



**Dismantling Otherness or
Empowering Racism: William Blake's
Little Black Boy Reconsidered**

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موقع المجلة الإلكتروني:

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Abstract:

This paper examines William Blake's poem "*Little Black Boy*" through the lens of deconstruction theory. It aims to uncover the underlying contradictions and power dynamics within the poem and the socio-cultural context of 18th-century British society. While the poem ostensibly challenges racial hierarchies and advocates against the oppression of marginalized communities, this study argues that it inadvertently reinforces systemic prejudice. Through a comprehensive text analysis, including linguistic choices, metaphoric expressions, and paradoxical elements, the paper reveals Blake's deep-rooted racism and prejudice. The literature review explores various scholarly perspectives on the poem's treatment of racial otherness, highlighting the debate between challenging stereotypes and unintentionally perpetuating them. By engaging with differing viewpoints, this paper encourages a nuanced understanding of Blake's work within the broader discourse on race and representation in literature. Ultimately, it seeks to shed light on the complexities of Blake's poem, emphasizing its potential for resistance and transformative possibilities while questioning the extent to which it successfully dismantles prevailing notions of racism and otherness.

Keywords: Otherness, Deconstruction, Racism, Binary Opposition, Reading Strategy

An Introduction:

The poetry of William Blake has captivated critics and readers alike for an extended period, mostly due to its thematic depth, nuanced employment of symbolism, and ability to stimulate contemplation on societal matters. One of the literary pieces authored by him is "*Little Black Boy*," a poignant examination of the intricate interplay of race, identity, and power relations in late 18th-century British society. The primary objective of this paper is to provide a comprehensive analysis of Blake's poem via the lens of deconstruction theory. This theoretical framework reveals the inherent contradictions and hierarchies embedded within literary texts. Analyzing the poem "*Little Black Boy*" through deconstruction allows for identifying and examining the academic work's underlying dynamics and power dynamics.

This deconstructive approach will also consider the socio-cultural background surrounding Blake's work. This study examines the inherent tensions and contradictions prevalent in 18th-century British society, marked by many groups against slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, as well as the emergence of Enlightenment values. Comprehending these issues is crucial for understanding how Blake's poem challenges the dominant discourse of that era.

Nevertheless, adopting a deconstructive approach to the text prompts us to interrogate the superficial interpretations and reveal the inherent contradictions that subvert the apparent racial hierarchy. This paper explores the deconstructive approach in analyzing how, although Blake's poem seems to challenge and subvert prevailing notions about race, identity, and power, it reinforces these notions unconsciously. Through carefully analyzing the poem's linguistic selections, metaphoric expressions,

and paradoxical elements, we may see William Blake's culturally deep-rooted racism and prejudice against the other.

The primary objective of this essay is to provide an academic viewpoint on the poem "*Little Black Boy*" by employing a deconstructive approach that surpasses conventional readings. We aim to uncover its intricate nuances and uncertainties through a comprehensive text analysis, emphasizing its capacity for resistance and transformative possibilities.

This paper examines how various reading strategies of William Blake's poem *Little Black Boy* can either oppose otherness or support racism. Since its publication in 1789, *Song of Innocence* by William Blake has been attributed with various interpretations. This paper casts new light on the nuances of Blake's poetry and its relationship to racism and otherness by examining Blake's poem, scholarly discourses, and the poem's interpretations. Furthermore, it evaluates the poem's position in modern society and its potential to act as a catalyst for change while analyzing the various interpretations of his poem. Even though Blake's poem has another contrasting message due to its very structure, this paper demonstrates that it can also be interpreted in a way that reinforces systemic prejudice.

Little Black Boy by William Blake aims to attack the notion that some individuals are fundamentally "less than" or "different" from the rest of society. The poem is supposed to challenge the concept of "Otherness." Since it investigates racism in colonial Britain and the wider Western world through the eyes of a young infant, he identifies oppressors. He sheds light on the injustices experienced by people based on color difference. In addition to its stated objective, the poem subtly challenges the oppression of subjugated people by dismantling the notion of Otherness. This

paper investigates how the poem's themes of authority, intimidation, identity, and difference contribute to this effect. This paper, however, leans toward presenting a deconstructive reading of Blake's poem to question whether the poet was conditioned by his Western society to propagate racism or whether he was successful in conveying the intended meaning. Using Derrida's deconstruction to analyze the poem's ideological foundations, this paper aims to show how Blake reinforces what he seeks to dismantle.

Literature Review:

William Blake's poem "*The Little Black Boy*" has been the subject of analysis and interpretation in the field of criticism for a long time. In the context of discussions about race, identity, and representation, this literature review aims to explore the scholarly perspectives on how the poem addresses racial differences. The review specifically examines the debate surrounding whether "*The Little Black Boy*" challenges notions of otherness or inadvertently reinforces stereotypes and promotes racism. By analyzing works, this review seeks to illuminate Blake's poems' intricate and nuanced interpretations and their implications for our understanding of race and representation in literature.

According to Kamarzadeh (2014), the poem "*The Little Black Boy*" by William Blake delves into the experiences of a black boy during the 19th century, which were shaped by the prevailing imperialistic attitudes of the time as well as his mother's strong religious convictions and belief in a hereafter. William Blake, a renowned poet, was born in 1757 in London. From an early age, he exhibited exceptional artistic talent. William Blake authored the poem "*The Little Black Boy*" in 1789 at 32. This poem explores the

experiences of a young African-American male who endures the hardships of discrimination, navigating the complex dynamics between individuals with black and white racial identities. The little African-American infant attentively heeds his mother's remarks as she imparts her faith in God and the concept of an afterlife to her sorrowful child. This study aims to evaluate the aforementioned poetry through the lens of Postcolonial studies to identify its underlying origins and rationale. Postcolonial studies posit that these can be traced back to the imperialistic tendencies prevalent during the nineteenth century.

In Güneş's (2015) analysis, Blake's poem "*The Little Black Boy*" critiques the Cartesian dichotomy between black and white, significantly impacting racial dynamics inside Western societies. The present analysis aims to deconstruct the Cartesian dichotomy of black and white in the poem "*Little Black Boy*" by William Blake. Güneş seeks to provide an overview of the main findings and conclusions of the research study. In his work "*The Little Black Boy*," acclaimed English Romantic poet William Blake articulates sentiments that oppose racism. This study explores Blake's endeavor to dismantle the Cartesian duality inherent in the Western worldview. The dichotomy posits that the cosmos has been governed since its inception by two opposing forces, one representing goodness and the other embodying evil, both regarded as equally fundamental initial causes. Within this binary and hierarchical association, a single phrase assumes a position of primacy or real significance. In contrast, the other term takes a subordinate role or is characterized by a lack of originality and prominence. The Western world will see that individuals with white skin are consistently positioned as primary or foundational in comparison to individuals with black skin. This binary and

hierarchical dynamic appears to underlie the various racial issues that arise between black and white populations. Güneş posits that Blake purposefully deconstructs the binary and hierarchical association historically employed in Western societies to divide and exert control over individuals of African descent, as evidenced in his work "*The Little Black Boy*." According to Güneş's study, during a time characterized by widespread anti-slavery movements in both the Americas and Europe, Blake wanted to establish a society that upheld principles of equality, devoid of any prejudice or injustice.

In the analysis conducted by Shan-shan, L. (2013) argued that William Blake's poem, *The Little Black Boy*, depicts a narrator who experiences a flawed sense of self-identification. This theme is intricately linked to the emergence of racial slavery. The emergence of post-colonial theory in the 20th century aligns well with the thematic exploration of racism and identity in *The Little Black Boy* since it provides a framework for analyzing the protagonist's identity.

Prapanca (2015) aims to analyze William Blake's poem titled "*The Little Black Boy*." The author seeks to conduct an analysis and evaluation of the inherent and external components of the poetry. The poem "*The Little Black Boy*" incorporates three distinct speech figures: denotation and connotation, imagery, and simile. The author uses sociological theory to analyze the extrinsic conversations. The discourse is around the interplay between society and poetry, as well as the theological perspective of William Blake as expressed in his poetic works. The author observes that William Blake employs many terms in this poem that might reflect his contemplations regarding the prevailing circumstances during that period.

The literature surrounding William Blake's "*The Little Black Boy*" provides diverse perspectives on its treatment of racial

otherness. While some scholars emphasize the poem's potential to dismantle racial stereotypes and empower marginalized communities through spirituality and critique, others raise concerns about unintentionally reinforcing racial hierarchies. It is crucial to engage with these differing viewpoints and consider the historical, cultural, and theoretical contexts in which the poem was produced. This literature review is a foundation for further analysis and encourages a nuanced understanding of Blake's work within the broader discourse on race and representation in literature.

The Concept of Otherness:

Individuals who deviate from the normative characteristics of a particular group are often met with skepticism and labeled as "the other." As a result of their perceived inferiority, these persons are susceptible to prejudice and inequitable treatment. An individual's experience of Otherness can be influenced by various factors, such as ethnicity, nationality, religion, social class, political opinions, sexual orientation, and place of birth. This group is often perceived as lacking human qualities, deprived of basic entitlements, and subjected to social prejudice characterized by perceptions of inferior intellect or malevolence. In contrast to prevailing beliefs, it is important to note that the concept of the other does not necessarily pertain only to a collective or numerical group. Most of the population in a colonized nation has the potential to be perceived as the other.

A noteworthy example can be observed in the demographic composition of India during the period of British colonial administration, wherein the Indian population surpassed the British populace by a ratio of four thousand to one. The male majority within a community sometimes perceives female members as

"Other" based on their ideas. This perspective finds validation in Aristotle's assertion that women possess an "inherent deficiency," which renders them lacking in some attributes. Within the given framework, the concept of the other encompasses many entities, such as a particular social stratum, a familial unit, a scholastic faction, or a community at the regional level (Ericsson & Kostera, 2020).

The concept of otherness has also been explored in numerous literary works. This investigation can take many forms, including prejudice, difference, and identification. For example, novels such as *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker (1982) and *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee (1987) examine this concept in a manner that emphasizes and humanizes characters who are perceived by society as "other."

Contemporary cultures persistently encounter the phenomenon of "otherness" despite the implementation of laws and rhetorical strategies aimed at fostering inclusivity and eradicating discrimination on the grounds of gender, ethnicity, or any other relevant determinant. Hence, it is imperative to acknowledge and interrogate this notion to foster a more robust community. According to Murphy (2019), achieving a state of peaceful and comfortable coexistence can be attained by acknowledging the importance of our divergences and actively seeking to gain knowledge from each other.

The phenomenon of racial discrimination has been present throughout human history. The situation is exacerbated by a lack of engagement with individuals from diverse cultural origins or a dearth of prior exposure to working with individuals from different cultures. Several contributing variables, such as misconceptions, worries, and biases, lead to its rise. However, the issue of

discrimination persists when individuals are subjected to inferior treatment or perception based on factors such as race, ethnicity, culture, language, religion, or even skin color. The issue is further exacerbated when interacting with an individual perceived as inferior (Rattansi, 2020).

Several Romantic writers used slavery in all its guises as a primary topic in their writings at various points in their careers. In these literary works, the words "freedom" and "slavery" are figurative; however, their roots can be found in the historical context of plantation laborers and the slave trade. In contrast to slavery, romantic works emphasize the importance of individual liberty. Several Romantic authors spoke out against racism and the evils of slavery. However, authors of the same period also illustrated the "natural" illustration of a hierarchical organization, with Europeans on top. Race evolved from an ad hoc system of ascribed characteristics into a set of biological ingredients to establish a hierarchical social structure and classify all of humanity, with Africans as the foundation for this endeavor. Even the adamant opponent of slavery, Thomas Clarkson, could not resist granting Europeans preferential treatment in this purportedly civilized order (Stafford, 2012).

Exploring the notion of otherness and elucidating its manifestations may result in a profound understanding of racial discrimination and foster a determination to address it. Engaging in extensive discussions with individuals from various cultural backgrounds can effectively contribute to achieving this purpose. Acknowledging the origins of prejudice and mitigating its consequences by emphasizing distinctions is feasible. Acknowledging and accommodating these places of divergence can

potentially eliminate the relevance and impact of the notion of otherness.

William Blake and Racism:

William Blake (1757-1827) was an English poet, painter, and printmaker widely regarded as one of the most significant figures of English Romanticism. Despite having a limited formal education, Blake displayed extraordinary literary ability at a young age. Even before he began composing poetry as a teenager, he was an avid reader. As an apprentice bookbinder, he honed his drawing skills and devised an innovative method for illustrating poetry. *Songs of Innocence* is one of his most highly acclaimed poetry collections (1789). The work consists of poems from a child's viewpoint, exploring themes such as innocence and hope in childhood.

Blake was born and reared during the Industrial Revolution in England. As a result, his artistic works frequently portrayed the harsh realities of life during a period of immense social, political, and economic transformation. He created works of art based on his observations of the people affected by the brutal industrial society and his experiences of tragedy and loss. His lyrical writings and artwork depict a world of physical and spiritual suffering but imply hope in such horrifying conditions (Eaves, 2003).

In addition to his celebrated poetry, Blake also produced a substantial corpus of visual art. In addition to his interest in poetry, Blake began to explore the world of painting at an early age and was a skilled draftsman. His artwork is frequently characterized by intricate designs and compositions with a hazy overtone. In

addition, many of his works depict a supernatural or dreamlike setting, reflecting his art's abstract and spiritual qualities (Wu, 2012).

However, he is best known for his profoundly spiritual works incorporating profound religious and philosophical concepts (Lucas, 2014). For generations, William Blake's influence on English culture will be recognized in poetry, prose, and art. His works continue to be popular due to the awe and astonishment they instill in readers regarding the cosmos' marvels. In addition, William Blake demonstrated that imaginative works of art could inspire optimism and comprehension even in times of great turmoil and conflict (Eaves, 2003).

For countless generations, racism's harmful influence has been felt. It remains a significant issue worldwide despite our best attempts to eradicate it. Thankfully, writers from all corners of time and space have used their unique lyrical voices to fight for tolerance and acceptance in the face of bigotry. Some of these authors' works highlight how anti-discrimination campaigns have been waged via literature and the written word. William Blake's poetry, for instance, demonstrates how words can inspire people to strive toward a better, more equitable world. The tranquility and solace in his writings encourage us to continue battling for justice and equity. Poetry is a potent weapon in the fight against bigotry, and we can build on the various poets' legacies by studying and honoring their works.

In his artwork and writings from the early 1790s, William Blake focuses heavily on antislavery principles. He sees it as a failure to comprehend the genuine, sacred concept of charity and human unity, not merely an African problem. He believes that people are mentally enslaved when they adhere to unoriginal

religions and science, construct their manacles to achieve the limited goals they have set for themselves, and feel inferior to others. According to Blake, the perfection of the universe and all its inhabitants would result from achieving interior harmony. His compositions and works depict slavery negatively while simultaneously proclaiming a unified set of human values. He was an outspoken advocate for equal rights, regardless of race or gender (Gunes, 2015).

The literary and historical communities have accorded William Blake's paintings and illustrations great renown. Due to his spiritual visions, his lyrical and prophetic verse, and his use of mysticism and allegory, Blake is widely regarded as one of the most influential writers and thinkers in history. In his writing, he condemns discrimination and questions its stifling influence on individuals (Gunes, 2015). Blake's first outright attack on racism is in his seminal work *The Clod and the Pebble* (1794). The sonnet opens with a "clod" talking about how happy and content it is to be, all by itself, oblivious to the opinions of others. As a result, Blake composes a "pebble" in which he expresses his disappointment that "Love endeavors not to satisfy itself, / Nor has concern for itself." This suggests that individuals will always look for those who share their views no matter how much love they receive. A subtle jab at bias and its tendency to divide rather than bring people together (Elliott, 2009).

The poem *The Garden of Love* by William Blake elaborates on this concept (1793). In this poem, he employs vivid and evocative imagery to convey his feelings regarding racism. He envisions a once-thriving garden now surrounded by a graveyard with tombstones representing the suppression of individuality and freedom. Those who dare to access the once-glorious park after the

prejudice-powered gates have been shut will be punished for their divine distinction (Blake, 1794).

Little Black Boy (1789) and *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1793) by William Blake argue against prejudice and for the abolition of slavery, respectively. When faced with racism, the protagonist of *Little Black Boy* experiences internal doubts and conflicts. The inspiration for this poetic drama was an account of servitude in Surinam. Given their history of oppression, this sonnet argues that black people should be evaluated based on the content of their character rather than the color of their flesh. Blake argues in this poem that sun exposure causes black skin on Africans and that every black individual possesses a white soul. Once the soul views God's face, according to his metaphors, the cloud representing the body will "disappear." In the poem, the mother of Little Black Boy suggests that once the spirit is redeemed, the African body's ebony skin will dissolve into thin air. Because he can shield the white boy from the sun's rays, Little Black Boy deserves the sun's warmth and Jesus' affection more than the white boy.

Little Black Boy and *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* by William Blake are magnificent examples of his personal views on slavery. In his writings, he supports the equality of all ethnicities and sexes. The fact that he fought against slavery and prejudice at a time when they were prevalent in the Western world exemplifies his progressive ideals. This phrase illustrates his laborious efforts. His artwork and writing depict the horrific reality of slavery, but he sees the West and White people as the only hope for liberation and salvation.

The poem *London* (1794) is another example of Blake's racial commentary; it details the hardships endured by the city's

impoverished and disenfranchised due to racism. Blake wrote this song during his career as a poet. He argues that the government is hypocritical and gives examples of how people of African and Irish ancestry were denied access to London's urban centers because of their lower social status. His unwavering rejection of racism is reflected in his poems in several ways (Gunes, 2015). In this poem, Blake expresses his conviction that everyone should be afforded the same opportunities in life and, consequently, that bigotry of any kind should be vigorously denounced.

William Blake's forthright and profound perspective on racism and its detrimental effects on individuals makes him a compelling and influential voice in the ongoing battle against prejudice and discrimination. By examining his works, we can see how lyrical beauty and poetry can inspire and aid the fight against prejudice.

New critical Reading of the poem:

William Blake's poem *The Little Black Boy* (1789) is a powerful exploration of the impact of racism on the African-American experience. By highlighting the pain, confusion, and hope experienced by a young Black boy, the poem sheds light on the injustice of racial oppression. *The Little Black Boy* is a poem that comments on the issue of social inequality and prejudice. According to the New Critical analysis of this poem, one can see the use of various poetic devices and a clear moral position to bring attention to this inequality. The poem depicts a "Little Black Boy" whose skin is seemingly too dark for his mother's comfort. This introduction creates a stark contrast between the white European child and the dark-skinned son, which is used to emphasize the issue of social inequality in terms of skin complexion. The boy's

mother attempts to appease him with the assurance that he will one day move away and become part of "Heaven's family." This idea of Heaven as a place of acceptance and unity echoes the Christian view of Heaven and highlights that the proper understanding of Heaven lies in its lack of discrimination.

A "pale" and "sunny" sky is contrasted with the "clouds and darkness" of the boy's "western sky" in the following lines of the poem. The metaphor emphasizes the physical difference between the boy's and the white child's worlds and the emotional one. In contrast, the boy wishes for a brighter sky; his mother has accepted the gloominess of her son's existence. The notion of social inequality is reinforced, both externally and internally. It is a metaphor for the emotional toll that everyday encounters with prejudice take on those who experience them.

The poem culminates with the line, "The bowed head and the folded hands, their humbled hearts adore." This line serves to emphasize the fact that even in the face of inequality, the child is still able to find solace and strength in his faith. Ultimately, the poem serves as a reminder of the power of Christian beliefs to overcome the injustices of this world. Thus, William Blake's poem *Little Black Boy* advances a moral position on the issue of social inequality, using poetic devices to bring attention to this issue. Through an analysis using the New Critical approach, one can see the use of carefully constructed imagery and metaphors to emphasize the power of faith to conquer even the most seemingly hopeless scenarios.

The poem begins as the little black boy describes his joy at being in nature, with stars "shining in the skies" and the sun "clothing" him in its warmth. He expresses his happiness of being loved by his mother and the sun, symbolizing a universal

underlying racial unity. Despite this, he still feels alienated due to his skin color. He describes the burden of being despised by those around him and “a world of woes” that awaits him because of his race. As the story ends, the boy's perspective changes after being reassured by his mother. While he and others may face prejudice in this life, he is guaranteed that they will be loved and accepted by their Creator no matter what. The young boy finds passage and hopes through faith, ending the poem with the assurance that “white” and “black” will merge in God's sight and their true freedom will be gained. Ultimately, the poem is a poignant reminder of the racism that African Americans have experienced for centuries. However, it speaks to the power of love and faith in the face of despair and gives us hope for a better future.

Using the Binary Opposition and Contrast to Uncover Otherness:

William Blake’s poem *Little Black Boy* (1789) explores otherness and its impact on racial injustice. Through the young narrator, who is alienated due to his skin color and experiences discrimination due to his difference, Blake deftly tackles the concept of otherness. Throughout the poem, Blake employs a range of motifs and symbols to examine the oppressive repercussions of otherness. This can be seen in how the boy is “clothed” by the sun and juxtaposed with the “world of woes” dependent solely on the color of his skin. This contrast reveals the hypocrisy of a society that denies him access, love, and acceptance in the physical world but can still allow him to find solace in the spiritual one.

As the poem progresses, it becomes clear that despite the boy's alienation, his faith in a divine Creator gives him hope for a future where he can ultimately transcend his otherness. The poem

also highlights how oppressive systems of racism seek to divide humanity and deny justice, regardless of spiritual or religious beliefs. Blake encourages his readers to consider how this othering mentality reinforces the power imbalance between whites and people of color, causing exclusion and leading to further exclusion and suffering.

The themes explored in the poem offer an important reminder that the experience of otherness can be a source of distress and difficulty yet can also bring strength and a sense of solidarity. By exploring such themes in *Little Black Boy*, William Blake offers a powerful insight into the damaging effects of racism and other forms of oppression.

The poet uses contrast to effectively dismantle the oppressive power of the “othering” mentality of racism. In this poem, Blake examines the feelings of alienation, injustice, and, ultimately- hope that a young black boy faces due to his perceived differences.

The poem is written from the boy’s perspective and starts with his joy at being in nature, with stars “shining in the skies” and the sun “clothing” him in its warmth. Here, Blake juxtaposes the boy’s feeling of acceptance in this idyllic setting with the oppression he faces every day due to the color of his skin. The contrast between the two ideas is used throughout the poem to emphasize the grim reality of racism effectively.

The poem ends with a contrast between the boy’s physical world of ostracism and legal repression and his spiritual one of faith and unconditional love. By weaving these two contrasting perspectives together, Blake encourages readers to think of how oppressive systems aim to divide humanity by forcing people to decide between contradicting truths. He also contrasts these two worlds to illustrate how love and faith can triumph in the face of

hatred and oppression. In *Little Black Boy*, Blake poetically dismantles the concept of otherness and the oppressive power of racism with his creative use of contrast. By examining the young boy's experience of alienation and despair, he urges society to recognize our shared humanity and strive for a better, more just future.

William Blake's poem *Little Black Boy* is a prime example of how the poet uses binary opposition to explore racism and slavery in early 18th-century England. By presenting the discourses of black/white, rich/poor, privileged/disenfranchised, and oppressor/oppressed, Blake intends to change society by raising awareness about racism and poverty.

The poem opens with a contrast between the little boy's dark skin and whiteskin . The "clime of the purchased slave" (line 2) reveals the historical context of the poem, which is the slavery of the black race. From the beginning, by contrasting his skin with the white English boy, the black boy embodies the oppression his race faces, of which he is the victim. The poem talks about the innate differences between the two, the black boy being unhappy with his "shades of grief" and the white boy being joyful with his "golden Joys" (lines 8 and 9).

The white boy, who has a "mission...To spread abroad/The tidings of his love" (lines 12 and 13), and the black boy, who is expected to toil in the burning sun, provide a stark contrast. By comparing the life of the white boy with a "mission" while the black « boy's mission" (line 23) is to suffer in the heat, Blake further accentuates the unequal social conditions of both and highlights the racism and discrimination of the time.

Blake also uses binary opposition between the wealthy Englishmen who "compass'd" around the black boy (line 30) and

the poor, who were “poor” and possessed no “home” (lines 28 and 29). He captures the power imbalance in society and uses the words “compass” and “poor” to directly contrast the center of power and its victims.

The poem is set to end with a positive resolution as through the “soft, forgiving light” (line 42) from the boy’s mother, it is symbolically hinted that dark skin is no longer a cause of shame but something that should be celebrated. Thus, Blake uses binary opposition to contrast the ideal and the reality of racism and slavery in the 18th century. He shows how such contrast should be reversed so that “trembling” (line 40) no longer evokes pain and sorrow.

Deconstructive Reading:

Deconstructive reading is often called aporetic because deconstruction does not view any text as a unified, distinct whole but as having irreconcilable and contradictory aporias. This is because, according to deconstruction, no text has a unified, distinct whole. Miller conveys that a text's significance cannot be altered by elucidating the symbiotic relationship between the literary and critical texts, each dependent on and shaped by the other. (Miller, 1977).

Deconstructionists argue that conventional methods for classifying and condensing the meaning of a text are defective and should be reconsidered. Deconstruction is a literary analysis technique that examines, beneath the surface of a text, how language can distort or alter the communicated meanings. Deconstruction offers a new perspective on how various writings generate an delimitate meaning (Davis et al., 1979).

As a theory, deconstruction necessitates the creation of new terms; this explains Derrida's use of new terminology. Derrida initially appropriated the term "deconstruction" from the writings of Martin Heidegger and began applying it to textual analysis. Derrida argues that context is fundamental to the concept of difference, so there is no such thing as an external text. He argues that a nihilistic perspective is not the best method to comprehend opposition (Derrida, 1998).

However, the analytical theory of deconstruction emerged around the middle of the twentieth century in response to the dominant structuralist literary criticism of the period. Deconstructive thinkers shifted their attention from the text's structure and meaning to the rhetorical strategies employed in deconstructing it. Deconstructive theorists were thus better able to dissect written works. Therefore, deconstruction can be understood as a literary criticism focusing on the text's grammar and semantics to reveal any potentially concealed meanings (Davis et al., 1979).

In his book *Practicing Theory and Reading Literature: An Introduction*, Roman Selden endeavors to illustrate the operation of a Derridean approach, even though he is aware that this goes against the spirit of this methodology. He assumes the deconstructionist starts by exposing a particular text's hierarchically structured philosophical framework. Pairs of words (such as soul and body, being and non-being, good and bad, content and form, truth and lies, essential and inessential, speech and writing, and masculine and feminine) are understood to form a hierarchy of value or truth, allowing the writer to omit implications or meanings that conflict with the preferred terms. Thus, "body" is viewed as insubstantial and ephemeral, "form" as trivial and inconsistent, and "feminine" as deficient or weaker than "masculine." The deconstructionist

continues by inverting the hierarchy, not out of malice but because he or she perceives a lacuna in the text that permits such a shift. Ultimately, the new hierarchy is displaced and cannot establish a new "truth" or structural stability. Indeterminacy reigns supreme. Derrida viewed binary oppositions as organized in a state of unstable imbalance, whereas structuralists viewed them as immovable elements of a structural framework (Selden, 1989).

As a reading strategy, Deconstruction begins with the presumption that any given text contains both its explicit and latent meanings. Deconstruction aims to reveal and analyze such concealed messages. This can be accomplished by analyzing how metaphors, symbols, and other forms of language create meaning in a text. In addition, deconstruction aims to challenge established meanings and beliefs by exposing the text's underlying ideas and associations (Yerli, 2017).

Poststructuralist thought diverges from structuralist thought because poststructuralists believe that text reflects the world's actuality. Based on the polarities depicted in the poem, the poem *Little Black Boy* by William Blake may be interpreted as containing a racist undertone. The juxtaposition in the second line, "And I am black, but O! my soul is white," introduces a paradoxical contrast between the narrator's external racial identity and their innermost essence. The combination of blackness and whiteness presents a challenge to the conventional linkages between race and identity. The narrator's assertion that the soul possesses a white color serves to reflect Blake's deep-rooted racist conviction that white color is superior. White color, light, and English are superior to black color, cloud, and African. In addition, "White as an angel is the English child," introduces a racial comparison between the narrator and an English child. The English child is depicted as pure and angelic due

to their whiteness. This binary opposition between blackness and whiteness reflects the racial hierarchies prevalent during the time the poem was written. It exposes the power dynamics and privileging of whiteness within the colonial framework. Such lines as "White as an angel is the English Child" and "But I am black as if bereft of light" imply that a Eurocentric view of the universe is superior. This concept stems from the colonial mentality, in which colonizers believed they were 'kind' by transferring civilization to their colonies (Said, 2008).

"And these black bodies and this sun-burnt face/
Is but a cloud, and like a shady grove
The cloud will vanish. We shall hear his voice."

(Yeats, 2002, p.50)

As the poem continues, Blake establishes that white color and light are privileged. In a single line, it is implied that after death, everyone will have white skin, implying that whiteness is associated with celestial realms. In the poem, clouds are used as a metaphor to illustrate that having black skin and a sunburned face is only transient, just as clouds come and go.

The narrator of the poem *Little Black Boy* describes a lesson the narrator's mother imparted to a young black child about the impermanence of this existence and how we are only here to learn to love symbolically under God's beam. We will be welcomed into God's golden pavilion, which can be interpreted as heaven if we can withstand the intensity of such love. The young black boy relays his mother's sage advice to a young white English boy, symbolizing the ability of love to unite people of different ethnicities.

Within the deconstructive approach to *Little Black Boy*, the narrator's mother may teach her son a preference for whiteness rather than a religious lesson. This is demonstrated when the little black boy relays his mother's message to the white English boy, symbolizing his desire for validation and acceptance of his appearance. Thus, this message from his mother appears to have diminished the son's appreciation for the physical characteristics God has endowed him with and shaped his optimism that if the English boy believes that everyone will be the same in heaven, he will treat him better in life.

It is conceivable that the mother has been influenced by colonizers when considering her intentions in the poem. In some instances, colonizers were known to introduce their religion, and they frequently trained the priests of these faiths. This portion of the message could have been intended as propaganda to obtain favor with the colonized population.

The poem's last stanza forces the reader to reflect upon the oppression faced by the little black boy. "I'll shade him from the heat till he can bear" depicts a gesture from the speaker towards another character. Providing shade can symbolize offering protection or support to someone in the circumstances. However, within this act, there might also be an implied assumption that the other person, who is haired ("silver hair"), requires help or aid, reinforcing a power dynamic where the black individual is positioned as a caregiver or helper. The final line, "And be like him, and he will then love me," emphasizes the speaker's yearning for acceptance and affection. The speaker's desire to emulate the person implies a wish to adhere to standards or expectations. This longing for love and acceptance can be viewed as a reaction to the power dynamics and prejudices in the social framework. It prompts us to

question the genuineness of love that's contingent upon conformity or assimilation.

Texts are approached differently by poststructuralist criticism than by traditional interpretations. Instead of attempting to comprehend the poem's meaning based on its superficial level, the poststructuralist analyzes the text's deeper aspects. Deconstruction, popularized by Jacques Derrida, is one method. This methodology identifies binary opposites and challenges their conventional meanings. For example, the metaphors in the poem are dissected more thoroughly, and both intended and inadvertent messages are revealed. In addition, ambiguous passages are identified (Royle, 2003).

Therefore, deconstruction is an effective reading strategy for literary analysis because it enables readers to get to the heart of a work. In addition, it challenges conventional wisdom regarding meaning and interpretation, thereby revealing previously concealed aspects of the text. Finally, deconstruction offers an alternative method of literary analysis by emphasizing rhetorical strategies and dismantling binary relations in the text.

Attempting a deconstructive reading by applying these strategies to William Blake's poem *Little Black Boy* reveals its high complexity and intensity. Examining the dichotomies, metaphors, and ambiguous terms present in the poem enables a poststructuralist, specifically deconstructive, approach that allows more profound readings.

The “*Little Black Boy*” is a beautiful and powerful poem that resonates with us even today. It is a timely reminder to question the institutionalized racism and oppression that has persisted for far too long and to recognize and accept that we are all equal despite any

differences that can be seen on the surface. By doing this, we can move closer to dismantling otherness.

Conclusion:

English Romantic poet William Blake addressed social, political, and economic upheavals on his devices. His poems and visual art depicted life during the Industrial Revolution and offered hope and spiritual enlightenment. Blake's poetry and art affect English culture by inspiring readers and viewers to appreciate life and find hope in times of trouble.

This study examines otherness—how ethnicity, religion, social status, and politics are used to degrade others. Acceptance and variety have improved in societies. Otherness perpetuates discrimination and inequality. To address this, we must acknowledge and examine otherness, talk to others from diverse backgrounds, and respect our differences. Doing so can minimize bias and establish a healthier, more inclusive community.

Applying the new Critic reading, this paper has emphasized William Blake's antislavery and human unity views on racism. Blake believes racism shows a lack of charity and solidarity. He stressed the need to free our brains to create harmony. His words and art denounced injustice and promoted race and gender equality. Blake challenged racism in his poems to motivate people to work toward a world.

The poem “*Little Black Boy*” by William Blake addresses racism, discrimination, and ‘otherness.’ The poem attempts to explain the stark differences and injustice endured by the tiny black child, who was born into a world that considered him inferior to

others with lighter skin. In this poem, Blake wonders if white skin is better than black skin to disprove the concept that one color is better.

William Blake's *Little Black Boy* is a complicated poem on 18th-century England's racial dynamics. New Critical and Deconstructive readings illuminate Blake's complex critique of good and wrong. Either interpretation best conveys the poem's meaning and significance. New Criticism helps us identify Blake's iconic imagery and paradoxical structure. Deconstructing the poem shows its underlying meaning and nuanced significance, reflecting Victorian England's deep uneasiness with justice. *Little Black Boy* by William Blake is a powerful reminder of the ongoing fight for social and racial equality.

To conclude, this academic paper has delved into the complexities of William Blake's poem titled "*Little Black Boy*" and its connection to the ideas of otherness and racism. While the poem aims to challenge the notion of otherness and shed light on the injustices marginalized individuals face due to differences in skin color, this paper has presented an analysis that raises questions about whether Blake perpetuated racism or effectively conveyed his intended message.

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تفكيك الآخر أو تمكين العنصرية:

إعادة النظر في الفتى الأسود الصغير لويليام بليك

الملخص:

تبحث هذه الورقة في قصيدة ويليام بليك "الفتى الأسود الصغير" من خلال نظرية التفكيك. وتهدف الدراسة إلى الكشف عن التناقضات الكامنة وكذلك ديناميكيات السلطة داخل القصيدة والسياق الاجتماعي والثقافي للمجتمع البريطاني في القرن ١٨. ففي حين أن القصيدة تبدو ظاهريا وكأنها تتحدى العرقية وتتناهض اضطهاد المجتمعات المهمشة، فإن هذه الدراسة تطرح فكرة أنها تعزز عن غير قصد العنصرية الممنهجة. من خلال تحليل شامل للنص، بما في ذلك الخيارات اللغوية والتعبيرات المجازية والعناصر المتناقضة، تكشف الدراسة عن عنصرية بليك وتحامله المتأصلين. وكذلك تستكشف مراجعة الأدبيات وجهات نظر علمية مختلفة حول معالجة القصيدة للآخر العرقي، وتسلط الضوء على الجدل بين تحدي الصور النمطية وإدامتها عن غير قصد. من خلال التعامل مع وجهات نظر مختلفة، تدعو هذه الدراسة إلى فهم دقيق لعمل بليك ضمن الخطاب الأوسع حول العرق والتمثيل في الأدب. في نهاية المطاف، تسعى من خلال تفكيك القصيدة إلى تسليط الضوء على تناقضات قصيدة بليك، مع التأكيد على إمكاناتها للمقاومة والإمكانيات التحويلية مع التساؤل عن مدى نجاحها في تفكيك المفاهيم السائدة للعنصرية والآخر.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الآخر، التفكيك، العنصرية، المعارضة الثنائية، استراتيجية القراءة.