CHAPTER III

POSTCOLONIALISM: THE UNIFYING FORCE

One of the essential features of African American autobiography is the issue of the apartheid. Though the writers approached the genre from different directions, they all invariably treated the theme of discrimination in their autobiographies. It is presumed that an autobiography is necessarily the life story of an individual. But for the African Americans “self advertisement and disclosure are not the only purpose” (Sayre 29-30), and it is their racist structure, which has made them speak for the African collective consciousness.

Through the variety of personal life histories these autobiographers tried “to redeem Black history from oblivion, correct the false account of White historians and make future Black generation aware of their proud heritage” (Wells 4-5). In the four autobiographies under study there is a record of the similar sad life of the people who have undergone humiliation, horror and mental torture at their worst. As presentation of facts, “they give us eye witness accounts of the furnace of misery” (Butterfield 11).
This metamorphosis of African American voice from despondency to self-assertion gave a solid foundation for the post-colonial African American literature.

This chapter analyses the relationship between the postcolonial theory and the African American autobiography. The concepts like individual fighting for the freedom of the entire race, double consciousness, education as a means of freedom and empowerment, resistance which carries with it ideas about freedom, identity and individuality, have been advocated by the postcolonial theorists. Similarly these autobiographies under study have all these factors in common.

Postcolonialism designates the time after colonial rule, which is mostly from the middle to late twentieth century. This was the era when most of the British colonies such as India fought for their independence from the British Empire and became separated nations. Postcolonial theory began to arise in the 1960 as thinkers from the former colonies began to create their own form of knowledge, their own discourse to counter the discourse of colonialism. Some critics would date the rise of the postcolonialism in the Western academy from the publication of Edward Said’s Orientalism. Although there is a considerable debate over the precise parameters of the field and definition of
the term "postcolonialism", generally it means the study of the interaction between the European nations and the societies they colonised in the modern period.

The word "postcolonialism" is a very loose term. In the literal sense it denotes the period that has been preceded by colonisation. Originally postcolonial literature seems to label literature written by people living in countries formerly colonised by other nations. Viewed in this way many critics argue that the literary productions of McKay and Chinua Achebe are not postcolonial literature. The chief reason is that they were written while the nations in question (Jamaica and Nigeria) were still colonies. But scholars like Paul Brians defend these works as postcolonial literature. He feels that the, "literal colonization is not the exclusive objective of postcolonial study" (Brians par. 1). Henry Louis Gates in his article, "Blackness of Blackness", argues that the term denotes not only to the literature, which has been created after independence but also to the works written after colonisation. Generally postcolonialism is used to signify a position against Imperialism and Eurocentrism.

According to some postcolonial critics the term "postcolonialism" is misleading as it purported to be the case with the term, "post-modernism". The main reason is that they have interpreted the 'post' in postcolonialism to mean literally after colonialism or after independence. But critics like Steven
Best and Douglass Kellner opine that the prefix 'post' refers to an active rupture with what preceded it (Best 29). Notwithstanding the different time periods, different events and different effects the entire postcolonial theorists and theories admit that colonialism continues to affect the former colonies even after the political independence. Moreover although postcolonial theory generally confines itself to the past half-century it can be argued that everyone has been colonised at some time or the other. As people struggling for freedom in oppressed nations they reflect some of the concepts of postcolonial theory.

There are some major issues of postcolonialism. Among them the study about how the colonial power is able to gain control over the large portion of the non-western world is the primary one. Further it tries to find out how the colonial education and language influenced the culture and identity of the colonised. Another important issue is the analysis of the various forms of resistance against colonial control. These issues of postcolonialism can be found at a varying degree in the autobiographies under study.

Theorists like Edward Said, Gayathri Chakravorty Spivak and Homi Babha, otherwise known as the 'postcolonial mental giants' (Tate N.Pag.) examine how Western cultures or the colonisers treated the colonial subjects or the subaltern through various discursive practices. They also examine how these subaltern cultures both participated in and worked to resist colonisation through various overt and covert as well as direct and subversive means.
The concept of postcolonialism entered critical discourse in its current meaning only in the late 1970s and early 1980s. But both the practice and theory of postcolonial resistance go back much further. African American studies and postcolonial studies are viably different fields, yet a shared goal of disestablishing social hierarchies lends itself to the other issues in common. Both the theories “look at how a hegemonic white or western culture came to dominate a non-white culture and how the subordinated culture reacted to and resisted that domination” (Gates par.8).

As a sub-division of cultural studies the scholars of postcolonialism like Homi Bhaba and Bill Ashcroft have in common, a determination to analyse the unjust power relationship, which manifested itself in the cultural products. In other words the concern of this theory is about the encounter of cultures and it, “addresses all aspects of the colonial process from the beginning of colonial contact” (Ashcroft, Postcolonial Studies Reader 2). They engaged themselves to the variety of liberation process. They expose and struggle against the influence of large rich nations on poorer nations. Faced with the dilemma of wanting to make positive claims for certain ethnic groups or nationalities while simultaneously acknowledging individualism these scholars put forward the concept of “strategic essentialism” (Brians N.Pag), which is group identity.
The writers under scrutiny felt the same group identity. These writers as sub-cultural groups responded to the challenges of a pluralistic society by trying to proclaim not only to the White world, but also to the whole Universe, the sorry state of the “other world” of human societies. R.G. Kulkarni, while discussing the similarity between the Dalit autobiography and the African American personal account states that, “[…] it [autobiography] is an attempt to communicate to the White World what White have done to the Negroes. It is a mirror of White deeds”(212). Thus by portraying the marginalised state of their communities in the context of the subaltern studies popularised by Edward Said and Gayathri.C. Spivak these writers uniformly marched towards the identical goal. In other words the common denominator of these writers is the painful awareness of the pitiable plight of their own situation and seeking a way to redress it.

Exploitation, injustice and oppression have been universal phenomena in various societies through all times. Writers in different forms from time immemorial have dealt with all these ideas in a detailed way. In other words suppression of the have-nots by the haves is a recurring happening. The same cruelty towards fellow human beings has taken place in the United States in the form of colour discrimination. This colour discrimination has yoked the African American for more than three hundred years. To voice against the inhumanity of the White people, the four champions of the marginalised society under study found literature as the best tool.
Shaped by similar socio-cultural global events the authors under discussion have emerged to impart the significance of racial identity. The main qualification of these writers as the supporters of their own minority community is that they all equally fit into Davis’ definition of a major Black Writer. According to him a Black writer is: “One whose work deals largely with Black experience, measures up to appropriate aesthetic standards and influences to some extent his contemporaries and/or those who come after him”(xiv). Further they practise the concept of resistance against the supremacy of the Western power, which has been later adopted by the postcolonial theorists. This concept carries with it ideas about human freedom, identity and individuality.

The four writers under scrutiny consider the autobiographical mode to be the suitable form because “autobiographical writing has proved useful to the oppressed people [...] it commands the potentially political power to change minds”. Moreover through these personal accounts they try to bridge the gulf between the Whites and the Blacks. By protesting against the social realities which have affected their lives and identities in a decisive way through their records of personal life they hoped to “recreate link between the singular self, the immediate community, and the wider world of sympathetic readers and fellow human beings”(Stone 4).
While several significant works have described the attitudes of the whites towards the African Americans these self-histories gauged the self-perception of the minority community at various events and issues of the time. By doing so, "autobiography as history and documentary has an ultimate value no novel or drama or fiction, can ever have" (Sayre 29). As a vivid picture of life these personal accounts have a ring of truth and sincerity unlike other imaginative literature.

Through their personal accounts, these authors have created, "a community of fundamental identification between 'I' and 'We' within a single autobiography", and proved that, "the individual and the community are not polarities". Moreover "they can not be ultimately separated, [they] as subject and object join and merge in consciousness "(Olney 14). Though it sounds paradoxical the study of the self and that of the world can not be differentiated. Thus their desire to communicate enabled them to begin a dialogue in the context of Mikhail Bakhtin—a dialogue with others, events and with themselves. This dialogue that goes into constructing these authors who exist not in isolation but in a context filled with the sounds of, "what country people called mother wit the collective wisdom of generation" (Angelou 83). This ability to fuse language with qualities of the human voice in a cultural dialogue is what links, the personal voice with the public one to shape a distinctive social discourse in the autobiography.
Bakhtin is like Franz Fanon, a prophet of postcoloniality. He believed that novelistic discourse thrived in the periphery of Hellenic culture and continued to thrive in the marginal reaches of societies. The main reason is that it is at those margins that different cultures interact and breed new forms. He is the authority cited to lend prestige and weight to a theoretical claim, which belongs to the sphere of postcolonialism. Moreover as a theorist of the Soviet Union, Bakhtin is associated with the school known as Russian Formalism. He shares with Marxist theorists an interest in the historical and social world.

Bakhtin's theory focuses primarily on the concept of "Dialogue" and on the notion that any form of writing is always a dialogue. In his book *The Dialogic Imagination* Bakhtin focuses on the question of literary forms or genres as examples of dialogic forms (Klages N.Pag). He argues that the autobiographical text comes into being through an ongoing interplay of dialogue, which reveals it as a social discourse. Hence there is the intricate interrelationship between the writer, text and the world.

Thus in the context of Bakhtin's dialogue an autobiography converts a writer to, "a citizen in a crowded city of words" (Rodriguez 32). African American autobiography as a narrative arises from a dialogue with the self and about the self in relation to others and a particular cultural landscape distinguishes it and makes it a powerful means to fight against social
oppression. In short in these autobiographies the portrayal of the self has been presented as a social personality rather than an individual. According to Bruffee, "What we think of as the individual self is constructed largely community generated and community maintained"(777). Similarly the four writers under study have enabled the readers to see their community, ideology and culture on both local and global levels through the display of the self.

Johnson's *Along This Way* is a life long process of interpreting and re-envisioning the racial problem of his fellow men and women. He expressed his feeling of being a representative of an entire race. The ruling principle of his autobiography is that each must contribute in some way to the welfare of his race. He stressed the idea that the obstacles that appeared in one's way were to be regarded as challenges and the greater the challenges the greater should be the determination with which it would be attached. The most important factor of Johnson's life was the racial discrimination and the violence that he had witnessed and experienced.

His experiences as a rural summer-school teacher, for instance, introduced him to the bleak economic and educational conditions under which the African Americans lived in the backwoods of Georgia. Only in the development of his own identity he knew about the full meaning of the racial problem. Of this experience he states that it was a period of "psychological change", and during this period he recognised his people as, "a race". He
further states that: “I had learned something about the Negro as a problem, but now I was where I could touch the rude bulk of the problem itself with my own hands, where the relation between black and white in the gross were pressed upon me” (ATW 119). The main reason for this late realisation is the affluent family background of Johnson.

Johnson's varied and successful career as literary writer, diplomat, teacher and lawyer made him subject himself to the resistance against injustices and wrongs done to his own community. The self-life history of Johnson abounds with the details of the positive aspects of the African American life and how much regard he has towards his race. In his days, these marginalised people were not popularly supposed to have the capacity to occupy positions of responsibility. But in the account of his personal life he calls the reader's attention to the fact how his own people occupied some important positions. In fact, Johnson himself has set an example for the aspiring children of his community by occupying many prominent positions like the first Black Secretary of the NAACP. At the very outset of Along This Way he expresses his feeling of being a representative of an entire race. He considers his achievements not as an individual one but as of his race. He asserts that, “The only thing in America that have sprung from American soil, permeated American life and been universally acknowledged as distinctly American [have] been the creations of the American Negro” (ATW 327).
Thus by exhibiting himself as a role model Johnson stressed the importance of his community.

As a man of action, Johnson devoted his energies and numerous talents in uplifting his people and gaining for them a more just share of America's opportunities. As the NAACP's chief executive officer in the early twenties he immersed himself in a wearing, frustrating but ultimately partly successful fight against lynching. During the year 1919 he took steps for the enactment of a law against lynching. Due to the effort taken by him, on April 11, Mr. L.C.Dyer the Representative of the House Office Building introduced the anti-lynching bill, which protected the African Americans and prevented the Whites from persecuting them (ATW 361-62). He continued with the NAACP through the twenties though his activities were less spectacular than the lynching bill battle. They kept him at the forefront of the African American's fight for equality.

As a poet and writer the contribution of Johnson, as the NAACP's executive towards the advancement of his race is remarkable. He tried his level best to guide younger Negro poets towards expressing their own heritage. The chief reason for that was:

[...] he (Negro) needs to find a form that will express the racial spirit by symbols from within rather that by symbols from without--such as the mere mutilation of English spelling
and pronunciation. He needs a form that is free and larger than dialect, but which will still hold the racial flavour. (qtd. in. Bronz 41)

As the politician and the statesman he felt it necessary that unless there was the "lowering and sweeping away of economics and industrial barriers against the Negro" (ATW 355), there would not be a complete freedom and upliftment for them. He concludes, "when economic and industrial avenues are opened to the Negro, many of the most perplexing phases of the race question will automatically disappear" (356). Thus he engaged himself in the life long fight against racial discrimination and violence. It was not a physical fight and counter attacks. But he did fight against the oppression through a firm and delicate pressure with the legal systems. In other words it was the public leader who paved the way for his people.

McKay, like Johnson believes that in his autobiography, "a historical consciousness speaks out of singular experience for some particular social group to a wider audience" (Stone 3). This Jamaican immigrant never experienced racial prejudice in his own country. He set foot in America with the expectation for the same environment. But his realisation about the realities about the African American life in the United States came only after 1912. He wrote about the injustice done to his race in America in the Peasant Magazine. He was shocked and, "horrified", and his, "spirit revolted against
the ignoble cruelty and blindness of it all" (Cooper 298). This experience has brought a kind of hatred in his mind. At the same time McKay did not want to heap this hatred towards the White for, “to hate is to be miserable” (Cooper, 298). By moving friendly with the Whites he brings home the discriminating attitude of the dominating race towards the minority.

Ironically, from the beginning of his career he was guided and influenced by the Whites. Before his visit to America, in his native land itself he had been discovered and promoted by Walter Jekyll, British aristocrat. In the United States, Frank Harris, the editor of “Pearson’s” and Max Eastman, of “The Liberator” encouraged him to publish his poems in their magazines. It is highly ironical that his poem against racial attack “If we must Die”, first appeared in a White magazine. However, he developed hatred towards the Whites for the repression of his people. The main burden, which pained McKay from his arrival in the United States until his death in 1948, was the plight of the African Americans in the modern world. As he expressed his views about his people he remarks:

What, then, was my main psychological problem? It was the problem of Color. Color-consciousness was the fundamental of my restlessness. And it was something with which my white fellow-expatriates could sympathize but which they could not altogether understand. [...] they couldn’t understand the instinctive and animal and purely physical pride of a black
person resolute in being himself and yet living a simple civilized life like themselves (ALWH 245).

McKay stressed that in spite of their physical ugliness the African Americans should feel proud of their cultural heritage. He felt that his race is in no way inferior to that of the White.

As a representative of the race he felt that African Americans should not lose sight of their own uniqueness and the value of their creations while taking what was valuable from the larger European Civilisation. He laid stress on the need of group spirit for his people. He advised his fellowmen “to organize themselves and learn from their mistakes” (ALWH 352). Throughout his autobiography, he stressed the value of group unity. He felt sorry that there was no major representation of his people in politics. When he was appointed as the African American delegate at Moscow, he opined that to “feel inflated” for individual success was not enough. He feels that his people “remain politically unorganised. What we need is our own group, organised and officered out entirely by Negroes, something similar to the Finnish Federation” (ALWH 178). Thus he hopes that by promoting the group solidarity the world brother-hood will emerge.

While Johnson was deeply involved in an institution working for equal rights, McKay engaged himself in writing to educate the Whites. In fact as an editor of “The Liberator” McKay was the only Black writer to have a
communication between the African American and the White writers. He found literature as a weapon of propaganda to represent the racial issue. Towards the end of his personal account he states:

For I have nothing to give but my singing. All my life I have been a troubadour wanderer, nourishing myself mainly on the poetry of existence. And all I offer is the distilled poetry of my experience. (ALWH, 354)

Thus as the child of the Diaspora, he always emphasised his blackness and his solidarity with African Americans.

Hughes, "the cultural ambassador for his race in the court of world opinion" (Bone 239), was the major literary figure to fight against the racial prejudice. He devoted his versatile career in portraying the urban experience of the working class. As his parents' marriage did not last long he had to spend much of his childhood with his grandmother, Mary Langston, in Lawrence, Kansas. In her house, he learned the history of his people, racial pride and the folklore of his community. Through this knowledge he learned constantly the need to struggle on behalf of the ideals of social justice and the progress of the African American. He judged his people as "the most wonderful people in the world"(Brooks 509). So he wanted to celebrate them in his poetry, fiction, essays and plays.
Similar to the postcolonial ideology Hughes has become a spokesman of his community. Hughes liked his race, their naturalness, their sense of styles and their bitter facing up of life. It was this strong love for his people that made him recoil from his father, who had a constant hatred for the African Americans. Thus caught between a father who hated his own community and a mother, who never understood him, Hughes developed an attitude to celebrate the black life. He has stated all these in his two volumes of autobiography. He proclaims that: “our aim ought to be, to present to the general public already misinformed both by well meaning and malicious writers, our higher aim and aspirations and our better selves”(BS 267). By portraying the lives of common people Hughes depicted the African American reality, which is true to life. In fact his aim was, “to reveal the Negro to the White world as a human feeling things”(Manuel 77).

Hughes’s theory and practice was to bring the lower class life to the forefront and not the portrayal of the “Negro Bourgeoisie” of Washington D.C. He criticised the latter as “unbearable and snobbish, a group of people as I have ever come in contact with anywhere”(BS, 206). Probably it is this idea, which has made him create Harriet, a character in his novel, Not without Laughter, as his own mouthpiece. Harriet attacks the snobbish nature of her sister Tempy as:

[...] “Tempy”? Harriet sneared suddenly. “So respectable, you can’t touch her with a ten-foot pole, that’s Tempy […] won’t
even see her family. When niggers get up in the world they act just like white folks – don’t pay you no mind. [...] It is not being black matters with her, though its being poor and that what we are”. (NWL 41)

He felt his identity only with the working class people of his race. According to him these pitiable people are: “[…] like the gayest and the bravest people possible, […] facing tremendous odds, working and laughing and trying to get somewhere in the world” (BS 55).

Hughes’s aim and wish throughout his life was to change the White’s opinion about the superficial reality of his people, that “all Harlemites left their houses at sun down to sing and dance in cabarets […] The white saw nothing but the cabarets, not the houses” (BS 225). Those “Happy Darkies” lived in the poor houses, which was the stark fact of life in America. As an artist, Hughes vows to expose the reality of the sorry state of his people through his writing. He believes that, only by holding the mirror to the life of his own fellow men an artist can hope to produce a memorable art. As the majority of the people belong to the lower class and he is one among them Hughes feels that it is his duty to expose the sufferings of his brethren to the public.

The colour prejudice prevailed not only between the Whites and the African Americans. It spread even among many African Americans who drew
class lines within colour line. The mulattos like Hughes himself had many racial strains. As a mulatto he had faced many problems. Apart from this colour division there was the class division among these oppressed people. They divided themselves as upper and lower mulatto. Hughes expresses his bitter feelings about this unnecessary class division in the second volume of his autobiography. He sadly points out that because of the hard labour of the lower class mulatto the upper class enjoyed all the comforts of life. He states that: “It was in Haiti that I first realized how class lines may cut across color lines within a race and how dark people of the same nationality may scorn those below them” (IWAIW 28).

As a mulatto he came across rejection and was hurt in his own personal life. In The Big Sea he narrates how on his voyage to Africa the natives of Africa refused to accept him as a dark man. They laughed at him and shook their heads and said, “you white man, you white man” (BS 102-3). As a member of the oppressed social group, Hughes thus tried to connect his personal self not only with his race but also with the sub-category of his race. In other words he “links the individual and history by his fully realized images of Negro life” (Butterfield 127).

Wright, like his predecessors, was one of the foremost writers to confront the dehumanising effects of racism. As an examination of oppression, rebellion and emancipation, Wright’s Black Boy describes in detail the
physical and emotional hardships faced by the people of his community. His early encounter with Jim Crow Society, his poverty, the limited opportunity for education or employment and his migration in 1927 to the southern side of Chicago made him a representative participant of the African American social history. The enigma of race disturbed him right from his childhood.

Initially, he knew about racial violence and of being caught by the "white death", only in the form of rumours. But as he grew, he himself faced that omnipresent White malignity. When he worked as a delivery boy in the area, which was dominated by the Whites, the police unnecessarily threatened him. They drew their guns only because he was dark complexioned. Sometimes drunken joy riders knocked him off the running board and kicked him simply for the sadistic delight. Haunted by these bitter experiences he expresses his feeling as follows:

And the problem of living as a Negro was cold and hard. What was it that made the hate of whites for blacks so steady, seemingly so woven into the texture of things? What kind of life was possible under that hate? Nothing about the problem of Negroes was ever taught in the classrooms at school; and whenever I would raise these questions with the boys they would either remain silent or turn the subject into a joke.

(BB 143-144)
Wright was instructed by his elders not to question these routine deeds of the Whites. Yet he could not adapt to the strain of shrinking into himself or turning his cheek to every insult and racial violence aimed at him. He feels that “It was inconceivable [...] that one should surrender to what seemed wrong, and most of the people I met seemed wrong” (BB 144). He vowed to fight against this oppression by means of literary production with haughty, tormented and didactic style. He, “centred in his blackness, [...] renders the suffering of southern blacks and his stricken younger self in scenes that are dramatically fluent and pointed as a surgeon’s scalpel so that the readers witness at the pain of penetration” (Leibowitz 346).

While the first part of Wright’s life encountered the racial abuse, the second part was filled with coldly anonymous circumstances. As he narrates his experience in Chicago he points out:

[...] A dim notion of what life meant to a Negro in America was coming to consciousness in me, not in terms of external vents, lynching, Jim Crowism and the endless brutalities, but in terms of crossed-up feelings of psyche pain. (AH 7)

Though Wright failed to propose any concrete solutions to the dilemma facing his people, his own story is an attempt to achieve a closer identification with the southern Blacks who like himself have suffered under the heavy weight of racism. Unlike the people of his community, Wright had the talent
to express in writings, the agony of their daily existence. His aim was to provide inspiration to the numerous native sons and daughters and he wanted to voice for the voiceless.

He took advantage of the opportunities and began educating himself. He started to read the works of Theodore Dreiser (1871-1945), Joseph Conrad (1857-1924), Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1821-1881) and Sinclair Lewis (1885-1951). With these he also went through the works of Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Thorstein Bunde Veblen (1857-1929). He then constructed some social theories out of the acumen of the above mentioned writers and his own personal experiences (AH 19). He felt that the problem of African American who was living as an "adolescent and cocksure a stranger to suffering and travail an enemy of passion and sacrifice"(AH 14) was to be solved only by plumbing the aggressive authority of a white majority. Wright found it very difficult to work for this noble cause due to his family burden.

Wright became desperate due to his helplessness. At that time, the Communist Party ideology promised to redress injustice, find jobs, bread and shelter for the needy of all races and to foster an ethical consciousness. His views on Communism are:

In principle I heartily agreed with this [Communism] for I knew that it was impossible for working people to forge instruments of political power until they had achieved unity of action. Oppressed for centuries divided hopeless corrupted,
missed, they [African American] were cynical – as I had once been – and the communist method of unity had been found historically to be the only means of achieving discipline. […]

I wanted to be a communist, but my kind of communist I wanted to shape people’s feelings, awaken their hearts. (AH 107)

Initially, Wright believed that Communism and its principles would help for the betterment of his people. But later on his hopes were shattered.

After he became affiliated with the Chicago John Reed club, Wright was upset. The chief reason was that, he was labelled as an intellectual because he read books other than those endorsed by the communist party. He was threatened by the group and was scorned by some of the communists of his own race. He narrates this painful experience in his American Hunger thus:

[...] why was it that! I was a suspected man because I wanted to reveal the vast physical and spiritual ravages of Negro life, the profoundity latent in these rejected people […] what was the danger in showing the kinship between the suffering of the Negro and the sufferings of the other people? (AH 82)

Thus it was clear that that the four writers equally fought for their race through the portrayal of their personal life histories. They struggled to maintain the dignity of their people like the scholars of the post-colonial theory. Wright perceived his own plight as a representation of the whole of his community.
He aimed through his autobiography not only to foster and preserve, “clean positive tenderness, love, honour and a capacity to remember” which are “native with man” (BB 33), but also to prove that African Americans are capable of them.

While Wright took literature as a strong weapon to fight against the marginalisation Johnson sought the political power to redeem his people from the clutches of White supremacy. McKay on the other hand lamented over the sad condition of these minorities and strove to attain “group pride and strength and self-respect” (ALWH 345). Hughes by mingling very closely with the working class showed that they are beautiful as well as ugly (TNARM 694). Thus these writers uniformly exposed through their personal lives the sorry state of their community and tried their level best to redeem from their plight.

Postcolonial theory is largely built on the concept of “otherness”. The theorists further define this concept as “Diaspora”. According to them Diaspora is, “the voluntary or forcible movement of people from their homeland into new regions” (Ashcroft, Postcolonial Studies Reader 68). The postcolonial theorists view Diaspora with utmost importance. Bill Ashcroft notes that as descendants these children of Diaspora have come to produce a highly unique culture. The remarkable point of this culture is that it maintains and builds on the perception of their original cultures (Ashcroft 68-70).
Both African American theories about United States' racial dynamics and the postcolonial theories argue that the colonised learn to speak what W.E.B. DuBios has called a "double voiced" discourse, speaking both the language of the dominant culture and the language of the sub-ordinate culture. Likewise, the autobiographies under study firmly felt about this "double voice". Their diasporal experience in a nation where there were lingering forms of discrimination and racism towards minority population has bridged these two theories together. While discussing the concept of 'otherness' in the postcolonial context John Lye states:

[...] otherness includes doubleness, both identity and difference, so that every other, every different than and excluded by is dialectically created and includes the values and meaning of the colonizing culture even as it rejects its power to define. (Some Issues in Postcolonial Theory par.3)

The African American autobiographers under study experienced this kind of "otherness" in their personal life. They have stated that they found it difficult to adjust to the polarising cultures--the culture of the colonies and that of coloniser. In the words of John Frow, they:

[...] (will) also be other than their pasts, which can be reclaimed but never reconstituted and so must be revisited and realized in partial, fragmental ways. You (they) can't go home again (qtd.in.Lye par.4).
In other words, they felt a kind of identity crisis. They struggled to synthesise the two contradictory feelings—feelings as American and African. Homi Bhabha calls this hybridity as "transnational". To quote him from his article in Greenblatt and Gun's "Redrawing the Boundaries":

Culture as a strategy of survival is both transnational and translational. It is transnational because contemporary postcolonial discourses are rooted in specific histories of cultural displacement. (qtd.in.Lye par12)

This "transnational" dimension of cultural transformation is well described by the writers under consideration. As champions of Black cause in White America they commonly felt their double consciousness—as Africans and as Americans—in spite of their existence in a variegated epoch. They tried throughout their lifetime to reconcile the two contradictory identities. They struggled to find their roots in a country, which did not accept them as human beings. If they identified themselves only with their own race, then there was the danger of alienation. At the same time, they would become total strangers to their own people if they attached themselves with White America. This "double consciousness" is well explained by W.E.B. DuBois as:

The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife,--this longing to attain self conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and true self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. [...] He simply wishes to
make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without, having the doors of opportunity closed roughly in his face. (TSBF 4)

For the unification of this "two-ness" these writers under study accepted their blackness as a subject of pride. As African Americans they consider "black is beautiful." They felt, like Antar, the African poet as:

I have met every peril in my bosom,
And the world can cast no reproach on me for my
Complexion:
My blackness has not diminished my glory.
(qtd.in. McKay ALWH 91)

These darlings of the downtrodden felt that by focussing the theory of "black aesthetic" they could become equal with the supreme race. According to Powell, "black aesthetic" is:

[...] grounded in the idea of a new post-Emancipation, post-colonial black identity which [...] thrive in black communities where artistic creativity and performances are the basic cultural currencies. (15)

The Black Aesthetic Movement is also known as the Black Arts Movement. Though this movement developed in the 1960s and early 70s
under the guidance of the leading theorists like Houston A. Baker Jr., Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Addison Gayle Jr. it took its origin in Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association of 1920s. This movement sought to acquire economic power and to infuse among African Americans a sense of community and group feeling. The writers encouraged the people of their community to inculcate a sense of pride among African Americans with such slogans as "black power" and "black is beautiful".

Alain Locke urged the African American artists to re-establish the position of art at the core of black life and to make art a liberating force for their people. It was Locke, who saw Negritude as a viable force in making the world aware of the cultural contributions that African Americans made to modern art. Of this idea he comments:

Africa's art creed is beauty in use vitally rooted in the crafts, and uncontaminated with the blight of machines. Surely the liberating example of such art will be as marked an influence in the contemporary work of Negro artist as it has been in that of the leading modernists. [...] African art therefore presents to the Negro artist in the New World a challenge to recapture this heritage of creative originality and to carry it to distinctive new achievement in a vital, new and racially expressive art.

(Lock Negro Artist 12)
The Great Migration of hundreds of Black people to the Northern urban centre after the first World War, the emergence of a black intelligentsia, the general post-war restlessness and disillusionment of the twenties created a new militancy and radicalism among the African Americans. This attitude not only gave them self-confidence but also fostered nationalism and stimulated efforts at self-discovery. Writers like Hughes tried to express their, "individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. If White people were pleased they were glad; if they were not, it does not matter. They knew they were beautiful" (qtd.in.Ervin 48).

African Americans try to synthesise their work within the framework of known, familiar experiences. They believed that art could not be autonomous, independent and self-sufficient. Value was seen not in the formal organisation but rather in the liberal depiction of objects and events of real life. To this end the writers by portraying their life have captured the beauty of blackness as seen in the expression and daily activities of their people. They have searched the souls of African Americans by registering in their realism the unique qualities. By picturing their people whose joys are experienced even in pains these writers have avoided the problem of using art liberally to mirror the social injustice.

African Americans maintained the fact that by laying claim to a unitary black aesthetic there is a possibility of tying together disparate issues
from a myriad of places and influences. Johnson describes in his autobiography his "race superiority" complex when he is talking about his ancestors. He marvels that "black is beautiful" (ATW 121), and is very proud to note that, "all the most interesting things that came under my observation were being done by colored men" (ATW 31). McKay and Hughes expressed the same theme of 'black' as a mark of distinction. When the former refers to the "group soul" (ALWFH 349) he means by the term 'soul' the race pride, shared culture, and Negritude. On the other hand the latter strongly holds the idea that African Americans are beautiful for they endure life. In short, they all felt that the assertion of Black pride is a defence against racism and racial discrimination.

The task of the intellectuals has been to delineate African American character and personality in the American context. Their attitude towards the White supremacy was not to ask for sympathy but to demand their rights by stressing their importance. In other words they struggled to get equality. Postcolonial theorists have advocated similar concept of resistance. Like the postcolonial ideology these writers under study propagate the ideas about human freedom, identity and individuality. With these higher principles they wrestled their life long fight against oppression. They all demanded in their writings both literate and psychic decolonisation. In the words of Wright:

We black folk, our history and our present being, are a mirror of all the manifold experience of America, what we want, what
we represent what we endure is what America is. If we black folk perish, America will perish. [...] We want what others have the right to share in the upward march of American life, the only life we remember or have ever known. (TMBV 146)

As the advocates of postcolonialism these children of Diaspora had engaged themselves and were committed to the variety of liberation process. Thus, these black artists had weathered despair and racism to achieve greatness by following the similar principles of postcolonialism. Through their personal life histories they revealed how "black " imagery engages with larger issues to achieve its symbolic force.

These fighters against racial prejudice wanted to have common solidarity. Hughes had the capacity in his work and life to feel a broad sympathy for the whole race of mankind. In the words of Gibson, "he could 'dream a world' in which downtrodden people of all colours and in all countries could share the fruits of the earth"(xxv). He has taught the future writers the success and value of universality. He believes that once people maintained the common human solidarity then the human values can not be limited to one place and period.

Wright's biographer, Constance Webb has reported in her work how Wright had involved himself in achieving the oneness of humanity. He has
voiced out this globalisation of fellowship not only through literature but also even in some programs and activities. As Fabre puts forth, "[...] he could cast himself in the personal of a man for ever seeking a place where he could be more fully human [...]" (The World of Richard Wright 77).

McKay advocates this unification of the whole humanity when he despises the discrimination. He feels that "It is a cancer in the universal human body and poison to the individual soul"(ALWH 135). The solution lies in the fusion of “a group soul"(ALWH 350).

Thus they all uniformly hoped that through the portrayal of their personal lives:

[...] The world [...] must be remade until a new international order emerges, transformed by a radical restructuring of its society and economy within which there will be neither wealth, nor poverty nor power and dependence. Then and only then will Prospero and Caliban and even Arial be changed into self-reliant creatures and man will cease to be a capitalist wolf to his fellow men. (Austin 45)

Postcolonial theorists like Ashcroft, Briffins and Tiffin hold the view that education is used by the marginalised people as a tool against the colonised. They further believe that education is viewed more than benign and
neutral force, as there are many positive consequences. The dignity of man is based upon certain, unique powers possessed by him such as creation, communication, observation, speculation, imagination and reasoning. Education and individual freedom among several others are essential for the liberation of these powers (Bullock 155-156). In the present world the only method of putting down the flames of international inter-racial and inter-religious wars is 'the slow spreader education for universal humanism' (NEB 192).

Though education appears to be humble in its purpose of bettering the uneducated it does dominate the colonised in contrast to the physical interactions and abuses of colonisation. In, The Post-Colonial Studies Reader Ashcroft and Tiffin explain that education:

[...] establishes the locally English or British as normative through critical claims to “universality” of the values embodied in English literary texts and it represents the colonized to themselves as inherently inferior being: “wild”, “barbarous”, uncivilized”. (426)

As advocates and promoters of equality these autobiographers invariably felt the need of education for the racial upliftment. Education as a mode to improve their position was strongly recommended by them. They firmly believed that the learning to read and write provide, “the pathway from
slavery to freedom” (Douglass 59). They asserted that in order to take their place in the American society, on the same footing of whites the best and fruitful measure is to receive education. In the words of David Walker “[...] for coloured people to acquire learning in this country, makes tyrants quake and tremble on their sandy foundation” (37). It was their unshakeable opinion that a quest for literacy was the initial thing, which will automatically lead to freedom and respect for their community and will render an upliftment to their race.

Before the emancipation movement the African American’s learning to read and write was considered a crime and whoever went for educating them might be whipped or even killed. The ante bellum laws have prohibited the slaves from being taught to read and write. The chief reason behind those laws was that once the slaves were privileged to acquire education immediately they would have the awareness of the outside world and develop the questioning spirit. In order to curtail their challenging attitude, it was made that the slaves should remain illiterate. But once the African Americans had tasted the fruit of education, they felt as though they have undergone a spiritual and intellectual rebirth. The very idea of literacy thrilled the illiterate slave. They feel in the words of Wright:

[...] We love books inordinately, even though we do not know how to read them for we know that books are the gateway to a
Johnson enjoyed the privilege of education from his early childhood. He learned to read and write when he was young. He exhausted the educational opportunities in Jacksonville. In his autobiography, Along This Way he has discussed his views on education of his people. Southern Negro College students used to teach the Black farm children during the summer vacation. Johnson discussed a similar experience, when he was a student at Atlanta University. The experience as a summer vocational teacher had given him immense knowledge. Johnson viewed that compared with this practical knowledge, the university education would not be more valuable. He felt that to educate the southern rural Negroes was really a rewarding job. He felt a kinship with the severely backward farm children and gained an opportunity to do a little for the upliftment of his race (ATW 104-119).

Whether describing his work as a teacher, principal, journalist, musician, novelist, poet, diplomat, civil rights leader or university professor Johnson was careful to show the seriousness of his commitment to the imperative he received from his formal and family education. Reflecting on his college years he remarks that the very idea about education has been changed. He sadly notes that the service motive behind the conception of education has disappeared. African Americans were forbidden from entering
the technical profession. While the White considered the teaching profession a money making one, Johnson believes, [...] education as a means of living, not of making a living” (ATW 122).

He then talked highly about the classical learning and opines that, “It was impressed upon us that taking a classical course would have an effect of making us better and nobler and of higher value to those we should have to serve” (ATW 122). Thus Johnson is of the view that education will definitely bridge the gap between races. He proved through his life that people could do wonders by educating themselves.

McKay has a different opinion about education. He predicted that education would ease group prejudice. However a kind of anti-intellectualism can be noticed in McKay and Hughes. Like DuBois, they did not discuss education as a means for the racial upliftment. They had firm faith in education that is derived from experience. They did not have any political affiliation like Johnson though they had faith in communism in the beginning.

McKay believed that the African Americans were more in tune with their racial culture than were the “talented tenth”. He even stressed the fact that African American children should study Antar, the Black poet, rather than Homer. When McKay’s book of verse, Spring in New Hampshire appeared in 1920 it received many reviews. Among them the critic of “London Spectator”
sarcastically commented that, "his work does not overstep the barrier of racial feelings written by a 'pure blooded Negro', who never offends our sensibilities" (ALWH 88). Infuriated by this criticism, McKay remarked that as the White people had all the facilities for higher education they took pride in calling themselves as the most modern and civilised. He then enquired if they are really civilised why should they call "a Negro's love poetry be offensive" (ALWR 89).

As McKay was glorifying the superiority of "Negro Love Poetry" over the English one, he comments on the White's system of education. He ironically states that, "[...] he [white] is spoiled by his modern civilisation" (ALWH 91). At the same time, he feels that the African Americans should not become a victim to this modern education. Instead of learning anything else, McKay opines, "[...] the Negro child [...] should know something of Antar, who was born a slave, who fought for his liberation, who loved so profoundly, passionately and chastely" (ALWH 91) and thus paved the way for the upliftment of his race.

Like McKay, Hughes shared a similar view on education. He too scorned the intelligentsia. They both lived among and wrote about the common workers of their own race. At the same time like McKay, Hughes took care of the education of the younger generation. An important aspect of Hughes's career was his writing for children. In 1932 he and Arna Bontemps
published their affecting children's tale *Popo and Fifina*. Hughes's *The First Book of Negroes* written in 1952 offered information about the life of African Americans to the young children. This effort of Hughes reflected his sincere love for the younger generation and his concern for their education.

When Hughes was talking about his experiences at Lincoln University, he had expressed his displeasure about the peculiar color line drawn between students of his race and the White faculty. He had heard from some students that white teachers were supposed to be superior to African American teachers. During his stay there he had to write a paper for his sociology class on some aspects of American life. He decided to do a study of the campus he lived in. His plan was to gather the facts on food, housing, social life, academic studies and the relation between the African American students and the White teacher. He puts forth his anguished feelings as:

[...] when I first went there [Lincoln] it had an all-white faculty teaching all-Negro student body. Other than the football coach, no Negro had ever, in all its seventy years held a professional position at Lincoln, a college for as its catalogue states the training of Negro leaders. There was an unwritten official color line that said No Negro could teach on that faculty. And no one of its alumni had ever been asked to join the Board of Trustees. How then could they be training Negro leaders? (BS 279)
Thus Hughes very boldly attacks the discriminating attitude of the dominating race. What he could not tolerate is the cunning way of the White people even in the field of education.

Unlike the other writers under study Wright has struggled a lot even to learn the very alphabet. Wright’s realisation about the importance of education had dawned in him at an early stage. He attained his literacy by going through many ordeals. His learning was a self-taught one. He knew very well that only by educating himself he could fight against the brutal environment. He has expressed the similar notion of love for books in his *Twelve Million Black Voices* as: “We (black) love books inordinately even though we do not know how to read them for we know that books are the gateway to a forbidden world”(64-65). He attacked the Whites who, “cheat us in erecting schools for our (black) children. They tax black and white equally [...] then they divide the money for education unequally keeping most of it for their own schools [...]” (TMBV 65).

Wright’s quest for literacy has been stressed throughout his *Black Boy*. He firmly believes that literacy and freedom are entwined goals. He also expresses that to attain these goals one has to face dangers of different types. He intimates in his first volume of autobiography that the white men might have killed him had they known about his reading of Henry Louis Mencken (1880-1956) and Sinclair Lewis. Fortunately he has discovered the
sympathetic Irishman, one Mr. Falk, who secretly helped him by giving his library card. This opportunity paved the way for him to read Mencken.

On the basis of this familiarity with Mencken, he pursued his reading to many notable writers including Joseph Conrad (1857-1924), George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950) and Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906). About Mencken Wright comments:

[...] I pictured the man as a raging demon, slashing with his pen, consumed with hate, denouncing everything American, extolling everything European or German, laughing at the weaknesses of people mocking God authority. [...] this man was fighting with words. He was using words as a weapon, using them as one would use a club. Could word be weapons? (BB 217-218)

From this experience he had the urge to write down his feelings. There again he met with many hardships, as he did not even know the English language and grammar. As he had to learn by self-teaching he found grammar to be dull and hard. Yet with utmost determination he learned them. It was this reading and self-teaching that shaped him as a writer. He started writing stories and even commencement addresses. All these prompted him to follow the North Star and in a supreme act of self-assertion to free himself.
Through his personal experience Wright, has understood the real value of education and literacy. He believes that as one candle lights many unlighted ones, he too wants to extend his helping hand to widen the horizon of knowledge. He gives us the glimpses of *le misérables* who are corrupted, exploited and destroyed, among his backward brethren. The first half of his *American Hunger* is primarily devoted to a socio-psychological portrayal of his life and work among the downtrodden. He explains how ignorance and racial discrimination fuel prejudice and self-hatred. While working as an insurance sales-man he himself aids in the swindling of the poor African Americans. But his is the hard choice between honesty and starvation. However he strongly holds the idea that illiterates are the root causes for the pitiable plight of his community. He states, "I liked their courage, but I doubted their wisdom [...] the Negroes were lost, ignorant, sick in mind and body"(*AH* 37).

It is evident that the above mentioned writers of this diasporic and subalternate society felt unanimously the important role of education in the upliftment of their status from marginalisation. These writers by possessing the gift of language situate themselves to the domain familiar to the Diaspora. In other words, these authors as the minorities "[...] are always on display, writing a black renaissance and righting a western renaissance that was, in the words of Ralph Ellison’s preacher in *Invisible Man* "most black, black, most black"(qtd.in.Baker Jr. 56).
Through education the writers under study were able to read great books written by writers like Karl Marx and were attracted by his doctrines on equality and freedom. Thus due to the exposure to education there stemmed in the minds of these African Americans a fascination for Communism. Marx's emphasis on the concept of equality of men attracted them as they were undergoing the exploited condition under the White pressure. The ideals of Communism-- equality and revolution attracted them but at the same time they did not want to become the full-fledged communist members.

McKay supported the Communist cause mainly because of his concern for the problems of his race. In fact, he had cherished the hope that Communism would bring about a classless society someday and make human beings happy. But his experiences in British as well as American Communist circles made him aware of its incapacity to win over the black masses to their causes.

In the Fall of 1919 McKay visited Great Britain where he met Sylvia Pankhurst, a member of the newly emerging British Communist party. He worked on the editorial staff of Pankhurst's Communist weekly "Workers Dreadnaught". At the International Club, he came in contact with many European and British Left Wing speakers. During this period, McKay familiarised himself with the doctrines of Karl Marx (ALWH 66-69). Yet, he could feel the racial prejudice of the White Communist. Therefore his trip to
Soviet Russia, even as a celebrity could not draw him into the fold of the party. When he narrates his Russian experience, he portrays the narrow and self-centred attitude of Stelov, the editor in chief. According to him, "He [Steklov] was interested in Negroes being won over to the cause of communism because they were young and fresh people and ought to make splendid soldiers". McKay, who never expected these words from a Communist, remarks, "so many other whites had said the same thing - that Negro make good cannon fodder. When they were properly led by whites to the black slaughter" (ALWH 182). Thus McKay vehemently attacked the partial treatment of the White Communists. In fact, he demanded a fair treatment from the White.

These autobiographers refused to become members of the communist party because they felt that since the party was based on discipline they would have to accept political directive on how and what to write. McKay approved the fact that the Bolshevik had "put a step to the vicious political exploitation of group and race prejudice" (ALWH 193-94).

Hughes, in spite of his having remained a close associate of the Communists and a sympathiser of the party stuck to his convictions of remaining true to his art. In other words he " was never intoxicated on red wine as to lose his grasp on black reality" (Bone 264). There was no doubt that Hughes
was clearly in sympathy with the achievements of the Bolshevik Revolution. In his personal account he highly praised the Russian Revolution as:

> When the Russian Revolution broke out, our school almost held Celebration [...] when Lenin took power in Russia, something happened in the slumy of the Woodland avenue [...]. (BS 31-32)

He could not keep himself aloof from the social and political currents of his times. It is somewhat difficult to pinpoint exactly when he got involved in the movement. But it can be guessed that by the second half of 1920, he became an active fellow traveller. Yet there is no record of his ever being a regular party member. However, he was especially impressed by the speed with which the Communists had gone away with Jim Crow in public accommodation, about which he mentions:

> The old partitions that once separated natives from Europeans, colored from whites were still there when I arrived [...] I saw them. But now anyone sat anywhere in the Tashkent Trams. In ten short years, Jim Crow was gone on trams, trains or anywhere else in central Asia. Russians and Uzbeks, Ukrainians and Tartars, Europeans and natives, white or colored all went to the same schools, sat on the same benches, ate in the same co-operatives, worked in the same shops or factories and fussed and fumed at the same problems. Gains and defeats were shared alike. (IWAIW 172)
Yet in Hughes, the feelings of an artist dominated over the affiliation to the party.

As far as Johnson is concerned, he does approve of the ideologies like equality and freedom. He firmly believes "in the idea of making the race into a self-contained economic, social and cultural unit"(Smith 425). But he rejects the idea that Communism is the only solution to their problem. He questions:

Will the Negro turn to communism? [...] There are no indications that the United States will ever adopt communism. [...] I feel that the Negro should not hesitate at revolution that would bring in an era which fully included him in the general good, but despite the enticing gesture being made; I see absolutely no guarantees that communism, even if it could win would wishes in such an era. (ATW 411)

As a practical and reasonable man Johnson has his own doubts about the Communist principle. So he can not involve himself completely.

Unlike the above writers, Wright’s realisation about the failure of the Party came to him very late. In the beginning, his attraction towards Communism is undisputed, for he was an active member of the Party. As he was fascinated by the Marxist ideology he involved himself totally with the Party. In the words of M.C.Raina:
Wright's involvement with the communist party began with a membership in the Chicago John Reed Club of which he later became President. What attracted him to communism was not its economic program, nor its underground politics, but its universal appeal to the oppressed. In other words, communism enabled Wright to understand the oppression of the blacks and to seek a remedy for it in social change. (142)

In the second volume of his autobiography Wright dealt in detail with his experiences with the Communist Party. Like the slaves and freedmen who came to North earlier to him, seeking asylum to plant themselves in the new soil, Wright arrived in Chicago in 1927. But he had to work at an assortment of jobs. Being depressed by the indifferent attitude of the people at Chicago, he finally enlisted himself in the party. As the ideology of the party promised him hope and better future he embraced Communism as a final resort. He observes:

I [...] was impressed by the scope and seriousness of its activities. The club was demanding that the government create jobs for unemployed artists, it planned and organised art exhibitions, it raised funds for the publication of Left Front; and it sent scores of speakers to Trade Union meetings. The members were fervent, democratic, restless, eager, self-sacrificing. I was convinced, and my response was to set
myself to the task of making Negroes know what communists were. (AH 67)

But in course of time, Wright met with so many bitter experiences. He was upset to discover that instead of his using or serving the Party, the Party was using him. The Communist did not respect his individuality and this wounded him in his sorest spot. In short, he "wanted to be a communists but [his] kind of communist. [He] wanted to shape people's feelings, awaken their hearts"(AH 101). He has a stubborn wish to be a writer and tell the truth as he sees it and not as others prescribe it. Due to this attitude he could not capitulate to the Party's despotism.

Thus it is evident that the above writers were attracted towards Communist Ideologies, which they hoped would help for the upliftment of their race. The ideologies of postcolonialism are used against Imperialism and Euro centrism. Against the need for anti-colonial revolution the postcolonial theorists have stressed the need for an economic reform. As Marx has predicted a kind of economic reform and the importance of freedom the Communistic principles were adhered to by these writers. But at the same time they shunned the idea of becoming mere slaves by rejecting their individuality as artist. It is this self-respect, which prevented them from becoming the full-fledged members of the party. They all unanimously felt that "the materials of the artist is in the first place his own concrete experience, not
political theory, and that the latter while it may clarify and reflect, should not ever dictate the former”(Butterfield 128).

Like the ideologies of communism, the ideals of the French Revolution: Liberty, Equality and Fraternity drew these writers towards France. Just as the postcolonial writers who tried to bring the economic and social equality these authors also earnestly wished for the same. As the French ideals promised for that kind of equality they all leaned towards France.

During the anti bellum period the “myth of French culture and hospitality was popular only among the so called ‘Black Elite’. As the journals of African Americans had praised the French racial liberalism in an effective way, many of these affected people volunteered themselves to enlist in the army during the year 1917. Hailing from a strict military army, which never promoted fraternity among the soldiers, these marginalised people established relationships with the French people who treated them equally. This was the first experience of racial equality. They were treated well by the French supreme commander.

Due to this cordiality, African Americans introduced Jazz music in France during the year 1918 through the Jimmy Europe’s Orchestra. In return, African Americans enjoyed the fruits of tolerance and generosity shown to them by the French. Along with the American expatriates some of the African
American writers also visited France in the 1920s. They found career opportunities in the cabarets due to the introduction of Jazz and African American art in France. Artists like Josephine Bakers triumphed in France due to the popularity of Negro art and Jazz. The writers under study were no exception as they were drawn towards the French atmosphere intellectually and emotionally.

Johnson has a high regard for the French atmosphere, which has brought about a miracle within him. For the first time in his life he felt, "the sense of being a human being" (ATW 209). He experienced a strange kind of freedom in France. He was free from, "a sense of impending discomfort, insecurity, danger […] the Man-Negro dualism and the innumerable manoeuvres in thought and behaviour that it compels" (ATW 209).

In Hughes’s mind the image of France evoked the literary accomplishment and absence of racial prejudice. From his father, he came to know that “in Paris, they don’t care about color”(BS 62). He visited France only after his voyage, to Africa in 1923. During his second transatlantic voyage, he met a Frenchman who gave a bright picture of Paris. As Hughes talked to him about this wonderful city, he wanted to visit there as early as possible (BS 140).
During his stay in France, he encountered many bitter experiences and suffered without money. At times he was almost chased out by employers when he sought some work. Poverty threatened him wherever he went. But he explained that it was due to their anti-foreign attitude. He felt relieved that those employers, like the American White, did not shout “dirty nigger at him” (BS 155).

Further it was in France for the first time he met Alain Locke, the Urbane Professor of philosophy and the important personality of Harlem Renaissance. He became the root cause for bringing out Hughes’ inner resources and talents in a country where he enjoyed freedom. Along with him, Hughes contributed poems in “The Crisis” and “Opportunity” (BS, 184). Apart from the absence of racial prejudice he was attracted towards France, for it has renewed his literary talents. Thus in spite of his sufferings Hughes had some opportunities to develop his artistic talents.

Of all the writers under study, McKay remained in Paris for a long time. During this period he mixed with all sorts of people and derived inspiration from his French experience to write novels. In Banjo, Marseilles plays a background role. Though he denounced French racism, he felt that “the position of Negro citizens in France [was] worthy of envy” (McKay The Negro in America 49).
McKay in the fifth part of his autobiography describes his experience and relationship with American expatriates in Paris in an enthusiastic way. He wonders, "it was interesting in Paris to mix in among the cosmopolitan expatriates. The milieu was sympathetic" (ALWH 243). It was due to the absence of color-consciousness, that McKay chose to remain in France for a long time. There he was regarded not "as an inferior or an exotic" (ALWH 245).

Unlike Countee Cullen his contemporary, McKay never undertook a pilgrimage in search of his cultural roots in order to pay homage to the European tradition. Though he praised the age-old historical monuments he only, "appreciated [them], but was not specially enamoured of Paris" (ALWH 230). He felt that Americans like himself had much to gain from travelling abroad and experiencing a variety of cultures, but he felt by no means culturally inferior to the French.

The main reason for Wright's love for France was that he felt free there. He found serenity and harmony in France. He used to marvel at the Frenchmen's ideas about freedom. He felt that they did not argue for personal freedom because they just lived it. Through his friendship with Jean Paul Sartre (1905-1980) and Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986) he came to know the real significance of freedom. So "he was determined to go to France and it had been a dream since 1939 (Webb 243). The preoccupation of the Americans
with production and consumption, selling and buying has been denounced by him as “trash of life” (AH 14). He found it very difficult to “fit (himself) into a materialistic life” (AH 23). When he read Marcel Proust’s *A Remembrance of Things Past* he wanted to write in the same style. But he was filled with “hopelessness” for “I (he) wanted to write of the people in my environment with an equal thoroughness; and the burning example before my eyes made me feel that I never could” (AH 24). Hence he concluded in an unpublished Journal, “only if one lived in Paris, or in some out of the way spot where one could claim one’s own soul […]. All the more reason why I dream and dream of leaving my native land to escape the pressure of the superficial things I think I know” (qtd.in.Fabre *The World of Richard Wright* 145).

Besides freedom the French nationalism also attracted Wright very much. Like McKay and Hughes Wright felt that Frenchman considered the people of their country just as French and never judged them by means of racial discrimination. He expressed his wish in *I Choose to Live* as:

My feelings in such circumstances are ambiguous. Frenchmen tell the Muslims at the point of their submachine guns, “you are French”. We American Negroes might wish to be forced in a similar way to consider ourselves as Americans (qtd.in.Fabre *From Harlem to Paris* 185).
Fascinated by the French Ideologies these four autobiographers had a chance to spend some time in the free French environment. Moreover it is the desire for the universal humanism, which makes them form an affinity towards the French culture and hospitality. Due to all these factors, the authors under study considered France as a haven and they did not have any second opinion. Postcolonial writers insisted the ideas of freedom and equality in order to come away from the repression and discrimination of colonialism. Similarly by advocating freedom and equality, which are the underlying principles of French Revolution and Communism of Russia, these fighters of oppression presage some of the concepts of postcolonialism.

To sum up, these four autobiographers in voicing the common cause of the African American race unanimously have marched hand in hand towards one and the same goal. They shared similar attitudes on education, which they thought was the best means for their empowerment. In their quest for liberty, equality and fraternity they did not differ from each other. It was these ideals, which pushed them towards Russian Communism. They found a sort of solace in France where there was not much disparity of races. Above all, in their awareness of their peculiar “dual identity” and support for resistance they anticipated the postcolonial theory before it could emerge in the world. Thus, these writers though varied from each other in some aspect, had a common ground in sharing generally most of the common ideals.
To express these uniform factual details, they have adopted certain literary techniques. It is these aspects of fiction, which have turned these factual personal histories into works of art.

The ensuing chapter enumerates how these writers of autobiography have blended fact and fiction in their autobiographies.