



**METAPHORICAL EXPRESSIONS IN CORA'S PURSUIT OF  
FREEDOM FROM RACISM AND SLAVERY IN COLSON  
WHITEHEAD'S *THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD***

**A Thesis**

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
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**PRONOUNCEMENT**

The writer truthfully affirms that this thesis entitled “Metaphorical Expressions in Cora’s Pursuit of Freedom from Racism and Slavery in Colson Whitehead’s *The Underground Railroad*” is compiled by herself without obtaining any result from other researchers in S-1, S-2, and S-3 and in diploma degree of any university. In addition, the writer ensures that she did not take any content or material from other publications or someone else’s writing except for the references mentioned in the bibliography.

Semarang, 6<sup>th</sup> July 2019

Ria Destya Ningrum

### **MOTTO AND DEDICATION**

“Sometimes a useful delusion is better than a useless truth.” —**Colson Whitehead**

*This thesis is dedicated to the reader and the writer*

**APPROVAL**

**METAPHORICAL EXPRESSIONS IN CORA'S PURSUIT OF FREEDOM  
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UNDERGROUND RAILROAD***

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Ria Destya Ningrum



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## **ABSTRAK**

*Penulis meneliti novel berjudul *The Underground Railroad* yang ditulis oleh Colson Whitehead. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah menganalisis unsur-unsur intrinsik dan ekstrinsik dalam novel. Latar, tokoh, dan konflik merupakan unsur intrinsik yang dianalisis. Penulis menggunakan pendekatan sosiologi dengan menggunakan konsep rasisme dan perbudakan dari Richard J. Perry dan menggunakan teori metafora konseptual dari George Lakoff dan Mark Johnson. Dalam pengumpulan data penulis menggunakan metode penelitian pustaka. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa ada ekspresi-ekspresi metaporikal yang muncul ketika tokoh utama melarikan diri dari perkebunan dengan tujuan mencari kebebasan di Utara. Ada dua jenis metafora yang digunakan oleh penulis. Diantaranya adalah metafora konvensional dan metafora baru. Ekspresi-ekspresi metaporikal tersebut juga berperan dalam menggambarkan bagaimana praktek perbudakan dan rasisme berjalan pada era antebellum di Amerika Serikat sesuai dengan cerita yang ada dalam novel. Sebagai contoh, perwujudan kereta bawah tanah yang merupakan ekspresi metaporikal yang dapat dimaknai alat pembebasan. Hasil ini terurai dalam narasi perjalanan tokoh utama.*

*Kata kunci: ekspresi metaporikal, rasisme, perbudakan, jenis metafora.*

## **ABSTRACT**

The writer analyzes the novel of Colson Whitehead's *The Underground Railroad*. The purpose of this research is to analyze the intrinsic and extrinsic elements of the novel. Setting, character and conflict are the intrinsic elements analyzed. The writer uses sociological approach adopting Richard J. Perry's racism and slavery concepts and conceptual metaphor theory from George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. In collecting the data, the writer uses library research method. The result of the research shows that there are metaphorical expressions which appear when the main character runs away from the plantation in pursuit of freedom in the North. There are two types of metaphor that are used by the writer. They are conventional metaphor and new metaphor. These metaphorical expressions play a role in depicting practice of slavery and racism happened during the antebellum era in United States based on the novel. For example, manifestation of underground train is a metaphorical expression which could mean as a freedom carrier. This result is elaborated through the main character's journey narrative.

Keywords: metaphorical expression, racism, slavery, types of metaphor

## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

## 1.1 Background of the Study

Racism or racial discrimination can take many forms and it greatly affects those who were being harassed or abused. Though harassment or abuse might be the worst acts which associates with racism especially if casualties are being calculated, acts such as racial name-calling, jokes or comments are still forms of racism that are still discernible to this day. According to the *American Heritage College Dictionary*, racism has two meanings. It first defines racism as, “The belief that race accounts for differences in human character or ability and that a particular race is superior to others” and secondly as, “Discrimination or prejudice based on race.” Racism is also regarded as a conviction that is culturally installed which despite whatever other motives involved; it tries to defend the privilege that whites have, as the other races regarded as of lesser importance or lower in position of minorities (Wellman, 1993: x). In the United States of America’s context, racism is most often appointed to minorities or people of color which is basically the non-white people in the USA. In this same land, the worst practice of racism had come into its existence in the past, in which the system is known as ‘slavery’.

Slavery is “one of the most extreme forms of the relation of domination, approaching the limits of total power from the viewpoint of the master, and of total powerlessness from the viewpoint of the slave” (Patterson, 1982:3). Looking back to the history that the country has when there were several cases in which slaves tried to escape plantation during the time of slavery that ended around one and a half century ago under Abraham Lincoln administration, the 16<sup>th</sup> President of United States.

In the novel, during that antebellum era, there are several terms or phrases that

work as codes or as simplification of a string of actions that were used by anti-racism organization or people to help slaves escape by turning those phrases into some metaphors, so it could have another fantastical meaning and to not appear conspicuous to the enemies or metaphors that the author made up to add another fantastical flavor in the story. It is the reason why literature is one of the best, if not the best, way to demonstrate the slave perspective or narrative and it encourages the discussion of slavery to be put back on the table again especially with the rising popularity of contemporary work of fictions about slavery. One of the recent literary works that stood in the forefront and has succeeded in bringing up this discussion back to life is a novel called *The Underground Railroad* by Colson Whitehead. It is an award-winning book published in 2016 which has a significant impact in the heart of literature enthusiasts around the world specifically those living in the United States. This novel narrates a story of a 15-year-old enslaved woman named Cora who attempted to escape the unjust and vicious treatment of the plantation and tried to flee from Georgia to the North when Caesar, another slave, asked her to go with him seeking freedom. However, what makes this escape story stand out is the play of metaphors that is manifested in the story.

*The Underground Railroad* challenged the traditional boundaries of a work of fiction. Its writing has been acclaimed by the American media and critiques as a non-mainstream piece of work in today's literature. The use of metaphors in this novel means way beyond than just a mere metaphor, in fact the metaphorical expressions found in the novel could depict the grotesque face of racism and vicious practice of slavery in the United States pre-Civil War. As Lakoff and Johnson mention in the book *Metaphors We Live By*, they define metaphor as "...a device of the poetic

imagination and the rhetorical flourish—a matter of extraordinary rather than ordinary language.” (2003:4). Thus, metaphors could provide a deeper meaning rather than only providing a comparison with alternative connotative meaning. There is also a term that white slave society still regards as a metaphor when actually there is an actualization of that metaphor which only several black and pro-abolitionist know of. It is beneficial to the main character, Cora, during her escape attempt, because if this information is heard by slave society, it would be perhaps impossible for her to run. Therefore, metaphorical expressions, their types and their importance in Cora’s journey in seeking freedom so that she could be free from slavery will be the focus of the discussion in the topic.

Through analyzing the mentioned topics of the novel, the writer tries to prove that there are metaphorical expressions found in the novel and those metaphors are conventional metaphor and new metaphor. In support of that, the writer analyzes the importance of these metaphorical expressions in depicting how slavery and racism are conducted during the antebellum era of United States in the novel.

## **1.2 Scope of the Study**

In writing this thesis, the scope is focused on analyzing the metaphorical expressions that appears when the female protagonist is on the run and how these metaphorical expressions matter in her pursuit of freedom and how they depict racism and slavery during antebellum period in United States as depicted in the novel. In doing so, the writer will examine the intrinsic and extrinsic aspects of Colson Whitehead’s *the Underground Railroad* novel. The intrinsic aspects cover character, setting, conflict, while the extrinsic aspects cover metaphor, anachronism, racism and the practice of slavery during antebellum era told in the novel.

### **1.3 Purposes of the Study**

According to the aforementioned background and the scope of the study above, the purposes of the study are presented as follows:

- To analyze the intrinsic elements shown in the novel such as character, setting, and conflict.
- To examine metaphorical expressions that appears during Cora's pursuit of freedom to the North and classify their types.
- To analyze the importance of metaphorical expressions in depicting racism and slavery during the antebellum era in United States.

### **1.4 Methods of the Study**

#### **1.4.1 Method of Research**

In order to support the analysis, the writer uses library research method as it is the type of research that is most suitable to examine this *The Underground Railroad* novel. Mary W. George states that library research as a form of structured inquiry with specific tools, rules and techniques which implicates in spotting and locating the sources which supply factual data, information and personal or professional notion on a research question as a part of significant component in research method (2008:6). Thus, to collect the data and significant information in pursuance of a valid thesis, the writer uses two kinds of sources; primary source which is the literary work itself while the secondary source includes books, articles or journals which are taken either from library or internet sources.

#### **1.4.2 Research Approach**

The writer uses objective approach which focuses on revealing the portrayal of the

period through the narrative elements shown in the novel such as character, setting and conflict. Furthermore, in analyzing the extrinsic elements of the novel, the writer uses sociological approach which is according to Kennedy and Gioia, “sociological approach examines literature in the cultural, economic and political context in which it is written or received” (1995: 1801). This approach is used specifically to analyze how metaphorical expressions during the main character journey in seeking freedom matters to depict racism and the practice of slavery in the United States antebellum era. In accordance with this approach, a theory by Lakoff & Johnson called a Conceptual Metaphor Theory is used to analyze and classify types of metaphors used in the novel.

### **1.5 Previous Studies**

In maintaining the originality of this study and to articulate a fresh critical analysis without overlapping the findings of the studies that has been conducted and disseminated in the past by other researchers, the writer finds three qualifying studies prior to this as exemplification or limitation for the writer to analyze and to add some more information or to help answering some still raised-questions from thus existing research literatures.

Kaylie -Anne Ward in her 2017 thesis entitled *The Unfinished Project of Freedom* in Colson Whitehead’s *The Underground Railroad* attempts to place the book within the tradition of slave narratives and neo-slave narratives as one of literature genres. Moreover, it intends to show how Whitehead tries to withstand the ideas of racial cruelty that American society shows toward people of color. It also shows how different periods of time in the novel have correlation with the treatment toward people of color in today’s time.

Whereas Matthew Dischinger in his essay which was published in 2017 entitled *States of Possibility in Colson Whitehead's The Underground Railroad*, he investigates how the novel supplements its readers with the relationship of the logics of fantasy and history through the poetics of speculative satire and how it can be used to articulate a new political destiny for American society.

Lastly, A study entitled *Travel as Metaphor and Reality in Afro-American Women's Autobiography* (1990) by Mary G. Mason examines how travel as a term not just having a meaning as a reality in the escape of the slave narrative but it also becomes a metaphor for Afro-American women in which travel in here is their life journey or progression.

In contrast with the aforementioned studies, the writer will analyze metaphorical expressions and their types and how these metaphorical expressions matters during the main character journey to be freed from racism and the practice of slavery in the United States antebellum era.

## **1.6 The Organization of the Writing**

In writing this thesis entitled “Metaphorical Expressions in Cora’s Pursuit of Freedom from Racism and Slavery and Their Importance in Colson Whitehead’s *The Underground Railroad*”, the study will be arranged in chapters and sub-chapters as follows:

### **CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION**

This chapter which contains the introduction of the study consists of six sub-chapters. They are background of the study, scope of the study, the purpose of the study, methods of the study, previous studies and organization of the study.



**CHAPTER II                    BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR AND SYNOPSIS OF  
THE NOVEL**

A brief biography of Colson Whitehead and the summary of his literary work under the title *The Underground Railroad* are presented in this chapter.

**Chapter III                    LITERARY REVIEW**

This chapter consists of the literary review, theories or several relevant concepts that are effective to examine the intrinsic and the extrinsic elements of the novel intently.

**CHAPTER IV                    DISCUSSION**

This chapter of the study focuses on analyzing the intrinsic and extrinsic elements of the novel which later provide findings correlated to what are incited in the purposes of the study. The intrinsic elements will include the analysis on character, setting, conflict, while the extrinsic elements include the analysis of metaphorical expressions which appears in Cora's journey to the North, their types and their importance in depicting racism and slavery during Cora's pursuit of freedom from slavery and racism.

**CHAPTER V                    CONCLUSION**

This chapter gives result or conclusion of the problems discussed in the thesis and it also summarizes the overall discussion and explanation in the previous chapters.



## CHAPTER II

### BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR AND SYNOPSIS OF THE NOVEL

#### 2.1 Biography of Colson Whitehead

Colson Whitehead is an American novelist who was born on November 6, 1969 and was raised in Manhattan. Whitehead is one of four children of successful entrepreneur parents. Growing up in Manhattan, he attended a highly selective independent co-educational day school named Trinity School before studied writing in an Ivy League college, Harvard College and graduated in 1991. He worked at the Village Voice, a newspaper agency where he is responsible to write reviews of television, books, and music. While working there, he also started drafting his first novels which later made his career as an author.

Whitehead has written six novels and published two non-fiction books so far. *The Intuitionist*, his first novel which was published in 1999 was a winner of the Quality Paperback Book Club's New Voices Award. In 2001, his book *John Henry Days* was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award and the Pulitzer Prize. This book is inspired by African-American folk hero of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, who has skill in hammering steel drills into rock in order to build railroad tunnels. His 2003's *The Colossus of New York*, a book of essays compilation about the city was a New York Times Notable Book of the Year. *Apex Hides the Hurt*, published in 2006 is a novel about a "nomenclature consultant" who gets a task to name a town was a recipient of the PEN/Oakland Award. *Sag Harbor* (2009), a novel about black teenagers who were hanging out in Sag Harbor, Long Island during 1985's summer was a finalist of the Hurston/Wright Legacy Award. His novel about post-apocalyptic New York City,

*Zone One* (2011), was a New York Times Bestseller. While *The Underground Railroad* (2016) won the Pulitzer Prize, the National Book Award, the Carnegie Medal for Fiction, and was a #1 New York Times Bestseller. It was also Oprah's Book Club 2.0 selection and was also chosen as President Barack Obama's summer vacation reading list. In addition, Pulitzer committee citing the book's "smart melding of realism and allegory that combines the violence of slavery and the drama of escape in a myth that speaks to contemporary America."

As a powerful novelist and essayist who is interested in the issue that deals with African-American story or narrative, so far, he has been granted a MacArthur Fellowship, A Guggenheim Fellowship, a fellowship at the Cullman Center for Scholars and Writers, a Whiting Writers Award, the Dos Passos Prize. Currently he lives in New York City, while here and there invited to many talk shows, interviews and to taught classes in universities. ("Colson Whitehead Biography" Bio. (2018). *Colson Whitehead*. Retrieved September 07, 2018 from <<https://www.colsonwhitehead.com/new-page/>>) and (Penguin Random House Speakers Bureau. (2018). *Colson Whitehead*. Retrieved September 06, 2018 from <<https://www.prhspeakers.com/speaker/colson-whitehead>>).

## **2.2 The Synopsis of *The Underground Railroad***

The book does not start immediately with telling the main character's narrative named Cora (a young slave who works in a Georgian plantation), but rather starting with the story of Cora's African grandmother, Ajarry. Her journey started by being kidnapped as a kid in Africa by Dahomeyan raiders, along with her father, which later she discovered was beheaded. Her story continued when it is told that she was sold multiple times and that she attempted suicide twice because she was treated badly and

violently on the ship, both attempts failed. Eventually, she ended up in Georgia on the Randall plantation, the same plantation where Cora and her mother worked. There she never attempted suicide or escape anymore. At the plantation she married three times and bore five children. Three husbands died and one child that still lives past the age of 10 is Mabel, Cora's mother. The other did not make it. Ajarry spent the rest of her lifetime until her death in that cotton plantation but she had been valued and respected by the other slaves on the plantation as one of the original Randall slaves.

In contrary, her daughter, Mabel, was not really respected as she is quite stubborn and unpopular. Mabel was still lucky because Ajarry had passed the land that she managed to obtain and control before to her. However, she escaped the plantation when Cora was eleven years old. Cora was left with the land she inherited from Mabel. After her mother left, she became an outcast or a stray and she hates her mother for leaving her at such state. Soon she was placed in Hob, a cabin for exiled and secluded women on plantation.

One day, a birthday celebration that slaves in the Randall plantation usually held every once or twice a year on Sunday on their half work day. Those who had extra work could not ask for a break to their master or the white man.

Cora seemed reluctant in participating in the birthday celebration, even passive and a little bit rude in answering Lovey's (another slave) questions. During the celebration just before the feast, a young male slave named Caesar asked her to flee the plantation and run away with him but she denies his invitation and thought that the idea was deranged. According to the previous attempt of other slaves, only Mabel who managed not being found and brought back to the plantation by Arnold Ridgeway, the slave catcher. James and Terrance Randall, the plantation owners,

often hit and whipped the slaves over little matters or when slaves do not do their job properly, deny pleasing and dancing with them.

After James Randall dies of kidney failure not long after the celebration, and Terrance Randal took over the plantation and the situation getting worse there, Cora eventually accepted Caesar offer to run away to the north, it makes Lovey knew about their plan and followed them. Unfortunately, Lovey was captured and Cora defended herself by killing a young man who tried to take her with a rock. By following the subway train and made their first stop in South Carolina. They considered the city to be much nicer compared to Georgia since they can assume new identities, given a job and communal housing. However, they later learned that white men there were conducting experiments about a disease and are trying to sterilize black women. That's where they decided to leave the town to North Carolina. Cora separated with Caesar on the way after a re-run with Ridgeway, the slave catcher.

In North Carolina, the situation is even worse. There are bodies of people being burned hanging from the tress along the road that they called as "Freedom Trail". Whites people who helped slaves escaped became the victim and also black people that they helped are hanged during the Friday Festivals. Cora is fortunate, when she arrives, a local named Martin and his family agreed to hide Cora in the attic. Several months later, some patrollers, one of them is Ridgeway arrive at the house and storm their way to the attic and seized Cora's ankle furiously and she is thrown over the stairs hence why Martin and his wife are lynched by the townspeople until they are dead. Cora is then taken out of town by Ridgeway. On their way back to Georgia, Cora travels through Tennessee with Ridgeway, Homer and Boseman and another escaped slave named Jasper that he had to give back in Tennessee but was shot

because along the road his singing annoyed Ridgeway. One evening, after a dinner, Boseman tries to rape Cora but a group of escaped slaves interrupted them and attacked Boseman and Homer, Cora manages to flee but not before kicking Ridgeway in the face. She flees with another escaped slave named Royal.

As the narrative jumps into a later time, it is explained that Cora and Royal travel to a farm in Indiana which is owned by John Valentine. In here, also lives a community of free black people. Cora takes classes, works with the others in taking care of the farm. However, because of fear being caught again, she doesn't fully happy there and it becomes a reality when slave catchers are informed about the place and Ridgeway and a few slave catchers come and burn down the farm but Ridgeway take Cora away again. On their way to the railroad station, Cora pushes Ridgeway down the stairs by twisting her chains around his neck. Cora runs and steps into a wagon waiting in the station and begins her journey to the north where she exchanged stories with one of the wagon drivers where black and white people also inside the wagon.

CHAPTER III  
**LITERARY REVIEW**

**3.1 Intrinsic Elements**

Intrinsic elements are essential to build up the literary work itself. They are crucial in forming the entirety story of the novel. Therefore, in order to support the analysis, the writer analyzes the narrative elements in the novel.

**3.1.1 Narrative Elements**

In *A Glossary of Literature Terms*, Abrams states that, “a narrative is a story, whether told in prose or verse, involving events, characters, and what the character says and does” (1999: 173). Thus, narrative elements complement and shape the entire work adequately. In this study, the writer looks over several narrative elements. They are setting, character and conflict.

**3.1.1.1 Setting**

Setting is a very significant element in the story to tell the readers when, where, how the story occurs and how the situation or ambience within the story drive the course of its plot. According to Abrams, setting is divided into three categories, which are, general locale, specific time, and social condition (Abrams, 1999: 284).

Hugh Holman in *A Handbook to Literature* also classified setting into three categories; setting of time, setting of place, and setting of social environment. He states that setting is the physical or sometimes could also be spiritual, background where action of a narrative in a literary works such as novel, drama, short story, etc. takes place(1960:453).Holman later explains in his fourth edition of the book of same



title that,

The elements which go to make up a setting are: (1) the actual geographical location, its topography, scenery, and such physical arrangements as the location of the windows and doors in a room; (2) the occupations and daily manner of living of the character; (3) the time or period in which the action takes place, e.g., epoch in history or season of the year; (4) the general environment of the characters, e.g., religious, mental, moral, social, and emotional conditions through which the people in the narrative move. (1985:413).

Three of the settings are essentials especially setting of social environments since it goes hand in hand with the discussion of the extrinsic elements. The values that the society uphold and the situation that the environment undergoes are urgent aspect that should be explained. Besides that, its condition also involves a lot in the development of the main character or other characters.

### **3.1.1.2 Character and Characterization**

As one of the elements that makes the story alive, characters represent and deliver the idea of the story that the writer wants to convey to the reader. Characters can take many forms. They could either be a human or person, which is most common one or animal, plant, thing and or figure. M.H. Abrams states

“The character is the name of a literary genre; it is a short, and usually witty, sketch in prose of a distinctive type of person. ... Characters are the persons represented in a dramatic or narrative work, who are interpreted by the reader as being endowed with particular moral, intellectual, and emotional qualities by inferences from what the persons say and their distinctive ways of saying it—the dialogue—and from what they do—the action” (1999:32-33).

Characters, by their action, thought, behavior or from the dialogue that they utter delivers certain moral values to the reader. From one character to another usually have diverse and distinct personalities. Therefore, each of the characters impact the

story in different ways that makes the story a whole. According to Forster in Abrams' *Glossary of Literary Terms*, there are two types of character, they are flat character and round character (1999: 33). Flat character according to Abrams,

“A flat character (also called a type, or "two-dimensional"), Forster says, **is built** around "a single idea or quality" and is presented without much individualizing detail, and therefore can be fairly adequately described in a single phrase or sentence”(1999:33).

Thus, a flat character does not have significant change in their phase of personality or mentality and often remain the same within his life that is being portrayed throughout the whole story. Meanwhile in contrary, round character, Abrams says that,

“A round character is complex in temperament and motivation and is represented with subtle particularity; such a character therefore is as difficult to describe with any adequacy as a person in real life, and like real persons, is capable of surprising us” (1999:33).

According to the aforementioned, a round character is much more complicatedly full of surprises and the development of its character could affect the plot within the story and these changes are usually triggered by event or environment surrounding the character itself.

### **3.1.1.3 Conflict**

Conflict happens in the plot when entanglement of affairs is developed between opposing forces. As an element that develop the story, conflict also makes the story much more alive, not flat and it sets an exciting tone with incidents that happen inside the story. C. Hugh Holman mentions that “conflict is the struggle which grows out of the interplay of the two opposing forces in a plot” (1961:105).

According to Holman as well, there are two types of conflict. It is divided into internal and external conflict. Internal conflict occurs within the character and one usually deals with his emotions, thoughts and or feelings. An example of internal

conflict is classified or called as ‘man against self’ conflict. Elizabeth Irvin Ross explains that man against himself conflict focuses on the main character’s inner or personal problem such as character’s major fear, flaw, or some other characteristic that the character must deal with in the story while a woman trying to deal with her feelings represents a woman-against-herself conflict (1993:140).

External conflict is when the character must deal with the problem or struggle against another character, natural condition or the society. Generally, there are two types of external conflict, they are ‘man against man’ and ‘man against society’ conflicts. Ross states that ‘man against man’ conflict happens when there is another person in the story that prevents the main character from getting what he wants or when the main character is pitted against another because they have their own way (1993: 140). As for ‘man against society’ conflict, the story sets a character against the beliefs, laws or values of a society and the main character is always out of sync and thus exists to display the society’s flaws (Morrell, 2009:101).

### **3.2 Extrinsic Elements**

Extrinsic elements of literature are the building elements that are outside and beyond the literary works itself. What lies behind the work such as the author’s life, experiences, religion, education, social background and circumstances encroach on the story and embed changes on its plot and characters. It also magnifies the subject and story beyond its structures. Types of metaphor, racism and its worst form ‘slavery’ are the topics which are going to be analyzed since they highly configure the novel.

Analyzing metaphor is intended to see and decode what kind of metaphor that is used in the novel and the importance of them to portray racism and slavery in the

antebellum era in a deeper sense and more importantly how certain metaphor matters as a life changing wagon for the main character to evade a cruel racism practice. Meanwhile racism and its practice of slavery are analyzed to depict the struggles, experiences, and the escape journey that the main character had to endure.

### **3.2.1 Metaphor**

Metaphor as one of the figurative languages and as a poetic imagination of language plays a significant role in adding another flavor to the story in the novel and it also makes the writing the more fanciful with certain qualities. Gibbs explains that metaphor is an expression with two measured conceptual domains where one expression is understood in terms of the other (1993: 252). The two concepts are called as “source” and “target” domains, the source is the domain where the actual or initial statement is generated, and target is the domain that is used to explain the statement. According to Fauconnier, the inputs spaces (the source and the target) are cross-mapped. Consider, for example, the metaphor of the surgeon is a butcher (1996: 144).

#### **3.2.1.1 Conceptual Metaphor Theory**

Lakoff & Johnson define conceptual metaphor as a way of conceiving or perceiving one thing in terms of another thing, and understanding its principal function (2003:36). It means that conceptual metaphor shape how we, think, act, use and interpret languages that are used in our everyday lives where the meaning of something could mean differently than the literal meaning of the word itself. Moreover, Lakoff and Johnson give examples of commonly used conceptual metaphors such as “argument is war” and “time is money” (2003: 115). Therefore, one could view argument as a war or a battle to be won between those who are having

argument. As for “time is money”, in a sentence like ‘I’ve invested a lot of time for that’ the use of the word ‘invest’ which commonly subjects to money or financing, in this case, it creates a new understanding of the word ‘time’ itself. According to them, conceptual metaphor is specifically divided into two types. They are conventional metaphor and new metaphor.

#### **3.2.1.1.1 Conventional Metaphor**

Conventional metaphor according to Lakoff and Johnson; “conventional metaphors are metaphors that structure the ordinary conceptual system of our culture, which is reflected in our everyday language”. (1980: 139). Thus, this metaphor is commonly used and it has infused in the society everyday language with no realization that there is a process of conceptualization, so that the use of metaphor could remain unnoticed. It is infused and spoken effortlessly and unconsciously to the degree in which in the language a conceptual metaphor is conventionalized. People can easily understand without having a second thought about the meaning and use the expressions such as “Time is running out”, “her explanation is crystal clear”.

#### **3.2.1.1.2 New Metaphor**

New metaphor which is also called novel metaphor is not the same with conventional metaphors in that they are beyond social conventions and “are capable of giving us a new understanding of our experience” (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 139). Its capability in giving a more creative new meaning, new reality or a new imagination is different compared to conventional metaphors which conceptualize only from a preexisting reality. New metaphor can be unfamiliar and harder to understand or interpret or in other words it uses the mechanism of conventional though in exceptional or extraordinary ways. It is an extension of conventional metaphor.

For example, 'Death is sleep' as a conventional metaphor has certain aspects of sleep that are mapped onto death such as inactivity, inattentiveness, horizontal position, etc. The mapping in this metaphor could be extended. In Hamlet's soliloquy, Shakespeare extends creatively the ordinary metaphor of death as sleeping to include elements that are not conventionally mapped which is the possibility of dreaming (Lakoff and Turner, 1989):

To sleep? Perchance to dream! Ay, there's the rub;  
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come?  
(William Shakespeare, *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, Act III, Scene I*) (Xiu Yu, 2011)

### **3.2.2 Racism**

Racism, where superior race, which is used to be identified with white race gives boundaries in almost every aspects of life to inferior races which is basically the non-white race goes way back in the United States history. Tzvetan Todorov states that racism is a designated behavior emerges from one individual or group hatred or contempt toward another individual or groups whose physical characteristics different from them own and it is also an ancient form of behavior that might be seen worldwide (Todorov, 1993:91).

According to Richard J. Perry in "Race" and Racism: The Development of Modern Racism in America; racism is the way of grouping people from their physical appearance and it leads to social discrimination in the end (2007: 2). It is apparent that differences in genetic or biological divides people in the United States somewhat in the social setting and it retraces back to the history of how it all started. Looking through the historic glass in the said country, European settlers that colonized the New World foresee the demands of progress in the country during the colonial period

which required abundant help from another cheaper and plentiful race to do hard and difficult chores. They began shipping and trading black people who came from Africa in the fifteenth century to work on the construction, plantation and other sectors. At first, they were labeled as indentured servants then they were enslaved.

Furthermore, Perry explains that racism arises from distinct background of historic events, social and cultural dynamics. This phenomenon affects people's life in real time and in specific places (2007: 2). Thus, the obvious characteristic distinction that black people have in comparison with white people is one of the reasons why in the past there are disparities regarding housing, education, income, employment, health care, and criminal justice among other sectors between these two races. Hence, it happened because Black is considered biologically and culturally inferior compared to the White and it fuels white people to discredit this race and situate them in this institution of human enslavement. In addition, racist presuppositions in the eighteenth and nineteenth century in the United States about African inferiority fits with slave trade and what goes down in the system of plantation of the antebellum American South (Perry, 2007: 93).

- **Racism in the Antebellum Southern United States**

The writer provides information about the history of racism or its institutionalized form that happened in the several southern states of the United States identical to the states that are used as a setting in the *Underground Railroad* novel during the antebellum period. In antebellum South Carolina, slavery lies at the center of the plantation economy led by planter class throughout the state. A majority of the population were slaves, and here the plantation-belt lies at the brinks of slave society (Sinha, 2000: 8). Thus, the society in South Carolina still upholds very tightly and

depend on the system of slavery for the state life and economic cycle pre-civil war era.

As for antebellum North Carolina, instead of slaves, the majority of the population was white which is nearly two-thirds of the population and there was also 2 percent of free black. North Carolina's free white non-slaveholders possessed a degree of political power that exceeded that of any other non-slaveholding population in United States. (Cecil-Fronsman, 1992: 26-27). From this population and class division, it tells a lot that unlike its neighboring state, North Carolina maintain far less severe system of slavery. They were not as ambitious to fill their land with many slave presences and free Black although only a small percentage, they were a living proof that there was a possibility for free black to be welcomed by common whites.

### **3.2.3 Slavery**

Slavery could not be separated from racism as it is one of its wicked institutionalized forms. Slavery in the United States is an establishment linked with new world racism that was legalized with conscious policy. In this country, it was started in 1619 when twenty Africans were brought to America, in the British colony of Jamestown, Virginia to be exact, by the Spanish and Portuguese settlers and slave trades or popularly called Trans-Atlantic slave trade. (Horn, 2018: 12). Africans being brought to America against their will is a first indication of racial discrimination happened in this country. There was also an idea or a myth that seemed to be propagated by the Whites that Africans physical and mental were not considered human beings characteristics or not fully human and seen only fit for slavery. Europeans repelled their skin color as they are starkly different from their own. This racist view of Blacks preceded the practice of slavery. Even though, they were being applauded because of



their strong physique in doing labor works, how they were being treated could not be appraised. Then the practice of slavery in the lucrative crops such as cotton, tobacco or sugar plantation where slaves were controlled by their masters became a form of veil racism for centuries. Perry states “Slavery also continued for their children, whether these children were still with them at the end, or had been sold long before.” (2007: 111). It goes on through generation after generation and only ends with the Thirteenth Amendment which abolished slavery in 1865. In addition, Finley in *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology* states that black slavery is indeed considered as modern slavery that it cannot be discussed seriously without besetting on present-day social and racial tensions (1998:9).

## CHAPTER IV

### DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the writer includes the discussion of both intrinsic and extrinsic elements of *The Underground Railroad* novel by Colson Whitehead as the main object of the study. The intrinsic elements analysis includes the discussion on setting, characters and conflicts found in the novel. This discussion supports in highlighting the aspects of racism, slavery and the process of reimagining those history through the usage of metaphor and anachronism whilst the extrinsic elements analysis includes the discussion on racism and practice of slavery reflected in the novel, metaphor and deviation of conceptual metaphor into dead metaphor, anachronism throughout Cora's journey to the north and how her journey to freedom provides a reimagining of America's history of racism.

#### **4.1 Intrinsic Elements Analysis**

##### **4.1.1 Setting**

In this section, the analysis of setting in the novel is explained and will be divided into three categories; setting of time, setting of place and setting of social environment. Setting of time focuses on the time, period or year when the story happens. Setting of place discusses where the story takes place. Lastly, the setting of social environment examines the social circumstances, ambience and interactions that Cora has with the individuals, groups or society that surrounds her.

##### **4.1.1.1 Setting of Time**

The setting of time of this novel is widely happens during 19<sup>th</sup> century when the

practice of slavery is still established in United States and for the most part happens during the antebellum era, which is in the history of southern United States is the period after the war of 1812 to the beginning of American Civil War. Specifically, it is noticed from several characters' stories that this novel uses three generation time frames, from the story of Cora's grandmother, Ajarry, to her mother, Mabel. However, their part of the story is not described much.

It starts with Ajarry story detailed in chapter 1 which happens when slave trade is still prevailing as she was being sold a few times on the trek and on the ship that brought her to America potentially between the late 18<sup>th</sup> century and early 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was when slave trade was at its peak as shown in, "Cora's grandmother was sold a few times on the trek to the fort, passed between slavers for cowrie shells and glass beads...., the price arrived upon after the standard haggling in Coast English..." (Whitehead, 2016: 3).

The following chapters have entered a new time frame which is the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The author provides an excerpt of runaway slave advertisement which has a specific date and year to preface chapter 2 before the narrative starts, "... All persons are forewarned of harboring said girl, under penalty of law prescribed. W.M. DIXON JULY 18, 1820" (Whitehead, 2016: 12). Other advertisements which detailed the year also preceded chapter 4 and 6, "...I have been informed she is lurking in and about Edenton. BENJ. P. WELLS. MURFREESBORO, JAN. 5, 1812" (Whitehead, 2016: 100) and "...I understand she will try to pass as a free girl. RIDGON BANKS. GRANVILLE COUNTY, AUGUST 28, 1839" (Whitehead,2016: 170).

#### **4.1.1.2 Setting of Place**

In the following is the discussion of where the story in the novel takes place. A few

Southern states that will be discussed are based on the journey of the main character, Cora, after she escapes. These states are South Carolina, North Carolina, Tennessee and Indiana.

#### **4.1.1.2.1 South Carolina**

After Cora and Caesar decide to leave the plantation via underground railroad, they make stops in several states. The city is described by Sam, a white man who are among the people who help Cora and Caesar on their runaway journey, as a safe place where colored are people treated better than those by other states: “South Carolina has a much more enlightened attitude toward color advancement than the rest of the south. You’ll be safe here until we can arrange the next leg of your trip. It might take time” (Whitehead, 2016: 108).

Bessie Carpenter, Cora’s new ascribed identity in the city, lives in dormitories which were described as new two-story red brick buildings where she lives with other black residents: “When Bessie arrived in town, most of the eighty beds in the bunk room had been claimed. A day earlier and she might have been sleeping in a bed beneath one of the windows” (Whitehead, 2016: 105). While living in dormitory, she has a day to day job as well. She is being placed to work in the Anderson family tidying the house and taking care the children, “Bessie spent most of her time on that first floor, chasing after the children, preparing mealsand tidying up” (Whitehead, 2016: 101). In the Anderson family, Cora experiences her first job outside of a plantation. Then, she is positioned again to work at the museum in which she thinks that she would be cleaning instead she would pose and act as a part of the exhibition installment about American history by being a live mannequin displaying dioramas about the trade of human trafficking where she and other colored performer would be

watched by the visitor, “Cora worked in three rooms. That first day, gray drapes covered the large glass windows that separated them from the public” (Whitehead, 2016: 130). During the time of her work at the museum, she actually hates it and based on her experience as a slave she hates how inaccurate the museum interpretation of slave narrative being displayed. Later on, when she realized later on that the town tries to do medical experiments on black and know that the slave-catcher is looking for her in the city, Cora decides to flee the city and continue her runaway journey via underground railroad from the tunnel that is hidden under Sam’s house.

#### **4.1.1.2.2 North Carolina**

The third place also the second stop is set in North Carolina, only this time she takes the ride on the train without Caesar’s company since he did not show up at Sam’s house on the day Sam’s house who has a hidden trapdoor with a pathway to the underground railroad got burned. When she stops at the rail station, she presumes that her arrival in North Carolina is a big process considering the distance she could manage to escape plantation: “As did the plentiful drinking water, the torches, and the distance she had traveled from the slave catchers. North Carolina was an improvement, beneath the surface” (Whitehead, 2016: 180). Cora is saved by a station agent named Martin who went down the station to give an announcement for whoever passenger that the North Carolina station is closed. It can be seen that the city is grim and eerie by how it decorates the street with death bodies of colored people hanging from the trees. This street is called the ‘The Freedom Trail’, “The corpses hung from trees as rotting ornaments” (Whitehead, 2016: 182).

Cora is allowed to stay and hide in Martin’s house because if people see just a glimpse of her, patrollers or not, she would likely end up being strung up. For the next

several months until Ridgeway put an end to it and drags her from her hiding spot, she spent all of those time trapped in the attic. She could not get out and risk the family getting caught hiding a runaway by the patrollers who may do inspections in random houses at random hours, the punishment could be death. In this very attic, she often entertain herself with little facilities, there is also a gap hole in the wall that face the town park, where she often takes a peek at the ongoing activities there and witness many things like play and music performance but also lynching of colored people: “Crawling to different sections of the attic nook, searching for imaginary oases of cool, became her principal activity after her vigil over the park” (Whitehead, 2016: 186).

#### **4.1.1.2.3 Valentine’s Farm in Indiana**

Several freemen with guns and knives free Cora from Ridgeway’s capture when they are on their way to Missouri and take Cora to Indiana by subterranean train. There, she stays in a farm owned and managed by John Valentine with other colored folks. Settling in a city further north after spending fifteen years in the southern state of Georgia, Cora finds Indiana very cold, “... , when to bring a shawl because Indiana nights were a shiver, colder than she’d ever known” (Whitehead, 2016: 287). At the farm, Cora stays in a cabin with two colored women. The most convenient place so far for her to live considering her place at the plantation in Georgia, the dormitory in South Carolina or the small attic in North Carolina are either horrendous or that she has to share it with many inhabitants, “... , Cora, Molly, and Sybil were the only inhabitants of their cabin, sleeping in the two rooms off the main living area” (Whitehead, 2016: 289). Valentine’s farm has Meeting hall where the settlers usually gather together for a night event or to study and also library where the settlers could

read books and almanacs. Cora also takes classes again at the farm and she also works in the washroom.

### **4.1.1.3 Setting of Social Environment**

#### **4.1.1.3.1 Social Environment in South Carolina**

##### **4.1.1.3.1.1 Black Uplift Program under White Society Control**

On the beginning of the ‘South Carolina’ chapter, it is told that the state does not practice slavery and that colored people could go about living their life with privileged whites or even poor whites without the fearful feeling that they usually feel on the plantation. Many of them work with white people, however, their relationship with their employer extremely differs from the relationship between master and their slaves. It can be seen from Sam’s statement, “They got food, jobs, and housing. Come and go as they please, marry who they wish, raise children who will never be taken away. Good jobs, too, not slave work. But you’ll see soon enough.” (Whitehead, 2016: 111). Even there are many white people whom are not of high-class status, they would work as labors, employer or any other jobs, “Many of the white men in this part of town worked as foremen or laborers in the larger factories” (Whitehead, 2016: 104).

Free people of color who are newcomers or minorities in the city are surprisingly welcomed and they are given a place to stay like dormitories, education so they could read and widen their knowledge, “South Carolina maintained a different attitude toward colored progress, as Sam had told Cora on the platform..., but the provision for colored education was among the most nourishing” (Whitehead, 2016: 114). It could also be seen from Cora’s experience or Bessie (her fake identity in the city), while working at the Anderson family, she could witness how distinct the

environment is compared to Georgia, how colored and non-colored could integrate in such a casual atmosphere, “There were shortcuts, but Bessie liked to take in the lively activity of Main Street in the evening, mingling with the townsfolk, white and colored” (Whitehead, 2016: 102). As the chapter progressed, little did Cora know the city is not as idyllic as she thought it would be for the sake of her people alike. These seem like the type of program to uplift black people lives so that they feel like they can have the same life as white. However, their life is still unconsciously dictated by white society because no one of people of colored work in the Griffin building to also help decide black right, job, place to live etc. where the government of the state concentrated.

#### **4.1.1.3.2 Social Environment in North Carolina**

##### **4.1.1.3.2.1 White Separatist Society**

In contrary to South Carolina, its neighbor state, North Carolina is a white separatist society. They do not welcome the existence of colored people on their land, “In North Carolina the negro race did not exist except at the end of ropes” (Whitehead, 2016: 187). It seems to the point that they want to push the population of black people out of the state, if possible, out of America. Any spotted blacks land their feet in North Carolina would be lynch in front of the society and hang at the ‘Freedom Trail’, the trail along the road where black people are hung up. Even whites who got caught assisting them would be given punishment, most often deathly punishment.

One of the reasons that they want to demolish black people is because they consider White is a superior race and Black is a lesser race. On day to day, Cora sees a stark difference compare to South Carolina where white people and people of colored could mingle at the park without barrier, What Cora sees in North Carolina



town center are uniform faces, “..., Cora did not immediately notice an important feature of the park: Everyone was white” (Whitehead, 2016: 187). Even the mayor or senator of the town who often give address during the Friday Festival uphold this idea tightly, “For this separate nation we have forged, free from northern interference and the contamination of a lesser race” (Whitehead, 2016: 191).

#### **4.1.1.3.3 Social Environment in Indiana**

##### **4.1.1.3.3.1 Color-conscious Society**

The black communities who stays and contributes to Valentine’s farm in Indiana lives in a separate complex with white families but both notice the existence of each other, “Land was cheap in Indiana. There were white people there, too, but not so close” (Whitehead, 2016: 315). However, they are still living in disparity because some white settlers seem to still have racial prejudice towards black. It can be seen from the segregation that they applied by having stores divided for both races, “Last week a feed store hung a shingle saying WHITES ONLY—a nightmare reaching up from the south to claim them” (Whitehead, 2016: 330). Thus, makes a the society in Indiana a color-conscious society. It is comforting for Cora and other colored people that John Valentine is respected among the white community and that they can socialize freely with each other that is built from different past experiences, “The free men and women of color, the fugitives who stayed and the ones who moved on” (Whitehead, 2016: 292).

#### **4.1.2 Characters and Characterization**

In this novel, there are two characters that are going to be analyzed. They are Cora also known as Bessie Carpenter when she was in South Carolina who is the main character in the novel and Ridgeway, a slave catcher who is determined to bring Cora

back to the plantation as he is failed to find and catch Mabel, Cora's mother. Beside the main character itself which story hugely influence this writing, the other character is chosen because he has significant roles and many involvements in Cora's life especially during her escape journey as someone who is against and wanted to end her escapement, his role determined the course of Cora's whole escape narrative.

#### **4.1.2.1 Cora (Bessie in South Carolina)**

Cora as the main character has a major role in the novel and can be classified as round character. She is going through complex changes and undergoes some emotional and psychological developments, especially development in her frame of mind or outlook of the world and the environment orbiting around her life. Running away from the fear of living on the plantation by facing another fear of being caught and brought back to the plantation during her escape journey and by stopping and living in several states makes her encounter various differences in the environment and society scope from each state that it changes her perception of the world and of her life especially how she views racism.

Cora's life as an enslaved woman at the plantation is tragic and grotesque especially after her mother, Mabel left her at the plantation when she is just eleven years old, Cora feels abandoned and her status as a stray among her fellow Africans makes her withdrawn herself from her community, she can be considered cold and reserved that she only cares about herself and her garden that has been passed to her from her grandmother and mother. "She owned herself for a few hours every week was how she looked at it, to tug weeds, pluck caterpillars, thin out the sour greens, and glare at anyone planning incursions on her territory" (Whitehead, 2016: 15). She also hates those who tries to steal greens or wreaks havoc on her field, in fact, after an

incident with another slave named Blake when he tried to tie his dog in Cora's plot and Cora ended up destroying the dog house, "No one moved to stop her, so strange was this display. Her first blow brought down the roof of the doghouse, and a squeal from the dog, who had just had his tail half severed" (Whitehead, 2016: 23). Here, it shows that Cora has developed a brave demeanor growing up and would do everything to protect herself who intrude her privacy.

She also shows fearless and kind attitude when she helps Chester, an enslaved boy who got beaten with Master Terrance's cane because he spilled his wine on his shirt by also bending down that the cane also hit her, "it grabbed hold of her and before the slave part of her caught up with the human part of her, she was bent over the boy's body as a shield" (Whitehead, 2016: 40). As for her being rebellious, this idea is not on her mind previously, she actually thinks that the idea is ridiculous and she is reluctant when Caesar, another slave asks her to escape with him but as things has gotten worse at Randall, she eventually agrees to flee Randall plantation to the north to find freedom with Caesar when she is fifteen years old even though they know their escape news would be discovered immediately and slave catcher would be on their tails, "They had six hours until their disappearance was discovered and another one or two before the posses reached where they were now" (Whitehead, 2016: 65).

When she and Caesar arrive in South Carolina, Cora has to replace her given name with Bessie Carpenter, it is to avoid getting caught by the slave-catcher and recognized as a runaway. In order to blend in with the society in the city who does not practice slavery, they have to act walk like a free man. Cora is very keen and determined to fix her walk and posture, she also learns how to read, write and speak

better since colored people allowed to have education, “In the following months, Cora mastered posture. Her letters and speech required more attention” (Whitehead, 2016: 112). She can be quite skeptical and quizzical in certain moments just like when she is questioning the proctor in her dormitory about the whereabouts of the women who used to stay in number 40, “Why can’t they? On the plantation, master decided everything for us. I thought we were done with that here” (Whitehead, 2016: 152).

After her time ends in South Carolina, she escapes again with train to North Carolina. When the engineer asks her to get off there, Cora displays a determined attitude to escape the southern part of the country and leave with the train again but she could not as the train is still under maintenance and would go back to south, it can be seen from her dialog with the engineer, “I’m going with you,” Cora said. What’s the next station?” (Whitehead, 2016: 179). From the changes that she undergoes during her trip to freedom and the complexity of her character, how she adapts to different environment with various kinds of societies, Cora is definitely a round character. Her character is also urgent in revealing several aspects which creates a reimagining. She is the main figure who escapes using ‘underground railroad’ which refers to the dead metaphor and from her point of view an alternative to history of racism in the United States could be seen.

#### **4.1.3 Conflict**

Out of the numerous conflicts that happened within the novel, the writer focuses on the conflicts between Cora and herself as a sample of internal conflict and the conflict between Cora and Arnold Ridgeway as a sample of external conflict. The conflict between Cora and Ridgeway is chosen because both characters have strong representation in the novel. Cora is an escaping black during the antebellum era and

Ridgeway is a slave-catcher who is determined to catch her, therefore, they have endless conflicts throughout the novel.

#### **4.1.3.1 Internal Conflict**

##### **4.1.3.1.1 Cora Against Herself**

Cora seems to be conflicted at first whether she should run or keep still at the plantation. The two women in her life contribute to this conflict. Her grandmother could tolerate her destiny being a slave until her death unlike her mother who escaped. When Caesar asked her to escape with him, she denied but she also ponder this thoughts many time as she must choose whether she wants to stay but suffer and die at the plantation or run and risk dying on the road to freedom, “It was her grandmother talking that Sunday evening when Caesar approached Cora about the underground railroad, and she said no. Three weeks later she said yes. This time it was her mother talking” (Whitehead, 2016: 9). Thus, it can be seen that she is being indecisive and this conflict is resolved by her decision to flee with Caesar. Her final decision to escape determines how the story will continue as for if she decides to stay instead the process of reimagining would not happen.

On the run, as she goes from one state to another state, one part of her is grateful that she could managed to get away very far but each one of her accomplices do not have the same convenient luck as she has. They are either being punished, captured, hanged, or shot to death. She feels guilty for them and this occurrence haunts her, she feels as though everyone who has helped her while escaping could not make it because of her fault, “Running away was a transgression so large that the punishment enveloped every generous soul on her brief tour of freedom”. (Whitehead, 2016: 259).

#### **4.1.3.2 External Conflict**

On this discussion on external conflict, only one conflict between Cora and Arnold Ridgeway that is going to be described. Their conflict captures the reflection of racism displayed by a slave and a slave catcher. Cora's escape journey helps making a reimagining happened whilst Ridgeway determines to stop her journey he goes so far as chasing her everywhere she ran. Thus, their conflict is worth mentioning as the conflicts between Cora and other characters are minor clash.

##### **4.1.3.2.1 Cora Against Arnold Ridgeway**

The conflict between Cora and Ridgeway is the most dominant and crucial conflict that happened in the novel. It starts when Cora decided to escape the Randall plantation. As a slave catcher who has been hired by Randall to find Mabel, Cora's mother and failed makes him much more determines to hunt and bring back Cora to the plantation. Cora manages to escape from his patrol in Georgia and South Carolina but he finds her in North Carolina, "She crawled under Martin's old bed and that's where they found her, snatching her ankles like irons and dragging her out" (Whitehead, 2016: 222). He drags her from her hide in the attic of a white family house claiming that his searching of Cora has been going on for some time, "Slave catcher. I go here, I go there. I've been after this one for a long time. Your judge knows all about me" (Whitehead, 2016: 224). When the mayor of North Carolina recommends for Cora to be executed, Ridgeway prevents it by saying that he has the right to claim her and bring back to her master in Georgia.

On their way to Tennessee from North Carolina, they kept having argument back and forth that when silence kicks in is odd, "He waited for her to say something, having grown used to her chirping at his remarks. They were on to each other. She

kept silent to interrupt their pattern” (Whitehead, 2016: 242). She is able to escape again from him in Tennessee by the help of three black men and she goes to Indiana with her helpers but again Ridgeway finds her and the peak and last conflict that happens between them is when Cora leads Ridgeway and Homer to the tunnel in the underground railroad that Ridgeway wants to see. There, on the way down she spins her body and pushes Ridgeway off the stone stairs which hurt him so bad likely bleeding to death, “Homer crouched next to his boss. His hand covered in blood from the back of Ridgeway’s head” (Whitehead, 2016: 361).

## **4.2 Extrinsic Elements Analysis**

### **4.2.1 Metaphorical Expressions and Their Importance in Depicting Racism and Slavery in Cora’s Pursuit of Freedom**

#### **4.2.1.1 Underground Railroad as Network of Safe Houses and Escapes Routes**

In the beginning of the novel, ‘The Underground Railroad’ is classified as a conventional metaphor. According to the time and place setting, it is still being regarded as a term in everyday language especially by white slave society and most slaves. It means a network of people who are sympathetic with slaves and help them run away from plantation by hiding them in safe houses and find safe escape routes so that slave-catchers would not know their whereabouts. To be detailed, it plays as a secret code in which a network of white people who are abolitionist, lenient toward abolitionist mission or part of anti-slavery movement, help slaves to escape the plantation in the Southern states with numerous tactics and ways. It is not a secret pathway that leads to a tunnel with operating locomotive.

Back then in the antebellum era of real United States, this was a very effective

organization that there are still people today who think there was a literal train running along America from the South to the North, carrying people to freedom. Railroad terminology is used to maintain secrecy and confuse slave-catchers. The need for secrecy was foremost as there were severe penalties for slaves and those who helped them to freedom. It has the same meaning with what is depicted in the beginning of the story in the novel;

“The underground railroad maintained no lines to speak of. The decoys in negro dress, the secret codes in the back pages of newspapers. They openly bragged of their subversion, hustling a slave out the back door as the slave catchers broke down the front. It was a criminal conspiracy devoted to theft of property, and Ridgeway suffered their brazenness as a personal slur” (Whitehead, 2016: 96).

Thus, The Underground Railroad acts as a metaphor because the literal meaning of the word itself is interpreted as another thing that is entirely different by the society because the literal underground train system has not existed yet. The phrase is used effortlessly because it suits the environment and situation within the antebellum time frame, “Most slaves made tracks for the black water, as there were no helpful whites this far south, no underground railroad waiting to rescue a wayward nigger” (Whitehead, 2016: 75).

However since the novel make the underground railroad to not only become a mere metaphor but instead reimagine this term literally with an actual train beneath the ground that is operating and only few people and few slaves know about its existence as the story progressing. This is an advantage for Cora and her fellow slaves who escape with her via underground train. Her master, the slave-catchers, patrollers and most white society would not thought of searching their location beneath the ground. They would not even have any idea that there is a hidden trapdoor in the



house of white who is actually pro-abolitionist. This trapdoor is the door that leads to the rail platform and station.

Therefore, the existence of this metaphor during the time of slavery is important and useful in making the escape journey of a slave easier since not many people know about a literal underground railroad and its location. It also depicts how people who want to take part in abolishing slavery have to be careful with their plan in helping slave escapes by hiding the real meaning of a system or plan using other terms that might have dual or more meaning so their plan would be successfully executed without having a direct threat from the enemy, the slave society. In a deeper sense, it shows that the practice of slavery gives an immense feeling of fear throughout the society. Moreover, it also depicts that the regulation in plantation is very tight that abolitionist has to use all kinds of codes to inform something. Living as a slave in the Southern United States is tragic and piteous. In Randall plantation, the slaves are being treated horribly, their children and grandchildren does not have any option besides also being slaves. Their distinct background and physical differences compared to the white settlers made white feels superior about their race and it is what leading racism to happen in the plantation. They are working on the cotton field, tending gardens of greens, working in the milk house, taking care stocks, even the vacant plot in their cabin is a working field “Slaves fought with equal fervor over their tiny parcels at their feet. The strip between cabins was a place to tie goat, build a chicken coop, a spot to grow food to fill your belly on top of the mash doled out by the kitchen every morning” (Whitehead, 2016: 16).

However, there is quite a distinct situation between the northern half and the southern half of the plantation. In the northern half, it is less aggressive. The slaves

could usually hold a Jockey birthday feast once or twice a year where they would celebrate the night with dances, socializing accompanied with music and various meals and beverages. It does not happen on the other half of the plantation as the younger proprietor, Terrance Randall explained to be much more aggressively cruel and intolerant, “Feast like this didn’t happen in Terrance’s domain, for the younger brother was stingy with slave amusements. The Randall sons managed their inheritances according to their temperaments” (Whitehead, 2016: 27).

Since faith brought Cora to the world by a black mother who is a slave in Randall cotton plantation, she does not have much choice but to also follow her mother footstep and obey the overseer or the master’s orders. Picking cotton, tending to her garden of yam, okra, cabbage and other plans are some of the examples. Mabel, her mother flees the plantation leaving eleven years old Cora behind. Since then, Cora is given a status and label as stray that she has to fight for her survival in the plantation without her mother support, “When Mabel vanished Cora became a stray” (Whitehead, 2016: 17). Her fellow slaves also treat her differently, especially when the situation got even worse, she is put in Hob, a place for the so called “wretched” to live alongside other unfortunate women, it is a part of Ava’s arrangement with Moses. Even some of her fellow African slaves view her as one and often humiliate or treat her poorly, one slave who hates her mother named Ava who is happened to be placed to sleep next to each other with Cora she still does not like Cora, “She made a point of knocking Cora whenever she got up to make water” (Whitehead, 2016: 18). he and his gang starts to tell lies and rumor about how Cora is flapping her dress to get men attention and would be mad if they refused her, it makes her more hated in the plantation that it gets to the point where she is raped by Blake’s gang and no one tries

to stop it, they just keep it quite like nothing happened, only the Hob women who attend to her after the occurrence:

“Not long after it became known that Cora’s womanhood had come into flower, Edward, Pot, and two hands from the southern, half dragged her behind the smokehouse. If anyone heard or saw, they did not intervene. The Hob women sewed her up. Blake was gone by then” (Whitehead, 2016: 25)

The slaves are also getting whipped, beaten, raped and other horrific inhumane things that people could think of if the slaves do not work properly, do not obey the rules and especially worse for those who attempt to escape the plantation, if they get caught, they are brought back and just like what Cora and others forced to witness with their own eyes, a runaway slave who got caught named Big Anthony, he get burned in the front lawn also witnessed by white visitor from another towns, “They gathered on the front lawn. Randall’s visitor sipped spiced rum as Big Anthony was doused with oil and roasted” (Whitehead, 2016: 55). Following James Randall’s dead, the northern half of the plantation is taken over by Terrance Randall. “Terrance addressed the slaves of the northern and southern halves. There is one plantation now, united in purpose and method, he said” (Whitehead, 2016: 55). The slave treatments start to turn horribly worse than before that it spikes Cora’s thinking to run off of the plantation.

#### **4.2.1.2 America as an Engine and a Warden**

America, to be specific the United States of America in the 19<sup>th</sup> century is just like other nations that is propelling for a significant progress and development in their economic, technology, etc. Many nations fight to have a paramount power around the globe. In this novel, the metaphorical expression of ‘America’ means an engine and a warden.

America is being compared to a machine could be classified as a new metaphor. A machine is a new imagination of the term 'America'. This machine is the type of machine that thrusting forward in expansion and profit. Machines are product of design while nation is not of design. One would have to dig deep to understand the concept of this metaphor.

“And America, too, is a delusion, the grandest one of all. The white race believes—believes with all its heart— that it is their right to take the land. To kill Indians. Make war. Enslave their brothers. This nation shouldn't exist, if there is any injustice in their world, for its foundations are murder, theft, and cruelty. Yet here we are” (Whitehead, 2016: 341).

According to the aforementioned quote and Cora's observation, this machine does not drive forward in an appropriate way. The fuel of the engine of the machine is murder, theft and cruelty. The New Land was occupied by Indian first, but then they were driven out of their land, tortured and killed by the Whites. Later on, they seemed to own the land and institutionalized ruthless practices such as slavery to compete internationally. “Stolen bodies working stolen land. It was an engine that did not stop, its hungry boiler fed with blood.” (Whitehead, 2016: 139).

This metaphor further portrays that as a machine that means to create profit, if they lose the human capital that could gain fortune, they would find way to get this human capital back. This human capital in this case is slaves. Therefore, back then, profession like slave-catchers is needed to help the evil economic circle get back on track. “The other patrollers were boys and men of bad character; the work attracted a type. In another country they would have been criminals, but this was America.” (Whitehead, 2016: 90). It proves that the use of violence is legalized in the antebellum era.

America as a warden also serves as a new metaphor. Here, America is

compared to a warden, who could mean a prison officer or generally a person responsible for the supervision of a certain place and enforce its regulations. In Cora's journey in seeking freedom, she feels uneasy since she feels like America is watching her every move like a warden, ready to punish her if she did something wrong or if she is found out on the run. "Whether in the fields or underground or in an attic room, America remained her warden." (Whitehead, 2016: 207). Throughout Cora's journey which starts in Georgia in hoping to find freedom in the North she has to meet many unfortunate situations. These unfortunate situations of her in other states make her realize that America is not in favor to the people of her kind even though she managed to escape a brutal plantation. Once Cora steps out of the plantation, almost every aspect she finds in several states after that is a reimagining that is created to help her achieve her main ambition to live freely when other African American in the south prefers to accept their faith as slaves. In South Carolina, Cora is presented with a much more progressive state with its skyscraper, automatic elevators, museums advances and bunch of free men living in dormitories not in a plantation cabin, given proper jobs such as nanny like Cora herself, construction worker like Caesar and there is no boundaries or segregation in public places, white and colored allowed to mingle, "She walked down the sidewalk as a free woman. No one chased her or abused her" (Whitehead, 2016: 104). However, out of all its advances, one thing that is still kept secret from the seemingly welcoming white societies in South Carolina is the existence of the railroad beneath its soil and it makes sense to hide it when later on the disguised evil medical syphilis sterilization experiment on black in the town is revealed.

Through Cora's eyes, North Carolina is reimagined to be a much more sadistic

state with white separatist society motivated to drive black out of this state. Their hatred toward colored race is often embodied into a public execution celebrated in a festival accompanied by play or poem performances that public enjoy. The bodies are hanged in the Freedom Trail along with other dead colored bodies, “They call this road the Freedom Trail now.” Martin said as he covered the wagon again. “The bodies go all the way to town.” (Whitehead, 2016: 183).

#### **4.2.1.3 The Literal Underground Railroad as the Darkness of American Journey for Black Race**

If ‘underground railroad’ is historically accepted as a secretive network of white people giving slaves assistance to run away, through Cora’s eyes, another metaphor interpretation of ‘underground railroad’ can be detected. The literal object of the underground railroad as a darkness of American journey for black race is categorized as a new metaphor. It also deals with a new creation or a new understanding for underground railroad terminology. The literal underground boxcars are metaphors for a darker, underground side of what United States is. Before Cora and Caesar initial underground train ride in Georgia, a station agent that help them named Lumbly states, “If you want to see what this nation is all about, I always say, you have to ride the rails. Look outside as you speed through, and you’ll find the true face of America” (Whitehead, 2016: 83). Turns out, mile after mile along her journey, there is only darkness. “Following Lumbly’s final instructions, Cora looked through the slats. There was only darkness, mile after mile.” (Whitehead, 2016: 84).

The darkness in the underground railroad represents the injustice that happens in the United States. It is also referring to the American dream that is not available for all races, all citizen or those who are chasing their American dream but never reach it

since there are oppressing regime that snatched it away from them. Those that are consider less, do not easily get a free pass to travel from one state to another and enjoy the scenery above the ground. They have to crawl their way under the ground surrounded with a dark tunnel, creaking boxcar, stinking rails. It is also seemingly a painful jab to the live of the blacks. It tries to remind that their place would never be in parallel to the live of the whites and that they have to endure oppression to survive living in the United States of America.

All these actual trains in the novel did not exist this far south in the real history of antebellum period United States. Underground train or subway was first built in Boston, Massachusetts during the Industrial Revolution period. It was preceded by advances in technology like the boring tunnel machine in order to begin making the construction for the track tunnel. During this late 19<sup>th</sup> century also marks the beginning of the underground or subway active operation in the US. It is palpable that the underground railroad in the novel is a misplacement of thing in the wrong place and time. This proves that this metaphor of the literal underground railroad as darkness of American journey for blacks is built in this novel specifically.

It is shown through Cora's observation that although South Carolina does not practice slavery, there is an application as a form of racism that is disguised within the society. White people decide and organize how black people should live their life in this state, they target black for medical experimentation and other unimaginable things. It proves that white people think that they are a superior race and that they should be the one who control black people, although they show it in a subtle way. Cora notices that the society in South Carolina might have malicious motives which is an act of racism distinguished their dreamy facade when certain things on how they

the society operate still very much remind her with what happened in plantation like how white people still control a lot of things, dictate and organize how black should live their life in South Carolina. One example that happened in the dormitories is that the proctors, the white people appointed to monitor the residents in the dormitories also like to arrange some things or events for black even though the agenda seems optimistic it contradicted with how Cora feels. Other thing that seems odd and strangely structured is when she is asked to go to the hospital to do a medical check-up and she discovers that many other fellow Africans are also there awaiting their examinations, “As the colored residents settled into South Carolina life, the doctors monitored their physical well-being with as much dedication as the proctors who took measurements of their emotional adjustments” (Whitehead, 2016: 133). From that quotation, it could also be seen just how much white still have power over black on behalf of their physic and mental and as many things as black could do freely without the fear of getting beaten or whipped across their back, they are still very much owned by government full of white working people, “According to the law, most of them were still property, their names on pieces of paper in cabinets kept by the United States Government” (Whitehead, 2016: 148).

One night when she wanders through the night, she spots a woman screaming “My babies, they’re taking away my babies!” (Whitehead, 2016: 126), while two men grabbed her and calming her down. It turns out that her curiosity is not just a negligible thought but it is a part of a veil plan that the state carries out to perform medical experimentation on black. They are targeting colored women who believed that they are treated under trial for syphilis program that could carry blood ailments, “The syphilis program was one of many studies and experiments under way at the



colored wing of the hospital” (Whitehead, 2016: 145).

In North Carolina, Cora often sees scenes or activities from very horrific to less horrific that the residents would enjoy but people of her color would abhor from the small hole in the wall in the attic where she hides. During the event like Friday Festival, people of the town would gather together. The evening starts with band performance and play performances in which the theme revolves around tragic slave narrative while those who act as black would blacken their faces with burned cork, this play mock and ridicule colored people and exerting white supremacy on public display by ending the night with the act of lynching or public execution usually by hanging the discovered or captured black people. It is an extreme of social control that white mob has power over and take pleasure in participating, “The town appreciated the moral of the performance, their applause resounding through the park” (Whitehead, 2016: 189).

This lynching culture is not only applied to colored runaways but also free colored people who sets their foot in North Carolina, “The new race laws forbid colored men and women from setting foot on North Carolina soil. Freemen who refused to leave their land were run off or massacred” (Whitehead, 2018: 198). Even white people of the town who are caught of helping or hiding colored people would end up hanged on public execution but their bodies are not appended to the freedom trail, “..., or for aiding and abetting a colored person, was left to discretion of local authorities. In practice, the verdict was death” (Whitehead, 2016: 200). The society in this town reacts to the widespread movement of abolishing slavery by abolishing black race.

Another dark day for black race is shown when a massacre or termination

performed by white people in order to abolish the existence of black race happens in the story. It could be said that this is a non-thoughtful or random act of racism. They do it for the reason none other than their hatred toward them for living in the same place and breathing the same air as white society. This thought only is enough to motivate them in actuating a black mass killing spree. When Cora stays in Valentine Farm, a place to accommodate black people in Indiana, she feels calm and at ease at first because she actually enjoys everything that she does there. She could read books, given a proper job, and meets her lover. Although deep in her heart, she is still haunted with the feeling that Ridgeway, the slave catcher is not giving up and would chase her here and it would mean that she is putting the farm in danger.

One night during a gathering night on Valentine farm where uplifting speeches are given, aesthetic poems are performed, hopes are spread throughout the room, white men including slave catcher wreaking havoc in the gathering night and put an end to Valentine farm. They put the houses on fire, firing black inside the meeting hall and slave catcher who owes a master to bring back their slave dragged the runaways off of the farm. “Then came a chorus of rifle fire, screams, and broken glass, and a mad scramble overtook the meeting hall” (Whitehead, 2016: 343). Another scary after-math moment is that white take pleasure in carrying out this malice action because of the racist thought ingrained in their brain, “The white posse dragged men and women into the dark, their hideous faces awash with delight” (Whitehead, 2016: 343).

#### **4.2.1.4 Pursuit of Freedom as the Construction of the Underground Railroad**

The metaphorical expression of pursuit of freedom as the construction of the underground railroad could be considered as a new metaphor. It provides a new

exclusive meaning that is not easy to understand without knowing the concept or the background theme of the story. Escape attempt or running away is akin to building a station, railways out of a stone and steel or iron. Its construction and the effort that it takes to build the underground railroad during the slavery era in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century could be represented by the term ‘pursuit of freedom’. “It was not difficult to imagine the sequence when the slave cast off his chains in pursuit of freedom—and retribution.” (Whitehead, 2016: 193).

In the hidden underground connection in Georgia lies the first railway car that carries Cora away from the plantation and head off to South Carolina. Only a few people know about this information and they have to keep this secret with their life. Seeing it for the first time in her life, Cora is captivated by it, “The tunnel pulled at her. How many hands had it required to make this place? And the tunnels beyond, wherever and how far they led...” (Whitehead, 2016: 82). In South Carolina, she also uses underground train to head to North Carolina to avoid slave catcher who hunts her down. Another locomotive connection in Tennessee and Indiana also become part of her journey in taking her to her supposedly final destination, the north.

Then, the fact that Cora is ended up always becomes her own superhero by being brave enough to outsmart certain white people, lucky enough to have people helping realize her subjective goal and by escaping slave-catchers many times. Most of all, the availability of the actual underground which always works in Cora’s favor is an alternative to the slave narrative back then which usually the white people under the ‘underground railroad’ network becomes a symbol of white savior. They fully arranged, accompanied and transported slaves through secretive houses or transportation to the north without a literal boxcar with its railways. In this novel, the

people who helps Cora seems to always encounter unfortunate destiny or ends up dead, “Running away was a transgression so large that the punishment enveloped every generous soul on her brief tour of freedom” (Whitehead, 2016: 259). Almost in every state, what’s captivating is the relationship of Cora and the underground railroad itself. The time she spent in the station in the dark tunnel for days, or accompanied with rats like the filthy station in North Carolina. Starving, longing for a drink and gasping for air surrounded her visions. This hopelessness is worth it when a light of hope in the shape of train car always coming her ways. Despite the chaos and the lunatic societies upholding racist values above the soil.

#### **4.2.1.5 Declaration of Independence as America**

The Declaration of Independence as America is a new metaphor. At the beginning, in Randall Plantation, a slave named Michael could recite long passages in the Declaration in rote memorization. It represents an America with an empty and hollow promise of freedom at its center. Later, on the Valentine farm in Indiana, the free black children recite the Declaration with a proud intonation in their schoolhouse, it is showing that American can indeed live up to its ideals.

Cora, seeing this racist white world juxtaposed against the words of the Declaration of Independence, decides that the concept of America is a ghost and an illusion, because the words "all men are created equal" are not a reality she has witnessed at all. “She didn’t understand the words, most of them at any rate, but created equal was not lost on her” (Whitehead, 2016: 139). The promises described in the Declaration of Independence might only live and exist elsewhere, “Now that she had run away and seen a bit of the country, Cora wasn’t sure the document described anything real at all. America was a ghost in the darkness, like her” (Whitehead, 2016:

216). South Carolina, North Carolina, Tennessee and Indiana, the places where Cora makes stop at and live during certain period of times, are the southern states of United States which practice severe slavery system according to its actual national history during the antebellum period, while in this novel some supposedly realistic history events is given a twist and through Cora's narrative, an alternative America is unfolded.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

*The Underground Railroad* by Colson Whitehead challenged the factual history of racism in the United States during the antebellum era with the availability of metaphorical expressions which have deeper sense of understanding in depicting racism and practice slavery in the antebellum era told in the novel. A certain manifestation of metaphorical expression is also very effective and beneficial in helping slaves escape their misfortune and find freedom. As a major example, the term ‘underground railroad’ that is being perceived as a conceptual metaphor in the beginning of the story and later actualizes into a real object with real tunnel and stations both has their own meaning as a metaphorical expressions.

Based on the analysis that is dependently unraveled from the runaway narrative of an enslaved fifteen years old woman named Cora who escapes from the southern plantation to find freedom in the North during antebellum period United States using the help of a subterranean train from one state to another state, it can be shown that there are metaphorical expressions found by the writer which could also give an in depth depiction or portrayal of how racism and practice of slavery were conducting and affecting the main character during her pursuit in seeking freedom to the North. The metaphors are Underground Railroad as network of safe houses and escape routes, America as an engine and a warden, the literal underground railroad as the darkness of American journey for Black race, pursuit of freedom as the construction of the underground railroad and Declaration of Independence as America.

In the story, Cora’s character also helps comprehend the reflection of horrific

racism in each state that she goes to and how she behaves toward her surrounding while Ridgeway's character as an antagonist represents a contradictive side against Cora. He is a slave catcher who devotes his life to catch Cora. The characteristics of antebellum south era are elaborated in the setting discussion and the conflict which Cora's endures against herself or Ridgeway displays her struggle in reaching freedom through staying and meeting several types of societies in the southern states of antebellum period.

The depiction of racism and slavery as its institutionalized form is made difference from one state to another state that Cora visited. The type of societies that she had to deal with also varies. Sociological perspective is seen fit to discuss about this topic and to better understand it. Cora encounters many kinds of racist societies with different intensity of racist behaviors. From living in the appalling plantation who would severely beat, whip or even kill disobedience slave in Georgia to living in a place where black and white are allowed to mingle in the public area but hide a sinister agenda for medical experiment that exploit black in South Carolina to a place where public lynching would be executed if white catches even just one black set their foot in North Carolina to a city that seemed to be undergoing post fire disaster in Tennessee and to the state where black people live and work together in a farm community just to be massacred in a night gathering by local white of Indiana. All of these situations and she could still manage to escape at the end. Some distinct differences to the real antebellum history are the situations that happened in South Carolina and North Carolina. South Carolina was one of the scariest states to live for black while North Carolina is less terrifying.





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