THE RACIAL DISTRIBUTION GUILT: BLACKS' BETRAYAL OF BLACKNESS IN CHARLES JOHNSON'S *MIDDLE PASSAGE* (1990) AND EDWARD P. JONES' *THE KNOWN WORLD* (2003)

Dr Kotchafolo SORO
sorokotchafolo@gmail.com
Dr Ouana Alassane SEKONGO
ouanaalassane@gmail.com
Postdoctoral Researchers graduated from Alassane Ouattara University (Bouaké, Côte d'Ivoire)

Abstract

This paper analyzes the system of subjugation and exploitation of man by man based on skin color in Charles Johnson's Middle Passage and Edward P. Jones' The Known World. It lingers on the intra-racial and inter-racial relationships of oppression. The study proceeds with an "against the grain" reading of Middle Passage and a "with the grain" reading of The Known World in order to bring to light blacks' responsibilities in the wretchedness of their race. Drawing on a deconstructive framework, the study posits that the black man is a wolf to his fellow black man, objecting thus the assumption that the white man is the main oppressor. Deconstruction, viewed from Michael Payne's standpoint, is nothing, not a method, not a technique, not even an act. It is a reading process aiming at spotlighting "a deconstructive process already existing in the text" (Payne qtd in Rolfe, 2004, p.274). This study analyzes the authors' attempt to unsettle the traditional views of the black-white relationships and draw people's attention on blacks' responsibilities in their own

predicament. The article specifically discusses blacks' betrayal of blackness during the era of slavery and also in contemporary international relationships.

Key words: Blackness, enslavement, betrayal, responsibility

Résumé

Cet article analyse le système d'asservissement et d'exploitation de l'homme par l'homme basé sur la couleur de la peau dans *Middle Passage* de Charles Johnson et *The Known World* d'Edward P. Jones. Il s'attarde sur les rapports d'oppressions interraciales et intra-raciales. L'étude procède par une lecture à « contre-courant » de *Middle Passage* et une lecture suivant la perspective d'Edward P. Jones dans *The Known World* afin de mettre en évidence les responsabilités des Noirs dans la misère de leur race. S'appuyant sur une charpente de déconstruction, l'article soutient que l'homme noir est un loup pour son frère noir remettant ainsi en cause les suppositions selon lesquelles l'homme blanc serait l'oppresseur principal. La déconstruction, du point de vue de Michael Payne, n'est rien, elle n'est ni une méthode, ni une technique ni même un acte. Il s'agit d'un processus de « déconstruction déjà existant dans le texte » (Payne cité dans Rolfe, 2004, p. 274). Cette étude analyse l'effort consenti par ces auteurs afin de bouleverser les visions traditionnelles des relations entre Noirs et Blancs et d'attirer l'attention sur les responsabilités des Noirs dans leur propre situation de misère. L'article met particulièrement l'accent sur la trahison de la Négritude par les Noirs eux-mêmes, non seulement pendant l'époque de l'esclavage mais aussi dans les relations internationales contemporaines.

Mots clés : Négritude, asservissement, trahison, responsabilité

Introduction

'Life is a marathon', says a maxim. If that dictum embodies a stamp of truth, it is unmistakable that other races are far gone while the black man is still lagging behind. Metaphorically and humorously, some races have even traversed Athens a long time ago while the black man is still in a marathon, the battlefield amongst wrecks, just struggling to find a foothold. This prolonged wretchedness of the black being created a network of insulting identification around blackness leading other races to glance contemptuously at this race. Blackness is much lampooned and vilified in different ways and different fields. Some religious conceptions, probably distorted ones, deliberately associate blackness with sinfulness. In the fields of social sciences, blacks are frequently seen as savages. They are even considered as closed in nature to apes than human beings. In terms of virtues and skillfulness, compare to other races, the black man is said to be less dependable, naïve, lacking charisma and creativity. In short, there seems to be direct correlation between blackness and negativity. Accordingly, the association of blackness to the armada of pejorative identifications makes his skin color a handicap to the Negro among other races.

Admittedly, blackness is vilipended everywhere by other races. Therefore, the black being is mishandle, subjugated and submitted to inhuman treatment by other races. Disapprovingly, what arouses great shock and bitterness is the betrayal of blackness by other blacks.

Blackness has a specific definition in this paper. In fact, beyond its traditional meaning which is simply the state or quality of having a dark complexion, in this article blackness refers to a color-coded brotherhood or sorority that seeks to unite people of African descent and valorize their identity. Hence, the betrayal is the performance of any action by a member of the community that is detrimental to other members or any action that demotes and discredits the race. This article calls on black people to support themselves and value their culture, which is the first step to make others accept and respect them in the world.

In the novels of Johnson and Edward, the betrayal is conspicuous. The betrayal is perceivable through a glaring fact; that is the exploitation of blacks by blacks. Some powerful blacks pursue profit at the expense of the life of other fellow blacks. To clarify, in the fictions of Johnson and Edward, some black characters possess black slaves. Others operate in slavery; that is to say, they buy and sell black slaves while they are blacks themselves. Along with this glairing case in point of high treason, other treasonable acts against the community are passing, mismanagement of state institutions after the departure of the colonizer, the open reluctance to adhere to organizations intended to promote Pan-Africanism. Another alarming aspect of the betrayal today is Africans' *en masse* illegal migration towards other continents leaving their ancestors behind and neglecting the development of their motherland.

Logically, this paper does not linger on nervous inter-racial relationships between blacks and other races. It rather analyzes treacherous and unfraternal relationships between black characters and their fellow blacks. Actually,

though there is no more human traffic as such, Africa is still mimed by a number of vices that hinder the advancement of the continent. Accordingly, the study seeks to know in what way is the black man a wolf to his fellow black man? Starting with the hypothesis that the avowed and natural enemies of Africa are Africans, the study will consecutively analyze blacks' part of responsibility in the enslavement of the race and how their objectionable behaviors delay Africa nowadays. Then, it suggests some positive attitudes black people should adopt in order to develop Africa, which is their homeland.

I. Paradigm Shift: Reconsidering the Enslaving Circumstances of Black Africans

1. Africans' Part of responsibility in the process of Enslavement

Slavery is, in general, a forced labor regardless of legality. In the context of this investigation, slavery is an institution or social practice that consists in owning human beings as property in a condition of servitude and subjugation. Notably, the enslaved person works for no payment. Doubtlessly, slavery does exist almost everywhere in the world. Seen anywhere, the term 'slavery' is reminiscent of the trafficking of black African slaves from Africa to America through a series of interactions between Europeans, Arabs, Asians and deplorably Africans themselves. In fact, in debates about the slave trade, people generally point at Europeans and Arabs as main actors. Although this may be true, it is also worth mentioning that

the slave trade was quickened and made easier by some black Africans.

On that account, a number of testimonies highly prove that blacks were directly implicated in the scandal. By way of illustration, M. P. Daniel and C. Malcolm (1962) mention "98% des captifs on été à des courtiers africains, les 2% restant ayant été enlevés par les Portugais lors de leur premier contact avec l'Afrique", '98% of the captives have been bought from African brokers, the other 2% have been kidnaped by Portuguese during their first contact with Africa' (my trans…). Thomas Bailey and David Kennedy are also very edifying. In their book entitled *The American Spirit* (1984), they relate the account of an active participant. The English Captain provides a detailed description of the slave trade chain underlining Africans' role in the process of enslavement. He explains "The present king often, when ships are in great strait for slaves, and cannot be supply'd otherwise, will sell 3 or 400 of his wives to complete their number, but we always pay dearer for his slaves than those bought of the cappasheirs" (B. Thomas & K. David, 1984, p. 61).

The evidence presented thus supports the idea that blacks did effectively participate in the enslavement of their own fellow creatures. This disappointing aspect generally goes unnoticed, as it is unknown in the known world. The known world, in this specific context, is the popular opinion that slavery was a business of westerners. The fictional works of Johnson and Jones then derogate the traditional view of slavery and draw attentions on a background information that remained long recessive. Their literary works fit into the scheme of Peter Vaclav Zima's

deconstructive criticism. He suggests that "detecting contradictions and aporias is a crucial element of deconstructive criticism whose main function is to refute the claims of the concept and the rationality of the logos" (Z. V. Peter, 2002, p. 4). They excavate the historiography of the slave trade to detect and situate the responsibilities of each race. Along the same lines, they correspond to the category of fiction writers that Michel Foucault sees as historians whose job consists in excavating a given epoch to expose what he calls the "other history, which runs beneath history" (F. Michel, 1972, p. 121). Johnson's novel excavates and exposes a case in point of a black slaver. The novel shows that Calhoun the black protagonist, facing Papa's implication in slave trade, is so upset and indignant that he interrogates "Papa is he sayin' you was dealin' in slaves?" (*Middle Passage*[1], p. 201). In fact, being obsessed with the burning desire for making property, Papa Zeringue, a 'black tycoon,' blindly invests in the economics of slavery that consists in raiding, capturing, buying and shipping his kinsfolk to America. And worse, his initials (*PZ*) are branded on the bodies of those who could have been considered as siblings. Calhoun highlights it thus, "All, like livestock, bore the initials of the Republic's financers burned into their right buttock by a twisted wire – ZS, PZ, EG, a cabal of Louisiana speculators whose names I would learn soon enough" (MP, pp. 120-121). Tidiane N'Diaye confirms the complicity of Africans in the facilitation of black people's trafficking that he considers as a genocide. He insists «Ainsi, la triste réalité est que des Noirs ont livré d'autres Noirs. […] Quand les chasseurs

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[1] Hereafter, any quotations from *Charles Johnson's Middle Passage* will be introduced by this acronym 'MP' followed by page numbers.

d'hommes arabes ne faisaient pas le travail eux-mêmes, la plupart des rabatteurs qui livraient les captifs noirs aux négriers étaient bien des Noirs » (N. Tidiane, 2008, p. 114) ; "So, the sad reality is that some Blacks have handed over other Blacks. […] When the Arab men-hunters did not do the work themselves, most of the beaters who delivered the black captives to the slaves' traders were indeed Blacks" (my trans…). Overall, at the dusk of this section, it is possible to infer that without the active participation of Blacks in slavery, it would not have wounded Africa so severely, hence the high betrayal of the race.

2. Intra-racial Enslavement: Blacks Exploiting Blacks

In their novels, both Johnson and Jones portray freed black characters as being paranoid due to their painful experiences while they were under slavery. This paranoiac feeling keeps these forms of black characters to regard others as the cause of their suffering. In *Middle Passage*, for instance, by considering himself to be the first one betrayed by his black folks who sold him to white slaveowners to work on cocoa plantation in America, the protagonist Rutherford Calhoun no longer trusts his brothers in any situation. This is perhaps the reason why he gets involved in black enslavement in the course of the story as a way of throwing back the stone to his unfriendly black fellows as C. Yildiray (2016, p. 86) underlines that "Rutherford Calhoun, the first-person narrator of Middle Passage, is a unique and complicated protagonist. He is both a philosopher and a trickster." Similarly, the hero Henry Townsend in *The Known World*, has a betraying attitude

toward his fellow blacks who could not early detect his fake character. In fact, functioning as a freed slave in the story, he also takes part in the enslavement of other black people, which reveals his unreliability among his folks. In this respect, S. M. Mutter (2011, p. 135) asserts:

> One would expect that a slaveowner like Henry Townsend who spent his childhood as William Robbins's property would possess a greater capacity for love, for sympathy and especially for empathy [. . .] Henry Townsend has been enslaved and could be enslaved; he just happens, in the moment of novel, not to be. That he nonetheless chooses to actively participate in a chattel system as a slaveowner is strange, and deeply ironic. The presence of black slaveowners is probably the most memorable and is certainly the most surprising feature of The Known World.

Additionally, it is arguable that in both novels, the feeling of being homeless brings some freed slaves to be callous to their black fellows. After spending several years of slavery in racial American society, these black characters surely feel homesick. They seem to operate in a complex system because while white Americans do not consider them as brothers, they are also overlooked by their original African folks who regard them as people who lose their roots. Under this umbrella, they are neither seen as Americans, nor fully as Africans. In this context, the notion of 'cultural in-between' gains its full meaning. In *Middle Passage*, Calhoun's attempt to cross the Atlantic to Africa can be translated as his eagerness to come back home and embrace his roots. However, the hardships he went through

seems to transform him into a heartless person since "Thieving and lying become a stock for him [Rutherford Calhoun] that betrays his position as a 'middleman'- neither European nor African, neither American nor anything else" (C. Yildiray, 2016, p. 86). Throughout the story, Calhoun is mainly portrayed as a crook and an unreliable individual to the point that his black fellows doubt him. Just as Calhoun, Henry Townsend functions as an untrustworthy person in *The Known World*. By partaking in slavery, he demonstrates his feeling of disgust for his own brothers. This aligns with the common saying that 'if there is no enemy within, the enemy outside cannot harm you.' Had Townsend not turned against his own brothers, slavery could have easily been prevented. Taking part in it gives him the power to perpetuate it, not just in American society but also in some African areas as S. M. Mutter (2011, p. 136) points out that "The novel [*The Known World*] does not dwell on any implicit distinctions between white slaveowners and black slaveowners; rather it suggests that, at base, a slaveowner is a slaveowner."

In both narratives, the quest for survival also turns several black characters against others. This internal conflict is economically driven because everyone seeks their own well-being at the expense of others. For instance, while seeking economic empowerment, some former slaves like Henry Townsend in *The Known World* turn their brothers into slaves. In doing so, they can, in turn, use them to work for them with a view to lining up their pockets as A. Irana et al. (2017, p. 32) stress that "Creating Henry Townsend as the main character who owns slaves when he has his freedom, Jones shows the representation of how the Blacks

[try] to reach equal position with the whites by owning slaves." It is surprising that instead of supporting one another against their white oppressors, these freed black slaves turn out as betrayers by submerging their own brothers into slavery. Under such circumstances, it can be admitted that Whites are not the only perpetrators of slavery, but some Blacks also partake in reinforcing it in racial American society. This callousness of blacks toward other blacks is reflected in *Middle Passage* through the attitude of Calhoun who seems to disregard the suffering of his brothers. While on *The Republic*, Calhoun is portrayed as a selfish man; that is, he only cares about his survival to the detriment of his black fellows who scrawl under exploitation as C. Yildiray (2016, p. 87) affirms that "After the detaining of the Allmusseri, an African tribe believed to possess physical and psychological deformities, Calhoun associates himself the blend of 'Other'. As sickness from vomit and death from infection get widespread through the confines of sleeping quarters of the ship, Calhoun has to discharge the corpse of a slave over the board."

II. The Conversation of the Betrayal Today

1. Passing

Randal Kennedy defines "passing" as a deception that enables a person to adopt a certain roles or identities from which he would be barred by prevailing social standards in the absence of his misleading conduct. In the context of this study, the adopted attitudes are blacks' attempt to imitate Europeans through a number of practices mainly external.

Notably, dressing, speaking and racial passing that consist in changing the skin color. The black man's impersonation of the white man is due to deception caused by a kind of self-loathing sentiments called 'body dysmorphic disorder'. They lost the sense of self-appreciation and they aspire to an ideal self. They want to turn white, have long hair and speak like white folk. In *Middle Passage* Rutherford Calhoun confesses that he used to have bushy and thick hair. That means he wanted to look like a white man. Isadora is another African woman who suffered from this form of internalized racism. In fact, when she fell in love with Calhoun and this latter refused to marry her, she thought that Calhoun rejected her because of her dark complexion. She laments "It's because I'm not [. . .] not pretty. No, don't say it! That *is* why. Because I'm *dark*. You'd rather have a beautiful, glamorous, light-skinned wife like women in the theaters and magazines" (MP, p. 17). Perhaps, this is why she urges Calhoun to be different by persuading him that "Don't be common. Comb your hair. Be a credit to the race. Strive like Creoles for respectability" (MP, p. 9). On the same occasion, B. Alan (1948, p. 113) pinpoints the black man's opened admiration for whiteness in the following terms "At the same time it must be admitted that the Negro has given some grounds for the unthinking to believe that he admires white beauty. By bleaching their skin and by straightening their hair coloured women try hard to lessen their unlikeness from white women."

Racial passing is unquestionably a self-defeating betrayal of one's race. It is a corporal subversion that denotes one's resentment for one's own self nature opening room for others to disparage one's group. Racial passing

should not be seen as an assertion of individual autonomy. By assertion of individual autonomy, one should infer that it is neither an act of self-assertion nor freedom of expression or action. It is rather a criminal act, a disloyalty to the race. Ronald Hall condemns passing with energy. He inveighs, "Trying to forgive Blacks who pass is difficult, I feel that by passing, they have cursed the memory of every dark-skinned person on their family tree." (qtd in K. Randal, 2001, p. 1187). This statement suggests that one of the greatest desires of the African is to resemble the white man as far as possible. Yet, before their encounter with the white, Africans did have virtue. As B. Alan (1948, p. 144) accurately underlines, "Until he is spoilt by contact with the whites the Negro has good manners." However, the itching desire to turn white is stripping Negroes from these intrinsic qualities. Therefore, this section can accurately close with Burns' assertion that "The inmate qualities of the Negro still remain, and it is not too late, by a change of attitude, to bring out these qualities and secure the co-operation of the dark races in the building up of a better civilization" (B. Alan, 1948, p. 143). The Negro must remain black and never forget his origin, which is Africa.

2. Tokenism, Neo-Colonization

Tokenism is a fallacy that the American authorities use to give illusion of white hope to African-Americans. Moreover, what is deplorable about this situation is that the handpicked Negroes who benefit from a little more qualitative treatment from whites become marionette used by whites against their Negro brethren. They become the

kind of Negroes who report to the whites what is happening with their black brothers in the slums. This corresponds exactly to Malcolm's description as he accurately notes, "The white man has always loved the kind of black leaders whom he could ask, 'Well, how's things with your people up there?" (X. Malcolm & H. Alex, 1965, p. 256). They are even manipulated through some sugary language such as 'you behave as if you were not a Negro.' This is what Frantz Fanon underscores when he reports the utterances of some racist whites, "How long have you been in France? You speak French so well [. . .] At bottom you are a white man" (F. Frantz, 1967, pp. 35-38). Yet, such discourse should remind any person that their origin is despised by the individual who utters it.

Today, the handpicked African leaders behave as if they were secret agents serving Westerners. A painstaking analysis of the political, economic and social situation of African countries may lead one to wonder if westerners do not have pawns in our governments. Some leaders seem to represent whites' eyes and ears. Ironically, it appears that whites have the script and blacks perform in the film. Blacks watch the television while the whites hold the telecommand (remote control). They control our political, economic and social life even after their official departure. Truly speaking, there are reasonable causes for grievance. What rankles the most is seeing some African leaders plotting with whites against their people. As a result, the sovereignty of most African countries remains a *de jure* and not *de facto* autonomy. Until today, Africans do not seem to understand the white man's strategy invoked by Calhoun. In Calhoun's utterances, to manipulate Negroes, the white man uses the oldest and simplest solution that is "Divide and

conquer. Poison each man's perception of the other" (MP, p. 58).

The observation made by Captain Ebenezer Falcon centuries ago is applicable to the contemporary African society. Calhoun unfolds the Captain's philosophy as follows, "It was Captain Falcon's belief that slave insurrections could be prevented if for every ten prisoners one was selected to oversee the others and keep them in line [. . .] and Falcon also gave them better food and few minor tasks such as picking old ropes apart" (MP, p. 74). A number of African leaders constitute the counterpart of these handpicked leaders in contemporary African societies. They play plainly the tasks entrusted to them by their white mentors. That is why Falcon concludes that "The best way to control a rebellious nigger, is to give him some responsibility" (MP, p. 74). In that perspective, any Africans who dare take another way are automatically considered as seditious individuals. Therefore, their destabilization then becomes the only option for the white man to maintain his suzerainty. Markedly, what is shocking and eventually nurses genuine grievance is the use of Negroes against Negroes. Alan Burns accurately portrays Negroes' lack of character and inconsistency while reporting the utterances of L. Solanke. He writes, "African[s] still constitute their own public enemy No.1" (B. Alan, 1948, p. 139). He reinforces his argumentation by exposing the relationships of vanity that exist among blacks. He hypothesizes that "Perhaps the most serious failing of the educated Negro, so far as the advancement of his own race is concerned, is his lack of the will for co-operation, the inability to follow for long a leader of his own colour, and the jealous vanity which prompts him

to criticise and pull down his bother Negro" (B. Alan, 1948, p. 137).

On that account, some glaring acts of high treason are the assassination of Malcolm X by Black Muslims on February 21, 1965 during a speech at the Audubon Ballroom in Manhattan. As a religious and civil rights' leader, Malcolm X was considered as a seditious individual. His execution is due to the fact that he wanted an upright independence of the black man at every level; cultural, political and economic. Metaphorically, Malcolm X recommended Negroes to build their own house instead of negotiating a seat in the white man's house. In a similar case in Congo, Patrice Émery Lumumba, a politician who was his country's first Prime Minister after it became independent in 1960, was murdered by his own countrymen supported by leaders in the West on January 17, 1961. C. Isaac (2023) underlines the responsibility of Congolese in the assassination of Lumumba. He explains that Seven months later, Lumumba was murdered, brought down by a combination of Congolese politicians and Belgian 'advisers,' with the tacit support of the United States and the malign neglect of the United Nations.

Correspondingly, in Burkina Faso such a heinous crime was also perpetrated by countrymen. Thomas Isidore Noël Sankara, a selfless Burkinabè military officer, Marxist and Pan-African revolutionary who patriotically served his country was fiercely assassinated on October 15, 1987. Sankara's anti-neocolonialism attitudes were really salient. He aimed at disconnecting his country with all legacies of colonization era. Nevertheless, he stumbled over the feet of enemies No.1 who are his African brothers. Even if one

can suppose that there is an invisible western hand implicated in the murder of Sankara, it must be acknowledged that he was slayed by Burkinabés' hands. After decades of gaging and silencing, investigations have been intensified to situate responsibilities in the murder of Sankara since 2014, the year Blaise Compaoré was forced to leave the throne. Up to the present time, a number of hypotheses are confirmed. Notably, some investigators stipulate that Compaoré is the main instigator and his mentor is Houphouët-Boigny, the first Ivorian President. According to K. Sia (2022), "A military court in Burkina Faso on April 6, 2022, handed down a life term to former President Blaise Compaore for the 1987 assassination of revolutionary leader Thomas Sankara, following a six-month trial." This assertion affirms the guilt of the suspect No.1 in the process. The effectiveness of Sankara's murder by his black brothers is highlighted by M. Angelo (2024, p. 185) who thinks:

> Although the intrigues were woven locally and the responsibilities of the local perpetrators must be investigated, Sankara was left to be killed by Compaoré, […] Burkina Faso was not even worth a coup from the outside. As a country, it was not even good for looting. But it suited the French, the Europeans, and their Ivorian *askaris* (mercenaries) that the captain should die. […] In my view, the strongest support for Sankara's murderer came from Ivory Coast. Sankara had never been on good terms with Houphouët-Boigny, the Ivorian

president who held power for 33 years from 1960 to 1993.

The evidence presented supports the idea that Africans undoubtedly constitute their own public enemy No.1. Thus, they always hide their wickedness, negate their responsibilities in their own atrocities and perpetually look for someone to blame for their predicament. The white man is constantly at the center of the accusation. If, on the one hand, the white man is to be blamed, African leaders, on the other hand, must not be spared. As proof, after more than half a century of self-governing, black elites show their incapacity to bring about sustainable development and offer qualitative life to their populations. They only remain cowardish, wicked, treasonous and mismanage public services. The Encyclopedia Britannica 14th ed., vol. xi, summarizes Africans' self-ruling results as follows, "Irrigation projects fell into decay, production and foreign trade dwindled. The courts were corrupt. Education, except that carried French priests, practically ceased. There was little protection of property and no industrial encouragement. Poverty and diseases added to the general" (qtd. in Alan Burns, 1948, p. 83). To crown it all, black people are stationary human beings lacking entrepreneurship and creativity. In a near future, they had better come up with critical and innovative ideas to develop Africa rather than accusing others of their sluggishness.

At present time, some African leaders boldly follow the paths of Malcolm X, Lumumba and Sankara. Once more, the betrayal rears its ugly head. People like Sankara in the new generation also face the resentment of some of their peers who still praise the relationships with the ostensible

ex-colonizer. The African leaders who are considered as recalcitrant individuals are victimized by military coups. In other circumstances, their countries are attacked by rebellious people or terrorists. These are the up-to-date tactics used to destabilize regimes. Rebellion and terrorism constitute other aspects of the betrayal today. In many parts of Africa, black people represent over-trained and heavily armed rebels or terrorists who bob up from everywhere and slaughter their black brothers. Cases in point are Boko Haram based in Northeastern Nigerian and JNIM (Jama'at Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslim) and ISSP (Islamic State Sahel Province) that operate in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger. These are said to be religious organizations animated by ruthless black bandits who kill *en masse* their black brothers in the name of a religion coming from abroad. This can be regarded as the highest degree of stupidity.

The question of Africans' total independence is not easy to handle in as much as they lack creativity and invention in terms of technology. They can neither fabricate weapons of mass destruction nor manufacture protection devices of high surveillance. Therefore, no one fears them and everybody preys and exploits them. These shortcomings compel Africans to side with another wing of white world anytime they decide to part with one group. Ahmed Sékou Touré, the late President of Guinea (Conakry) did so in 1958. He slammed the door in de Gaule's face and allegedly sided with Russia. However, the results are self-evident today. People like Sékou are emerging, notably in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. In the fashion of Sékou Touré, the leaders of the Alliance of Sahel States (AES), turned back to France and automatically welcomed Russia. Logically, when one

leaves one's father's house in order to be independent one should not go and find another father who must take care of them. Instead, one should try to build one's own house. However, this practice must not be totally condemned because when one fears the menace of one's father, it is rightful to seek protection from another father. In brief, history is repeating. When Sékou Touré turned back to de Gaule, he moved to the other side of the curtain giving Russia the opportunity to have a pedestal in Africa at moment when powerful blocs were waging war against each other in the context of the cold war. In like manner, AES gives Russians the occasion to settle militarily in Africa at a time when cold war has just reared its clutches in Ukraine. Nowadays, the iron curtain has disappeared. Many covenants have been signed; however, the war is still going on under other forms. Regarding the state of things, it seems that the blocs are still looking for markets to pour their dangerous weapons. So, Africans have the responsibility to take control of their destiny in order to thwart the machinations of the predators.

As demonstrated, the experience of Guinea with both blocs should remind all African states that the sole way that can lead to their real independence is their unity. This section cannot be closed without referring to Alan Burns (1948, p. 143) who opines that "The innate qualities of the Negro still remain, and it is not too late, by a change of attitude, to bring out these qualities and secure co-operation of the dark races in the building up of a better civilization."

Conclusion

Returning to the hypothesis posed at the beginning of this study, it is now possible to state that Blacks and their continent are effectively preyed by other races. However, it is necessary to clarify that Africa is mishandled by others with the full participation of Blacks themselves. In this framework, the study has confirmed that Africans constitute their own public enemy No.1. They not only abhor their own physical characteristics, but also the intra-racial relationships with their brothers. The betraying conducts between black characters portrayed in both *Middle Passage* and *The Known World* represent the untruthful and unreliable bounds within black communities. The fact that many black people do not have good intentions towards one another deteriorates their collaboration and exposes them to external predators. Thus, mutual respect, forgiveness, tolerance and understanding are values they should cultivate in order to build a harmonious community as the common saying goes 'union makes strength'. As a final note, it should be stressed that the full independence and development of Africa lie in the hands of Black people who have to change their mindset to make the continent prosper socially, economically and politically.

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