifying material reality that, despite its ontological status as a fantasy, traps and kills black and brown men in the contemporary United States. With no foothold in actual statistics on interracial violence or rape, it nonetheless functions as a myth that structures race, gender, sexuality, and class in the United States. Both real and unreal, it is a collective nightmare that structures power in U.S. culture. *But who is doing the dreaming?* [emphasis added] (Winnubst, 2003, p. 2).

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