

PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA
MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH
AMAR TELIDJI UNIVERSITY OF LAGHOUAT
FACULTY of HUMAN SCIENCES AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES
DEPARTEMENT of ENGLISH



The Quest for Identity in James Baldwin 's Go Tell it On the Mountain

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master, Literature and Language Teaching

Written by
Cotte Rima

Supervised by
Mr . A .Kourdourli

2015/2016

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my beloved parents who sustained me both materially and spiritually during this process and to my uncle Nouredine Cotte who showed me the care that I needed to perform my work. Also I am indebted to my teacher Mr. Kourdourli for his help, his guidance and advice.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my teacher Mr. Kourdourli. I also offer my thanks to those who have helped me in this study.

Abstract

Throughout many year, African -Americans have been struggling to define and construct their identity which was undermined by the white man. Not only does history confirm this struggle but also does literature. In this literature, African- American authors sought to reconstruct their identity as well as to reassure their culture which has become totally subjected to racism and prejudice. Afro -American authors in particular sought to restore the Afro-American experience which had been described as nothing but painful and tragic due the harsh institution of slavery imposed on them by white Americans. In this scope, James Baldwin emerged as one of the outstanding authors who made a significant contribution to American classics. His novel *Go Tell it on the Mountain* subtly probes into the black male experience and the black man's quest for his identity. The novel's two overarching themes are in fact the quest for identity and the search for love. In this novel, Baldwin creates the fictional character of John Grimes, a troubled young adult who becomes confused about adolescent male identity. His conflict with members of his family and how he feels about his step- father and the hypocrisy of the Christian church are major themes in this study. The novel further examines the influence of racism upon the characters in the story and how racism tears the structure of the Grimes family.

المخلص بالعربية

على مر السنين حاول الافارقة الامركيون التعرف على بنيتهم الشخصية التي كانت محل تشكيك الرجل الابيض لا فحسب التاريخ يؤكد هذا الشجار الشخصي بل حتى في الاداب تظهر هذه النزعة و في خضم هذه الاداب حاول الرجل الاسود في اميركا ان يبني احترامه الذاتي و تليسه الاداب الرجولية التي اصبحت هدفا للتمييز العنصري و محل تشكيك ولقد حاول الكتاب الامركيين الزنج ان يحيوا التجربة الامريكية الافريقية التي يفرضها الامريكي الابيض بمؤسسة العبودية

وفي هذا المضمار سطع جيمس بولدين كنموذج الذي اعطى الاداب الامريكية النقطة الفياضة في هذا النوع من الاداب الكلاسيكية خاصة في روايته اذهب و اصرخ بها على الجبال يحاول بلباقة ان يظهر التجربة الرجل الاسود في بحثه عن الهوية

ان جيمس بولدين في كتابه هذا ابتكر شخصية خيالية لجون غيرمز فتى مضطرب ذو العقلية المتشوشة حول زوج امه وكنيسته و يتطرق في الرواية ايضا الى موضوع التمييز العنصري الذي اثر على تكوين اسرة الغريمز ودور الكنيسة المسيحية كنوع من النفاق وكمبعث الالهام وتأثيرها على قرارات اسرة الغريمز

Table of Contents

Dedication.....	I
Acknowledgments	II
Abstract.....	III
Table of Contents	IV
General Introduction.....	1

Chapter 1: Identity in American Literature From Late 19th to Early 20th Century.

1. Identity and its Origins.....	6
2. Types of Identity.....	7
3. Identity in American Literature of the late 19 th and Early 20 th Centuries	9
4. Modernity and its Impact on American identity.....	8
5. The Harlem Renaissance and Afro-American Identity.....	12
6. The Quest for Identity in the Life of African-Americans.....	13
7. The Quest for Identity in African-American Literature.....	14

Chapter 2: The Quest for Identity in James Baldwin's *Go Tell it on the Mountain*: Theme and Character Analysis.

1. The Genre of Autobiography.....	17
2. The Quest For Identity in James Baldwin's <i>Go Tell it on the Mountain</i>	19
3. Analysis of the Major Characters in <i>Go Tell it on the Mountain</i>	21

Chapter 3: Family Conflict, Religion and Racism in *Go Tell it on the Mountain*.

1. The Relationship Between John and Gabriel Grimes.....22

2. The Representation of Family in *Go Tell it on the Mountain*.....25

3. The Role of Religion in *Go Tell it on The Mountain*.....26

4. Biblical Allusion in *Go Tell it on the Mountain*27

5. Racism and its Influence on the characters in *Go Tell it on the Mountain*.....29

General Conclusion..... 31

Bibliography.....33

AppendixA..... 34

Appendix B.....36

General Introduction

General Introduction:

Throughout many years, the quest for identity in American literature has remained one of the mostly- debated and controversial themes. As a consequence, one generation after another have attempted to answer questions such as Who am I? Why do I exist? And what is the importance of me? In other words, what is my identity?

The Puritans wanted God's kingdom on earth. The generation of independence wanted to reach out for a place of equality. The outbreak of the American Civil War of 1861 gave birth to a new class of African-Americans to whom the American ideals of liberty, equality and the pursuit of happiness did not apply.

The experience of African – Americans had been nothing but painful and tragic due to the different challenges that African-Americans have faced. African -American history stood as a witness for African-American's pain, suffering, survival and struggle.

Along the years, African – American writers have been preoccupied with defining and constructing their identity, particularly that of the male African-American. They have faced the problems of building up their self-esteem and asserting their cultural existence which was undermined by the white man. Both history and literature confirm this struggle. In literature, Ralph Ellison is said to be one of the most prominent authors who explored the notion of the individual's quest for his identity. He notes that for the African - American, 'the nature of our society is such that we are prevented from knowing who we are.' Moreover, he goes on to explain that the struggle for self-definition occurs on multiple levels. On the level of the individual, Ellison tells the story of a young man who confronts a larger world beyond the security of home and who attempts to define himself within the new conditions imposed on them by white Americans. In fact, it is through the misadventures of his naïve protagonist that Ellison stresses the individual's need to free him from the influence of society's stereotypes and demonstrates the level of deception that the individual will overcome so as to achieve self-awareness. On the communal level, Ellison explains that the struggle of the narrator as an Individual is indicative of the struggle of the United States to define or redefine itself. Meanwhile, Langston Hughes explains how a biracial person arrives at the orderly sense of his identity.

Langston Hughes (1930) illustrates the frustration of an African-American man living in a white world dominating social order and also examines the behaviour of white Americans

towards the black man, particularly a biracial person. In this scope, Langston Hughes gives the example of a character of a mixed blood whose emotions are of a black but whose cleverness is of a white man. Throughout the story, the author reveals the unwillingness of the character to accept any sort of white supremacy or social hierarchy and therefore, deliberately attempts to violate it. In one of the scenes where the character (Robert) is talking back to a white woman, the author explains that his character has become confused about his male identity. Thus, being half black and half white, he decides to act like his half white so as to show his masculine authority and at the same time claiming the right of a fair and equal treatment. In addition, Richard Wright explores the unending struggle of his protagonist to achieve his identity.

Identity and the need for self -definition emerges as one of Richard's overarching themes in his novel *Native Son*. Richard Wright (1940) examines the struggle of Bigger Thomas, an unsettled figure longing for a sense of belonging in an America that degrades black people. However, in his novel *Native Son*, the attempts of the protagonist (Bigger Thomas) to find a better expression of his identity are constrained by several factors inherent in the cultural, economic and political fabric of the American system. One of the obstacles that litter his path to self-definition is the fear most black people have of doing anything in American society. Given America's history of slavery and racism, a fatalist fear seems ingrained in Bigger Thomas from childhood as he becomes obsessed with the fear of possible arrest and fear of stigmatization, which demobilise him. According to Richard Wright, the black person in America is denied the power of choice and is consequently driven to an obvious destiny. He further explains that the issue of race, racism materializes in *Native Son* as it shaped the notion of the black's intellectual inferiority. Besides racism, the issue of power, ownership and deprivation also contribute to hindering one's search for self- definition and identity. For example, Bigger Thomas feels brutally alienated from a system that has already branded him as worthless without power. As such he was he was confused about his own identity.

The concept of identity is broad and illusive. It has been tackled from various angles and within various disciplines such as psychology, sociology and anthropology. Yet it remains one of the most intriguing questions in American writings particularly in the work of James Baldwin. In fact, what distinguishes Baldwin from his contemporaries such as Ralph Ellison is his remarkable ability to reveal the interior being of his protagonist, to demonstrate his sufferings, his pain and the struggle which he undergoes so as to achieve an orderly sense

of identity. More specifically, in *Go Tell it on the Mountain* Baldwin explores the private interior of his protagonist (John Grimes) his bitter feelings, his confusion about his male identity and ultimately his inability to define or identify himself. Moreover, what makes Baldwin's ten years of production novel such a unique work is his ability to show that the struggle of his protagonist to achieve his identity is not confined within the borders of American racist society but rather within his own family.

The significance of the quest for identity lies within its importance of reviving the memory of the past and to recreate a certain pride in their African heritage. A heritage that has been subjected to racism, pain and prejudice. In *Go Tell it on the Mountain* John's quest for identity goes beyond the African heritage. It is the quest of a confused male adolescent about his feelings, his Gender, his faith and his social environment.

My research aims primarily to see the protagonist (John Grimes) arriving at his self-fulfillment it also aims to probe into his feelings, his thinking, his anticipations and goals, in addition to his relation with his step-father and how he reacts to his surroundings. This research also examines the role of the black Christian church be it as a source of hypocrisy or as a moral virtue. And how it influences the life of characters in the novel. Some of the research questions are: Does John Grimes or does he not arrive at the conception of his own identity? Does he embrace or reject his destiny? In what way does John Grimes's personality is different from other members of his family? How does the role of the Christian church influence the life of the characters in general and John in particular? More specifically, *Go Tell it on the Mountain* stands on the possibility of John Grimes the protagonist arriving at his self-recognition.

My dissertation which is conducted through an analytical and thematic approach is divided into three chapters. Chapter one will outline the necessary theoretical background of information related to the topic in hand, including the origins of the word *identity*, its different types and how identity is expressed in American writings. Chapter two will discuss the genre of autobiography, the quest for identity in the work of James Baldwin and conduct an analysis of the major characters in *Go Tell it on the Mountain*. Chapter three will examine the relationships of the major characters in the novel and the role of religion in their lives, how family is presented in the novel, and how racism impacts the life of the characters in the novel.

Chapter One

Identity in American Literature From
Late 19th Century to Early 20th Century

Throughout the history of American literature, the quest for identity has remained one of the mostly debated themes as different generations of Americans attempted to answer questions such as: Who am I? And to be an American, what does it mean to be an American? Particularly in the modern era when identity has emerged as an inescapable issue for the American individual. Hence, the quest of African-Americans for their identity emerged as one of the interesting topics for discussion.

The quest of the African- Americans for their identity, in particular, has been a varied and rather an intriguing question, and this for a number of reasons. Among these reasons are the very fact of Afro-American history which is the witness of a process of marginalisation, pain, suffering and prejudice. Thus, identity has become an important issue for both black and white American writers.

In chapter one I shall gradually cover the following points: first, identity as far as its ethnic, and religious identities. After that, I shall delve into the theme of identity in American literature in general and in African - American literature in particular during the period of the 19th and 20th centuries.

1. Identity and its Origins:

In psychology, sociology, anthropology, and philosophy, identity is the conception, qualities, beliefs, and expression that make a person (self-identity) or a group such as (national identity or cultural identity) different from others. The etymology of the word identity means sameness, oneness, state of being the same. The word derives from middle French *identité* (14th century), from Medieval Latin *identitatem* (sameness), ultimately from Latin *idem* (the same). The earlier form of the word in English was *idemite* (1560s) from Medieval Latin *idemitas*. The etymology of the word *identity* shows that the meaning of identity revolves around sameness. The latter is central to the definition of identity .The individual considers himself or herself as a member of a community on the basis of similarities that exist between him or her and the group to which he or she belongs .These similarities may be in terms of birth traits such as ethnicity or race or mentally acquired traits such as ideologies and religion. In this scope, different types of identity exist.

2. Types of Identity:

Many types of identity exist in order to reflect the many ways in which people are associated or connected with other groups and these types can be social, ethnic, religious, and racial.

2.1. Social Identity

The term *social identity* refers specifically to those aspects of a person that are defined in terms of their group membership. Even though most people are members of many different groups, only a small category of these groups is meaningful in terms of how we define ourselves. Therefore, in these cases our self-definition is shared with other people who claim that categorical membership, for instance, as a *Woman*, as a *Muslim* or as a *Democrat*. To share social identity with others does not mean that we know or interact with each member of the designated category. It does mean, however, that we believe that we basically share numerous similar features with other members of the category. And to some extent, the events that are relevant to the group as a whole also have major significance for the individual member. For example, a person who identifies herself as a feminist is more likely to be aware of the legislation regulating abortion, more likely to have read books by Betty Friedman¹ and more likely to be conscious of the salary discrepancies between a man and woman than is a person who does not identify as a feminist. Moreover, social identity highlights many other different forms.

Many forms of social identity exist in order to reflect the many ways in which people are connected with other groups. In this scope, Five distinct types of social identity exist: First, ethnic and religious identity like Asian-American. Second, political identity by which we mean Democratic or Republican. Third, vocational and a-vocational identity describing people such as artists or psychologists. Fourth, personal identity which points to family relationships such as a mother, parent or a brother. Each of these social identifications has some unique characteristics which make it somehow distinct from another type. In the sphere of personal relationships, relationship identity has in particular some special features: to be a mother, for example, may simply implies a sense of shared experience with other women who are typically mothers. And at the exact time the word *mother* implies a specific role-

¹ Betty Friedman (Feb 4, 1921 – Feb 4, 2006) was an American writer, activist, a feminist and a leading figure in the women's movement in the U.S Her book *the Feminine Mystique* is often credited with sparking the second wave of American feminism.

relationship with another person: A relationship that is grounded on the individual's own experience with other persons. While this social identity is defined on an individual level, other forms of social identity are defined on a communal level.

Other types of social identity are defined not in relation to the individual but rather to the generic group: for example, to identify a doctor requires a shared definition with countless others whom we know nothing of. A further defining element of occupational identity is that it is picked up from what is called *achieved statuses* as opposed to other forms of social identity such as gender and ethnicity which are ascribed to one at his or her birth. The term *gender* identifies a man or a woman. In fact, this term is frequently mentioned when people are asked to describe themselves and also it is one of the mostly-used category by people to describe us. Hence, the development of gender identity has been a crucial topic for psychology since gender has become an essential category to the extent that many implications have been associated with gender. For example, personal traits illustrate the state of being aware of the feelings of others and role behaviour illustrates the state of taking care of children or assuming leadership roles. Furthermore, other aspects of social identity represent a unique way of identifying oneself.

The term *national identity* can be closely-linked to ethnic identity but often represented a distinct way of identifying oneself. In Finland, for example, being ethnically Finnish and being a citizen of Finland are two overlapping bases of identification. By contrast, in America, one can have an identity as an American and at the same time holds an identity as an African-American or Asian-American. Thus, like major types of identity, national identity is flexible and subjectively defined. Hence, other types of social identity are ethnic and racial.

2.2. Racial and Ethnic Identities:

The construct of race and ethnicity in the United States is complex and difficult to define since researchers were not consistent in their meaning, which makes these concepts difficult and rather challenging to grasp. The concept of *racial identity* in particular has been misunderstood and contested, some of its meaning being derived from its biological dimension while some is derived from its social dimension. As a biological category, race is derived from the individual's physical features. In fact, this categorisation of individuals led

many Europeans to hierarchically group people on the basis of their physical abilities and moral qualities with Caucasian as the pinnacle followed by Asian and Native Americans and African last on the racial ladder. Today however, literary and theoretical manifestations of racial identity are discussed not in biological terms but through social construction which refers to a sense of group or collective identity based on the individual's perception and that s/he shares a common heritage with a particular racial group while racial identity is put in the frame where individuals categorise others often on the basis of what we look like. Ethnic identity is put in a frame where individuals identify with others they had a common bond with.

The term *ethnic identity* is also considered as a social construct and is viewed as an individual identification with 'a segment of a larger society whose members are thought by themselves or others to have a common origin and to share a segment of culture and who, in addition participate in shared activities in which the common origin and culture are a significant ingredient.'² Ethnic identity is mostly found in an environment where the individual identifies consciously and unconsciously with those s/he had a common bond with because of similar traditions, values and beliefs. These points of connection allow the individuals to make sense of the world around them and to find pride in who they are. An example of this would be the religious criterion that has become an essential element in defining ethnic identity.

2.3 Religious Identity:

The term *religious identity* refers to a religious self- interpretation as recognised by supportive audience. Thus, we speak of a person's religious identity or a religious community identity because the recognition and appropriation of the religious concern. Certain beliefs and practices are deemed significant to the extent that one labels oneself as a religious individual or as a community. This identification may be total, but generally identity is partial contingent, temporary, relative or vague. The notion of recognition and apparition reflects a dynamic process in which religious data in the form of text rituals, values, events, and norms are evaluated and related to the concern of everyday life in which they are believed or practised as significant of self- referral. Moreover, identity has become a major concern in American writings of the 19th and 20th centuries.

² John Milton Yinger, *Counter Culture and Social Changes* 1976. p. 200.

3. Identity in American Literature of Late 19th and Early 20th Centuries:

Identity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries describes two major periods: the first period characterises modernity and its impact on American identity and the second period covers the era of the Harlem Renaissance and the emergence of Afro-American identity.

3.1. Modernity and its Impact on American Identity:

In the few decades that followed the American Civil War³, America had conspicuously developed. Many new tools were introduced into American society such as the railway, the telephone and electricity. Cities were getting bigger, towns were getting smaller. The impact of such a change did not stop at the material level but rather extended to reach out for peoples' thoughts and view of life. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries marked the beginning of modernity⁴. The latter altered the traditional concept of identity because of the work opportunities offered by the accelerating rate of industrialisation. Women, African -Americans and even children were employed. Both African-Americans and women began to call for the rights that shaped their identity as they started to question what once had been a *taboo* or the *unquestionable*.

In this sphere, a difference appeared between the concepts of *modernity* and *modernisation* while modernisation referred to the process of social changes that followed the technological changes of the 18th and 19th centuries, modernity was introduced as the individual and collective experience of modernisation. Moreover, modernity was described as the issue that arise when these changes were experienced. People started to divert from norms and took completely new directions as they sought the truth more through scientific and experimental methods rather than through superstition. The conflict between science, myth and religion was one of the solid pillars of modernity.

³ The American Civil War was a civil war fought from 1861 to 1865 between the northern US states usually known as the union and confederate states of America the war was fought over the issue of slavery and state rights.

⁴ Modernity (n) is the quality or state of being modern.

Religion, myth and superstition were regarded as peoples' main source of meaning when faced with questions that are beyond the reach of their knowledge. Countee Cullen⁵ states, 'in order to explain complexities and to banish contradiction thus, making the world look simpler and more comfortable to inhabit.'⁶ In other words, the world would be a better place to live in provided that the world's complexities are made simpler. The comfort he speaks of is of a spiritual nature. In the pre-modern age, religion, myth and superstition were all unquestioned and undoubted. Therefore, many individuals had somewhat stable identities, a stability that resulted from the solidity of their faith. However, when modernity shook these bases, the modern individual launched an unending quest for other alternatives. Thus, with the advent of modernity, religion and myth became no longer a source of meaning since researchers distinguished between *mythos*⁷ and *logos*⁸ as a source of meaning that helped individuals make sense of the world around them. While the former is based on myth and superstition, the latter is based on logical reasoning whereby the individual uses his or her mind to figure out the truth. Moreover, the advent of modernity also had its influence on American society.

American society has become without a doubt a classless society yet with an accelerating rate of modernisation. The gap between the poor and the wealthy widened. Industrialisation resulted in the creation of consumer societies in which the individual relied on the industrialised goods. This consumerism did not only affect the outward manifestation of society but rather added a new dimension in defining identity. Instead of answering *Who am I*. Identity extended to answer *What do I have?* Moreover, the spread of media, means of transport and means of communication had greatly influenced peoples' identity and the way they view themselves as they were introduced to a new culture, language, and religion. The scientific explanation of the natural events had ultimately reduced everything to cause and effect. People no longer view nature in the same way as did their ancestors, leading them to question about their identity. Thus, the quest for identity emerged as a controversial theme in American writings.

⁵ Countee Cullen (May 30, 1903 .January 9, 1946) born as Countee Porter, was an African-American poet, author and a scholar who was a leading figure in the Harlem Renaissance.

⁶ A Magister thesis on the quest for identity in Francis Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and Ralph Ellison s' *Invisible Man* submitted in 2013in the University of Oran.

⁷ Mythos is the underlying system of beliefs, especially those dealing with supernatural forces, characteristics of a particular cultural group.

⁸ Logos (n) in philosophy is the rational principal that governs and develops the universe .In Theology, the divine word or reason incarnate in Jesus Christ.

The question of identity in American literature has remained one of the most controversial themes. Throughout the history of American literature, the theme of identity seems to be the focal point over which all other themes revolve. In the modern era, identity has become even more important than before due the different challenges that the traditional bases of America faced. Twentieth- century American literature has buried many of these deficiencies to form a stable identity because of the difficulties or the impossibility of putting them into practice. The second decade of the twentieth century marked a crucial period in the history of American identity with the continuous waves of immigrants that continued to settle in America.

Receiving about one million immigrants a year between 1905 and 1914, many Americans began to worry about the continuous waves of immigrants that continued to settle in America. As a result, the American government passed the Immigration Restriction Act in 1921 and in 1924 respectively .These acts were passed in the hope of protecting the Anglo-Saxon element in the American population against further encroachment by other groups. Moreover, the period was marked with remarkable changes in terms of racial and gender identities. In this sphere, the second decade of the 20th century marked a radical shift in racial and gender identities.

The second decade of the twentieth century also marked the various attempts by American intellectuals such as John Dewy⁹ to unify American society and try to flatten the differences that existed among the different groups. Most Americans followed the so-called ideology of pluralism¹⁰ that attempts to strike balance between the individual's right to be different and to contribute in mass society yet, reaching a common ground between the two concepts created somewhat a paradoxical situation; in other words, Americans found themselves between the ideal of freedom, equality and the hardship of applying them into reality. Furthermore, the First World War(1914 – 1918) also influenced the American social structure, as women became actively involved in the war and showed the ability of performing jobs that were once restricted to men. Thus, gender identities came closely to be defined as the degree to which people see themselves as masculine or feminine. In society, these roles were part of the individual's identity. The term *gender identity* was later proved

⁹ John Dewy (October 20, 1859 – June 1, 1952) in New York was a famous American philosopher, psychologist and educational reformer he was the founder of functional psychology and one of the earliest developers of philosophy of pragmatism.

¹⁰ Pluralism is a situation in which people of different social classes, religion and races are together in a society but continue to have their different traditions and interests.

by modern psychologists to be socially- constructed, not biologically- determined. Traditionally speaking, women in America were confined to domestic work but in the 1920's gender role went through remarkable changes as white women were granted the right to vote, to hold positions and jobs that were once confined to men. Thus, women began to feel more financially- independent and free from men. Whitefield states 'The woman of the 1920s' was more independent than her mother's generation. Less reliant on men and less willing to follow social rules, she rejected domesticity and demanded the same right as man.'(2007) ¹¹

Women continuously tried to break the shackles imposed on them by society. This feeling of independence was not only defined in terms of holding positions outside home but also led to more independence and freedom. The period was also characterised by the appearance of the so-called *flappers* ¹². These women revolted against traditional social norms through adopting new life styles that include new haircuts or new clothing to an extent that it became very difficult to distinguish between a man and a woman. This merger in role and gender identities has been one of the most debated subjects in modern literature. To Europe Moreover, the period that followed the 1920's witnessed the immigration of a number of American writers who participated in the First World War (1914- 1918). The experience of those had an impact on their lives and works as well. Those writers were referred to as the *lost generation* ¹³ due to their loss of faith in the traditional ways of life and innocence that characterised the preceding generations. Having lost faith in their past, these writers found themselves in an endless journey in search for an explanation for their detachment from their native tradition which became their first change. Furthermore, the second decade of the twentieth century also marked the emergence of a unique culture as young Americans adopted a new way of life and revolted against the already - established culture and tradition. The family became no more a primary source of moral values and the sense of their identity was looked for among their peers. Meanwhile, a new African -American identity was reborn.

¹¹ A Magister thesis on the quest for identity in Francis Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* submitted in 2013 in the University of Oran.

¹² Flappers: the term flappers describes a woman who flamboyantly flouted their contempt for what was back then deemed as societal behaviour that was conventional .Flappers were women characterized by their choice of bobbed hair, short skirts, and their enjoyment of Jazz music.

¹³ The Lost Generation writers are the generation of men and women who came of age during or immediately following the First World War and become viewed as a result of their war experience and the social upheavals of the time as cynical, disillusioned and without cultural or emotional stability.

3.2. The Harlem Renaissance and Afro-American Identity:

In the first decade of the twentieth century African- Americans were leaving the south in great numbers towards Northern cities. This migration reached its peak in the 1920s' when African-American intellectuals were gathered in Harlem¹⁴. They played an important role in propagating ideas that were very important in shaping personal, national and communal identity. Thus, Harlem became the cradle for African-American literary and cultural achievement. The main aim of the Harlem Renaissance was to construct a new African - American identity apart from the one that had been imposed before main- stream culture. Booker. T .Washington¹⁵ was among the earliest scholars who laid out the basis for what is called the Harlem Renaissance. He believed in the existence of racial differences but still the possibility of unity by saying that the blacks and whites were separated as fingers and united as the fist. He also believed that the blacks were also Americans despite all the racial differences. By contrast ,W. E .B Du Bois¹⁶ stated that Washington's position fostered the inferiority of the African-Americans in the War as an indicator of their true American national identity by saying that they fought gladly to the last drop of their blood. Du Bois also believed that every single African -American had become torn between being an African and American at the same time and that he did not take his identity for granted.

The Harlem Renaissance also had influenced African -American poets like Langston Hughes. He restored African -American popular culture in order to arrive at an authentic art. Hughes focused on the question of identity in a poem entitled *I too American* which helped evoke the spirit of the black Americans engaged in a conflict centring around the problem of identity.

4. The Quest for Identity in the Life of African-Americans:

The painful and tragic experience of African -Americans in the United States of America led them to struggle for and establish an identity of their own. A survey of the history of the African people in different geographical spaces such as Africa, the American

¹⁴ Harlem is a large neighbourhood in the northern section of the New York City Borough of Manhattan since the 1920's .Harlem has been known as a major African-American residential, cultural and business centre.

¹⁵ Booker. T .Washington (1856- 1915) was the most famous Black man in America between 1895 and 1915 he was also considered the most influential black of the late 19th and early 20th centuries .

¹⁶ William Edward Burghardt Du Bois (Feb 23, 1868. August 27, 1963) was an American civil war activist, leader pan-Africanist, sociologist, educator, historian, writer, editor, and scholar he became a naturalized citizen of Ghana in 1963 at the age of 95.

South or the industrialised North presented a picture where identity has been the foremost casualty in the history of migration, embittered by a conflict with the majority voice engaged in a struggle for survival against unexpected suffering. The tragedy was that the African - American began to look for the thing that he himself was not responsible for: his black colour, his race, his ancestors and his physique. Thus it was under such condition that an unending quest for identity began.

African- Americans were first brought to America as slaves and then hurled into a strange and hostile environment where they felt the slow but painful process of a new place. As a result, they could neither call themselves Americans nor Africans. In this process, the *Negro*¹⁷ did not only lose his culture but also his very personal name. He was given a Christian name or was given a name of his master. In this process, the *Negro* lost the very personal indicator of identity. Additionally, he also lost the sense of his religion, a sense that helped him to survive under hard conditions.

In the process of importing black people to the New World, many African-Americans lost their primitive religion which helped them to survive together now was taken away from them and were given a new religion, i.e., Christianity. Some blacks were convinced that all men were equal in the eyes of God but shortly afterwards were disillusioned. Their captivity under Christendom blasted their lives and destroyed the very image that had guided their hearts and minds to get them through. Moreover, in this process each white man created an all- powerful atmosphere of passion in which black slaves become a tool for exploitation. The blacks were also denied the right of education. The blacks however desired to learn, to be able to use language as a tool of emancipation. In the narrative of the life of Fredrick Douglass¹⁸, *An American Slave*, he states, ‘the means of knowing myself was withheld with me.’¹⁹. As for many blacks even Sunday school was a mere mockery of education to the slaves who desire to learn, to be able to use language and articulate grievances had been and still is an important feature of the African-American quest for identity.

¹⁷ The Negro means black in both Spanish and Portuguese languages, being derived from Latin word *Niger* of the same meaning the term *Negro* literary Spanish and Portuguese to refer to black Africans and people with that heritage used ‘black’ from 18th century to the mid-20th century.

¹⁸ Fredrik Douglass (Feb 1818 – Feb 1895) was born in Talbot County, on Maryland’s Eastern Shore. He was an African American social reformer, abolitionist, orator, a writer and statesman.

¹⁹ Fredrik Douglass, *An American Slave*, Boston, 1845. p.4.

5. The Quest for Identity in African- American literature:

A shared sense of history played a pivotal role in the way values and visions were transmitted from one generation to the next. History has become part of society's attempt to structure self- image and to communicate a common identity. Thus, Africans-Americans were unable to assimilate or integrate with the whites. They began harking back to their past which once gave meaning to their actions, urging African - American writers to begin a quest for their identity.

African -American fiction used history as the backdrop for African-American writers. Male writers in particular portrayed the African-American protagonist engaged in a quest for identity throughout the actions of withdrawal from and involvement in society and the female character as a dimensional figure remained with the black male psyche and many times even branded their women with negative images. Moreover, even though the writing of Afro-American women runs parallel to the writing of Afro-American men, women had their particular views of gender. Female writers saw in most cases that the slave narrative of the male has failed to give the fair picture of a complete woman and while the life of a black male went through a series of changes, the negative image of black women continued to appear in contemporary writing. Thus, women had not fought in terms of class and race but also to change the negative image in their lives as well as in their literature.

To sum up, the experience of African -Americans to whom the American ideals of liberty and equality did not apply had been nothing but painful and tragic due to the different challenges that African-Americans had to endure. Thus, in the process of defining who they really were, African-American history emerged as a witness for African-American suffering, pain, survival and struggle to erase many of the social segregation imposed on them by white Americans. Moreover, the quest of African-Americans for their identity has been varied and controversial, especially the quest of the Afro-American novelist James Baldwin in his semi -autobiography *Go Tell it on the Mountain* which is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter Two

The Quest for Identity in Baldwin's *Go
Tell it on the Mountain*

James Baldwin's rich intellectual journey illustrates the direction of Black American thought and culture in the second half of the 20th century. His novel *Go Tell it on the Mountain* had a stunning impact on American life and opened up new ways to understand contemporary social problems. He presents the fierce and polemical black American life and exposes the innumerable overtones and undertones of interracial relations. A fundamental idea in Baldwin's vision has always been that of a black man as the victim of history as he expresses the wishes, the thoughts and the experience of thousands of blacks, their sorrow and strain, their despair and aspiration, and eventually their hatred.

Baldwin has been the outspoken activist in the struggle for social, economic, and political justice for the black minority in American society and is indeed a mediator between the whites and the blacks, by explaining and translating the black man's experience into American terms and by establishing his own struggle for identity with that of the American individual, Baldwin has repeatedly insisted on the parallel between the Negro in search of selfhood and the American intent of distilling a national identity.

In this chapter I shall cover the following points: First, the genre of autobiography. Second, the quest for identity in James Baldwin's *Go tell it on the Mountain*. Third, I shall carry out an analysis of the major characters from James Baldwin's *Go tell it on the Mountain*.

1. The Genre of Autobiography:

Difficult to define, autobiography in the broader sense of the word is used almost synonymously with *life writing* and denotes all modes of telling one's own life. More specifically, autobiography as a literary genre signifies a retrospective narrative that undertakes to tell the author's own life, or substantial part of it, seeking to reconstruct his or her personal development within a given historical, social and cultural framework. While autobiography on the one hand claims to be non-fictional in that it proposes to tell the story of a *real* person, it is inevitably constructive, or imaginative, in nature and as a form of textual *self-fashioning*. It ultimately resists a clear distinction from its fictional relatives (auto-fiction, autobiographical novel), leaving the generic borderlines blurred. Thus, one must wait the 1800's for autobiography to emerge.

Autobiography emerged as a literary genre around 1800 and has evolved into a genre of non-fictional, yet *constructed* auto-diegetic narration wherein a self-reflective subject

enquires into his or her identity and its development trajectory. The autobiography looks back to tell the story of his or her life from the beginning to the present, tracing the story of its own making- in Nietzsche's²⁰ words *How One Became What One Is*. As it tends to focus on the autobiographical subject as a singular individual, autobiography in the modern sense is thus marked by secularisation and temporisation of experience such as the autobiography of saints like *The Confession of Saint Augustine*²¹ contrary to pre-modern spiritual autobiography which is best illustrated by *The Confession of Jean Jacques Rousseau* in the 19th century which constructs its subject as exemplum i.e. as a little story to be learnt from. Hence, modern autobiography introduced a brand new mode of narration.

The narrative mode of modern autobiography as a literary genre is firmly linked to the notion of the individual which evolves to some extent by the show of the moment of self-recognition towards the narrative present: only at the end of one's story can it be unfurled from the beginning as a singular life course, staging the auto- biographer as subject. The secular self -accounts for itself as an autonomous agent in charge of itself. This is the narrative logic of autobiography in its *classical shape*. The task of autobiography was to represent a unique individual, as claimed by Rousseau²² 'I am not like any of those I have; I venture to believe that I am not like any of those who are in existence.'²³ Autobiography thus, focuses on the life of a singular individual within its specific historical context. Additionally, an autobiography will have some unique characteristics.

Autobiography in its *classical* shape is characterised by auto- diegetic, i.e. 1st- person subsequent narration told from the point of view of the present. The comprehensive and continuous retrospection, based on memory makes up its governing structural and semantic principal. Oscillating between the struggle for truthfulness and creativity between oblivion, concealment, hypocrisy, self- deception and self-consciousness, fictionalising autobiography renders a story of personality formation. Although 1st - person narrative continues to be the dominant form in autobiography, there are examples of autobiographical writing told in the

²⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) was a German philosopher of the late 19th century who challenged the foundation of Christianity and morality he believed in life, creativity, power and realities of the world we live in, rather than those situated in a world beyond.

²¹ The Confession of Saint Augustine is the name of autobiographical work consisting of 13 books written between AD 379 and 400 by Saint Augustine of Hippo the work outlines Saint Augustine's youth and his conversion to Christianity.

²² Jean – Jacques – Rousseau (1712 – 1778) was a Genevan philosopher, writer and composer of the 18th century romanticism of French expression and was one of the most influential thinkers during the enlightenment in 18th century Europe.

²³ Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Confession of Jean Jacques Rousseau* New York : L.G Croker, 1782.

third person, for example (Stein 1933; Woolf 1976) in verse (Wordsworth 1799, 1805, 1850). However, with its *grand narrative*²⁴ of identity, the classical first person form of autobiography has continued to provide the generic model around which autobiographical forms of writing and new conceptions of autobiographical selves have taken shape. At the heart of this narrative logic lies the duality of the autobiographical person, divided into *narrating I* and *narrated I*, making the distance between the experiencing and the narrating subject. Whereas the *narrated I* features as the protagonist, *the narrating I* i.e. the 1st- person narrator, ultimately personifies the agent of focalisation²⁵. The overall position from which the story is rendered, although the autobiographical narrator may temporally step back to adopt an earlier perspective. A pseudo- static present point of narration as the ultimate end of autobiographical writing is thus implied, rendering the trajectory of autobiographical narrative circular.

Next to narrative and identity, the role of memory in autobiographical self-construction has been addressed in particular, adopting cognitivist and psychoanalytic angles as well as elaborating the neurobiological foundations of autobiographical memory. From the perspective of *natural* narratology,²⁶ the experiential aspect of autobiography, its dimension of reconstructing experience, have been emphasised. With memory taken as a constitutive faculty. The nature of autobiographical subjects has also been revised in terms of psychoanalytic and psychological categories. Classical autobiography has turned out to be a limited historical phenomenon whose foundations and principles have been increasingly challenged and subverted with respect to poetic practice, poetic logical reflection and genre theory alike. Even within less radical theoretical frame, chronological linearity, coherence and closure as mandatory generic markers have been disqualified; autobiography generic scope now includes such forms as the diary, journal as *serial autobiography*, the literary *self-portrait* as more heterogeneous and complex literary type. While autobiography has thus gained in formal and thematic diversity, autobiographical identity appears a transitory phenomenon at best. In its most radical deconstruction twist, autobiography is reconceptualised as a rhetorical figure that ultimately produces the illusion of references.

²⁴ Grand narrative or master narrative is a term coined by Jean – Francois Lyotard which means a theory that tries to give a totalizing, comprehensive account to various historical events, experiences, and social, cultural phenomenon based upon the appeal to universal truth or universal values.

²⁵ Focalisation is a term coined by Genette (1972) and defined as the selection or restriction of narrative information in relation to the experience and knowledge of the narrator, the character or others, more hypothetical entities in the story world.

²⁶ Narratology is a humanities discipline dedicated to the study of the logic, principles, and practices of narrative representation.

Meanwhile, James Baldwin used the genre of autobiography to reveal his life experiences, his suffering and the pain that he had to endure.

. 2. The Quest for Identity in James Baldwin's *Go tell it on the Mountain* :

The theme of identity is the most pervasive one in the work of James Baldwin and involves the major issues of race, nationality, art and morality. The search for self-identity is one of Baldwin's central themes. In fact, the quest for identity is a serious problem in America and the failure to undergo the experience is indicative of a fatal weakness which destroys a person. The quest for identity always involves the discovery and rejection of illusion and delusion about oneself. Almost all of Baldwin's protagonists from John in *Go Tell it on the Mountain* to Fonny in *If Beale Street Could Talk* are involved in an agonising quest for identity. They always seem groping from an immense loneliness, carrying on an unarticulated search. They struggle to define and maintain their black identity within America's alienating and entangling cultural landscape of racism and discrimination. Hence, Baldwin's quest for the self has largely become dependent on the individual's identification with his group or his community.

The genuine sense of self and identity depended largely on self-knowledge and self-awareness that come only through suffering. The characters' colour inflicts suffering on them, suffering that can be uplifting and humanising. But this self-discovery is never an entirely private battle. It is also the result of private anguish. In Baldwin's view, there can be no self-perception apart from interpersonal relationship. In order to define oneself, a person has to be willing to reveal his interior being to someone to share his agonies and experience. Identity can be achieved only in a spiritual communion with others. It is dependent on identification of the individual self with group self. With group experience and tradition, community plays a crucial role in Baldwin's novels. Often, his character quest for identity reveals his need for communal identification. Baldwin suggests that one can achieve a genuine and liberated sense of self only through complete acceptance of one's self and through a genuine relationship with one's community. Hence, the novel examines the conflict of the protagonist so as to achieve his identity.

Go Tell it on the Mountain is essentially an exorcism²⁷, purgation²⁸, a necessary constriction which leads to the unlimited expanse of identity. The novel stands as an honest, intensive self-analysis functioning simultaneously to illuminate self, society and mankind as a whole. It is a story of a black, about blacks, set in predominantly black environment. It is an authentic and convincing presentation of a wide range of experience from days of slavery in the South to the Harlem of Baldwin's youth. The major conflict of the novel is the universal problem of youth achieving maturity. John Grimes's search for himself is seen as cutting the psychological cord. The central action of the novel is John's initiation into manhood - a ritual symbolisation of the psychological step from dependence to a sense of self.

The novel is seen as Baldwin's obsessive preoccupation with his private world of oppression and rejection and the story reflects his own life as a black young man chained to a world of discipline and tradition. John Grimes wishes to escape the dogmatically religious boundaries of his father's house. Using the fictional character John as a surrogate, Baldwin prospectively probes into his own frustration and the shortcoming of his family and the struggle for identity. The novel presents three generations of a black family whose life extends from slavery to the present day. It also investigates the black's possibility of achieving identity. Moreover, Baldwin analyses the spiritual dilemma of black Americans. From the quest for his identity, John Grimes escapes into the ostensible safety of religious ecstasy²⁹. As he lies before the altar, a series of visions passed through his soul: images of darkness and chaos, silence and emptiness. These images of damnation express the state of the soul when thrust into outer darkness by rejecting, punishing, castrating his father figure who is a surrogate of a white society. His dominant emotions were fear, shame, despair and guilt. Thus, John's fate will be complex as the sound of the music he hears throughout the novel. Hence, Baldwin explains the harsh circumstances in which John (the protagonist) discovers his own identity.

The matchless, unimpeachable authority that John hears in the novel is the sound of souls of black folks. It is the sound of black art and black religion, for it flows from the frustrated and disappointed hearts. This is the sound of the blues. John attempts to achieve

²⁷ Exorcism is the religious or spiritual practice of purportedly evicting demons or other spiritual entities from a person or an era they are believed to have possessed

²⁸ Purgation is the act of cleansing or exonerating one's self of a crime, accusation, or suspicion of guilt by denying the charge on oath, or by ordeal.

²⁹ Religious ecstasy is the type of altered state of consciousness characterized by greatly reduced external awareness and expanded interior mental and spiritual awareness frequently accompanied by vision and emotional sometimes physical euphoria. Euphoria means the state of spiritual and physical well-being.

with extreme uneasiness his individual existence however, he finds it rather difficult to escape this dark and complex fate which ultimately frustrates his individual will. In fact, in these harsh realities John discovers his identity. He is the lowest among the lowly. He struggles to flee away from this darkness, out of his black community, but eventually ‘moaned and stumbled, and crawled through darkness, finding no hard, no voice, finding no door.’³⁰ He shares the complex and ambivalent fate of black Americans. In addition, the quest for identity is revealed through the novel’s central characters.

3. Analysis of Major Characters in James Baldwin’s *Go Tell it on the Mountain*:

Within this scope, two opposing yet crucial characters are analysed: the character of John Grimes (the novel’s protagonist) and the character of his step -father, Gabriel Grimes (the novel’s antagonist).

3.1. The Character of John Grimes:

John Grimes is the protagonist of the novel. The book opens on his 14th birthday. John is an ambivalent young man, confused about his feeling for his church, his father, and what his father represents. He experiences the world and has an epiphany³¹ at the end of the novel when he is considered saved after having a vision. John is a representative of a young adult, trying to discover who he really is and how he feels about the world. Additionally, John is an artist troubled by his religious heritage. He has an inchoate artistic sensibility and yearns to experience the bliss of the commonplace, though his power of perception and intelligence distinguishes him among his peers. The conflict of young Grimes is presented through a series of scenes occurring on his fourteenth birthday, John wakes up with a sense of guilt for he has committed a sin which had posed a dilemma. He has already been utterly confused about his adolescent homosexual longings. In one of the scenes, John stands up on a Hill in New York’s central park and feels ‘like a giant who might crumble this city with anger like a tyrant who might crush this city with his heel and like a long awaited conqueror at whose feet flowers would be strew, and before whom multitude cried , Hosanna.’³² By doing so, John expresses his hatred for the rewards to be inherited from his preacher step- father and tries to escape the

³⁰ James Baldwin, *Go Tell it on the Mountain* New York: Alfred .A Knopf, 1953.p 195.

³¹ Epiphany is a moment in which you suddenly see or understand something in a new or very clear way.

³² James Baldwin, *Go Tell it on the Mountain* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953. p31.

miseries inherent in the life of black Harlem which is controlled by white power. Meanwhile, the character of Gabriel Grimes is described as being both dominant and offensive.

3. 2.The Character of Gabriel Grimes:

Gabriel Grimes is the antagonist of the novel. Gabriel was born into a religious household, but lived an unhealthy life style, till he was saved at the age of 21. John fears Gabriel but also wants to earn his respect. Throughout the novel, John's brother Roy, who is the legitimate son of Gabriel is treated better by Gabriel, as he feels that Roy is the second chance to raise a son properly in the eyes of God. Gabriel is significant mainly because the role he plays in John's view. His existence can only be described as lustful and selfish as he becomes involved in affairs that always have the purpose of satisfying his own egotistical desires. Such desires are fulfilled once he marries Deborah and fancies himself to be her divinely appointed saviour, sent to 'raise her up, to release her from that dishonour which was hers in the eyes of man.'³³ Moreover, throughout the novel Gabriel fails to establish a genuine relationship with his two sons. He is incapable of doing these things because love has never become a reality in his life. Therefore, to Gabriel, John's conversion is a bitter irony 'only the son of the bond woman stood where the rightful heir should stand.'³⁴ His behaviour towards John resembles the white man's relation to the blacks in a racist society. Moreover, Baldwin used this two conflicting characters to portray the conflict that black Americans underwent to arrive at an orderly sense of identity.

All in all, Baldwin's vision has been substantially shaped by his private anguish as the mistreated step-son, his vision in fact is the product of his own struggle to define the chaos of his experience in order to achieve an orderly sense of self. In the depth of despair, he has forged his own identity, and through his novel *Go Tell it on the Mountain*, Baldwin portrays the black American in search for eternal, elusive identity. Thus, the relationship and the conflict between the two characters, the representation of the family in James Baldwin's *Go Tell it on the Mountain* the role of religion in James Baldwin's *Go Tell it on the Mountain* and the treatment of racism in James Baldwin's *Go Tell it on the Mountain* are the subjects of the next chapter .

³³ James Baldwin, *Go Tell it on the Mountain* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953. p109.

³⁴ James Baldwin, *Go Tell it on the Mountain* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953. p 128.

Chapter Three

Family conflict, Religion and Racism in
Go Tell it on the Mountain

James Baldwin's *Go Tell it on the Mountain* is a multifaceted novel that tells many different stories and reflects many different themes. On the simplest level, it is a story of a young boy coming of age. The boy's story gains complexity as it becomes interwoven with the story of his step- father. The novel is also a story of religion, racism, familial expectations perceptions and how these forces impact people's struggling to survive.

Go Tell it on the Mountain is in fact a powerful presentation of John's dilemma, a young boy rendered impotent, except in his dreams by the pervasive of the triadic threat to his existence, i. e. God, Gabriel and the white man. His terror, his fear, and hatred of God are analogous to his fear and hatred of white society. John hates and fears his earthly father, Gabriel, with the same intensity with which he hates and fears God and society.

In this chapter, I shall discuss the following points: First, I shall examine the nature of the relationship that both John and Gabriel have. Second, I shall analyse how family is presented in the novel. Third, I shall highlight how religion is treated in the novel. Forth, I shall discuss how racism impacts the life of the characters in the novel. Finally, I shall explain how the characters of the novel are constantly alluded to in the Bible.

1. The Relationship Between John and Gabriel Grimes:

The relationship between the step- father and the son is central to the plot. The hatred that they both feel for each other is as complete as is their lack of understanding of each other. Throughout the novel, the secret of John's illegitimacy is never revealed to him and the novel may be read as criticising such acts of suppression and repression in the name of the so -called decency. On a simpler level, their antagonistic relationship voices a criticism of secrets, lies and loveless upbringing. The reasons for Gabriel's mistreatment of John are suggested as the novel proceeds the ostensible reason is that he is not his biological father. Additionally, It is also hinted, however, that another factor for this abuse could be that of his first- born son Royal who was murdered and Gabriel becomes jealous of John's existence.

The conflict between Gabriel and John is also used figuratively, particularly in the third part of the novel to represent the battle between good and evil. As John lies on *the threshing floor* and looks up to God, his disconnected thoughts keep coming back to the way Gabriel dominates his life. It is as though Gabriel symbolised the obstacles to John's awakening, particularly in part one of the novel where it is stressed that Gabriel's association with God, as he is a preacher, entails that John's loyalty to his family has become divided.

Parallels may be made with Florence's similar distaste for religion because of Gabriel's calling. Gabriel comes to represent both the danger of hypocrisy and the obstruction to gaining happiness in the afterlife.

Throughout the novel both Gabriel and John are depicted as representing an ancient uneasy relationship between father and son, and this is made explicit in the reference to Noah and Ham in the third part of the novel. In fact, this generational conflict has been expressed by countless authors across the centuries and has become one of the central themes of Freud's understanding of the oedipal complex³⁵. For the son to mature and individuate, the father becomes an enemy to conquer – John's spiritual awakening is the sign that announces his maturity and his separation from Gabriel. Meanwhile, the Grimes family played a crucial role in John's life.

2. The Representation of Family in James Baldwin's *Go Tell it on the Mountain* :

In *Go Tell it on the Mountain*, the structure and myth of unified family is undermined. Throughout the novel, John's relationship with Gabriel is based on a lie, he believes that Gabriel is his biological father. As well as criticising the patriarchal dominance of Gabriel this work is also a Bildungsroman that traces John's development; his thoughts, perspectives and actions are pivotal to the content of the first and third parts of the novel and he is an adolescent who feels detached from his family and his step – father.

According to John's perspective, this family is barely held together. The Grimes family is fragmented and the name alone is a signal that this is a degraded unit. It symbolises the poverty each member endures. Their low position in society, John's feelings of unhappiness and isolation are epitomised in his belief that his mother has forgotten his birthday as this has happened before. His desire to escape the bond of his family and community is evident when he runs up his favourite hill in central park. His ambition is to have material wealth to be respected and admired. This dream is soon questioned by John. However, once he remembers the racism of his society which he has read about and which Gabriel has informed him, it is at this point that John's hatred for Gabriel allows him to

³⁵ The Oedipal complex is a term used by Sigmund Freud in his theory of psychosexual development to describe a boy's feeling and desire for his mother and jealousy and anger towards his father essentially, the boy feels as he is in competition with his father for possession of his mother. He views father as a rival for her attention and affection.

remain naïve about the prejudices he is bound to encounter in American society. Not only did the family play a significant role in the life of the protagonist, but also did his religion.

3. The Role of Religion in James Baldwin's *Go tell it on the Mountain*:

In *Go Tell it on the Mountain*, the Old and New Testament are constantly alluded to: the framework, chapters, headings and the title depended on the Bible. Many of the characters' names are also biblical such as Gabriel, John, Deborah. Moreover, the plot, based on two days, draws heavily on John's spiritual awakening and Gabriel's religious hypocrisy. Next, the store-front church the family attends is Pentecostal³⁶ in faith and depends on the belief of spiritual awakening and necessary day-to-day battle with temptations and the search in the afterlife. The fear of God's wrath clouds the actions of Elizabeth and John in particular. Gabriel uses this fear as a weapon to criticise Elizabeth's past sins, although he is not as troubled about his own choices in life.

As well as offering structure to the novel, religious concerns dominate the content as John mulls over the expectations that he will follow Gabriel's calling and be a preacher. John's distaste for the thoughts of pursuing the same role epitomises the conflict between the two. The conflict has infected John's relationship with his faith, as religion and hate for the father have become if not synonymous then twisted together. Adherence to God is often juxtaposed with John's determination not to bow to Gabriel. John's faith in God and his hatred for his step-father have become inseparable till he is saved. Despite the fact that John will become a preacher, his belief in God barely wavers his fear and his distaste for sin demonstrates his piety as well as highlights his difference from Roy and Gabriel. When younger, John's faith is also a means to exemplify the extent to which he lives in fear of God and Gabriel. Meanwhile, racism plays a pivotal role in the life of the Grimes family.

³⁶ Pentecostal is a Christian festival commemorating the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles.

4. Biblical Allusion in *Go Tell it on the Mountain*:

In *Go Tell it on the Mountain*, Baldwin attempts to recreate the black fundamentalist, Pentecostal congregational worship that he grew up with. Almost each character in the novel has a biblical counterpart, but a few characters stand out above the rest. For example, Gabriel and Deborah take their parallel from Abraham and Sarah of the Old Testament and their search for a seed. John and his brother Roy are compared to Jacob and Esau where Roy is Esau and John is Jacob.

In the opening scenes of the book Gabriel Grimes is married to Elizabeth, mother of John. Gabriel has received what he believed to be a prophetic promise from God in dream. In this dream Gabriel was told that he would have a seed, or royal heir. Gabriel is compared to Biblical patriarch Abraham, who was married to Sarah. Both were in their 80s when God told Abraham that he would have a heir, or promised seed. Because of their old age it was biologically impossible for them to fulfil this prophecy themselves just as Gabriel and Deborah were unable to fulfil Gabriel's dream. In order for Abraham to have his heir, Sarah suggests that he should make relation with his maidservant Hagar. Gabriel does not have a maidservant with whom to have a child, of course, but he does have an affair with a woman named Esther. Although this affair was shortly lived, it did however produce a child named Royal. At this point Royal would be Ishmael and be his promised seed. But neither Royal nor Ishmael would turn out to be this seed since God has promised Abraham a seed that was to be provided legitimately through his wife Sarah. Genesis 21: 2,3 says ' And Sarah became pregnant and then bore a son to Abraham in his old age at the appointed time of which God has spoken to him. Accordingly Abraham called the name of his son who had been born to him, Isaac.' Moreover, at Genesis 21:12, God tells Abraham that be the true heir or seed, not Ishmael. In order to fulfil this Ishmael had to be dismissed from family.

Similarly, Gabriel's son with Esther Royal was killed in a fight. He no longer had a seed. Since Gabriel and Deborah did not live during the Bible times, there was no miracle for them to have children. His heir was provided by his second wife, Elizabeth (the mother of John). Although John was his eldest living son, he was not his biological son, Roy was even though Roy was much more rebellious and therefore less likely to serve as a royal spiritual heir, Gabriel rejected the idea that John could fulfil this prophetic dream. He continues to believe that Roy will change and that his behaviour is just temporary.

John and Roy are half-brothers, sharing Elizabeth as their mother. The events of the novel drew similarity between John and Roy to Jacob and Esau of the Bible. Jacob and Esau were twin brothers and the grand sons of Abraham and Sarah. Although they were twins, Esau came first, and therefore he is considered to have the first born rights especially in Bible times, the first born was the favoured child, receiving special treatment, and often the largest inheritance. For most, being the first born was a coveted position, Roy was Gabriel's oldest living son, so he would receive the first born birth rights, which, in this case was to fulfil Gabriel's prophetic dream and provide a royal seed.

Roy was not religiously inclined, nor particularly interested in following his father's footsteps. He was like Esau who ignored his rights as the first born in fact he was willing to sell his rights for a bowl of soup. Although John and Roy did not exchange soup, John, in effect earned his right as first born and heir to Gabriel over Roy when he was saved. John has reached a higher level of spiritual enlightenment through the dramatic events of the *Threshing floor*. Roy has not yet achieved this, and therefore could not serve as a spiritual heir. If he had not accepted God and was forgiven for his sins. John was eager to serve this role because he wanted to match his father and earn the same sort of respect and admiration that Gabriel received.

John is compared to Jacob because of the wrestling that he and Elisha had in front of the alter. The Bible describes at Genesis 32: 24 that when Jacob was alone, suddenly an angle appeared and began 'to grapple with him until the dawn ascended. Similarly, John and Elisha playfully wrestle while trying to complete their cleaning chores at the church. Elisha was one of the saints of the congregation and had already been saved. John had extreme respect and awe for Elisha. To him, he was angelic and perfect in his thoughts and actions. So when John wrestled with Elisha it was like Jacob wrestling with angelic spirit. While the angel that wrestled with Jacob did not speak much with him, Elisha did give spiritual advice to John more often.

5. Racism and its Influence on the Characters in *Go Tell it on the Mountain*:

Baldwin's *Go Tell it on the Mountain* draws heavily on the history of the United States. It offers an insight into the effects of slavery and the migration of African – Americans from the South to the cities in the North. With the older generations such as Florence, Gabriel

and Elizabeth, their unhappiness and alienation from the wider white- dominated society is translated into bitterness and destructive behaviour. John's battle with Gabriel is indicative of an antagonistic father- son relationship and it is also representative of the decisive influence of racism as Gabriel's impotency outside of the home is avenged on his family.

By using John as the central protagonist, a perspective of the third generation of African -Americans who never lived in the South is given. He cannot understand nor appreciate why Gabriel is so entrenched in his hatred of the whites. John accepts praise from whites and African – American school- teachers whereas Gabriel has no trust in white people. Gabriel's and Richard's separate positions are contrasted with John's desires for integration. John is aged 14 and it is possible to see his views as being offered as a naïve voice. It is also worth remembering, however, that John's perspective underpins the novel as his views are returned to intermittently. In this light, his voice is favoured. This is especially apparent when he is compared with Gabriel.

All in all, Baldwin's fictional works show heightened and painful awareness of the problem inherent in the quest for personal and artistic identity. The crises in his life most often communicated in his writing as artistic, religious and sexual have given rise to a single minded dedication in search of discovery of the self. Baldwin, in his works, demonstrates the burden of being black in an American cultural environment. His novels evoke the reader to the distinctiveness of black in American life and deal with the impact of conditions of urban life and society on black people.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion:

James Baldwin's autobiographical novel *Go Tell it on the Mountain* explores the private and obsessive preoccupation with the world of oppression, racism, prejudice and rejection that Baldwin himself faced. The story of the novel reflects his own life as a young man chained to a monotonous world of discipline and tradition. The novel tells of John Grimes, a young man who desired to escape the dogmatic religious boundaries of his preacher step-father. By using this fictional character, Baldwin probes into his own frustration or despair. Moreover, the struggle for identity has become a major issue of the novel. In this novel Baldwin investigates the possibility of black Americans achieving their identity from the harsh days of slavery to the present day and through the imposed discipline of Christianity. In particular, the novel is seen as a powerful presentation of young John's dilemma, a young man who was offered a world that he rejects and conducted a life that he hates and while he struggles to flee this life, he finds no door and finally shares the complex and dark fate of black American.

Baldwin's novel also explores the dual role of the Christian church in the lives of black Americans, as a source of hypocrisy and as a vehicle for inspiration and community. As a source of hypocrisy, the author demonstrates the deception, the eagerness, the pride, vanity and disloyalty of its members. In particular, the character of Gabriel Grimes, who is as far as his community is concerned, a respectful, strict and a faithful preacher who devotes his life for the service of God and his people but in reality Gabriel is a dishonest husband who betrays his wife and leads an adulterous life. To his offspring, he is the abusive, aggressive, and irresponsible father who mistreated his own family. As a source of inspiration, the black church plays a crucial role in the life of individuals. Many of them feel the church as a refuge where safety, peace, mercy and forgiveness could be found. The church provides a shelter to those who were subjected to racism and prejudice as it creates harmony among its members.

The novel more subtly examines a variety of subjects such as, racism, discrimination, subjection, prejudice, segregation that African-Americans have but to endure. The novel also examines alienation of the individuals, to show how the protagonist becomes alienated from the mainstream of society and culture. More specifically, the novel explores the possibility of the individual reaching his self-fulfilment. In fact, the mere examination of these subjects gave Baldwin the opportunity to emerge as the outstanding author who made a great contribution to American literature.

At this point of the research, I have come to the conclusion that John Grimes (the protagonist) is unable to conceive of his own identity. The quest of the protagonist for his identity is inhibited by his feelings of confusion about his race, his gender, his faith and his social environment. All these factors constitute an impediment to any human being in the quest for his identity. So, the question which is aroused? Who are the original inhabitants of Algeria are they the Arabs or the Berbers? In an attempt to answer this question a crises of identity rose between the two communities.

Bibliography

Bibliography

Primary Sources:

Baldwin, James. *Go Tell it on the Mountain* New York City, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1953.

Secondary Sources:

A Magister Thesis on The Quest for Identity in Francis Scott Fitzgerald's *Great Gatsby* and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* Submitted in 2013 in the University of Oran .

Chavez, Alicia Fedelina. 'Racial and Ethnic Identity' New direction for Adult and Continuing Development .1999.

Deaux, Kay 'Social Identity' Encyclopaedia of Women and Gender. 2001.

Das, Soma 'The Quest for Identity: A major Concern in the Life and Literature of African-Americans' The Echo vol. one. 2012: p 82 - 87.

Selma, Helga 'Autobiography' The Living Hand book of Narratology.

Vincent, Francis 'Religious Identity and National Heritage' Empirical and Theological Perspectives.

Webliography:

[http// w. w.w etymology on line . com / in dex ph p?](http://www.etymologyonline.com/index.php?)

[w.w.w novel guide.com / go tell it on the mountain/ essay question.](http://www.novelguide.com/go-tell-it-on-the-mountain/essay-question)

[w.w.w novel guide.com / go tell it on the mountain / character profiles.](http://www.novelguide.com/go-tell-it-on-the-mountain/character-profiles)

[http/Shodhganga inflibnet.ac.in.](http://Shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in)

Appendix A

Appendix A:

The Quest for Identity in James Baldwin's *Go Tell it on the Mountain*.

James Baldwin



The Harper Magazine

James Baldwin:

May 8th, 2005

James Baldwin was born on August 2, 1924, in Harlem. “[I]n those days,” he wrote in 1961, “that part of town was called The Hollow and now it’s called Junkie’s Hollow.” His mother, Emma Berdis Jones, had eight more children in the decade after his birth, and James became their de facto caretaker. “As they were born, I took them over with one hand and held a book with the other.” His stepfather, David Baldwin, the son of a slave, was a preacher from New Orleans who beat James, his mother, and his brothers, and had him circumcised at the age of five.

Baldwin joined Countee Cullen’s French class at Frederick Douglass Junior High School in 1936, at age twelve, and was later, with Richard Avedon, Cullen’s student in high school. Baldwin interviewed Cullen, an esteemed poet and [frequent Harper’s Magazine contributor](#), for the high school literary journal, *The Magpie*, of which he was literary editor. “Have you found that there is much prejudice against the Negro in the literary world?” Baldwin asked. “No,” Cullen replied, “in this field one gets pretty much what he deserves.”

For a short while, Baldwin was a child preacher; as a young man, he laid railroad track in New Jersey and toiled in a New York meatpacking plant. He was harassed for his homosexuality but came to accept it, and once roomed with Marlon Brando. His stepfather, David, was committed to a mental institution in 1943 and soon died of tuberculosis. “[A] few hours later, his last child was born,” James wrote in “Me and My House. . . .” which was published in the November 1955 issue of *Harper’s*. David was buried on James’s nineteenth birthday, the same day a riot erupted in Harlem. “As we drove him to the graveyard,” James wrote, “the spoils of injustice, anarchy, discontent, and hatred were all around us.”

In 1948, after writing an “unsalable” novel and a number of book reviews — “mostly, as it turned out, about the Negro problem, concerning which the color of my skin made me automatically an expert” — Baldwin left the country in order to “find out in what way the specialness of my experience could be made to connect me with other people instead of dividing me from them.” He departed for France on November 11, 1948.

His second novel, *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, came out five years later, in 1953. That October *Harper's* published "Stranger in the Village," its first essay by Baldwin. "From all available evidence," it began, "no black man had ever set foot in this tiny Swiss village before I came." "Me and My House . . .," his second essay for the magazine, is widely regarded as his finest; it became the title piece of his first essay collection, *Notes of a Native Son*. His next novel, *Giovanni's Room*, which Baldwin called "another declaration of independence," details an American expatriate's homosexual affair with an Italian man. "One thing that Jimmy's got that's good is that he's stubborn," his brother David later remarked. "When they said, *Giovanni's Room* will destroy your career, he said, 'I'm sorry — that'll have to happen.' "

Baldwin returned to the United States in 1957, the summer the Civil Rights Act was debated in Congress, and emerged as one of the foremost figures in what he called "the latest slave rebellion" — "or what American newspapers erroneously term the civil rights movement." He was on the cover of the May 17, 1963, issue of *Time*, under the caption, "Birmingham and Beyond: The Negro's Push for Equality." The following week, Baldwin partook of a disappointing conversation on civil rights, organized at Robert Kennedy's behest, with a group including Harry Belafonte, Lena Horne, and Rip Torn. Kennedy asserted during the discussion that, regardless of their differences, everyone in the room that day was blessed. "You don't know what the hell you're talking about," Baldwin retorted. "My life is not blessed. I live in hell." Appearing on a public-television program to discuss race later that evening, he concluded: "There are days — this is one of them — when you wonder what your role is in this country, and what your future is in it, how precisely you're going to reconcile yourself to your situation here, and how you're going to communicate to the vast, heedless, unthinking, cruel, white majority that you are here."

Baldwin was prevented from speaking at the 1964 March on Washington ("They wouldn't let him get up there because they know Baldwin is liable to say anything," Malcolm X said), and in the early 1970s, after the assassinations of his friends Medgar.

Evers, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King, Jr., he returned to France, where on December 1, 1987, in Saint-Paul-de-Vence, he died. He had authored six novels, seven essay collections, a short-story collection, two poetry collections, a photo book with Avedon, and a children's story. Five thousand people attended his funeral at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York. Odetta sang; Amiri Baraka, Toni Morrison, Maya Angelou, and French ambassador Emmanuel de Margerie spoke; and the ceremony closed with a recording of Baldwin singing "Precious Lord."

Appendix B

Appendix B:

The New York Review of Books

James Baldwin and the 'Man':

F.W. Dupee

FEBRUARY 1, 1963 ISSUE

The Fire Next Time

by James Baldwin

The Dial Press, \$3.50

As a writer of polemical essays on the Negro question James Baldwin has no equals. He probably has, in fact, no real competitors. The literary role he has taken on so deliberately and played with so agile an intelligence is one that no white writer could possibly imitate and that few Negroes, I imagine, would wish to embrace *in toto*. Baldwin impresses me as being the Negro *in extremis*, a virtuoso of ethnic suffering, defiance, and aspiration. His role is that of the man whose complexion constitutes his fate, and not only in a society poisoned by prejudice but, it sometimes seems, in general. For he appears to have received a heavy dose of existentialism; he is at least half-inclined to see the Negro question in the light of the Human Condition. So he wears his color as Hester Prynne did her scarlet letter, proudly. And like her he converts this thing, in itself so absurdly material, into a form of consciousness, a condition of spirit. Believing himself to have been branded as different from and inferior to the white majority, he will make a virtue of his situation. He will *be* different and in his own way be better.

His major essays—for example, those collected in *Notes of a Native Son*—show the extent to which he is able to be different and in his own way better. Most of them were written, as other such pieces generally are, for the magazines, some obviously on assignment. And their subjects—a book, a person, a locale, an encounter—are the inevitable subjects of magazine essays. But Baldwin's way with them is far from inevitable. To apply criticism "in depth" to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is, for him, to illuminate not only a book, an author, an age, but a whole strain in a country's culture. Similarly with those routine themes, the Paris expatriate and Life With Father, which he treats in "Equal In Paris" and the title piece of *Notes of a Native Son*, and which he wholly transfigures. Of course the transfiguring process in Baldwin's essays owes something to the fact that the point of view is a Negro's, an outsider's, just as the satire of American manners in *Lolita* and *Morte d'Urban* depends on their being written from the angle of, respectively, a foreign-born creep and a Catholic priest. But Baldwin's point of view in his essays is not merely that of the generic Negro. It is, as I have said, that of a highly stylized Negro, a role which he plays with an artful and zestful consistency and which he expresses in a language distinguished by clarity, brevity, and a certain formal elegance. He is in love, for example, with syntax, with sentences that mount through clearly articulated stages to a resounding and clarifying climax and then gracefully subside. For instance this one, from *The Fire Next Time*:

Girls, only slightly older than I was, who sang in the choir or taught Sunday school, the children of holy parents, underwent, before my eyes, their incredible metamorphosis, of which the most bewildering aspect was not their budding breasts or their rounding behinds but something deeper and more subtle, in their eyes, their heat, their odor, and the inflection of their voices.

Nobody else in democratic America writes sentences like this anymore. It suggests the ideal prose of an ideal literary community, some aristocratic France of one's dreams. This former Harlem boy has undergone his own incredible metamorphosis.

His latest book, *The Fire Next Time*, differs in important ways from his earlier work in the essay. Its subjects are less concrete, less clearly defined; to a considerable extent he has exchanged prophecy for criticism, exhortation for analysis, and the results for his mind and style are in part disturbing. *The Fire Next Time* gets its title from a slave song: "God gave Noah the rainbow sign,/No more water the fire next time." But this small book with the incendiary title consists of two independent essays, both in the form of letters. One is a brief affair entitled "My Dungeon Shook" and addressed to "My Nephew on the One Hundredth Anniversary of the Emancipation." The ominous promise of this title is fulfilled in the text. Between the hundred-year-old anniversary and the fifteen-year-old nephew the disparity is too great even for a writer of Baldwin's rhetorical powers. The essay reads like some specimen of "public speech" as practiced by MacLeish or Norman Corwin. It is not good Baldwin.

The other, much longer, much more significant essay appeared first in a pre-Christmas number of *The New Yorker*, where it made, understandably, a sensation. It is called "Down At the Cross; Letter From a Region of My Mind." The subtitle should be noted. Evidently the essay is to be taken as only a partial or provisional declaration on Baldwin's part, a single piece of his mind. Much of it, however, requires no such appeal for caution on the reader's part. Much of it is unexceptionably first-rate. For example, the reminiscences of the writer's boyhood, which form the lengthy introduction. Other of Baldwin's writings have made us familiar with certain aspects of his Harlem past. Here he concentrates on quite different things: the boy's increasing awareness of the abysmally narrow world of choice he inhabits as a Negro, his attempt to escape a criminal existence by undergoing a religious conversion and becoming at fifteen a revivalist preacher, his discovery that he must learn to "inspire fear" if he hopes to survive the fear inspired in him by "the man"—the white man.

In these pages we come close to understanding why he eventually assumed his rather specialized literary role. It seems to have grown naturally out of his experience of New York City. As distinct from a rural or small-town Negro boy, who is early and firmly taught his place, young Baldwin knew the treacherous fluidity and anonymity of the metropolis, where hidden taboos and unpredictable animosities lay in wait for him and a trip to the 42nd Street Library could be a grim adventure. All this part of the book is perfect; and when Baldwin finally gets to what is his ostensible subject, the Black Muslims or Nation of Islam movement, he is very good too. As good, that is, as possible considering that his relations with the movement seem to have been slight. He once shared a television program with Malcolm X, "the movement's second-in-command," and he paid a brief and inconclusive visit to the first-in-command, the Honorable Elijah Muhammad, and his entourage at the party's headquarters in Chicago. (Muhammad ranks as a prophet; to him the Black Muslim doctrines were "revealed by Allah Himself.") Baldwin reports the Chicago encounter in charming detail and with what looks like complete honesty. On his leaving the party's rather grand quarters, the leader insisted on providing him with a car and driver to protect him "from the white devils until he gets wherever it is he is going." Baldwin accepted, he tells us, adding wryly: "I was, in fact, going to have a drink with several white devils on the other side of town."

He offers some data on the Black Muslim movement, its aims and finances. But he did a minimum of homework here. Had he done more he might at least have provided a solid base for the speculative fireworks the book abounds in. To cope thoroughly with the fireworks in short space, or perhaps any space, seems impossible. Ideas shoot from the book's pages as the sparks fly upward, in bewildering quantity and at random. I don't mean that it is all dazzle.

On the cruel paradoxes of the Negro's life, the failures of Christianity, the relations of Negro and Jew, Baldwin is often superb. But a lot of damage is done to his argument by his indiscriminate raids on Freud, Lawrence, Sartre, Genet, and other psychologists, metaphysicians and melodramatics. Still more damage is done by his refusal to draw on anyone so humble as Martin Luther King and his fellow-practitioners of non-violent struggle.

For example: "White Americans do not believe in death, and this is why the darkness of my skin so intimidates them." But suppose one or two white Americans are *not* intimidated. Suppose someone coolly asks what it means to "believe in death." Again: "Do I really *want* to be integrated into a burning house?" Since you have no other, yes; and the better-disposed firemen will welcome your assistance. Again: "A vast amount of the energy that goes into what we call the Negro problem is produced by the white man's profound desire not to be judged by those who are not white." You exaggerate the white man's consciousness of the Negro. Again: "The real reason that non-violence is considered to be a virtue in Negroes...is that white men do not want their lives, their self-image, or their property threatened." Of course they don't, especially their lives. Moreover, this imputing of "real reasons" for the behavior of entire populations is self-defeating, to put it mildly. One last quotation, this time a regular apocalypse:

In order to survive as a human, moving, moral weight in the world, America and all the Western nations will be forced to reexamine themselves and release themselves from many things that are now taken to be sacred, and to discard nearly all the assumptions that have been used to justify their lives and their anguish and their crimes so long.

Since whole cultures have never been known to "discard nearly all their assumptions" and yet remain intact, this amounts to saying that any essential improvement in Negro-white relations, and thus in the quality of American life, is unlikely.

So much for the fireworks. What damage, as I called it, do they do to the writer and his cause—which is also the concern of plenty of others? When Baldwin replaces criticism with prophecy, he manifestly weakens his grasp of his role, his style, and his great theme itself. And to what end? Who is likely to be moved by such arguments, unless it is the more literate Black Muslims, whose program Baldwin specifically rejects as both vindictive and unworkable. And with the situation as it is in Mississippi and elsewhere—dangerous, that is, to the Negro struggle and the whole social order—is not a writer of Baldwin's standing obliged to submit his assertions to some kind of pragmatic test, some process whereby their truth or untruth will be gauged according to their social utility? He writes: "The Negroes of this country may never be able to rise to power, but they are very well placed indeed to precipitate chaos and ring down the curtain on the American dream." I should think that the anti-Negro extremists were even better placed than the Negroes to precipitate chaos, or at least to cause a lot of trouble; and it is unclear to me how *The Fire Next Time*, in its madder moments, can do nothing except inflame the former and confuse the latter. Assuming that a *book* can do anything to either.

