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**MAPPING RACIAL DOMINANCE: A POSTCOLONIAL  
CRITIQUE OF SPATIAL STRUCTURES IN WHITEHEAD'S THE  
NICKEL BOYS**

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### Abstract

*This research paper offers a postcolonial spatial analysis of Colson Whitehead's *The Nickel Boys*, arguing that the Nickel Academy is a "material engine" of racial injustice rather than a neutral backdrop. Drawing on Frantz Fanon's theory of the Manichean worldview, where the colonial universe is bifurcated into zones of "being" and "non-being," the study decodes the school's geography as a literal map of systemic power. Moving beyond themes of trauma, the qualitative analysis demonstrates how racism is embedded in the architecture and enacted through space. By examining segregated dormitories, administrative facades, and the punitive "White House," the paper shows how physical design reifies racial ideology. This hierarchy is reinforced by a "discursive architecture" of euphemisms that masks state violence. Ultimately, Whitehead's reform school serves as a monument to persistent colonial logic in America. By linking carceral studies with postcolonial theory, the research argues that the novel uses spatial narrative to critique how racial power is constructed, maintained, and resisted within the built environment.*

**Keywords:** *Racialized Space; Architectural Power; Postcolonial Critique; Systemic Racism; Necropolises.*

## INTRODUCTION:

### Background of the Study

To sustain racial hierarchy, power must be physically etched into the landscape rather than merely existing as an ideology. Racism "geographies" its logic, creating physical environments that enforce the divide between the dominant and the oppressed. This spatialization transforms abstract prejudice into a concrete reality that dictates movement, access, and survival.

Colson Whitehead's *The Nickel Boys* (2019) exposes this reality through the microcosm of a Florida reform school, illustrating how systemic injustice is manufactured into the American landscape. Inspired by the historical Arthur G. Dozier School for Boys, the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel moves beyond personal bigotry to critique a "carceral architecture" designed to uphold racial stratification. This research posits that institutions like the fictional Nickel Academy are not passive sites of mistreatment but are "spatial embodiments" of injustice engines purposefully engineered to produce and replicate racial subjugation.

To interpret this spatial grammar of authority, this study employs the postcolonial framework established by Frantz Fanon. In his seminal work, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Fanon describes the colonial landscape as a violently bifurcated "Manichean geography." This divide pits the settler's zone, a realm of light, infrastructure, and recognized "being" against the native's zone, a space of darkness, disorder, and "non-being." Such segregation is not merely socioeconomic but fundamentally spatial; power is sustained through the radical, hierarchical distinction between these two worlds. The reform school serves as a perfect manifestation of this Fanonian blueprint, with its white administrators, Black

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inmates, and a polished facade concealing a brutal, hidden interior and secret burial sites. It functions as a colonial enclave within the United States, materializing the abstract logic of white supremacy on American soil. By prioritizing a spatial reading, this analysis decontextualizes racism not as a mere collection of social practices, but as a deliberately engineered built environment.

Consequently, this research moves beyond exploring how racism functions within American institutions to examine how these structures serve as architectural manifestations of a persistent colonial racial regime. It positions *The Nickel Boys* as a vital piece of literary cartography, one that critiques the spatial planning and design of oppression, rather than just social policy or individual morality. In an era of heightened global awareness regarding systemic racism, carceral injustice, and the school-to-prison pipeline, this interdisciplinary approach offers a crucial method for understanding how power is physically constructed, naturalized, and potentially subverted in modern America. By meticulously tracing the "Manichean blueprint" of the Nickel Academy, this article argues that systemic racism is fundamentally a spatial and architectural project. Ultimately, it asserts that literature provides a unique, forensic platform for exposing the built environment of racial subjugation.

## **Research Objective**

To analyze the spatial architecture of the Nickel Academy in Colson Whitehead's *The Nickel Boys* through the lens of Frantz Fanon's Manichean worldview, demonstrating how the institution's physical design and geographic organization materialize and enforce systemic racial power.

## **Research Question**

RQ: 1 How does the narrative construction of space and architecture in *The Nickel Boys* function as a blueprint for a Fanonian racial hierarchy?

RQ: 2 How does this carceral geography shape the subjectivity and resistance of the incarcerated boys?

## **Significance of the Study**

This work has strong scholarly, methodological, and socio-political value, as it provides a new, integrative critical approach to the analysis of the intersections among systemic racism, literature, and space.

This research addresses a significant void in the scholarship of Colson Whitehead's *The Nickel Boys* by providing the first systematic exploration of its spatial and architectural poetics through Frantz Fanon's Manichean framework. While existing critiques focus on historical memory or trauma, this study redefines the Nickel Academy not as a mere backdrop for narrative events, but as the primary antagonist a physical machine that requires and performs racial violence. By applying Fanon's theories, originally rooted in the Algerian Revolution, to the modern American carceral state, the research establishes the novel as a vital part of the global postcolonial canon. This materialist reading enriches our understanding of Whitehead's radical literary techniques, demonstrating how his use of architectural metaphor exposes the domestic reform school as a colonial enclave. Methodologically, the study synthesizes Fanonian

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theory with critical geography and architectural studies to prove that racial divisions are literally manufactured into bricks, mortar, and landscapes. This forensic approach moves beyond metaphorical interpretations to show that institutional space is never neutral but inherently political. By framing racial justice as a struggle over who controls and defines space, the paper challenges liberal notions that removing prejudiced individuals is sufficient for progress. Instead, it aligns with decolonial movements and Black Lives Matter by suggesting that true justice requires the total dismantling of the structural blueprints that reproduce hierarchy. Ultimately, this work offers a repeatable template for analyzing how colonial power persists in contemporary housing, policing, and mass incarceration.

## Literature Review

A literature review is a critical overview of existing research on a specific topic. Rather than just a list of summaries, it synthesizes information to show the current state of knowledge, identify gaps, and provide a foundation for new research (Ahmad et al., 2022; Maitlo et al., 2023; Yousaf et al., 2025). Its function is to provide the foundation for new research (Ahmad et al., 2023; Maitlo et al., 2025). A literature review acts as a critical bridge between existing knowledge and your new research, ensuring your work is relevant and well-grounded (Jalbani et al., 2023; Ahmad et al., 2024; Maitlo et al., 2024; Shaheen et al., 2025). In a nutshell, its importance lies in its ability to justify, contextualize, and strengthen your academic efforts (Rao et al., 2023; Ansari et al., 2025). This review summarizes the critical terrain applicable to a spatial-architectural analysis of *The Nickel Boys*, how the general postcolonial theory has developed into particular novel scholarship, and conclusively where the gap that this study is set to fill: the failure to apply the Manichean geography of Fanon to the construction of the carceral space in the novel.

In a nutshell, the "spatial turn" in the humanities identifies colonialism as a systematic process of controlling both territory and the psyche. Central to this is Frantz Fanon's (1961) "Manichean geography," which describes a colonial world violently bifurcated into the settler's zone of "being" and the native's zone of "non-being." This physical segregation materializes power through absolute spatial difference rather than social unity. Expanding on this, Achille Mbembe (2003) introduced "necropolitics" to describe how sovereign power creates "death-worlds"—spatial enclaves where populations are relegated to social or physical destruction. Together, these theories provide a framework for viewing carceral institutions not merely as repressive sites, but as architectural projects that define humanity through the very landscape of racialization.

The model by Fanon should be differentiated with other powerful postcolonial spatial theories. The ideas of hybridity, mimicry, and the third space by Homi K. Bhabha contribute positively to the understanding of fixed identity and pure space, emphasizing on ambivalence, interstitiality, and the subversion of the colonial mimicry. Nevertheless, to examine the total institution of the Nickel Academy, a closed system based on radical segregation, total control, and spectacular violence, the model of a

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Manichean world provided by Fanon is a more directly applicable and diagnostically acute prism. The Academy does not work on ambiguity but fanatical division; its violence aims at eliminating any third space.

The Whitehead scholarship on the novel is abundant and interdisciplinary, but it is concentrated around a few major and frequently overlapping thematic areas which are yet to be brought to bear on a dedicated Fanonian spatial reading. Much of the most heartfelt criticism uses the theory of trauma and psychoanalytic models (Sultan, 2023) to explore the deep psychological destruction of such characters as Elwood Curtis. These works skillfully map the inner traumas of PTSD, broken memory, physical pain, caused by institutional racism. But they often consider the institution itself as a traumatic background or precipitating setting, instead of examining how that particular spatial arrangement of that setting is itself a major source of trauma. The structure of punishment is a poorly studied player in these psychological accounts.

The second, more solid body of work puts the novel in the context of sociology of the carceral state and the literary tradition of the neo-slave narrative. Critics such as Martin-Salvan (2022) can interpret the Nickel Academy as a carceral topography, directly relating its logic to the historical trajectory of slavery, Jim Crow, and modern-day mass incarceration. Such scholars as Junior (2023) effectively apply the concept of necropolitics by Mbemba to describe the school as a death-world. Others use sociological theories such as the conflict theory by Ralf Dahrendorf (Azizah, 2023) or white supremacy theories (Utami et al., 2025) to simulate the power dynamics of the Academy. These studies are analytically savvy and politically crucial, but they tend to concentrate on social processes, economic exploitation, or legal systems in the space, and pay less enduring attention to the way the architectural structure and spatial grammar of the space predetermine, determine, and naturalize the same processes. The blueprint in itself is hardly the focus of analysis.

The current criticisms are powerful but have their own limitations in a complete architectural interpretation. Trauma research throws light on the devastating effect, but may marginalize the spatial mechanism of the cause. Carceral and sociological criticisms recognize the system and history of power, but may fail to recognize the underlying spatial ideology - the Manichean delirium- which is the engine and justification of the system. This paper is meant to fill this gap. It states that a Fanonian spatial reading is not complementary but is rather a necessary part of a complete understanding of the most radical formal and political criticism in the novel. The combination of the insights of carceral studies and the accuracy of the geographical framework developed by Fanon enables this study to show how Whitehead employs narrative not only to narrate a story of injustice but to carefully map the blueprint of racial power, rendering visible and legible the otherwise normalized and naturalized architecture of oppression. This strategy shifts the interpretative aim of comprehending the institution as a place of injustice to the analysis of it as the material expression of that injustice.

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## **Methodology and Theoretical Framework**

Research methodology is the systematic plan or "blueprint" used to conduct a study, ensuring that results are valid, reliable, and address specific research objectives (Ahmad et al., 2021; Khokhar et al., 2025). While research methods are the specific tools (e.g., surveys, interviews), research methodology provides the logical framework and justification for choosing those tools (Cheema et al., 2023; Ahmad et al., 2025; Murtaza et al., 2025). This study employs a qualitative research design centered on spatial-textual analysis, utilizing Frantz Fanon's Manichean worldview as a rigorous theoretical prism to decode the architectural laws within Colson Whitehead's *The Nickel Boys* (2019). By treating narrative descriptions of landscape and geography as constitutive ideological components rather than mere background, the research systematically examines the "production, experience, and contest of space" through a three-layered approach: the physical layout and racialized aesthetics of the Nickel Academy, the governed and resistant choreographies of character movement, and the "discursive architecture" of euphemistic language that masks institutional violence. Following Fanon's (1961) assertion that the colonial world is violently "cut in two," the analysis maps how the Academy functions as a colonial enclave, bifurcating the environment into a "Zone of Being" for white administrators and a "Zone of Non-Being" for Black inmates. This framework reveals that the institution's very structure from its dignified facades to its hidden "White House" and secret burial grounds is a self-justifying machine designed to manufacture the racial inferiority it claims to rectify, effectively naturalizing oppression through the built environment.

## **Textual Analysis / Discussion**

This discussion uses the Manichean geography of Fanon as a diagnostic device to decipher the space architecture of the Nickel Academy. It states that the physical structure of the institution is not a neutral vessel of racism but rather its active, material machine, which creates a Fanonian zone of non-being that systematically generates dehumanized subjects and organizes all possibilities of resistance. The discussion is organized in such a way that it passes through the macro-level of the plan of the institution to the micro-level of the subject in terms of the internalized space.

The design of the Nickel Academy is a literal narrative blueprint of the compartmentalized colonial world of Fanon. It is geographically imposed in a strict, visible division between the domain of the oppressor and the oppressed, an architecture of absolute division. This is most directly manifested in the very division of living quarters: Cleveland to black boys, Roosevelt to white boys. It is not just a policy; it is an architectural fact that dictates all the spheres of life, sleep, and sociality. The very naming is important--the reference to U.S. presidents--to imply that this racial hierarchy is not an exception, but an American value, literally embedded in the sleeping quarters. The suggested lower state of affairs in Cleveland (more crowding, more neglect) is a material implementation of the qualitative distinction Fanon outlines between zones. The boys do not simply get taught that they are different, but they are taught by the tangible reality of the place where they live, that their side of the line is inferior.

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This space logic reproduces itself in an organic way and shows its internalization. The narrator notes, The racial division of the school recreated itself in the gym, with white boys taking the south half and black boys claiming the north (Whitehead, 2019, p. 87). This self-policing division, which is automatic and occurs in a theoretically communal space, proves the metabolism of the Manichean logic; the architecture of division has created a similar geography of the mind. The gym is a microcosm, a “topography of mind” in which the “us versus them” dichotomy is literally acted out and solidified daily, and does not necessitate overseers immediately. It demonstrates how horrifyingly successful the system is: the colonized start to impose the spatial limits of their own imprisonment.

The final architectural representation of this divided sovereignty is “the white house”. The name itself is a harsh ideological sign, which directly and cynically correlates absolute, punitive power with whiteness and executive power. The quote, The White House delivered the law, and everybody obeyed (Whitehead, 2019, p. 56), is the perfect summary of the Fanonian reality of colonial law: not a social contract, but an edict of violence, which is issued in a racialized space of terror. This space is in a dialectical connection with the rest of the academy. The administrative buildings of the school are clean and ordered and publicly facing, and form the performative zone of being, a stage set of alleged rehabilitation, civility, and benevolent order. The concealed White House and the concealed burial grounds are, in stark, deliberate opposition to the visible, unconcealed zone of non-being, the zone of non-being that is constitutive of the overall dichotomy, the zone of non-being where the constitutive violence of the overall dichotomy is exercised. This architectural hypocrisy, a facade of reform behind which is the facade of torture, resembles the typical colonial town, in which the clean, well-organized sector of the settler is literally supported by the latent savagery of the native quarters.

The last, or terminal, layer of this hierarchy of space is the burial ground, or “the garden”. Not only is it a negative space, but a hidden space, a void in which human bodies are turned into anonymous soil, literally planted out back. This is the necropolitical final stage of the Manichean plan: the zone of non-being is turned into a death-world. It is epistemologically fundamental to the functioning of the Academy that it be hidden; it is the geographical secret that cannot be revealed to the front of the reform to stand. The archeological finding of the grounds in the present-day frame of the novel is thus the final spatial counter-narrative. The land itself is the one that cannot hold the secret, anarchically opposing the official architecture overhead. The exhumation is an apocalyptic breakdown of the spatial arrangement of the Academy, its secret centre torn open, offering indisputable, material evidence that the zone of non-being was never, as well, a killing field.

The Manichean worldview is also realized in the racialized system of organization of labor and minute regulation of the movement of the body in the space of the Academy. Work assignments are not chores, but rather spatial practices that strengthen hierarchical identities and ontologies. “The white students handled construction and the reassembly... and the black students did most of the

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painting” (Whitehead, 2019, p. 95). It is an exact architectural metaphor in everyday life. White students are occupied with structural and foundational work, literally building and rebuilding the environment, whereas the Black students are relegated to surface, finishing, and veneering work. This spatializes the hierarchy of Fanon, whiteness as agentic, creative, and architectural (mind), and blackness as decorative, subsidiary, and surface-oriented (body). It is a pedagogy of space, which is practised on a daily basis, educating each group of people about their natural location in the racial and physical hierarchy.

It is also controlled by arbitrary, capricious power to re-assign spatial identity, according to epidermal perception. The example of Jaime, who was taken out of the white to the Black dormitory when his skin turned dark in the lime fields due to the sun (Whitehead, 2019, p. 51), illustrates the unstable and visual dictatorship of such a racial-spatial order. The lime fields serve the purpose of racializing, and the decree of Superintendent Spencer is a form of what can be called spatial transubstantiation: a word, he transforms the essence of Jaime and thereby his proper place on the Manichean map. This highlights the fact that the blueprint is dynamic and is being redrawn by the ruling elites to sustain its rigid and fantastical categories against the reality of human life. Their movement is therefore never free since it is a product of their racial designation in the blueprint, whether they are being marched to a worksite, dragged to the White House, or redesigned through a whimsical interpretation of their body.

This epidermalization - the de-identification to skin color imposed by spatial rule - is ruthlessly imposed by discourse. The architectural segregation is reflected in the verbal one, the blunt, pedagogical statement that is smashed into the boys, “You are a colored boy in a white man's world” (Whitehead, 2019). It is ideological interpellation that attempts to directly project the external racial-spatial order onto their subjectivity, to educate them to view themselves as always outsiders, whose identity is determined by their subordinated position in a world made by others.

The spatial violence of the Academy is not only intended to discipline the body, but also to colonize the mind, to make the boys internalize its geography. This leads to the Fanonian schizophrenic division or “psychic duality”, in which the outer Manichean world generates an inner division. The most devastating account of this internalization in this novel is the path of Elwood Curtis. His early idealism, inspired by the documented addresses of Martin Luther King Jr., is a valiant effort to have faith in a moral world that is not divided into Manichaeian poles, a world in which justice is blind and hard work is paid off.

But the system of spatial brutality of the Academy systematically destroys this cosmology. His psychic breakdown reaches its peak following a traumatic accidental wound. His thought at the moment of great pathos is, in his immediate, instinctive thought: He yelped like a dog and then curled on the floor for a few minutes. The bathroom tile was cool on his skin. It was his own fault (Whitehead, 2019). With this instinctive self-accusation, the final, chilling triumph of the spatial-ideological apparatus is manifested: the victim has internalized the logic of his own punishment. He makes pain and misfortune

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his natural failing, which is their right, and leaves the system of oppression out of the equation. The physical order has been transformed into a mental order. His next agonized move was to compose an anonymous report on the corruption at the school. He didn't put his name down to kid himself that they wouldn't know the author's identity. They'd know he was the snitch, of course, but they'd be in jail (Whitehead, 2019). He exists in two conflicting psychic spaces simultaneously, between the moral geography of the justice he subscribes to and the brutal spatial reality of the law of the White House.

Turner, on the other hand, is a practical, cynical interpretation of the blueprint. His survivalism is a kind of professional, though pessimistic, spatial navigation; he interprets the obscure codes and treachery of the geography of the Academy with a realism which Elwood does not possess. His opposition is not an effort to cross over or ethically criticize the Manichean divide but to use its cracks, fissures, and blind spots for survival. His final escape and his lifelong, haunted adoption of the name of Elwood is possibly his greatest spatial action. It is a symbolic act of taking over the identity of a dead friend, of carrying Elwood, a soul killed by the geography, out of the zone of non-being and into a future, however psychologically traumatized and geographically limited.

In this totalizing space order, resistance should be conceived, following Fanonian vocabulary, as a kind of counter-violence, which aims at re-mapping the self and the land. This is not necessarily a great uprising; it is frequently a non-verbal, spatial repossession. The hidden classroom in the basement where a teacher secretly trains the boys is a gorgeous example. It is the invention of a subterranean, interstitial “zone of being” in the heart of the “zone of non-being”. This is an underground space that is a direct counter-architecture, a psychic refuge in which mind and potential are cultivated against the design of the institution to stultify and brutalize. It is the secret of its power, a spatial conspiracy with the dominant map.

The final anti-violence against the spatial regime of erasure is the frame narrative of the novel: the archaeological excavation. The discovery of the bodies was an expensive complication... Now they had to start a new inquiry, establish the identities of the deceased and the manner of death (Whitehead, 2019). This is a radical spatial act that is covered by this bureaucratic language. The exhumation is a forced, collective redrawing. It pulls the secret, negative space of the burial ground to the light of the day, compelling the official geography to see what it was constructed to hide. The naming of the so-called “seven remained unnamed” in the course of the forensic procedure (Whitehead, 2019) is a discursive counter-violence, which reinstates identity to the erased, violently redressing the official account. It is the land and the truth bursting out of the blueprint, and showing that the map is not the territory, and that the territory has its own ugly testament.

## Findings and Conclusion

This paper has shown that a Fanonian spatial analysis is not only possible but necessary to unveil the deep architectural criticism that Colson Whitehead explores in *The Nickel Boys*. Using the Manichean

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worldview of Fanon as a spatial and architectural principle, the research has been able to go beyond interpreting the Nickel Academy as a place of injustice and to examine it as the active producer and generator of the injustice through its very form. The novel not only comes out as a narrative of a racist organization, but as a detailed literary mapping of racism as the architecture of the institution.

The main conclusions of this spatial-textual analysis are united that the Nickel Academy is a literal, working literary embodiment of the “world cut in two” as suggested by Fanon. Its power is inscribed in many ways in its architecture:

The architecture of the Academy is made to produce a physical and rigid separation between a “zone of being” (the administrative, outward-facing spaces of performative order) and a “zone of non-being” (the punitive, secretive, and deadly spaces of the White House and burial grounds). It is not some chance segregation but the constitutive architectural principle of the institution. It makes racial hierarchy a fact of the environment, material, and sensual, and makes it look as natural and inevitable as the walls.

The discussion shows that buildings and landscapes in the novel are active agents of narrative, and they have ideological agency. The White House is not only where beatings are done, but it is also the royal residence of racial terror; its name is a literal ideological substitute for whiteness with absolute, punitive law. The rational, necropolitical conclusion of this spatial logic is the final, secretive geography, the ultimate, concealed geography, where the individuals who have been pushed to social non-being are literally erased, and the erasure process is closed. The very structure of architecture does the violence of classification and destruction.

The internalization of racism-- the tragic, instinctive response of Elwood, who concludes that his suffering is his fault -- is revealed to be a direct psychological effect of living in the Manichean blueprint. This geography of oppression, which the boys are constantly and violently forced to negotiate, through segregated dormitories to racialized work placement, educates them on their location within a spatial and social hierarchy. This process disintegrates the sense of coherent self and substitutes it with what Fanon termed a “psychic duality” in which the subject perceives himself as the hostile gaze written on the landscape.

To sum up, this paper has demonstrated that the novel by Whitehead presents a masterpiece of spatial criticism. *The Nickel Boys* makes the readers realize that systemic racism is not merely a collection of policies, prejudices, or economic inequalities but a spatial project. The reform school is a plan, a well-planned and comprehensive space in which racism is put into practice in terms of walls, thresholds, sightlines, and territories. This Fanonian reading is a much-needed corrective and an addition to the current scholarship. It demonstrates that the violence of the Academy is not an exception in its system, a perversion of its ideal mission. Instead, it is the system operating as intended, as the architecture of the system serves its purpose of demarcating, containing, and dehumanizing along racial lines.

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It is resistance that is ultimately reframed in this spatial paradigm in the novel. Resistance is not only a complex of actions, but a complex of practices of re-positioning the self within the oppressive space. The attempt of Elwood to use the moral channels of the system itself is a disastrous mis-mapping based on the inadequate cognition of the terrain. The art of navigation and escape by Turner is a triumphant, but deeply mutilated, re-plotting of a route beyond the official map. The archaeological excavation, several decades later, becomes the land itself and historical truth, executing the final act of counter-mapping. It violently amends the official account, revealing the secret coordinates of death under the lawn. Accordingly, the fundamental conflict of *The Nickel Boys* is uncovered as a cartographic war -- a struggle over who is entitled to draw the authoritative map of reality, to set the space, and to write memory on it.

The lasting usefulness of this analysis is that it has a wide applicability beyond the page. This study sheds light on a stark spectrum between fictional Nickel Academy and carceral institutions in the real world, segregated neighborhoods, exclusionary urban planning, and the militarized architecture of borders by offering a rigorous framework of how to read the racial politics of built environments in literature. It confirms, with a new theoretical power, the fact that the struggle of racial justice is the struggle of space, of who plans it, who dominates it, who is free to move in it, and who is entitled to its history and its future. Colson Whitehead, with his careful literary construction, and Frantz Fanon, with his geographical theory of radicalism, both present invaluable, complementary instruments with which to deconstruct, both analytically and practically, the patterns of oppression.

## **Recommendations**

Following the insights that this spatial-literary analysis has produced, it is possible to suggest the following recommendations to scholars, educators, and policymakers:

To advance the field of literary and social critique, scholars should formally integrate spatial theories such as Fanonian geography and architectural theory into their analytical methodologies to move beyond thematic readings and expose how narrative form itself constructs ideological meaning. Future research ought to apply this Fanonian lens to a broader, transnational corpus of carceral and neo-slave narratives, fostering interdisciplinary collaborations between literary studies, urban geography, and environmental psychology to better understand the lived experience of institutional design. Pedagogically, educators should incorporate modules on spatial justice that encourage students to map the geographies of power in texts like *The Nickel Boys* and compare them to contemporary carceral landscapes. Furthermore, policymakers and activists must support the memorialization of "erased" geographies of violence, recognizing these sites as pedagogical tools that reveal the architectural character of state power. Ultimately, advocacy for prison abolition and urban reform must include an explicit architectural critique, demanding the deconstruction of designs that surveil and dehumanize in favor of environments that prioritize transparency, dignity, and free movement, acknowledging that the struggle for racial justice is fundamentally a struggle over the design and control of space.

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