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Poetics and Politics of Subversion in Mildred Taylor's Roll of Thunder, Hear my Cry and Beverley Naidoo's *The Other Side of Truth*

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Abstract

The paper examines predominant subversive discourses employed in Mildred Taylor's Roll of Thunder, Hear my Cry (1976) and Beverley Naidoo's The Other Side of Truth (2000). This peculiar quality of the narrative is well accentuated in the foregrounding of marginalized people, especially children, as the central characters in the two novels .The stories in the two novels are told from the point of view of children. Seeing events in the two novels through the eyes of oppressed young children offers a fresh vision of the social and psychological reality for children as they struggle against the structures of different types of authority that dominate the social, political, and cultural world they live in. Characteristically, children in the two novels are presented as both victimized by the dominant power structure and as capable of interrogating and resisting that power structure. The subversive agency given to children in the two novels will be viewed as part of a wider context of disruption of traditional structures of power and authority in the time and place in which the action in each of the two novels is set. In The Other Side of Truth, the action is substantially set in England in the late 1990s. The main bulk of action in this novel revolves around the injustices, racial discrimination and oppression inflicted on two Nigerian young children (Sade and Femi) who are smuggled to England to escape punishment in their country on account of their father's radical political views. This state of affairs in The Other Side of Truth invites comparison with the moral plight of several children in Roll of Thunder. The action of this novel, which is set in America during the years 1933-41, deals mainly with the injustices a white, racist, and lawless society inflicts on African American family in rural Mississippi. The children's remarkable resistance as a means of counteracting practices of power figures as a pivotal issue in the two novels. The narrative's peculiar gravitation towards promoting subversive ideologies that undermine the prevailing power structures presented in the two novels reflects the two novelists' commitment to radical political agendas, agendas which give the two novels their ideological and political structures.

Keywords: Discourse, Subversive, Agency, Power, Politics, Ideology.

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Poetics and Politics of Subversion in Mildred D. Taylor's Roll of Thunder, Hear my Cry and Beverley Naidoo's *The Other Side of Truth*

In the Introduction of the book Children's Literature: Classical Texts and Contemporary Trends (2009), the editors, Heather Montgomery and Nicola J. Watson, write: "Children's literature has always been implicitly or explicitly ideological, presenting and promoting particular ideas about childhood and encouraging children to either uphold or challenge particular values" (p.7). Mildred D. Taylor's novel Roll of Thunder, Hear my Cry (1976) and Beverley Naidoo's The Other Side of Truth (2000) furnish two good examples in which promoting children's subversive agency figures as the backbone of the ideological structure which underlies the narrative in each of the two novels. The two novelists' characteristic commitment to enhance the empowerment of children is most noticeably reflected in their common foregrounding of children as the central characters, thus giving them the opportunity to defy and challenge the hegemony of mainstream orthodox socio-political structures which tend to marginalize children depriving them of the chance to express their own voice in classical Western children's literature. This, as the ensuing discussion will reveal, comes within the framework of the two novelists' overall ideological strategy to interrogate and disrupt firmly entrenched marginalization and subordination of children by structures of authority in classical Western children's literature. This prevailing orthodox trend is well enshrined in master narratives such as C.S. Lewis' The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (1984), one of the most outstanding modern children's books, the children in this novel are cast as heroes and heroines, they play the roles of kings and queens for many years in the fantastic kingdom of Narnia, yet towards the end of the novel they are forced to return to the real world where they became children again and have to submit to adult control. In Louisa May Alcott's classical children's novel Little Women (1868), another greatly renowned classical children's novel, the four female heroines demonstrate a remarkable resistance to established social mores and patterns of conduct enforced by patriarchal society, yet ultimately they are compelled to abide by the norms of patriarchal society, mainly what Ken Parille (2009) describes as "Ethic of Submission" (p. 31). To cite one more example, in Philip Pullman's Northern Lights (1995), children are forced to submit to adult authority deprived of any opportunity to shape their own destiny according to their natural bents and desires. In her article entitled "Missed Opportunities: The Subordination of Children in Philip Pullman's His Dark Materials, "Kristine Moruzi (2005) criticizes Pullman's essentially conservative view of the role of children: "Pullman's insistence on the subordination of children becomes problematic because he fails to understand the reality of life for his child audience and resists a genuine reconceptualization of contemporary society."(p. 67)

By contrast, Taylor and Naidoo commit themselves to creating an imaginative cultural space for their children to accommodate their characteristic inclination to defy and contest negative structures of authority. The narrative in each of the two novels, I would argue, represents new trends in writing children's literature as they are most revealingly expounded in Kimberly Reynold's (2009) following remarks:

Children's literature provides a curious and paradoxical cultural space: a space that is simultaneously highly regulated and overlooked, orthodox and radical, didactic and subversive. It is a space ostensibly for children – and certainly in the fictions created for them, children encounter ideas, images, and vocabularies that help them think and ask questions about the world- but children's literature has also provided a space in which writers, illustrators, printers, and publishers have piloted ideas, experimented with voices, formats and media, played with conventions and contested thinking about cultural norms (including those surrounding childhood) and how societies should be organized. (p. 100)

This quotation provides invaluable insights into the predominant subversive discourse at work in the two novels. In Taylor's novel the main challenges children face are social injustice, inequality and racial discrimination in racism-dominated American society in the 1930s, the period in which the action of the novel is set. Whereas The Other Side of Truth takes on the task of tracing the fortunes of two Nigerian children, Sade and Femi, who struggle against injustice, agonies of racism, displacement and British rigid rules of asylum as they arrive in Britain seeking safety and protection after the political assassination of their mother and the enforced disappearance of their journalist father, Mr Folarin Solaja, on account of his radical views in protest against the tyranny of the authoritarian regime in Nigeria in 1990s, the period in which the action of the novel unfolds.

Cassie is the first person narrator in Roll of Thunder, Hear my Cry. She is the only female child in the extended Logan family which consists of David Papa Logan, Mary Mama Logan, Caroline Big Ma Logan, Hammer Logan, and three male children: Stacey, Christopher John, and Clayton Chester "Little Man". Cassie is endowed with a highly-pitched nature and remarkably developed sense of right and wrong. Thus she serves as a very effective agent to heighten the reader's awareness of the enormity of injustice and atrocities inflicted on the members of the Logan family and their neighbors in a lawless, racism-dominated American South in the 1930's.
In The Other Side of Truth the story is seen from the viewpoint of Sade. Yet, unlike Cassie, Sade is not cast as a narrator; she is rather used as a focalizer whose active imagination and passionate nature provide the narrator with a very effective angle of vision from which major incidents are viewed. A fact which contributes to the reader's emotional engagement with the story of Sade and her ten-year old brother Femi, as is actually the case with Cassie.

In the two novels the novelists tend to identify themselves with their young heroines using them as mouthpieces for expressing their radical socio-political and ideological views from a fresh children's perspective, an act which does not only reinforce their common strategy to subvert alleged liberal humanist principles, advocation of human rights, justice, and equality in Western culture, but it also enhances the empowerment of children. It is on these grounds that Taylor in a general comment on the didactic function of the narrative in Roll of Thunder, Hear my Cry points out that the novel"will be one day instrumental in teaching children of all colors the tremendous influences Cassie's generation had in bringing about the Civil Rights movement of the fifties and sixties" (gradesaver.com). In light of these comments, given the two novelists' common ideological and political commitment, it might be argued that Cassie and Sade are meant

to be role models for children living in all types of oppressive circumstances globally. Although they suffer from all kinds of oppression and injustice by the structures of authority that dominate the social and political world they live in, mainly racial discrimination in America in Roll of Thunder, Hear my Cry and the values of British imperial culture in Naidoo's novel The Other Side of Truth, Cassie and Sade demonstrate characteristic inclination to interrogate and question cultural traditions and mores as they strongly struggle for self- realization and the formation of free liberated selfhoods . It is in these terms that the two novels can be placed in a long "tradition of pedagogical moral-political" literature for children, in the phraseology of Ann Hewings and Nicola J.Watson. Commenting on the educational effect in The Other Side of Truth, Ann Hewings and Nicola J.Watson (2009) establish ironic connections between the meaning effect in Naidoo's novel and children's literature written for white young readers to the end of shaping their imperial identity and, in the terminology of Raymond Williams (1980). "structuring of their feeling" (p. 34), in a colonial context:

For all her conscious topicality, Naidoo's willingness to tackle sensitive political issues and her political agenda places her as a writer within a long tradition of moral-political fiction produced for children. It is perhaps ironic that such fiction might will trace its roots back to the very different politics of Victorian and Education books meant to train boys for heroic imperial endeavors.(2009 331)

Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe (1719), Robert Louis Stevenson's Treasure Island (1868), and Rudyard Kipling's Kim (1901) provide good examples of the long tradition referred to in this quotation. According to S.P. Mohanty (1999), Baden-Powell's Scouting for Boys (1908) and Michael Rosentahal's The Character Factory belong also to the same tradition of the above mentioned books. In Scouting for Boys the author seeks to educate the British young men to be prepared to embrace the cause of the empire and be ready to rule. In The Character Factory emphasis is placed on the formation of imperial internal self as part of the British imperial pedagogic strategy (pp. 245-246).

Roll of Thunder, Hear my Cry and The Other Side of Truth, I would argue, belong to a kind of a parallel tradition in which boys and girls are subjected to a kind of sentimental education. If, in the phraseology of Edward Said (1993), the ultimate goal in the type of educational books already referred to is to construct the feelings of the "boys of the empire" (p.70), in the two novels under discussion the narrative gravitates toward helping central characters to play new roles in a different kind of future free of tyrannous hegemonic practices and racial discrimination. Interestingly, the future orientation associated with children's literature in the above defined sense is hinted at in an exchange between Mr Foralin Solaja (Sade and Femi's father) and his brother uncle Tunde in the first chapter of the novel where we read: "But today he [the father] was mute. His face was turned to the window that overlooked the front gate where the car had stopped. Their uncle slipped the newspaper back on to the desk. You can call your article " Our Children's Future. What do you imagine will happen now to your own Folarin?"(p.7)

An instructive analogy can be made between the pedagogic socio-political effect of the stories told in Roll of Thunder, Hear my Cry and The Other Side of Truth and the ultimate political goals in Palestinian children's literature as they are viewed by Karen E. Riley and Barbara Harlow

(2000). Commenting on the political and ideological dimensions at work in the writings of the Palestinian novelist Ghassan Kanafani, the two critics write:

In 1948, the state of Israel was founded, an event accompanied by the massive displacement of Palestinians from their homeland and the beginning of the years and then the decades of exile. Each of the stories here involves in some way a child, a child who, though victimized by the structures of authority that dominate the social and political world he lives in, nonetheless, by assuming new role participates personally in the struggle towards a new and different kind of future. (p. 14)

The hegemonic structure of authority, represented by the Jewish occupation, which Palestinian children are forced to face in Kanafani's children's writings, takes different forms in the two novels under consideration mainly bullying. In Taylor's and Naidoo's novels bullying, which can be viewed as a metaphor for power relations, in a Foucauldian sense, is extensively used as a means of shaping the two heroines' personalities and transformational outlook on life. Cassie and Sade exhibit a remarkable ability to cope with painful bullying. Cassie is taken to task at the hands of Lillian Jean, a ruthless white bully, yet she manages to fend for herself resisting Lillian Jean's constant attempts to undermine her dignity and strongly cherished passion for self-assertion.

In The Other Side of Truth, Chapter Twenty-One entitled "What kind of Name is that" (p. 108) is devoted to highlighting Sade's subjugation to bullying by her classmates (pp. 108-109).Under the pressure of bullying, Sade considers skipping school. But gaining strength from a flashback reminding her of her father's advice on bullying, Sade is able to hold her ground in front of her schoolmates' constant bullying: "But she could also imagine Papa saying: That might be true, Mama, but sometimes even children have to stand up to bullies. If they don't those bullies put on even bigger boots!" (Naidoo p.125). This is repeated in another invocation of her father's views on bullying in the same chapter: "We have to stand up to bullies! Expose them for what they are 'and 'If you allow bullies at stranglehold, they'll have you by the throat" (p. 133).

In terms of the mechanism of 'power relations' at work in the two novels, as it has been already pointed out, resistance to bullying features as an effective tool by which oppressed black children speak back to the dominant authoritarian power and hegemony of the whites in each of the two novels. In Roll of Thunder, Hear my Cry, the lives of almost all of the black characters in the novel are impacted by racist practices, notably Mama Logan who works as a school teacher. Mama Logan fights very hard against all forms of racial discrimination, mainly institutionalized racism at school as is well exemplified in the reservation of second hand books for black students. Mary's passionate concern for unveiling racist power structure brings her into trouble with the school's administration. She is considered by her colleagues, especially Miss Crocker, a" disrupting maverick" (p. 35). Eventually, she has lost her job paying a heavy price for her uncompromising position against institutionalized racism.

Racial tension throughout the novel generates retaliatory violence involving a large number of the black characters, mainly Cassie and her uncle Hammer Logan. The motif of violence tends to

frequently recur not only in Roll of Thunder, Hear my Cry but also in Taylor's other two novels Let the Circle be Unbroken (1981) and The Road to Memphis (1990) in which she continues to deal with the life story of the Logan family. Frantz Fanon's interpretation of violence as a tool of maintaining self-respect in a colonial context may explain Taylor's keen interest in the dramatization of the motif of violence in her fictional writings in a racist context. In his book The Wretched of the Earth (1963), Fanon writes: "at the level of individuals, violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his despair and inaction, it makes him fearless and restores his self-respect" (p. 94).Proclivity to violence in the novel is such that even the youngest member of the Logan family," Little Man" who is only seven years old, is involved in settling the scores with white school boys. This is expressed in "Little Man's participation in digging a ditch to stall the bus of the white school boys which deliberately splashes the black boys, including the young Logans on their way to school on daily basis. "Little Man's" sense of resentment generated by racial practices is exasperated by his discovery on the first day of school the common racial practice of reserving second hand soiled books for black students. In one sense, "Little Man'' reminds us of Little Father Time in Thomas Hardy's novel Jude the Obscure (1896). Just as Jude represents Hardy's grim view of things generated by social injustice, so "Little Man" seems to embody Taylor's forceful criticism leveled at the enormity of injustices of racial discrimination to the extent that a seven-year old boy takes to heart such harsh practices. In the terminology of Bakhtin (1975, p.56), Little Father Time and "Little Man'' somehow represent the exaggerated character type (that is given the former's deep rooted sadness and the latter's powerful exasperation with racism in spite of their young age) used as vehicles to express their creators' strongly held views on the injustices of social structures albeit in different contexts. For Hardy, marriage institution is the main source of social agonies, whereas for Taylor, as I have been arguing, racism is the cause root of social injustice.

The subversive agency given to children in Taylor's and Naidoo's novels is conceived as part of a wider context of disruption and transformation of entrenched race-based structures of power and authority in white Western societies. Again here, Kimberley Reynold's (2000) conceptual views on the socio-political transformational energy associated with children's literature illustrates the vital importance that this particular type of literature acquires as a leverage tool for effecting socio-political change in historical periods of transition:

Childhood is certainly a time for learning to negotiate and find a place in society, but it is also about developing individual potential suited to a future in which societies could be different in some significant ways- for instance, the organization of families, the distribution of resources, or the circulation of power. It is not accidental that at decisive moments in social history children have been at the center of ideological activity or that writing for children has been put into the service of those who are trying to disseminate new world views, value, and social models. (p. 100)

A classical example of the empowerment of children as a strategic tool to effect socio-political transformation in a fictional context can be found in romantic poetry in the last part of the eighteenth century and the early decades of the nineteenth century which witnessed the emergence of political radicalism and revolutionary cultural trends generated by the breaking

out of the French Revolution. Under the circumstances, children were given the privileged position to interrogate and call into question the power of established authority. For instance, in William Blake's ''Nurse's Song,'' the children challenge the authority of the Nurse who tries in vain to send them to bed early against their will and desire. Eventually, the Nurse relinquishes her authority and the children play on. In Wordsworth's poem "Anecdote for Father's Showing how the Art of Lying may be Taught," the narrative revolves around bridging the gulf between the viewpoints of the adult and the child. Towards the end of the poem we get the feeling that the child gains the upper hand against the adult. Or at least, we are left with two viewpoints which are not apposed but simply different. To cite one more example, Wordsworth's poem entitled "We are Seven" gives a voice to a marginal figure, a child: "The little Maid would have her will/ And said "Nay: we are Seven!"

Just as children's empowerment in romantic poetry occupies a central place in the process of bringing about socio-political change by politically active poets such as William Wordsworth and William Blake, so the subversive agency of children in Roll of Thunder, Hear my Cry and The Other Side of Truth, it might be argued, is conceived with a view of preparing the way for change in the structure of power relations in the settings in which the action in each of the two novels unfolds.

Taylor's and Naidoo's common interest in foregrounding the quotidian reality and ordinary events in the lives of black children in the two diverse settings in the two novels reflects their keen concern about providing a human dimension to the history of racial discrimination and the othering of the blacks in Western culture. Thus raising the readers' awareness about the urgent need for change which of course fits in with their shared commitment to political agendas which interestingly involve making their children aware of desolate life realities with which they are forced to cope with in spite of their young age.

Michelle Ann Abate's (2017) views in her article "Children's Books Should Offer a Political Primer" are particularly applicable to the course of events in the two novels:
"Children do not live in an apolitical world, in which they are either unaware of political issues or unaffected by their social, economy and legal impact. In the same way that books for young readers work to develop reading literacy, they should also strive to instill political literacy exposing children to a wide array of controversial subjects from an equally large array of perspectives". (www.nytimes.com)

Highlighting her preoccupation with political questions, Beverely Naidoo in her article entitled "A Writer's Journey: Retracing The Other Side of Truth " points out that the political writings of the South African writers Nadine Gordimer and Mario Vergas Llosas had a tremendous impact on her engagement in politics as is well reflected in her fictional writings. Likewise in Roll of Thunder, Hear my Cry Taylor's preoccupation with political commitment is well accentuated in her peculiar interest in resurrecting the history of slavery in the novel. Her overt treatment of the question of slavery provides a powerful evidence to her strategy to expose and undermine the official liberal humanist American discourse on slavery. Taylor devotes chapters Six and Seven

of the novel for a prolonged discussion of slavery among the members of the Logan family and their neighbors. In response to Mary Mama Logan's suggestion that the children should not be openly exposed to the history of slavery to protect them against its negative effects, David Papa Logan insists that it is necessary for the children to listen to their neighbor Mr. Morrison's account of the history of slavery as a kind of sentimental induction for them into its true history. Yet, while Mama Logan expresses her protest against exposing her young children to the painful memories of slavery in America, she insists on confronting it by teaching its history to her students at school. Here is how Cassie describes her mother's passionate concern for demystifying the sensitive question of slavery:

Mama was in the middle of history and I knew that was bad .I could tell Stacey knew it too; he sat tense near the back of the room , his lips very tight, his eyes on the men. But Mama did not flinch; she always started her history class first thing in the morning when the students were most alert, and I knew that the hour was not yet up. To make matters worse, her lesson for the day was slavery. She spoke on the cruelty of it ; of the rich economic cycle it generated as slaves produced the raw products for the factories of the North and Europe ; how the country profited and grew from the free labor of a people still not free. (p.224)

The recent slavery related "supremacist" rally which turned violent in August 2017 at Charolttesville in Virginia State in America brings newly to the surface the urgent need to demystify and confront the complex issue of slavery in America, relinquishing its glorification while admitting that it is an integral part of American bleak history as is actually the case in Roll of Thunder, Hear my Cry. Here we are strongly reminded of Homi Bhabha's (1994) views on the importance of reclaiming history for oppressed people as a means of achieving intense engagement with it and consequently transcending it (p.41). Bhabha cites Toni Morrison's novel Beloved as a good example of the liberatory force of reclaiming and confronting history in a context related to slavery.

Taylor's overt treatment of the theme of slavery in the novel stands in sharp contrast with a traditional tendency in classical European and American literatures to keep silent about slavery. For instance, it is a well established fact that Herman Melville and Nathaniel Hawthorne two of the most outstanding classical American writers hardly address the issue in their literary product. According to commentators (Lombard, Esther,2017 and Watson Jay 2017), the same holds true for the early literary product of William Faulkner. But the most obvious example of overlooking the issue of slavery in a fictional context is of course Jane Austen's Mansfield Park (1814). In Chapter Twenty-One of this novel, we come across the following conversation between Fanny, the heroine, and her cousin Edmund:

[Edmund to Fanny] your uncle is disposed to be pleased with you in every respect; and I only wish you would talk to him more. You are one of those who are too silent in the evening circle." [Fanny] "But I do talk to him more than I used. I am sure I do. Did not you hear me ask him about the slave trade last night?

I did- and was in hopes the questions would be followed up by others. It would have pleased your uncle to be inquired of further." "And I longed to do it – but there was such a dead silence! (p. 184)

Pierre Macherey's often – quoted remark "What is important in the work is what it does not say." (p. 87), is particularly applicable to Mansfield Park. In contrast, as it has been already pointed out, Taylor opts for coming into the open in dealing with the question of slavery.
The controversial issue of the nature of the representation of slavery in Western fiction is very well dealt with by Judie Newman (2017) in her article "Slavery in British and American Literature":

Slavery thus underwrites the broad generic qualities of the national literature. In the view of Pierre Macherey, the silences and omissions in literature are as important as the presences. Slavery is a shrieking absence in many canonical works of American literature; "writing back" against such silences has become a major critical activity. White writers are now regularly examined in the light of the history of slavery: Emily Bronte's Heathcliff as a black orphan from the slave port of Liverpool in (Wuthering Heights) or the Caribbean State in Jane Austen's Mansfield Park, for example. Almost all writers from the American South (and especially William Faulkner) can be viewed in this light.If little space is given in the current bibliography to canonical English writers who engage at some level with slavery, it is because the critical literature on their work is already extensive. More narrowly, in the English speaking world "slavery in literature" includes the writings of slaves and former slaves, as well as works written about slavery by non-slaves. Though the field is dominated by American works, British, Carribean, and post-colonial writers are also significant. (p. 1)

Taylor's outspokenness about slavery seems to be prompted by her desire to write back, in the sense defined by Newman, that is in response to the traditional silence about slavery, especially in the writings of white authors. Taylor's deliberate demystification of slavery in contrast with the general traditional trend to mystify it in Western literature, as it has been already pointed out, is another important feature of subversion discourse at work in the novel which aims at promoting and disseminating strategies for resisting it, and thus pave the way for change.
However, Taylor makes it clear that, during the period in which the action of the novel is set in the 1930s in Mississippi, time was not yet ripe for change to take place in American society. In Chapter Seven of the novel we read:

Papa's eyes narrowed and his resemblance to uncle Hammer increased. We Logans don't have much to do with white folks. You know why? ' Cause white folks mean trouble you see blacks hanging round with whites they're headed for trouble. Maybe one day whites and blacks can be real friends, but right now the country ain't built that way. (p. 192)

Similar views on the gloomy prospects of bridging the racial gap in America are held by Toni Morrison. Reflecting on the immense difficulty of eliminating racial prejudice and hierarchy of American society Morrison (1997) ,in her essay "Home " ,writes:

"I have never lived, nor has any of us, in a world in which race did not matter. Such a world free of social hierarchy, is usually imagined or described as dreamscape—Edenesque, utopian, so remote are the possibilities of its achievement." (p. 3)

Taylor's and Morrison's misgivings about achieving racial harmony and eradicating deep-rooted racism of American society recall to mind the concluding paragraph of E.M. Forster's novel A Passage to India (1924) where Fielding and Aziz engage in reflecting on the relationships between the British and the Indians:

'Why can't we be friends now?' said the other, holding him affectionately. 'It's what I want. It's what I want.' But the horses didn't want it – they answered apart : the earth didn't want it sending up rocks through which riders must pass single-file; the temples, the talk, the jail, the palace, the birds, the carrion, the Guest House, that came into view as they issued from the gap and saw Mau Beneanth: they didn't want it, they said in their hundred voices, 'No, not yet,' and the sky said, 'No not there.' (p. 306)

The lack of connection in A Passage to India reflects the rigidity of the colonial divide which separates the British and the Indians, whereas in Roll of Thunder, Hear my Cry racial discrimination prevents the blacks and whites from forging a productive friendship given the firmly entrenched power relations in favor of the privileged whites in Western culture. The privileged position of the white families in Roll of Thunder, Hear my Cry forces the blacks to fall back on their own resources particularly family unity as a means of fending for themselves against all the odds.

In the context of the ideological structure of the two novels, family unity features as a tool of resisting dominant hegemony of white social structure in both of them . In Roll of Thunder, Hear my Cry, family unity is well manifested in the Logan's decision to boycott Wallace store on account of selling alcohol and cigarettes to young black children:

The older children are drinking regularly there now, even though they don't have any money to pay, and the Wallace's are simply adding the liquor charges to the family bill… just more money for them as they ruin our young people. As I see it, the least we can do is stop shopping there. It may not be real justice, but it'll hurt them and we'll have done something. (183)

The children's secretive plan to build a trench in the rain-filled road to stall the white children's bus which deliberately splashes the black children on their way to school furnishes another good example of strong ties among the members of the Logan family. In Chapter Four of the novel we read:

"Cassie,' she said softly, fixing her dark eyes upon me, is there something you want to tell me?' I was on the verge of blurting out the awful truth about the bus and the men in the night, but then I remembered the pact Stacey had made us all swear to when I had told him, Christopher-John, and Little Man about the caravan and I said instead, 'No, ma'am, and began to churn again. (83)

In The Other Side of Truth, family unity is tested in the aftermath of the assassination of the mother. Uncle Tunde, for instance, plays a very active role in facilitating the smuggling of Sade and her brother Femi to England. And it was mainly due to the presence of uncle Dele in England that the scheme of sending the children to England has been hatched up. In the two novels strong family ties seem designed to fracture the stereotypical image of the disintegration of the black family in Western culture. In her comments on the autobiographical dimension in Roll of Thunder, Hear my Cry, Taylor writes: "Through David Logan have come the words of my father, and through the Logan family the love of my family… contrary to what the media related to us, all black families are not fatherless or disintegrating. Certainly my family was not (p. 403) . On the basis of the theme of family solidarity in the two novels, the family, in one sense, figures as the main protagonist in each of the two novels. This fits in with the two novelists' deliberate attempts to elevate the position of the black families in the two novels as part of their subversive political agendas.

The subversive discourses employed in the two novels as the investigation of the basic tension in the two novels has revealed serve as effective tools to invest social realist fiction, which characterize the narrative in the two novels, with the two novelists' political agendas and ideological stances. Agendas designed to provide optimistic alternative futuristic narrative to traditionally well-established, jnegative cultural and socio-political views held in Western culture about blacks and marginalized minorities . It is often maintained that children's literature is never politically or ideologically neutral.

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