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Slave Victimization Breeds Revolt in *Middle Passage* by Charles Johnson and in *Property* by Valerie Martin

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Introduction

Fiction can deal with history when a novel presents factual social and public events, which are material of history. Historical fictions explore the past by “examining how the times in which we live shape the way we understand the past” (Cohen 4). History can be remembered and understood through the narration of past events, which comes in the form of fiction. Many writers wrote historical fictions presenting the struggle of African-American slaves in gaining their freedom, which is the main focus on the African-American history. Some of these writers presented slave oppression through their historical fictions by illustrating slave revolts in the Middle Passage and on plantations. Middle Passage by Charles Johnson thrusts into the heart of the African-American history by illustrating the transatlantic slave trade in the nineteenth century. The novel illustrates the victimization of the slaves in the Middle Passage and how the slaves, in return, revolt on the slave ship to gain their freedom. It also shows the transformation of the newly freed slave, Calhoun, which changed him to a real free man. Property by Valerie Martin, on the other hand, is a historical novel, which illustrates the struggle of the African-American slaves on plantations. This novel shows the slaveholders’ savage treatment of their slaves. The female slave, Sarah, is raped by her master, the white man, and is oppressed by her mistress, the French Creole. As a result, her people revolt against her owners to free her from their oppression. African-American slaves were owned by their masters and were deemed as part of their private property. Therefore, they “resisted their enslavement, whether by running away or rebelling or causing more minor disruption of the slave labor system” (Russo 15). African-American slaves were calling for their emancipation and humanity by resisting and revolting against the white man as a result of being deeply oppressed. In Middle Passage and Property the white Europeans consider themselves superior to nonwhite races and rank the African slaves as inferior and savages.

The main purpose of this essay is to investigate slave oppression, which was enough to make the slave revolt for their emancipation. This oppression was caused by various ranks of white people, slave traders and slave owners, since the time the slaves were enslaved until they gained their emancipation or died for this purpose. Slave oppression took place in the Middle Passage and on different American plantations. New Orleans, for example, was one the most states with African slaves. It developed on smuggling and piracy: “The Louisiana colony was nurtured by piracy and smuggling from its beginnings” (Dawdy 115). Slaves were smuggled into Louisiana through New Orleans and were sold in the slave market, which was
considered one of the largest American slave markets in the eighteenth century. In addition, the wealthy élite society occupied the top social hierarchy, since it compared itself with the French noble society in France in the ancient régime and refused to be seen as lower. This created a great social gap between the slaves and the élites, which caused a social disorder in this state, and created racism through slave oppression: “The result is a curious juxtaposition between the dark and disorderly reputation of New Orleans” (Dawdy 27). Slaves in New Orleans outnumbered the whites, and this encouraged the slaves to revolt against the whites, who considered themselves superior to the slaves. The two novels serve the purpose of investigating slave oppression and slave revolts in the Middle Passage and on plantations. *Middle Passage* illustrates the corrupted society in New Orleans through smuggling and piracy, while *Property* illustrates the social gap between the élites and the slaves.

This essay investigates slaves’ victimizers, victimization and how victimization breeds revolt. More explicitly, African slaves were victimized by different oppressors, such as slave traders and slaveholders. As a result, they revolted in the Middle Passage and on American plantations violently calling for their emancipation and humanity. In *Middle Passage* the slaves revolt against the ship crew and kill most of them, while in *Property* a group of slaves revolt against land owners revenging Sarah’s rape. Furthermore, Calhoun, in *Middle Passage*, goes into different spiritual and psychological metamorphoses to free his psyche from the binary oppositions, and becomes ‘self’ and not ‘other’; whereas in *Property*, Sarah goes into a psychic revolt to free her psychic space from the oppression of her victimizers.

**Historical Background of Slavery in America**

Many Africans were transported through the Middle Passage to America as part of the transatlantic slave trade between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries (Mid Sweden University). African slaves were brought from Africa through the Middle Passage, which was the central part of the triangle trade “whereby goods were bought from Europe to exchange for people at ‘factories’ on the African coast” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 195). The Middle Passage was part of the triangle trade between Africa, America and Europe, where African people were purchased or kidnapped from Africa and sold as slaves in America. Slave oppression and humiliation started on the Gold Coast in Africa before slaves were shipped to America. African slaves were sold to the European traders or were sometimes kidnapped by bandits: “Since greed was the engine of the slave trade, slave trading attracted freebooters and
adventurers of all varieties” (Barry in Winter 10-11). Stolen slaves cost nothing; therefore, they were stolen sometimes by pirates and bandits.

The shock of being sold filled the African slaves with horror in the Middle Passage, since they did not know what their destiny would be. In addition, they were forcibly taken away from their families and were beaten and humiliated by the traders. For example, in the eighteenth century Jeffery Brace was sixteen when he was captured in Africa together with other Africans by English men (Winter 9). He and other Africans were shipped to America to be sold there as slaves. On the slave ship, Brace “witnessed men who showed no vestige of kindness, compassion, or honor—men who tortured, starved, raped, and murdered children as well as adults” (11). Slaves were treated very brutally on slave ships and received very little food, two insufficient meals per day. These meals consisted of boiled rice and corn and some water. As a result, many of the slaves died from starvation or sickness. They were fastened with iron chains and were lying down on their backs side by side, without allowing enough movement. In the morning, if the weather allowed, they were brought upon the deck for a short time to have some fresh air, while those who died during the night were thrown into the ocean (11).

Slaves also had to wait in the ship before sailing “which meant that the slaves collected first could spend many extra weeks aboard ship” (Winter 14). Slave traders waited until the ship was fully loaded with slaves to start sailing, which added to the long voyage on the ocean. Therefore, many slaves suffered from diseases and depression or intended to starve until death. Women were raped by the crew members, and children died from hunger. The Middle Passage witnessed the death of many slaves and even crew members, due to the lack of sleep and bad nutrition: “It has been estimated that during 300 years of its operation, over 12 million blacks were forcibly shipped in chains across the infamous Atlantic ‘Middle Passage’ to Brazil, the Caribbean and the United States” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 195). However, the number could be greater according to some historians’ estimation and about twelve percent of them died during the journey (195). African slaves were victims of the white man’s greediness for wealth, which destroyed the African society: “[N]othing compared to the massive holocaust that struck the African continent during the great disaster [of] the European slave trade” (Asante 2007). The Middle Passage can be considered a human holocaust, due to the great numbers of deaths.
Slave oppression continued after the slaves were sold in America, since the law gave slaveholders full freedom to deal with their slaves as they wanted, and gave them the right to treat them as their own property and even kill them. Slaves were usually sold to land owners to work on their plantations or as domestic servants. At the plantation, they usually were put together in one compound that was furnished with simple furniture and was located on the owner’s plantation around his house: “Indeed, here the arrangement of life was designed to remind [them] of [their] servitude” (Wade 11). Slaves were always reminded that they were properties of their masters, and they were also forced to work for long hours on the plantation under their master’s supervision, until they were exhausted. This procedure was followed to increase the production and to keep them on the land. They were also forced to obey their masters and were often humiliated and whipped if they broke the rules. Frederick Douglass, a former slave, who escaped his slavery and then became an abolitionist, claimed that “[t]he whip is all in all. It is supposed to secure obedience to the slaveholder, and is held as a sovereign remedy among the slaves themselves, for every form of disobedience, temporal or spiritual” (Douglass 28). Whipping the slaves was very common and it was considered as a kind of discipline control.

Douglass was taken away from his grandmother to be sold as a slave. He claimed that “as soon as [the children] were big enough, they were promptly taken away” (6). He did not live with his parents, because they were sold when he was very young. Slaves were usually separated from their families to be sold to other land owners: “Slavery has no use for either fathers or families, and its laws do not recognize their existence in the social arrangements of the plantation” (14). Therefore, most slaves did not know who their parents were. In addition to breaking the family, many slave owners used to rape their female slaves. Furthermore, slaves were deprived of education and most of them were illiterate. Land owners were very strict with their slaves and believed that without strictness, the result would be “the freedom of the slaves, and the enslavement of the whites” (61). Slaveholders believed that if a slave fails to obey the rules or tries to escape, he should be severely punished or even killed in front of the other slaves, as a lesson taught to all slaves to obey the rules. Slaves’ freedom must always be controlled and restricted to insure discipline on the territory and to prevent slave revolts. Otherwise, the white man’s control over his slaves will be lost.

This oppression, as a result, made many slaves revolt to gain their freedom and live with respect. Slave revolts took different forms, such as killing, burning, torturing, running away or
even choosing to die: “[M]any slaves [chose] the path of death as the only meaningful road to achieving freedom” (Osagie 28). When slaves were denied their rights as human beings, they chose to die instead of living without dignity. One of the famous revolts, which took place in the Middle Passage, is the revolt of the slaves on the Spanish slave trade ship *La Amistad* in July 1839: “The Amistad incident may be considered a prototype for the black struggle” (Osagie 76). Many slaves died in this revolt and the rest were captured by the Americans on the American Long Island coast and were brought to trial. Fortunately slave trade was illegal during this period, as the Atlantic slave trade was abolished in 1807 (55). Furthermore, there was a number of antislavery supporters among the judges: “The Supreme Court […] would deliver a verdict of ‘not guilty’ to black men who had not only revolted openly against the institution of slavery but had obstinately insisted on their right to freedom” (28). These judges believed that the mutinies revolted to gain their freedom, which was not considered a crime but the right of every human being. Furthermore, in 1865 the thirteenth Amendment was ratified in the Bill of Rights, which officially declared the prohibition of slavery in America.

Slave revolts were also demonstrated on plantations, such as Nat Turner’s revolt in Virginia in February 1831. This revolt happened without any warning: “Quietly and swiftly, he and his six companions moved from plantation to plantation killing every white person they encountered” (Osagie 42). He killed every white man he met with the help of his fellow slaves. Turner hated the fact of being enslaved, which was known among the slaves: “Relatives and other slaves had constantly remarked that he was not suited for slavery” (42). Therefore, his revolt can be considered as a form of slave resistance. Although many slaves joined Turner’s revolt and murdered a great number of white men, some were murdered and the rest were captured by the whites. However, Turner’s revolt inspired many slaves and encouraged them to call for their emancipation. Therefore, Amistad’s and Nat Turner’s revolts symbolize slave resistance, and in addition to other slave revolts, they opened the path to the Civil War and offered a new free life to the African slaves.

**Theoretical Approach**

The aim of this essay is to investigate and analyze the victimizers of the African-American slaves, how they oppress the slaves and how the slaves revolt to gain their humanity and self-respect in *Middle Passage* and in *Property*. Therefore, a combination of colonial, post-colonial, feminist and psycho-analytic social theoretical approaches will be helpful to
accomplish this investigation. Violence theories will be used as a colonial approach to investigate the slave traders’ violence in *Middle Passage* and the white man’s violence in *Property*. This violence is used in return by the African slaves on the slave ship Republic and on plantations aiming for their freedom. The theory of binary oppositions as a post-colonial approach will be used to investigate Calhoun’s binary oppositions and how he gained his real freedom through his transformation. Calhoun “has a double identity as both coloniser and colonised, and it is the recognition of such double identities which is one of the strengths of the postcolonialist view” (Barry 188). The freed colonized identity is doubled or hybrid and this new third identity is unstable. A feminist approach will investigate how Sarah, the black female, is dominated by Manon, the French Creole, and her husband, the white man, because the black race and the female gender are considered inferior, and therefore the black female is racially oppressed. The colonization of psychic space is a psychoanalytical theoretical approach to analyze Sarah’s silence, which is a result of the colonization of her psychic space.

Slave oppression is enacted through the violent treatment of the slaves. The white man considers himself superior to his slave, because he is civilized, which makes the black man ‘other’: “[I]f colonized people are irrational, Europeans are rational; if the former are barbaric, sensual, and lazy, Europe is civilization itself” (Loomba 45). This gives the white man the right to dominate the black man violently and enslave him permanently. Domination is often used with “violence that was often hidden beneath the civilizing rhetoric of imperialism” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 5). The white man regards himself civilized, and therefore he treats the black man violently, because he considers him the lowest cast of society, primitive and uncivilized. Kelly Oliver refers to Fanon, who claimed that race is not owned; rather it is created by the colonizer to use his domination over the inferior race, to see himself as civilized and the black man as primitive (Oliver 31). Furthermore, violence is specifically practiced on the black woman. The black woman forms the lowest gender and race in the social hierarchy, and as the white man has hunger for domination, she becomes an easy target for his domination: “[R]acial and sexual violence are yoked together by images of rape, which in different forms, becomes an abiding and recurrent metaphor for colonial relations” (Loomba 138). The white man oppresses the black woman by raping her, and her rape comes as a kind of punishment and domination.

The black man, as a result, becomes the white man’s property “[P]roperty is always controlled or made by someone” (Oliver 64). Slaves are sold to their masters and become
their properties, because the white man has authority and power. Property is related to racism, and as the black man is inferior to the white man, he becomes his property and is treated violently by the white man. In return, the white man’s violence is used by the black man, revolting against the white man, since dominating people with violence cannot last. Revolts are products of oppression and take place through violence, and they are created by the white man’s oppression. Slaves’ violence, as a result, can be seen as self-defense: “When applied in self-defense or in certain sorts of revolutionary situations [...] violence can and does accomplish its purposes, notwithstanding the cliche to the contrary that violence never solves anything” (Richard King 187). Through violence, slaves can gain their autonomy and the identity that was taken away by the white man.

The colonization of the psychic space is another theory discussed in this essay. This is the colonization of the body and the mind of the colonized. The psyche is the place where the body is connected with its social forces, which are values, culture, traditions, etc. These social forces are colonized and destroyed by the colonizer. The body is not able any longer to connect to its social forces, since they are destroyed. The white man’s violence and oppression colonize the psychic space of the colonized: “Oppression operates through social forces and institutions that work against the development and maintenance of open robust psychic space for particular groups or individuals” (Oliver 43). The colonized is marginalized and isolated from the world through the oppression of the colonizer. This, as a result, makes the colonized feel ashamed, alienated, filled with self-hate and depressed.

Even when slaves gain their freedom, their psychic space suffers from binary oppositions because of their color. They are not slaves; even so they are not equated with the white race. They are Americans, but the white man does not consider them Americans. Du Bois called a double consciousness, which is based on binary oppositions: “One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder” (Du Bois 8). People look at the black man as inferior and ‘other’, and this affects him consciously. He sees and evaluates himself through the eyes of others, which creates a double-self instead of his real free soul and free self. As a result, African Americans are alienated and marginalized in their societies, which makes them feel inferior.
This essay investigates and analyzes slave victimization in *Middle Passage* and in *Property* and how victimization breeds revolt. For this purpose, the essay is divided into three chapters. The first chapter investigates and analyzes slave oppressors historically and/or theoretically in the two novels. In *Middle Passage* the slave traders, who are described as pirates and Papa, the Creole of color, who is one of the investors of this trade, are slave victimizers. Moreover, in *Property* Sarah’s owners, the half French white Creole and the white man are the slave oppressors. The second chapter investigates and analyzes the victimization of the slaves, which comes in different modes of violence in the two novels. As a result, Calhoun, the newly freed slave, suffers from the binary oppositions and Sarah, the female slave, is silenced, since her psychic space is colonized. This chapter leads to the last chapter, which analyzes different kinds of revolts for freedom, caused by victimization. Freedom can also be gained in different ways, as in Calhoun’s transformation and the slaves’ dance in *Middle Passage* and the freeing of Sarah’s psychic space in *Property*. Since enslavement started in Africa and continued in the Middle Passage and then on the plantations, the investigation of each chapter starts with *Middle Passage* and continues with *Property* to show an order of analysis.

**Primary Sources, Previous Research and Material**

*Middle Passage* is a historical novel written by Charles Johnson and it was published in 1990. The novel won the National Book Award in the same year. *Middle Passage* carries many historical facts about slave trade in the Middle Passage during the nineteenth century. The novel focuses on the narrator of the novel, Rutherford Calhoun, a newly freed slave in New Orleans. Researchers have indicated that Johnson uses black American philosophy in focusing on Calhoun’s transformation to a real free man, showing the meaning of freedom: “[Johnson] provides a definition as well as identifies the major figures in philosophical black fiction” (Byrd 5). Byrd describes Johnson as a gifted writer in interrogating spiritual values through his philosophical system of writing. The novel is also inspired by the historical slave revolt on the slave ship *La Amistad* (Osagie XIII), where the African slaves were severely oppressed, and their revolt was a reason to gain their emancipation. The edition I am using as the primary source was published in 2005.

*Property* is a historical novel written by Valerie Martin. It was published in 2003 and won the Orange Prize in the same year. *Property* narrates the situation of the slaves during the
nineteenth century in the antebellum south and especially in Louisiana through the protagonist slaveholder Manon Gaudet. The novel shows, furthermore, how women during this period were dominated by the masculine gender and were seen as male property. Not many researchers have written about Property. However, in his book Calls and Responses, Tim A. Ryan discusses the novel and specifically the distressed relationship between the southern French white Creole mistress Manon and her black slave Sarah. The novel, as Martin claims, reveals the real history of slavery: “historical fiction should ultimately be about the reality of the past” (Ryan 171). Property shows that revolts were caused by the victimization of slaves in the South. The book edition that I am using as a primary source was published in 2011.

Slave revolts have been an important issue in the African-American history to remember the past, as Fanon indicated in his book Black Skins, White Masks, which was first published in 1952: “If the question once arose for me about showing solidarity with a given past, it was because I was committed to myself and my fellow man, to fight with all my life and all my strength so that never again would people be enslaved on this earth” (Fanon 202). Africans refuse to be enslaved again and believe that they must be acknowledged by the whites. Therefore, many writers and especially African writers contributed to the remembering of the past by writing about slavery in America, such as Frantz Fanon’s Black Skins, White Masks. This book is one of the secondary sources used in this essay, which have helped me in the analysis of the relationship between the colonized black man and the white man as the colonizer and the violent revolt of the colonized, seen as a kind of revenge. In his book, The Wretched of the Earth, Fanon described the struggle of the Africans calling for their freedom. The book has anti-colonialist approach and it describes how the colonized fights the colonizer for his emancipation.

Another writer, who wrote about slave victimization, is Frederick Douglass. He escaped his enslavement and became an abolitionist in the nineteenth century. Douglass wrote about his experience as a slave in his book My Bondage and My Freedom, describing how slaves were oppressed and humiliated by the white Americans. The reason for using this book as a secondary source in this essay is to provide the historical background of slave oppression on plantations. W. E. B. Du Bois is another African American, who was calling for the African Americans’ rights in America and stood against black discrimination in the era after antebellum. His book The Souls of Black Folks, originally published in 1903, is a collection of essays on race, which are related to the discrimination against African Americans. The book
is one of the secondary sources used in this essay for the analysis of Calhoun’s binary oppositions, and the edition I am using was published in 2007.

Other secondary sources used in this essay are Colonialism/ Postcolonialism (Loomba 2005) and Post-Colonial Studies: The Key concepts (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 2007). Civil Rights and the Idea of Freedom (Richard King 1992) is an additional secondary source, which was helpful for the investigation and the analysis of the use of violence in slave revolts. Colonization of the Psychic Space: A Psychoanalytic Social Theory of Oppression (Oliver 2004) is a secondary source about the psychoanalytical social theory, which was helpful for the analysis of the colonization of the psychic space of the enslaved. In analyzing the black female oppression, I mainly depended on Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Political of Empowerment (Collins 2000) as a secondary source.
Chapter 1
Slave Oppressors

FORCED from home and all its pleasures
Afric’s coast I left forlorn,
To increase a stranger’s treasures
O’er the raging billows borne.

William Cowper, “The Negro’s Complaint”

In Middle Passage and Property there are powerful and dominant people, who control the African slaves’ freedom. These dominators use their illegal and inhumane powers to destroy slaves’ identities and self-respect, when “all rights and all human values [are] set aside” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 196). These slave oppressors come from different social ranks, such as the ship crew of the Republic, who are described as pirates, since they contribute illegally to slave trade. The Creole of color, Papa Zeringue in Middle Passage, is one of the investors in the slave trade of the Republic, who enslaves his own race in order to increase his power and his wealth. Manon, the half French Creole in Property, considers herself élite, and therefore she oppresses her female slave to increase her power. Manon’s husband, the white man, is another slave oppressor in Property, who punishes and rapes his black female slave, because he considers himself superior to her. African slaves were brought to America as cheap labor forces, and they were enslaved and exploited by different white people to serve their capital. These people considered themselves stronger and more powerful than the enslaved labor forces and gave themselves the right to oppress the slaves, which created class division and racism. This chapter will illustrate and discuss slave oppressors in Middle Passage and in Property, who use their control over the slaves by oppressing and humiliating them. These oppressors are described according to different social categories, such as class, gender, ethnicity and race.

1. Pirates

In Middle Passage Charles Johnson describes the crew members of the slave ship Republic as pirates, who live on the free sea. When Calhoun meets the ship crew of the Republic for the first time, he resembles them to pirates: “[B]lack eyepatches, […] beards like tangled bushes,
hooks where hands should be” (Johnson 22). The crew members of the Republic are described as pirates and their aim is to escape from the law to the sea to steal Africans and sell them in America for their own interest in wealth. Pirates are known to be bandits and mercenaries, who steal and kill violently: “[T]he term ‘pirate’ derives from the Greek peirates ‘one who attacks’ and has historically been inextricably linked to depredation and raiding through unlawful violence” (Colás 3). Pirates are wanted criminals and bandits, who escaped from their countries to the sea. In the eighteenth century, governments decided that pirates had no country and no nationality, and the pirates agreed to this: “[T]hey emphasized their own rejection of nationality by announcing that they came ‘From the Seas’ […] [T]hey had sold their country and were sure to be hanged if taken” (Linebaugh 165). Pirates had legally no country and, as a result, they had no nationality, because they were wanted criminals. By exempting themselves of their nationality, they were sure they would not be caught and castigated for their crimes. As criminals with no law to control their freedom at sea, they used their unlawful forces with violence to steal and dominate other groups of people in order to acquire wealth. Therefore, the crew members of the Republic are pirates, as Falcon tells Calhoun: “[T]here’s not a civilized law that holds water” (Johnson 32). The sea has no laws; therefore, Falcon and the other crew members act freely at sea, since they know that there is no law to control them on the sea.

As a result, Calhoun becomes a pirate by joining the ship crew of the Republic, when he seeks freedom on the free sea. Calhoun is a newly freed slave, who escapes to the free sea from a planned marriage and from debts. He thinks that the sea would be the only place to which he could escape from his bondage, the only place which could offer him freedom:

I would stare out to sea, envying the sailors riding out on merchantmen, […] wondering if there was some far-flung port, a foreign country or island far away at the earth’s rim where a freeman could escape the vanities cityfolk called self-interest, the mediocrity they called achievement, the blatant selfishness they called individual freedom—all the bilge that made each day landside a kind of living death. (Johnson 4)

Even after Calhoun has gained his freedom, he does not yet see himself as a free man. However, joining the pirates on their ship is a quest for his freedom. Therefore, he plans to escape to the sea thinking that he would gain his real freedom and would live as a free man.
In accordance with maritime ideologies of the free seas, William Camden’s Annales of 1580 discussed *mare liberum*: “[A]ll are at liberty to navigate the vast ocean, since the use of the sea and the air are common to all. No nation or private person can have a right to the ocean, for neither the course of nature nor public usage permits any occupation of it” (Camden in Jowitt 4). By law, the sea is neither owned by any country nor by any person. It is public property and anyone has the right to use it. The sea is international property, and anyone is free to sail on it. This makes Calhoun think that he would be a free man by escaping to the sea. The free sea, as a result, can be related to the perception of piracy. Pirates are unlawful and criminals and are united by their failure in their societies. The free sea will offer them freedom and make them more aggressive by using free powers of domination, where there is no law to control them. According to Walter Ralegh’s maritime trade ideology, “whoever commands the sea, commands the world” (Ralegh in Jowitt 3). This means that maritime trade is related to domination and power. Pirates, who are inhuman criminals, took this as an advantage to use their freedom at sea and, as a consequence, to dominate their captives violently and inhumanly, since there are no restrictions and no limits to their power and domination. Furthermore, black pirates were common in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: “Hundreds of people of African descent found places within the social order of the pirate ship” (Linebaugh 165). Many of them were former slaves, who ran away from their masters and became pirates, or were free slaves. Therefore, it was common to have African slaves and African-American free slaves on pirate ships. As a result, Calhoun is accepted by the crew, and this makes him contribute to piracy.

The ship crew members of the Republic are criminals, and therefore they do not trust each other, especially not their captain Falcon. In addition to dominating the slaves on his ship, Falcon dominates his crew members, which makes them plan to rebel against him: “A crew has to trust its captain. Those of us here don’t. We think it’s time to change leadership” (Johnson 86). The crew members of the Republic try to gather as many sailors as they can on their side, in order to revolt successfully. They see Falcon as a tyrant, who restricts their freedom: “Anyone who served under Ebenezer Falcon woke each morning with a prayer on his lips, preliving his final hour and different ways he might die” (186). Falcon is cruel with his crew, and since he is a criminal he is not afraid to kill anyone who would disobey him. Therefore, his crew decides to rebel for their freedom. Pirates had their rules on their ship, and these rules were strict and should be followed by all, including the captain of the ship. The
The captain had limited authorities, and the crew members “permit him to be Captain, on Condition, that they may be Captain over him” (Linebaugh 162). The captain was chosen by the majority of the crew, and if the captain surpassed his authority, the crew had the right to execute him. Therefore, the crew members decide to change their unfaithful leader Falcon, which is natural for them, since he is a criminal.

As a result, the ship crew members of the Republic are rejected by their society, because they act aggressively and violently, and therefore they can be seen as cannibals. Pirates were sometimes forced to become cannibals at sea: “Cannibalism at sea was common enough, [because] […] [t]he sea does things to your head” (Johnson 33). Falcon and his crew were forced once to eat an African crew member on their ship when they were starving for lack of food (32). This incident leads to the theory of the abject. Julia Kristeva describes the abject “as that which human beings on a subconscious level psychologically reject because it traverses our corporeal boundaries” (Weaver-Hightower 95). Waste that is discarded by the human body is psychologically and emotionally repulsive. To maintain a wholeness of the body, the body must physically expel this waste. Anne McClintock calls this operation the paradox of abjection and claims that the abject is everything that is not needed, and this must be expelled in order for the human being to become social (95). This theory was expanded by critics and was linked to pirates and cannibals, who are socially marginalized and rejected, because they destroy societies. Therefore, pirates and cannibals contribute to the theory of the paradox of abjection: “[C]annibals and pirates perform abject behaviors, lack command of their bodies, and refuse to learn proper manners” (97). These two ranks are the abject of societies and are not related to the civilized human being, since their behaviors are not accepted by society. As a result, Falcon and his crew are considered as the abject of their society in dealing violently with human beings.

Furthermore, Falcon and his crew are illegal slave traders, since they contribute in piracy by stealing people. The events of Middle Passage took place in 1830, when slave trade was forbidden. Therefore, Falcon and his crew are breaking the law: “Like so many others with a seaworthy ship and crew of grumbling tars disillusioned by their country’s inability to keep the free sea from piracy […] Falcon turned to piracy himself, then to a contraband market that many these days served clandestinely” (Johnson 51). These unlawful men sail secretly on the sea, not caring about the dangerous risk in breaking the law. They are armed with the power of piracy by stealing innocent people and oppressing them in the Middle
Passage to increase their wealth. Although slave trade became forbidden in America in 1807, many slave traders continued to participate illegally in this trade. Therefore, in 1820 the American government considered slave trade as piracy and prescribed “the death penalty for persons found guilty of violating the laws” (Rawley 151). As a result, the crew members of the Republic are pirates by law as participators in the forbidden slave trade. Calhoun and the crew of the Republic know that they are involved in criminal actions: “[W]e’d all blundered, failed at bourgeois life in one way or another—we were […] all refugees from responsibility” (Johnson 39-40). Calhoun and the crew of the Republic are outcasts, who failed to live a decent life. In order to acquire wealth and domination, they use violence on the sea, giving themselves the right to steal properties of others. Therefore, the definition of piracy can strongly be related to stealing: “A broad definition that emerges from historical writing is that of the essentially indiscriminate taking of property (or persons) with violence, on or by descent from the sea” (Pennell 83). Piracy is related to stealing, which means taking others’ properties by force, since pirates create their own laws in violating others’ rights. This makes the ship crew of the Republic illegal slave traders and thieves.

2. Black Creoles in New Orleans

Philippe Zeringue, Papa, is another contributor to slave oppression in Middle Passage besides the ship crew of the Republic. Papa is a wealthy Creole and a black gangster man, who secretly contributes to slave trade, since slave trade is forbidden during the events of the novel. After the Republic sinks into the sea, Calhoun is rescued by another ship and meets with Papa on the ship. He confronts Papa with what he has found out about his contribution as a benefactor of the Republic slave trade. Papa’s servant Santos is shocked to know about Papa’s involvement: “Papa is he sayin’ you was dealin’ in slaves?” (Johnson 201). Santos trusted Papa and was his loyal servant; he never thought that Papa would contribute to such a crime against his race. Santos is more shocked to hear that the slaves on the Republic were from the Allmuseri tribe, because he is related to them: “My people on my grandpa’s side is from that tribe” (201). Free people of color in New Orleans, were able to live independently and form their own life (Kein 52-3). However, according to Code Noir, “gens de couleur libre”, or free people of color were not treated equally with whites, especially not with the white Creoles, and had limited rights: “[They] were deprived of civic rights by the Code Noir” (Callahan 155). Nevertheless, many Creoles of color succeeded in acquiring wealth through trade and other businesses. Creoles of color gained power in New Orleans after the
War of 1812, and in 1833 they became very powerful and were able to form a high social class: “Free people of color […] had access to ownership of real estate and could enter into business contracts, lease or rent out their property, and trade on the open market” (Kein 209). They succeeded in climbing the social ladder by increasing their properties and compete with other white classes, such as the white Creoles and the white Americans. This climb gave them more power, which was sometimes used against inferior groups. Accordingly, Papa, as one of the Creoles of color in New Orleans, uses his power and wealth and becomes one of the slave oppressors through his investment in the Republic.

Furthermore, Papa is a racist, who controls the white ship crew of the Republic and exploits his own race in order to extend his power and wealth. His aim is to outspread his power and domination as a way to increase his economy by possessing everything can be gained. Papa gained his economic power by pursuing illegal businesses, such as contributing indirectly to the slave trade. He enslaves his own race by “[b]uy[ing] and sell[ing] slaves when he himself [is] black” (Johnson 150). Furthermore, the crew members of the Republic are partly enslaved to Papa and they are “no freer than the Africans” (147). The African slaves as well as the crew of the Republic fall under Papa’s control, since he is one of the benefactors of this trade. Moreover, Papa stands against the white race: “Once he bought a business, he never–absolutely never–sold it back to white men, because he feared if it left black hands it might never return” (198). He is a racist man, who aims to control the whites through his wealth, and does not want to see himself lower than the white man. Standing against the white man made him gain a good deceived reputation among his black race: “[T]hose who did not know the full extent of his crimes, Papa was, if not a hero, then a Race Man to be admired” (198). His people do not know about his contribution to slave trade. They think that he stands against the white race, because he is colored and supports his people. Papa’s capital has increased illegally to the detriment of the inferior group. He betrays his own race by participating in stealing innocent African people and selling them secretly to increase his wealth. Papa gives himself the right to make everything his own property to increase his wealth, and he even tries to become more powerful than the majority white groups in New Orleans: “[I]n specific situations or positions, individual minority group members […] may be more powerful than certain majority group members” (Dijk 21). Racism, consequently, develops through the power of the domination of the minority group, which becomes stronger than the domination of the majority group. The minority group was inferior, but when it had gained power through wealth, it used this power to dominate other
inferior groups, which causes racism. Therefore, Papa is a racist gangster against his own race and against the white race, when the slaves and the ship crew of the Republic become the victims of his greediness and wickedness.

3. French Creoles in New Orleans

Besides the oppression of the black Creoles, French Creoles was another ethnic group in New Orleans, who contributed to slave oppression. French Creoles are French descendants, who were born in America: “Creoles originally referred to a white (man) of European descent, born and raised in a tropical colony” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 50). They were the highest class in New Orleans society, because they used to compare themselves to the French aristocrats in France and did not want to see themselves lower than the French in France. Manon Gaudet, the narrator of Property, is half French Creole, who considers her slave Sarah her own property. Sarah was given to her by her aunt as her wedding present: “[Y]ou’d best have my Sarah […] I will give her to you as my wedding gift” (Martin 20). Manon, in addition, looks at Sarah with disgust: “She’s a nerveless creature […] There really is something inhumane about her” (Martin 45). Even though Sarah is like a shadow to Manon, accompanying her everywhere and serving her loyally, Manon treats her as her property and not as a human: “[S]he belongs to me. She can’t doubt that I would sell her” (17). Manon possesses her slave Sarah, and can sell her anytime she wants.

French Creoles were the richest people in New Orleans. They excluded the other classes and especially the African Americans from climbing to the top, in order to control the economy, such as African slaves and trade wealth: “[W]ith the rise of the first creole generation in the 1730s and 1740s, a wealth-based system began to appear. By the second creole generation, mobility into the top tier of large slaveowners and merchants was limited by practices of intermarriage and inheritance” (Dawdy 144). French Creoles considered themselves élites and looked at slaves as the lowest cast of society. Therefore, they oppressed their slaves to control them and dominate them. Owning slaves was a way to increase their capital and expand the gap between French Creoles and slaves. The direct contact with African-American slaves made them segregate the slaves, and their relationship was limited to master/slave relationship (146). Moreover, New Orleans’ geographical location on the sea made the city a slave trade centre. The desire of the élite class to own slaves was another
reason to count New Orleans one of the cities with most slaves, which made them oppress their slaves, as a kind of segregation.

On the other hand, Manon oppresses her black female slave, because she refuses to be seen as equal to her enslaved black female. Manon considers herself élite, since she occupies the highest rank of her society. However, she was humiliated by her husband after he raped her female slave: “[T]he servant I brought to the marriage has borne him a son” (Martin 41). This humiliation made her feel that she was losing her power as a white Creole in the New Orleans society. Therefore, she chooses to join the rank of oppressors to gain her power, instead of being oppressed. Manon, as a white female, stands between being inferior and superior. Race and gender are scientifically related: “These connections exist both as part of the ‘common sense’ about race and gender, and, in a more codified form, within scientific discourse” (Loomba 135). In other words, Manon is a female, who is inferior to the male gender; on the other hand, she is white, which makes her superior to the black race. Therefore, Manon prefers to dominate and oppress her black female slave rather than being oppressed by the white man.

However, Loomba points to Fanon, who treated gender separately from race and claimed that the female gender is always inferior to the male gender, no matter to which race she belongs: “[B]oth black and white women remain, in his account, the terrain on which men move and enact their battles with each other” (Loomba 137). To prove her power to herself and to her society, Manon feels that oppressing her female slave makes her gain her power and will put her on the top of the social hierarchy. As a result, Sarah, the black female slave, becomes the mammy: “No one could dress my hair so well as Sarah, nor care for my clothes, nor arrange the rooms” (Martin 206). Sarah is the obedient slave, who serves her masters with loyalty. She is controlled by her masters: “[T]he mammy—the faithful, obedient domestic servant. Created to justify the economic exploitation of house slaves and sustained to explain Black women’s long-standing restriction to domestic service, the mammy image represents the normative yardstick used to evaluate all Black women’s behavior” (Collins 72). The mammy is a controlled image of the female domestic slave, which is created to rationalize the economic exploitation of the black domestic servants. Black African-American women remained poor, since they were economically exploited by the capitalist economy. They symbolized, in addition, the dominated people, who were dominated by their masters in obeying their orders without rejecting or calling for their rights. By oppressing and controlling
her black female slave, Manon makes sure that she remains élite and is not equated with the black female, which will give her more power over her female slave.

Since the French Creoles in New Orleans considered themselves élites, they segregated other social groups. French Creoles formed their own society and culture, which were similar to the French culture in France. This made them seem different from other European societies in America, as they equated themselves with the aristocrats in France. Manon’s mother was a French Creole, while her father was American. Their marriage took place against her family’s will: “He had just married a beautiful Creole, much against the wishes of her family” (Martin 95). His wife’s family rejected the marriage, because he was not a French Creole, which made him seem lower than them. In addition, he was not a wealthy man, “but he had ambition; he was fearless, godless, principled, and kind. He made a success of his enterprise, not a fortune, but a solid concern, free of debt” (95). Even though he had a little fortune and a good reputation, this did not make him a wealthy man, which was against what the élites looked for their daughter, as they aimed for their daughter to marry a wealthy French Creole man. However, Manon’s father increased his wealth and became a slave owner.

Originally, New Orleans was a French colony. However, after the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, French and Spanish noble classes started to protect and develop Louisiana’s culture and made it distinctive from other American cultures: “[T]hrough noble blood, and thus social class superiority, the Creole deserved recognition as part of America’s white middle-to-upper-middleclass hegemony” (Shaker 28). This distinction in culture and class made this class superior. However, after the migration of the wealthy and educated Anglo Americans to this state, the emulation to power and landholding increased between the two groups. This, as a result, increased slavery in this state. French Creoles, accordingly, rejected other groups: “White Creoles found it necessary to create the fantasy that Europeans and Africans, and their descendants, lived absolutely apart, in a kind of apartheid state” (Kein 262). White Creoles considered themselves the élite class of New Orleans, and therefore they refused to mix with other Europeans and Africans in their society. They also had different power resources, which made them privileged: “The power resources of elites may be multiple and include property, income, decision control, knowledge, expertise, position, rank, as well as social and ideological resources such as status, prestige, fame, influence, [and] respect” (Dijk 44). French Creoles in New Orleans owned power, and this privilege made them superior to other groups. The élite society in New Orleans is the original founder of the colony, which made
them a powerful group. Their power also increased by owning slaves and lands, and this made them seem privileged to the other groups, who later migrated to New Orleans. Therefore, segregating other groups and especially African-American slaves reinforced their appearance as élites in their society.

4. The White Man’s Oppression of the Black Female

The white man is another slave oppressor, who also oppresses and rapes the black female slave. When Sarah moves to Manon’s house, Manon’s husband tries to seduce her, but she resists him: “Sarah had resisted him all those weeks when I wasn’t there, and now she had tried to outmaneuver him, but she never would again” (Martin 25). When she and Bam plan to get married, Manon’s husband refuses their marriage with rage that “he pulled her inside by her arm and commenced slapping and hitting her until she was flat on the floor, begging him to stop” (25). This torture and humiliation are not enough, as he takes advantage of her powerlessness and rapes her as a kind of punishment (25). The white man believed that he had power over the black woman, since the black woman forms the lowest gender and race in the social hierarchy: “[S]kin colour and female behavior come together in establishing a cultural hierarchy with white Europe at the apex and black Africa at the bottom” (Loomba 131). Since black race and feminine gender are inferior, black women were oppressed by the white man. This oppression comes in the form of rape, as a way of humiliation. Since the white man has hunger for domination, the black woman becomes an easy target for his domination: “The rape of black women is a common trope of oppression among African Americans and draws the strongest emotional reactions perhaps of any of the horrifying facts of slavery” (Holsey 192). Female Slaves were usually raped by white men, because they were powerless. This rape signifies that female slaves had no power over their bodies, which proves that even their bodies were enslaved by the white man. Rape shows the vulnerability of the black female: “The sexual harassment of African-American women by White men contributes to images of Black women as fair game for all men” (Collins 54). In addition to black women’s cheap exploitation on plantation or as domestic servants, they were also victimized sexually by the white man.

Moreover, Manon’s husband deprives Sarah of forming a family and oppresses her and Bam, a slave who also works at the Gaudets, because they want to marry each other. Sarah had no family and as a human, she thought that she had the right to marry the person she
loved and form a family. However, Manon’s husband considers this a sin, and she and Bam are brutally punished for daring to think of such a thing: “[H]e beat Bam near to death. It was six weeks before he was recovered enough to be transported to the city, where he was sold” (Martin 26). The oppression of Bam is meant to remind him that he is a slave and not a human being. As a result, Bam and Sarah were separated, and even their son was sent away (26). As a human being, Sarah feels that she needs someone who loves her and cares for her. She was separated from her parents when she was very young, and when she wished to form her own family, she was oppressed for having such thoughts. Furthermore, the family would give her strength and defend her. In other words, Sarah was born in Mississippi and was sold as a slave (156). Therefore, she had no family to support her. Even her brother is unable to protect her, because as a black man, he is powerless.

Black female slaves in general were defenseless, because they had no families to protect them from oppression, and they were left alone to defend their rights, which were never gained: “As she was a slave, she likely would have been brought from a distant region and therefore [she has] no family or means of protection” (Holsey 34). Slaves were separated from their families, whether by being sold as slaves in Africa or on plantations, since family symbolizes unity and gives the slaves strength and support, especially females: “In many situations, especially that of slavery, colonialism violently intruded upon, broke up and appropriated families of colonized subjects. In such cases and where intrusions were only imagined or feared, the family became a symbol of resistance” (Loomba 182). The family symbolizes resistance, because it unites the slaves and gives them strength, which is against the colonizer’s desire. Therefore, female slaves were left alone in the white man’s world to hopelessly defend themselves.

Furthermore, Manon’s husband makes Sarah serve him food to use his domination and show her his disrespect. Manon’s mother always criticizes Manon for having Sarah doing the butler’s job: “Mother repeatedly remarks that it is uncommon to have a woman serve at table” (Martin 62). As an élite French Creole, Manon’s mother believes that her daughter should have a proper butler to serve food instead of a female slave. It is Manon’s husband who wants to keep Sarah for this job: “My husband does not wish to have one” (73). He wants to see his victim in front of him all the time to feel his power and domination: “[B]lack and colonized women suffer from both racial and gendered forms of oppression simultaneously” (Loomba 138). The white man, who placed himself at the top of the social hierarchy, exploited existing
racial facts and created new ones in order to gain more power over the female gender and the black race. In this way he made sure that he was the only dominant force in society. The black female was seen as the ‘other’, according to the binary thinking that “shapes understandings of human difference” (Collins 70). Such binaries as white-black and male-female represent oppositional terms. The ‘other’, according to the white man, is considered as an object and therefore, she should be manipulated and controlled (70). Therefore, Manon’s husband manipulates and controls Sarah, because she is the ‘other’ or an object. He denies her humanity and disrespects her. Sarah lives “[i]n a society in which no one is obligated to respect African-American women” (115). She was not respected for her gender and race, especially not by the white man. Therefore, Manon’s husband decides to make Sarah serve at his table in order to show her his disrespect.

Segregating and dominating the slaves is another kind of oppression by the white man. Manon’s father was a slaveholder and he “was strict and fair” (Martin 23). He was obsessed with his slaves and set his own rules to discipline them and control them. He followed a special strict system with them in order to make them obedient. They were also treated as inferior to remind them that they were slaves and that he was their master. During her childhood, Manon’s father did not allow Manon to play with the slaves’ children on their farm: “Father considered it a perverse practice that resulted in a coarsening of the master’s children and was the source of inappropriate expectation in the negroes, who must feel themselves the equals of their playmates” (24). He believed that children of the white middle class should not mix with the slaves’ children, because it was an immoral behavior, as the white children would be deflected when mixing with children of a lower class, and the slaves would learn to cross their limits to their masters.

African slaves were completely controlled by their white masters and were not allowed to enter their world. Fanon argued that “[t]he white man wants the world; he wants it for himself. He discovers that he is the predestined master of the world. He enslaves it. His relationship with the world is one of appropriation” (Fanon 2008, 107). The white man considers himself the master of the world. He believes that he is superior to other races. As a result, his superiority gives him the right to enslave and marginalize inferior ranks of society, and keep them always at the bottom of society. The white man sees himself as civilized, as Fanon stated: “The white world, the only decent one, was preventing me from participating” (94). The white man believes that he has the right to dominate and segregate his slaves,
because he brought them into his world. African slaves were forced to migrate to America to serve the Europeans. In addition, the Europeans considered them savages and uncivilized, which made them inferior in the white man’s world. Therefore, they were segregated and dominated by different social hierarchies in the American society.

In brief, slaves were oppressed by different people, from the time they were taken from Africa until they worked as slaves on the plantations. These oppressors came from different social classes and genders. In *Middle Passage* the slaves are oppressed by the ship crew of the Republic, who are described as pirates, because of their illegal contribution in the slave trade and treat the slaves violently. They use their illegal powers, since they are rejected by their society and there are no laws to control their behavior. Another oppressor is the black Creole Papa, who uses his power and wealth and becomes a benefactor of this trade. He is also a racist, who stands against the white race and against his own race. In *Property*, Manon, the half French female Creole, humiliates her slave Sarah, since she considers herself élite and does not want to lose her power as a female. She chooses to oppress her black female slave rather than being oppressed by her husband, the white man. In addition, her husband, the white man, rapes Sarah, since he sees himself superior to her, which gives him the right to practice his control over her. Being the superior in his society, makes him disrespect the black race in general, and especially the black female, which also makes him segregate his slaves.
Chapter 2

Slaves Suffering Under White Oppression

OPPRESSION! thou, whose hard and cruel chain,
Entails on all thy victims woe and pain;
Who gives with tyrant force and scorpion whip,
The cup of mis’ry to a Negro’s lip;

Mary Birkett Card, “A Poem on the Slave Trade. Addressed to her Own Sex”

Europeans chose to migrate to America, while African slaves were forced violently to migrate and work as slaves and servants to the white Europeans. African slaves were sold to the traders or stolen by them, and then they were shipped as cargo to America. In *Middle Passage* the African slaves are treated violently by the crew of the Republic for control. The violent treatment of the crew makes them seem as savages, aiming to take the slaves to be eaten. In America, the slaves were sold to the white man, working as free labor on plantations: “[S]lavery was the cheapest and most efficient form of labor” (Eltis, Lewis and Sokoloff 34). The slaves in *Property* are treated as goods, serving the capital in producing the maximum product without getting any profit or payment in return: “Enslaved Africans were people who had neither rights nor freedom of movement, […] because they were seen as things” (Asante 2007). Slaves are not treated as humans, since they are seen as primitives. As a result, they are oppressed by the white man and are treated violently, considered as Niggers. In addition, Calhoun, the free slave, suffers from his binary oppositions; he is free, but his color makes people consider him a slave. In other words, he is the ‘self’, but people regard him as the ‘other’. On the other hand, Sarah’s psychic space is colonized by her masters through her oppression, which makes her alienate herself and grow silent. This chapter will show how slaves suffer from the white man’s violent oppression in *Middle Passage* and in *Property*. This violent and psychic oppression resulted in deep pain and rage, which motivated the slaves to revolt against their oppressors.
1. White Man’s Violence

Europeans forced African slaves to leave their land. In *Middle Passage*, when the slave ship Republic arrives at the African coast, Calhoun cannot sleep at night: “Sleep and I were strangers that night. All that evening, moaning and sharp cries such as only Negro women can make drifted on the wind from the warehouse, where Africans living, dying, and dead were thrown together” (Johnson 58). Although Calhoun is sleeping on the ship deck, he can still hear the African captives’ cries. The captives are all locked together in the barracoons (slaves-holding cells), dead and living together. Calhoun compares the barracoons to warehouses, since the slaves are treated as goods and cargo. Slaves were either captured by Africans through warfare or kidnapped by the Africans or by the European traders:

Many, an untold number, died in the process of capture and during the long march to the coast. More died on the coast in the Europeans’ grossly overcrowded barracoons […] while awaiting shipment. […] When one adds the numbers killed in battle or in raids, it looks as if half those destined to be enslaved died before they commenced their often brief lives as unfree, dehumanised, labourers. (Sherwood 6)

African captives were chained and forced to march to the coast and were suffering from their capturers’ brutality and torture, trying to resist the physical coercion. They were then locked in the barracoons waiting to be exchanged for weapons and rum by the European traders. Many of them resisted their enslavement and tried to escape, but then they were shot dead. Therefore, before they were shipped on board, many of them died from their resistance to enslavement, and the rest were violently forced to leave their lives behind.

Violence continued on the slave ships to control the slaves. Slaves are packed on the Republic as cargo: “Once the Allmuseri saw the great ship and the squalid pit that would house them sardined belly-to-buttocks in the orlop, with its dead air and razor-teethed bilge rats, each slave forced to lie spoon-fashion on his left side to relieve the pressure against his heart—after seeing *this*, the Africans panicked” (Johnson 65). African slaves are not used to see big ships; therefore, the ship added more fear to the fear of enslavement. Treating the slaves as cargo is a kind of humiliation and oppression. Two slaves try to jump overboard for salvation, but their resistance is treated violently by Falcon: “He beat them until blood came” (66). Falcon punishes the slaves who try to jump overboard, because he does not want them to die, as their death means the end of his domination and it also means bad profits for the
In addition, women are terrorized and humiliated by being raped by the ship crew (134). Female slaves were usually raped by the sailors on slave ships: “Sexual violence was so thoroughly embedded in the system of slavery that it must be viewed not as incidental but as a constituent element of the trade” (Winter 13). Raping the female slaves was a kind of violence, which became a known practice among the white sailors to benefit from slavery and to terrorize the slaves.

In her book Arendt: a Guide for the Perplexed, Karin Fry refers to Hannah Arendt, who claims that “violence is normally used by those in control of government to force and coerce, resulting in the suppression of the freedom of the people” (Fry 64). Violence is used by hegemonic and tyrannous people to control the freedom of dominated people. Therefore, violence, according to Arendt, is the opposite of freedom. It silences and mutes the dominants and forces them to obey their oppressors. Furthermore, Arendt believes that violence has a short effect “for maintaining sovereign power” (64). The oppressed comes to a stage, where he cannot bear the pain and humiliation caused by violence any longer, which will make him reject the power forced over him. Therefore, violence cannot be used permanently, and as a result it can have a dangerous effect in evacuating power. Arendt also believes that power opposes violence, as power “concerns persons who come together to act” (65). In other words, power cannot be practiced over a group of people. It rather arises over others without the use of violence. Therefore, when violence emerges, it will put power at risk and destroy it. Accordingly, violence and power are opposites, and this signifies that the violence used by the crew of the Republic shows their lack of power.

However, Anthony Bogues contradicts Arendt by relating power to violence. Bogues suggests that “violence can be power and that in its performance as power violence seeks to trap bodies” (Bogues 101). The oppressor aims to control his victim with violence and does not aim for him to die, because “sometimes death becomes a means to an end” (101). Death will end the struggle, which means that the oppressor’s control will end at this stage. Bogues suggests that violence and power aim to enforce discipline and order, which can be performed to a limit, because if violence exceeds its limit, it will cause death. Therefore, the two slaves decide to jump overboard to end the violence enforced on them. As a result, the violent treatment of the slaves is a kind of control and domination.
Furthermore, violence is used by the white man to control the black man and to be recognized by him. In *Property* slaves are often whipped by their owners for any simple reason. For example, Leo is a slave at the Gaudet’s plantation, who is whipped by one of Manon’s husband’s fellows called Sutter: “[H]e has had him whipped and it will be a week before he can work again” (Martin 5). Leo is whipped because he “has befriended a woman Sutter wants for himself” (5). Sutter is a white man, who sees himself superior to Leo, the black slave. The whip will make Leo recognize Sutter and obey the rules set to him. Another victim of violence in the novel is Sarah, the slave girl. She is violently beaten and raped by her master shortly after she starts the work. Slaves and especially the newcomers from Africa were severely punished, since “they refused to perform the new tasks they were assigned; they ran away, and they sometimes lashed out in anger at their oppressors” (Kolchin 57). This resistance to the new enslavement needed to be broken, so that the slaves would accept their new status as dominated and obedient slaves and recognize their masters. These kinds of cruel punishments included “branding; nose slitting; amputation of ears, toes, and fingers (and less often of hands and feet); castration; and burning at the stake” (57-8). In general, American-born slaves required less punishment than the newcomers to America, as the latter needed more training and discipline. These punishments were also established since slaves were powerless to resist their owners, especially women.

Fanon described Hegel’s notion of man: “Man is human only to the extent to which he tries to impose himself on another man in order to be recognized by him” (Fanon 2008, 191). Fanon argued that this notion does not apply to the black man, as the white man does not consider the black man a man, rather a subject. Therefore, the white man does not need to prove his existence to the black man. Fanon also claimed that the white man considers the black man a machine-animal-man, which makes the white man alienate him and oppress him violently. However, Hegel’s notion of man can be applied to slave revolts, since through revolts, slaves will be able to impose their existence on the white man. Fanon argued that when slaves buy their freedom, they are still seen as the lowest social class in the American society, because of their color and the need for values: “Values that were not engendered by his actions, values not resulting from the systolic gush of his blood, whirled around him in a colorful dance” (194). He claimed that free slaves will live independently, but they will not be equated with the white man. The white man is recognized by the black man through the
violence he uses against him. However, the white man does not recognize the black man, and therefore he refers to him as the ‘other’.

2. White Man’s savagery

The violent treatment African slaves suffered made them think that the white men were savages. While the African slaves in *Middle Passage* are shipped to America, they think that the traders will take them somewhere to be eaten: “[T]hey thought we were barbarians shipping them to America to be eaten. They saw us as savages” (Johnson 65). In *Middle Passage*, Johnson refers to a historical fact about how the Africans consider the European traders. European traders’ violent treatment of the African captives made the Africans think that the Europeans were savages and cannibals, which became part of the Middle Passage horror. To illustrate this in *Middle Passage*, Johnson implies irony to the name of the slave ship. The name Republic represents the corrupted American society during slavery era. America was corrupted through stealing and oppressing innocent people and exploiting them to serve their economy. The Republic is an unstable ship, according to Calhoun:

> [T]he Republic was physically unstable. She was perpetually flying apart and reforming during the voyage, falling to pieces beneath us, the great sails ripping to rags in high winds, the rot, cracks, and parasites in old wood so cancerously swift, springing up where least expected, that Captain Falcon’s crew spent most of their time literally rebuilding the Republic as we crawled along the waves. In a word, she was, from stem to stern, a process. (Johnson 35-6)

The Republic represents America, which is unstable and damaged. The damage is caused by the white man’s savage treatment of the slaves. Calhoun describes the ship as a damaged ship, and this damage is increasing while it is used for shipping slaves to America. America is developing its capital rapidly through slave trade, but at the same time corruption and damage are severe. The crew feels the damage, as Cringle tells Calhoun: “She would not be […] the same vessel that left New Orleans” (36). The ship witnesses the physical and psychological torture of the slaves on the ship, which will continue and increase on plantations, due to the white man’s savagery. However, her sinking at the end of the novel symbolizes the fall of the tyrant forces of enslavement and the emancipation of the slaves.
Olaudah Equiano, an Igbo boy in the eighteenth century, was kidnapped by European traders when he was eleven, and was shipped on a slave ship. In his narration, Equiano described the fear of the slaves: “[R]umors, reinforced by sailors or interpreters who sought to exploit the captives’ fear, spread from Senegambia to Angola that the slavers, whose appetite for human cargo had become prodigious, were insatiable cannibals” (Diedrich, Gates and Pedersen 38). Slave trade continued for centuries, and it became known to the Africans in Africa that the traders were cannibals and that their aim was to take their captives to be eaten. Equiano also added that when he saw the captives chained together with deep sorrow on their faces, he was convinced that they were taken to be eaten by cannibals (38). Africans, moreover, believed that when African captives were taken and were never brought back, they were either eaten or murdered. Another slave described young Africans, who were brought on deck: they tried to jump overboard thinking that they would be fattened to be eaten: “The white man’s cannibalism explained his hunger for slaves and hence the trade” (38). European traders had hunger for slaves, and they were looked upon as savages and cannibals among the African society. In other words, Africans in Africa were always suspicious of their neighboring people whom they did not trust. This suspicion made them think of the European traders, who were complete strangers to them, as cannibals, and they considered the African captives sacrificial victims.

Another savage oppression is raping the female slaves, which can also destroy civilization. Before Sarah worked at the Gaudets, she was a slave at Manon’s aunt’s: “[M]y uncle had lost his head when a free man of color offered to buy Sarah so that he might free her and marry her […] he had Sarah tied up in the kitchen and whipped her himself” (Martin 21). Manon’s uncle acted like a savage and whipped her, as a kind of punishment. Sarah does not give up thinking about getting married, as she asks again for her right when she starts working at the Gaudet’s: “She entreated me to tell my husband, as she feared he wouldn’t agree to the match” (25). From her previous experience, Sarah is afraid to ask Manon’s husband, so she seeks Manon’s help. However, Manon’s husband’s reaction is not better than her uncle’s: “My husband’s reaction to this news was to leap up from his desk, bellowing like a bull” (25). Manon’s husband is even more savage than her uncle. He does not only whip her and beat her, but he rapes her in the end to humiliate her. The white man’s savagery can be explained through ecofeminism, which “stresses the indissoluble connectedness – both physical and conceptual – of the earth itself, and all life on it” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin
Human life is connected to nature; earth and sea. Nature is important for human survival, since it has a physical and psychological effect. However, the modern world of Western culture, which is based on domination, denies and minimizes this connection. Furthermore, it expands its domination over nature. This domination means that the human being will lose his freedom, if he does not connect to nature, which stands against ecofeminism.

Modern culture focuses on hierarchy: “The tenets of Enlightenment reason rely for their continuing power on a number of linked and hierarchized binarisms: nature and culture; black and white; civilization and savagery; the human and the animal” (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 68). The Enlightenment doctrine supports the idea of domination, which causes a binary division of hierarchy. In other words, the modern world supports the idea of the civilized white man, who extends his domination over the savage black man. The white man has a culture, which makes him seem human, while the black man is seen as an animal, since he is connected to nature. The white man’s domination comes from increasing his capital, which is achieved by exploiting the female gender and the black race. Therefore, according to ecofeminism, this idea of the modern world will destroy society. The female gender and the black race will fall under savage patriarchal power and will lose their freedom, since they are connected to nature: “The more closely associated with nature non-European peoples and women were considered to be, the more ‘inherently’ inferior they were; inferiority ensured and justified patriarchal/Western civilization’s destruction and domination of other lands and peoples” (68). Female gender and black race have strong connections to nature, and therefore they are considered inferior, according to the white man, and consequently, it will be easier for the white man to control them and treat them savagely. As a result, this domination will destroy civilization, as nature is related to civilization.

Furthermore, raping the female slave produces undesirable children, who are victims of the white man’s savagery. Sarah is raped by her master and gets two children from him. The eldest one, Walter, looks more like his father: “He has his father’s curly red hair and green eyes” (Martin 5). Walter is not white, rather a colored child, who is a mixture of the white man and the black female slave, which means that he is a half slave. He is neglected by his father, because his father also feels guilty for producing such a child. The boy is also disgusted by his mother, because he reminds her of her offense. Consequently, he becomes wild, raised by one of the slaves in the house: “[W]e had the little bastard running up and down the dining room, putting his greasy fingers in the serving plates, eating bits of meat
from his father’s hand like a dog […] The child is a mad creature” (5). Walter is a retarded child who, besides his wildness is deaf: “All master say is he don’ hear” (59). His retardation is due to Sarah’s rape. When Sarah was raped she was traumatized: “[I]t is estimated that fertilisation occurs only in a small proportion of rapes and it is highly likely that this fertilisation will not lead to the birth of a living child, because the woman may have an abortion voluntarily or as a consequence of trauma” (Romito 81). Sarah’s fertilization happened during the trauma of rape, which affected the growth of her fetus. As a result, Walter was born retarded. Walter is the victim of his father’s savagery. Moreover, he is neglected by his father, as well as the other child, who was born black: “[A] drop of negro blood does sometimes overflow like an inkpot in the child” (Martin 6). The other black child looks more like a slave, due to his color. Therefore, they both remind their father of the sin of having half-slave children: “A man who will enslave his own blood, may not be safely relied on for magnanimity. Men do not love those who remind them of their sins” (Douglass 19). The children are enslaved by their father and will grow up in a society, which will consider them slaves and inferior. His children will always remind him of his sin and of his savagery, and therefore they are neglected by him, and become victims of his savagery.

3. Calhoun’s Binary Oppositions

Another victim of the white man’s oppression is Calhoun, who is physically free, but his mind is enslaved. When he gained his freedom in Illinois, Calhoun decided to move to New Orleans to start a new decent life: “I looked for honest work. But arriving in the city, checking the saloons and Negro bars, I found nothing. So I stole—it came as second nature to me” (Johnson 2-3). Calhoun is treated as an inferior in a society where blacks are considered the lowest cast. Therefore, he becomes a thief and admits that he is “a social parasite” (2). Becoming a thief helps him to sail on the Republic with pirates and bandits. However, sailing with white people conflicts his conscience and this conflict grows after the African slaves come on board, which confuses his freedom and identity. As a result, he starts to suffer from binary oppositions, as Falcon describes it:

Conflict […] is what it means to be conscious. Dualism is a bloody structure of the mind. Subject and object, perceiver and perceived, self and other—these ancient twins are built into mind like the stem-piece of a merchantman. We cannot think without them. […] They are signs of a transcendental Fault, a deep crack in consciousness itself.
Mind was *made* for murder. Slavery, if you think this through, forcing yourself not to flinch, is the social correlate of a deeper, ontic wound”. (Johnson 97–98)

Falcon identifies the dualism in Calhoun’s mind. Calhoun is black, and yet he is not a slave. In other words, he is the ‘self’, but he is seen as the ‘other’ by the crew; he becomes an object, while he is still a subject in the white man’s eye: “According to Falcon, the flawed condition of the mind leads inevitably to the corruption of the body” (Lovalerie King 84). Calhoun’s hybridization confuses him and makes him emotionally unstable and unbalanced, since he does not know to which group he belongs: the crew or the slaves, the free men or the enslaved. The crew is still considering him a slave: “Better yuh keep your noodle down, Illinois […] Or yuh’ll be sold too. Stolen right off ship, I’m sayin’, and pressed into a gang. It’s happen before. […] These blokes don’t know you’re a sailor. And they don’t care” (Johnson 60). When the ship arrives at the African coast to buy slaves, Squibb tells Calhoun to stay low; otherwise the merchants will steal him and sell him as a slave, since his color makes him seem as a slave or ‘other’.

On the other hand, Ngonyama, the Allmuseri slave considers Calhoun barbarian, like the other crew members: “[T]he distance between his people, [the Africans], and black America was vast—his people saw whites as Raw Barbarians and me (being a colored mate) as a Cooked one” (Johnson 75). Ngonyama does not consider Calhoun African, rather a black American. In other words, he considers him a black barbarian. Ngonyama sees Calhoun as the ‘other’, since he does not belong to the Africans. As a result, Calhoun is the ‘other’ to everyone, and therefore his mind is still enslaved, due to his blackness: “By casting Rutherford as someone who is physically free but perceptually enslaved, Johnson tackles the very definition of freedom and challenges the presumption that freedom and property ownership are inherently connected” (Lovalerie King 84). Calhoun suffers from the binary oppositions: body and mind, object and subject, white and black, free and enslaved. Binary oppositions developed in the South during the slavery era, distinguishing the whites from the blacks: “The distinction had hardened into a dualism. Blacks were not simply human beings who differed in visible but superficial ways from whites” (Scarborough 9). Racism developed in the South, a racism which denoted that whites and blacks were considered different species. The whites were superior to the blacks, and they even called the blacks ‘niggers’. Binary oppositions are the results of motivated ways of thinking. Slavery motivated the white man to
call the blacks niggers and to marginalize them. Furthermore, their color was related to slavery, since Africans were brought as slaves to America.

Du Bois argued that African Americans live a double life; they live as Negroes and as Americans. He described how the African-American slaves were seen by the white man:

The worlds within and without the Veil of Color are changing, and changing rapidly, but not at the same rate, not in the same way; and this must produce a peculiar wrenching of the soul, a peculiar sense of doubt and bewilderment. Such a double life, with double thoughts, double duties, and double social classes, must give rise to double words and double ideals, and tempt the mind to pretence or to revolt, to hypocrisy or to radicalism. (Du Bois 136)

Du Bois claimed that African-American slaves suffered from racism. On the one hand, they were not considered real Americans, and, on the other hand, they were actually Americans. This created a double consciousness, as Du Bois called it, since the white men looked at them as inferior and others. The white men intended to remind them of their blackness by calling them Negroes. As a result, they became victims to racism, because they were excluded from the American world and were segregated into a world of alienation. However, they were considered part of the American society and participated actively in the economic growth, but at the same time they were excluded from the benefits of the product. This dualism created double souls, double thoughts and in the end an unbalanced man, who had a double feeling of belonging and not belonging. This third new personality cannot exist for a long time, since it will be filled with rage to salvage and emancipate the soul and body, which comes in a form of revolt.

Calhoun’s enslaved soul makes him escape to the sea, seeking his real freedom. He lives in an empty world with no family, no past and not even a future: “I don’t even know who my father is […] I have no family traditions to maintain. In a way, I have no past. […] When I look behind me, for my father, there is only emptiness” (Johnson 160). Slaves were separated from their families; therefore, they had only their masters to teach them to be dominated. Slaves who were born in America had no roots and no traditions or positive experience in their lives. Unlike African slaves, who were newly brought from Africa, they were still influenced by their rich cultures and traditions, as Calhoun describes the Allmuseri: “They seldom fought. They could not steal. They fell sick, it was said, if they wronged anyone. As I
live, they so shamed me I wanted their ageless culture to be my own” (78). Calhoun can never be like the native Africans, since he was raised as a slave and was never in contact with the African culture. He does not feel his freedom, because he lived his life as a slave. His freedom does not come immediately by an announcement that he is a free man, unlike the Allmuseri, who know what freedom means even after they are enslaved, since they lived as free men on their land. When Calhoun first arrives in New Orleans after his emancipation, he describes it as heaven (2). However, this picture does not last: “But even paradise must have its back side too. [...] Upstream there were waterfront saloons and dives, a black underworld of thieves, gamblers, and ne’er-do-wells” (Johnson 2). He discovers that black Americans are inferior and criminals in New Orleans, because their inferiority in this society forces them to become outlawed. He immediately starts to feel that people look at him as a slave: “[T]hey sniffed down their long, Continental noses at poor, purebred Negroes like myself, didn’t give a tinker’s damn about my family tree and welcomed me as the world downstream would not” (2). Therefore, Calhoun still feels inferior in New Orleans, which makes him escape to the sea seeking for his real freedom.

Johnson shows a binary opposition between Calhoun’s stasis and flux, permanence and change, mind and body, self and world (Conner xxi). The Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, maintained that change is a natural condition of the universe: “Heraclitus’s most famous pronouncement insists upon this fundamental principle of constant change” (xxi). Yet, Parmenides emphasized “the permanent and the unchanging” (xxi). Johnson relates the notion of change to Calhoun’s free body after his emancipation, while his mind is stasis; his mind is still enslaved through his fixed color. Johnson reveals that “the species of slavery to which Calhoun is here entangled is not physical, but rather metaphysical” (Byrd 106). In other words, Calhoun sees himself free, while New Orleans society considers him a slave. Therefore, he is transformed into a new form of slavery, a slave with no master, corrupted by theft. Calhoun longs to free his mind when he escapes to the sea. He does not want to be enslaved by marrying Isadora or by succumbing to his creditor Papa: “Both Isadora and my creditors, I should add, who entered into a conspiracy, a trap, a scheme so cunning that my only choices were prison” (Johnson 1). Marriage means enslavement to Calhoun: “[M]arriage, [...] was, for a man of my temperament, worse than imprisonment” (1). Calhoun wants to gain full emancipation and refuses any bonds. He thinks that the free sea will offer him freedom with no obligations or strings. However, he discovers that his journey on the
Republic does not offer him freedom. It rather makes him understand the meaning of freedom. Therefore, even after Calhoun escapes to the sea, his mind and body are suffering from the entrapment of the binary oppositions. However, by understanding the meaning of freedom, his body and mind can be freed eventually.

4. Colonization of the Psychic Space

In addition to the binary oppositions, slaves’ bodies and minds were colonized by their masters, the white men. After Sarah is brutally beaten and raped by her master for asking permission to get married, she chooses to grow silent: “Sarah wept, pleaded, then grew silent and secretive” (Martin 26). She refuses to speak even to Manon, who meant to help her with her request: “She told me first and I saw nothing against it” (25). This abrupt silence is a kind of social melancholy (Oliver 88). It is the result of the colonization of the psychic space, which happens when the colonizer controls the colonized body and mind. In her book, Kelly Oliver mentions Fanon’s claim that “colonization mobilizes an inferiority complex in the colonized” (Oliver 28). The colonized is considered inferior to the colonizer, and then he is marginalized and silenced. This, as a result, will create alienation, shame and social melancholy, which are only released by liberating the psychic space to gain sublimation and individual autonomy and to be able to connect to others. Female slaves often suffered from social melancholy, when they were silenced by their master’s oppression.

Oliver also refers to Freud, who stated the cause of social melancholy as “the loss of a loved self” (Oliver 89). People use language to communicate with other people. When female slaves are oppressed, they lose interest in themselves and feel ashamed of being inferior. As a result, they become silent as a symbol of melancholy, because they are unable to sublimate or connect with others. Furthermore, white men colonize the psychic space of their slaves: “The colonization of psychic space is the occupation or invasion of social forces—values, traditions, laws, mores, institutions, ideals, stereotypes, etc.—that restrict or undermine the movement of bodily drives into signification” (43). The Psychic space is the close connection between one’s body and culture, while the psyche is the place where the body becomes involved with the social forces (43). The colonizer’s oppression operates on the social forces, and will affect the development of the psychic space of the colonized, which at the end will lead to depression and self-hatred: “[M]arginalized people are not only shamed and then silenced but also vulnerable to depression, a consequence of the inability to manifest or
discharge affects in language” (124). Oppressing and dominating the psychic space deprive the slaves of enjoying their freedom to create their own identity and culture. It is their masters who forcibly decide and plan their lives, which has as a result that they are alienated and silenced, since they are considered inferior. These restrictions of the psychic space will lead to social melancholy, self-hatred and rage to free the individual from these restrictions in order to form a new unique identity.

Furthermore, Manon’s husband alienates Sarah through his oppression and violence, and this fills her with guilt. He enjoys seeing her silent: “My husband was pleased with himself” (Martin 26). Manon’s husband is celebrating his victory, because he has succeeded in alienating Sarah through his domination and subjection. Sarah’s alienation is a result of the guilty feeling of being oppressed: “The free-floating guilt and anxiety inherent in the human condition described by philosophers of alienation can in itself be diagnosed as a symptom of a concrete guilt over the oppression and domination that guaranteed white privilege” (Oliver 2). Sarah feels guilty of not being able to defend her rights as a human, which makes her alienate herself by growing silent. Her guilt gives her master the privilege of practicing his superiority over her.

It is usually the female gender and the black race who suffer from alienation, since they are inferior to the male gender and the white race. Therefore, Manon’s husband finds it easier to oppress Sarah than oppressing Manon: “He wishes I might die of cholera, and fears that she may instead” (Martin 67). Manon is a white female; in addition, she is rich, which makes it harder to dominate her. However, Sarah is desired by him, since he can easily be privileged by oppressing and subjecting her: “[T]he black man is the dark, invisible underside of the privilege of subjectivity constituting alienation” (Oliver 3). Sarah is black, which makes her invisible, and this has as a result that she cannot be privileged. Her inferiority erases her identity.

African-American slaves had no identity and were not recognized as American citizens. For example, the slave owners in Property do not know the exact age of their slaves, as Manon’s aunt claims: “She wasn’t a girl when she came to your mother, and that was twenty years ago. She is fifty or fifty-five, I would guess” (Martin 91). Manon’s mother had a slave, whose age was unknown. Part of a person’s identity is his age, but most slaves were illiterates and were not able to count their children’s age, as Frederick Douglass stated: “I never met
with a slave who could tell me how old he was. [...] [Slaves] keep no family records, with marriages, births, and deaths. They measure the ages of their children by spring time, winter time, harvest time, planting time, and the like; but these soon become undistinguishable and forgotten” (Douglass 4). Slaves had no records of identity and were denied education, and therefore, they were easily dominated. Furthermore, their marriages were illegal: “These marriages the negroes make are not legal” (Martin 25). Slaves were treated as properties and not as humans, and their owners did not legalize their marriages, because the slaves were inferior to them: “The marriage institution cannot exist among slaves” (Douglass 246). They were denied their rights as humans and were looked down upon by the white man, who silenced them and made them unrespectable, especially black women. Fanon claimed that “a colored woman is never quite respectable in the eyes of a white man” (Fanon 2008, 25). The white man desires the black woman only to oppress and alienate her to feel privileged; otherwise, he does not respect her. This oppression makes her alienate herself from the world, since she is filled with guilt.

Alienating the colonized and controlling his psychic space cause racism, a racism that aims to dominate the values of the colonized. Manon’s husband is a racist, who exploits his slaves and makes them inferior. The only things that interest him are things related to colonization: “My husband could talk about sugar […] he liked to shoot animals; this was the range of his interests. Art and music meant nothing to him; he could not concentrate on a picture long enough to see it. Five minutes of my performance upon a piano put him into a deep sleep” (Martin 165). The sugar plantation is related to slave exploitation, which will make the slaves inferior and will increase the white man’s capital. Manon’s husband’s interest in shooting animals shows his cruelty and savagery, which can be related to the oppression of his slaves. He has no interest in human arts, which can add delicacy to his soul and make him more human. He is, according to Fanon, the colonizer: “To justify exploiting the colonized and taking their land, the colonizer makes them inferior. And, to make them inferior, the colonizer racializes them” (Oliver 28). The colonizer becomes the master of the land and exploits his slaves, who are colonized to serve his interest. In order to have full control over the colonized, the colonizer must make them inferior, which as a result will cause racism. Fanon also claimed that the colonizer cannot enslave the colonized without officially making him inferior, which will create a racist culture. Therefore, colonization is always related to racism through exploiting the colonized and making him inferior.
Fanon went further in his suggestion, claiming that the colonized comes from a society with rich values, and these values do not exist to the colonizer. Values are important beliefs and ideals shared by a group about what is desirable and what is not. These values leave influences on the behavior of the group (Posner). The colonizer destroys the values of the colonized and does not admit them into his world, which will make him the enemy of values. This negation of values reflects the opposite qualities of the colonizer to oppress and marginalize the colonized, when the colonizer forces the colonized to accept his superiority by destroying the humanity the civilization of the colonized: “The white man’s violence attempts to expel his own otherness, which he has projected onto the bodies of those he oppresses, necessarily brings the return of the repressed in the form of both his own barbarism and guilt” (Oliver 29). Fanon referred the colonizer’s aggression and oppression of the colonized to his feelings of guilt, which start when the colonizer makes the colonized inferior, giving himself the right to exploit and enslave the colonized. This oppression will make the colonized ‘other’ so that the colonizer can exclude himself from the otherness. The colonizer, as a result, ends up controlling the psychic spaces of the colonized by exploiting him and dominating his values, which alienates and silences the colonized and leaves him in deep melancholy and self-hatred.

5. White Woman’s Oppression

Furthermore, Manon participates in colonizing Sarah’s psychic space, since she is oppressed by the white man and in return, she oppresses her black female slave. Although Manon is a rich white Creole, she is subordinated and humiliated by her husband: “[I]n his own home he was a tyrant” (Martin 166). Her husband treats her sometimes as a servant: “Since there are no servants presently available, Mistress Manon […] I’ll have to prevail on you to serve me some meat” (8). By addressing her Mistress Manon, he is mocking her by showing her that even if she is the mistress of her house, he can still treat her as a servant. Manon, in return, wants to demonstrate her matriarchal power, which is practiced over her slave Sarah. When Sarah runs away, Manon considers her as her lost property: “I don’t think of her as having run away […] I think of her as having been stolen” (185-6). Manon insists on getting back Sarah to prove her superiority to herself. What also strikes Manon is that when Sarah is captured and returned to her, Manon learns from Sarah that she had been treated as a free woman: “I considered this image of Sarah. She was dressed in borrowed clothes, sitting stiffly at a bare wooden table while a colorless Yankee woman […] served her tea in a china cup. The
righteous husband fetched a cushion to make their guest more comfortable. It struck me as perfectly ridiculous. What on earth did they think they were doing?” (208-9). During the period of her freedom Sarah lived as a free woman, owned by herself and not by her mistress.

Manon’s reaction shows that she stands against abolitionists and encourages slavery, which makes her feel superior. She is inferior to her husband, because she is a female. On the other hand, she is superior to her slave, because she is white: “White women have been offered a share of White male power, but at the cost of participating in their own subordination” (Collins 163). White women are privileged due to their color, but they are still suffering from subordination. The female gender is inferior, whereas the white race is superior; therefore, the white woman is subordinated by the white man, and in return she subordinates the black female. Sarah, as a result, is inferior to Manon, because she is black, which makes Manon use her matriarchal authority over her by oppressing her and considering her lower than herself.

To conclude this chapter, slaves suffered from the white man’s oppression. In Middle Passage the victimization of the slaves starts on their land before they are shipped on the Republic. First, the slaves are waiting to be sold to the traders in the barracoons, treated as cargo. On the Republic, in addition to their bad conditions on the ship, they are then controlled violently by the crew. The crew’s violent treatment makes them appear as savages to the slaves, who think that they are taken to be murdered or eaten. Calhoun, the newly freed slave, struggles with his binary oppositions: he is a free slave, but he is seen as ‘other’ by the crew and the slaves. In Property, the slaves are constantly punished and whipped by their masters. Sarah, the black female slave, is oppressed savagely by her owners. She is deprived of her simple rights and is punished for asking to marry the man she loves. In other words, her psychic space is colonized by her oppressors. As results of the above, slaves revolt against their oppressors to gain their humanity and self-respect, since they refuse to be treated as others.
Chapter 3
Revolt: The Route to Emancipation

They call us cotton heads, and coffee men, and oily men. They call us men of death. But we are the men of the dance whose feet only gain power when they beat the hard soil.

Léopold Sédar Senghor, “Prayer to the Masks”

Due to the oppression and the humiliation that slaves suffered, they exploded in opposition to their oppressors, calling for liberty and independence. Slaves revolted violently against the white man’s intolerant authority in the Middle Passage and on the plantations: “Granted, kidnapping and slavery are reasons enough for any group of people to revolt” (Osagie 126). Revolts came in different forms; however, most of them were aggressive and violent, reflecting the pain they suffered and the struggle they experienced. Nevertheless, revolts can be achieved peacefully, when the slaves dance on the slave ships to diminish the pain of enslavement. Another kind of revolt is psychic: the enslaved goes through spiritual and psychological changes to end up appreciating himself and seeing himself as ‘self’ and not ‘other’. African-American slaves lived as inferior under the savage control of the white man. Therefore, in order to live as human beings with self-respect, their emancipation could only be gained through revolt: “Mankind reaches the stage of full humanity when each recognizes the other as equal” (Richard King 178). Slaves wanted to be recognized as humans. However, emancipation requires self-sacrifice: “[H]umans will risk their lives for prestige and honor, for designation by self and others as possessing a certain status and character as free beings” (177). Slave revolts also meant that many slaves had to sacrifice their lives fighting for their freedom, rather than to live in humiliation. Such sacrifice opened the way for future generations to live as free humans. This chapter will show how slave victimization breeds revolt in Middle Passage and in Property. Besides violent revolts, freedom can also be achieved through the psychic revolts, which are peaceful revolts that free the psychic space of the enslaved.
1. Emancipation Achieved Through Violence

The white man’s violence turned the slaves into violent revolters. When the Allmuseri were shipped on the Republic, they were peaceful people. However, the crew’s violent treatment made them respond with violent revolt: “From the perspective of the Allmuseri the captain had made Ngonyama and his tribesmen as bloodthirsty as himself” (Johnson 140). This aggression is created by the crew’s violent torture. One of the slaves, for example, “pulled his shirt down to show them how Falcon had burned in the initials ZS not once but three times until the impression was as clear as stigmata, or the markings on cattle” (133-4). Slaves were usually burned with the initials of their owners to be recognized. Diamelo, who also suffered severely in the barracoons and on the ship, becomes the most violent and racial slave on the ship, and his treatment of his captives is very humiliating, such as speaking to them through a third person or, when he handles them something, throwing it towards them with his toe (153). His hatred is especially focused on Falcon: “Ebenezer Falcon, a true (godsent) devil to despise. A dragon so exquisite in his evil” (154). He wants to keep Falcon alive and oppress him to make him feel the pain and the struggle the slaves suffered. Diamelo’s violence makes him the champion of his group, although he is not the eldest one (154).

African-American slaves were violently oppressed by their masters. This oppression made them lose their humanity and self-respect and filled them with rage and violence: “It takes no complex theory of dialectics to see that a people whose very existence under and after slavery was permeated by violence might adopt it as a kind of antidote or countersolution to the violence inflicted upon them” (Richard King 185). African-American slaves were violent people. This violence was caused by the white man’s oppression during slavery, and continued even after slavery was abolished, because they suffered from discrimination. It is also a kind of remedy to heal the soul from the white man’s violence. Therefore, they take a stand against the white race as a kind of revenge: “To be free of psychological and physical pain, an individual or group may choose to reciprocate against those who have caused it” (185). African-American slaves struggled with physical and psychological pain for almost four centuries, and the remains of this pain continued for generations even after they gained their freedom. The violence they suffered turned them into violent people.

The slaves on the Republic believe that revolting violently is the only way to end their oppression; however, Ngonyama opposes them. In Middle Passage, Ngonyama is against
using violence with the sailors, unlike the other slaves, who have hunger for bloodshed: “Babo placed his hatchet down on the mate’s neck. He slanted his eyes towards Ngonyama, seeking the sign for them to kill him. Ngonyama shook his head. No. But he was alone in his decision” (Johnson 133). Ngonyama is the eldest member of the Allmuseri, and therefore, he was chosen to be their leader. However, Ngonyama believes that freedom can also be gained peacefully and wishes to revolt with less bloodshed, but his people disagree with him. They want to kill all the crew and keep a small number to show them the way back home. Besides, they are distressed, not knowing how to continue their revolt to escape their enslavement: “Whether they put to on Bangalang, or Louisiana, or any New World port, they would be cut down like wheat. No Yankee court would free them. They were still chattel, according to white men’s law” (132). Ngonyama knows that he and his men are still slaves, and if they will be caught, they will be killed by the white man’s law for oppressing and killing the ship crew. Furthermore, he believes that their freedom can be achieved peacefully without bloodshed. Therefore, according to his beliefs, “[h]e wanted the killing to end” (132). However, his people believe that since they were brutally oppressed, only violence would calm them down.

Fanon and Sartre supported the use of violence to end the tyrant oppression, while Fry refers to Arendt, who believes that freedom can also be earned through strategy and peace (Fry 66). This does not mean that Arendt is against using violence in revolutions or revolts, as she claims that “revolutions [or revolts] often require violence to establish new laws […] to secure freedom” (66). Arendt claims that violence is required in revolutions if the revolutionaries cannot gain their freedom except with violence. Therefore, even though violence causes harm and damage, the slaves believe that freedom is gained in the end and that this puts an end to the oppression of the slaves, while Ngonyama demonstrates a peaceful attitude to gain freedom.

Revolts were also violently carried out on plantations and were urged by the free slaves. Martin’s novel Property illustrates different slave revolts, which fill the white men with panic: “They just wanted to murder as many of us as they can […] They don’t think further than that” (Martin 109). The slaves’ only concern is to free themselves from the white man’s domination. They have no real life, since it is owned by their masters. Slave owners punish and humiliate their slaves, because they believe that with punishment and humiliation they would be able to dominate them completely without any resistance, but this could have an opposite effect: “The fire was started by a man who had been whipped for being too slow in
the field” (54). Whipping is the simplest punishment that the slaves receive from their owners. The violence they suffer, as a result, agitates them and makes them respond to such violence with rage and revenge.

Furthermore, the slaves are encouraged to revolt, as Manon says: “[T]heir rude passions inflamed by the wild talk of some preacher, planning how best to kill us all” (Martin 109). There are many former slaves in the South, who constantly encourage the remaining slaves to fight for their emancipation. Moreover, the slaves see how the free slaves enjoy their independent life away from the white man’s intrusion. Accordingly, revolts were instigated, since the slaves were victimized by their oppressors and were encouraged by former slaves to fight for their freedom. Frederick Douglass, who was a former slave in the South, illustrated this encouragement to revolt and became an abolitionist after he had gained his freedom. As an abolitionist, he encouraged slaves to fight and revolt against their masters to gain their freedom: “Frederick Douglass was eager that black men demonstrate their manhood and patriotism by fighting for their freedom” (Richard King 185). His own struggle made him understand the pain that the African-American slaves suffered by losing their humanity and autonomy. He believed that slaves must fight for their freedom to gain their true identity and respect, and live as free human beings. As a result, African-American slaves believed that their expression of violence made them act as men and would force the whites to respect them and fear them. Therefore, in addition to being victimized, which in itself bred revolt, slaves were also urged and encouraged by former slaves and preachers to revolt violently to gain their freedom and respect.

In addition, slaves revolted violently to be recognized by the whites. Sarah’s master treats her violently, which silences her and makes her feel unrecognized. As a result, her people revolt for revenge and kill Manon’s husband violently, as Manon says:

My husband was on his knees, struggling to rise. The big man held him by his hair. […] In the next moment the knife came down. There was the sickening sound of steal breaking through bone, and my husband’s head dropped forward into his chest at an impossible angle. The captain hailed his comrade, who stepped back to admire his handiwork. (Martin 123-4)
Sarah’s people kill Manon’s husband to revenge her rape and humiliation. It is also a way to let the white society recognize them and respect them, a way to demonstrate their triumph and their existence for their oppressors and a way to reject their subordination.

The black man, according to Hegel, is not recognized by the white man: “Self-consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only by being acknowledged” (Hegel in Speight 42-3). The human being is valued when he is recognized by the other through his actions. The slave is not recognized by his master, and as long as he is not being recognized he feels worthless, which is as a result, that his life is reduced to nothing. This produces the inequality between the slave and his master, and only fight or revolt will make the slave recognized by his master, when the slave gains his freedom. Hegel argued that a person might be recognized without fight, “but he has not attained to the truth of this recognition as an independent self-consciousness” (43). It is only through struggle and fight that the slave will be truly recognized by his master and gain an independent self-consciousness, which implies revolting against his master. The violent revolt of the slaves reflects their struggle and the oppression they suffered. It also shows how the slaves have a great desire for autonomy and self-value. As a result, they will be recognized and respected by the white man.

However, violent revolts require self-sacrifice, which can be illustrated in Property when the revolters are killed by the slaveholders, and their death shows self-sacrifice. In Property, slaves often revolt on different plantations. Most of them are caught and hanged, like the number of slaves who revolted against the Gaudets: “Four of the negroes, including the captain, were shot dead, the other two were captured and trussed for hanging” (Martin 134). These slaves have killed Manon’s husband and other white men on the plantation with great violence, but then they are killed by other white men. After every slave revolt on the plantations, the white men become very furious and kill every slave who is related to the revolt: “When it was all over, they had captured fifty negroes; every one was shot or hanged in the next few days” (134). Even though the revolters know that they will be caught and killed by the white men in the end, they are ready to die, because they know that their death and the death of other revolters will end slavery, that emancipation will be achieved. Richard King refers to Martin Luther King, who believed that freedom is achieved through self-sacrifice: “[He] was willing to offer his own life as well as someone else’s for the larger cause of freedom” (Richard King 186). Self-sacrifice shows that slaves refuse to live with
humiliation, that they prefer to die rather than to remain enslaved. King also refers to Fanon, who believes that it is the slaves’ “tradition of risking [their lives] to show [their] honor and worth” (186). Slaves have strong reasons to die: they prefer to die fighting their oppressors instead of living with humiliation under their oppressors’ control.

2. “Dancing the Slave”, Freeing the Body

However, emancipation can be sensed, such as when the slaves dance on slavery ships to relieve the pain of enslavement. On the Republic, the slaves are usually brought out on deck to dance: “At nine o’clock sharp each morning, when the weather permitted, a mate […] trotted them out, made them dance a little to music from the cabin boy’s flute for exercise, then hurried them below again” (Johnson 74). The journey is long in the Middle Passage, and the slaves cannot stay down in the dark without movement and fresh air. Falcon also believes that the music must be joyful to encourage the slaves to dance: “Methinks that’s too damned melancholy. Even niggers can’t dance to that. A lighter tune, if you will” (121). Another reason for the slaves to dance is to ease the melancholy of their enslavement and to eliminate the suicidal impulses in order to make them suitable for sale. Historically, slaves were forced to dance on ships for exercise, and they were usually whipped if they refused to dance (Diedrich, Gates and Pedersen 35). In 1783, Thomas Trotter, a surgeon on the slave ship Brooks “sees the dance as a joyless ceremony that he called dancing the slave” (35). He noticed that slaves were brought on deck to dance under the cat o’nine tails whip. Captives were also forced to dance in shackles, and there was not enough space to move. This kind of violent enforcement was humiliating: “Dancing by the cat was perceived as a violent and painful exercise” (35). Therefore, according to Trotter, “dancing the slaves” damages the slaves physically and psychologically and makes them agitated.

By contrast, Fanon considered the Africans’ dance a kind of relief: “The native’s relaxation takes precisely the form of muscular orgy in which the most acute aggressivity and the most impelling violence are canalized, transformed and conjured away” (Fanon 1973, 44). The colonized body and mind are completely possessed by the colonizer; therefore, the aggressive movements expel the pain and relax the body. Accordingly, “dancing the slaves” can also relieve the pain of being possessed, even if the slaves are forced to dance. It is a feeling of freeing the body and the mind from the colonizer’s control. The movements are performed aggressively to cleanse and purify the body and the mind of the colonized, who is
relieved after the dance, since the body is freed from the pain of enslavement. Therefore, slaves dance to relieve and free their bodies from the pain of enslavement.

As a result, “dancing the slave” represents resistance and a peaceful revolt against capturers, since the slaves are freely moving their bodies resisting their shackles. Slaves are dancing aggressively on the Republic: “They [dance] in place like men in a work-gang” (Johnson 122). The dance is uniting them, and their aggressive movements make them communicate through their bodies to resist the pain of enslavement and their oppressors’ cruelty. During their dance, one of the slaves “slip[s] when the ship roll[s], falling on his back and accidently, it seem[s], kicking the sailor in his stomach” (122). Johnson here illustrates this incident to show that their dance symbolizes that they revolt against the crew. In other words, the accident symbolizes the slaves’ communication through their dance about plans to revolt against the crew. The fall of the slave and the kicking of the sailor in his stomach symbolizes that the slave breaks his chains free to revolt against his oppressor. Therefore, even if the slaves are forced to dance, they are freeing their bodies from enslavement: “[F]estive dancing could represent a feat, a battle, a victory, a particular domestic event” (Diedrich, Gates and Pedersen 34). Slaves on ships used to show their skills in dancing, since dancing is seen as a victorious battle, taking out the pain of enslavement and uniting them against their oppressors. They use their whole bodies during the dance, loosening their shackled limbs to make them feel free: “The disabled bodies are able to perform a dance that is potentially the dance of life, a dance that can imaginatively break the chains and defy traders or captains and their crew” (42). Therefore, “dancing the slave” can symbolize the resistance of the slaves to enslavement, when the slaves are moving freely.

Another argument about slave dance is that the dance on slave ships was part of a long, rooted, cultural and social tradition, which implied continuity in times of violent change. The Allmuseri tribe, like many other African tribes, had an “ageless culture” (Johnson 78). They had certain beliefs and values, and therefore they refused to be enslaved, since this would make them lose their dignity. They also had in their culture “their ceremonial dance” (77). Inherent in the African culture are special ceremonial dances and folktales, which symbolize certain values of dignity and resistance, and contain mythical characters. One of the important folktale characters of the Akan African people, in present-day Ghana, is the Anancy spider (M’Baye 72). According to Sheila Walker’s African Roots/American Cultures, the Anancy trickster can transform himself into “a trickster boy and man, as well as [into a] powerful,
controlling half-spider woman” (Walker in M’Baye 72). Anancy is a trickster hero, who has many powerful stories of resistance. Since the Akan people were also enslaved by Europeans traders, the Anancy trickster became part of the African-American culture. Pietro Deandrea argues that Anancy is “a figure that survived the Middle Passage experience and still appears in Caribbean folktales” (Deandrea in M’Baye 72). The trickster figure became a symbol of resistance and revolt for the slaves in order to survive the struggle of their enslavement in the Middle Passage.

As a result, the spider trickster became a symbol of resistance in the Caribbean dance. One kind of dance, which depended on the movement of the limbs, had received the name of limbo dance, which can be connected to the spider trickster. This dance became a part of the Caribbean culture. In the limbo dance, the dancers move under a bar with their limbs backward, lowering their bodies gradually, and becoming like spiders. This dance was originally brought to the Caribbean through the African slaves (Diedrich, Gates and Pedersen 42). The movement of the limbs also gives the slaves an impression of rebirth, when they are able to move their shackled limbs: “In this symbolic reenactment of the slave ship dance, the leap to freedom is dramatized, visualized, and narrated” (42). Dancers feel that freedom fills their enslaved bodies through their free limbs, and they become like spiders. Since African slaves were attached to their long-rooted cultures, they refused their enslavement: “Africans carried a sense of pride and honor that was shamefully affected by the inhumane and agonizing hardships European slavers made them go through” (M’Baye 102). They felt ashamed of being enslaved, because this would make them lose their pride and honor; therefore, this shame gave them a reason to revolt against their capturers.

3. Psychic Revolt through Metamorphosis

Resistance can also be expressed through the psychic revolt, as when Calhoun feels guilty for contributing to slavery. As a result, he starts to forgive himself and see himself as ‘self’ and not ‘other’. Calhoun goes through different stages of psychological metamorphoses towards the emancipation of his soul. The first stage is when he is ordered to throw the body of the dead slave overboard. He starts to compare the dead slave with himself: “[H]e was close to my own age, perhaps had been torn from a lass as lovely as, lately, I now saw Isadora to be, and from a brother as troublesome as my own” (Johnson 122-3). Calhoun realizes at this stage how the slaves suffer from the pain of being separated from their loved ones. He starts to see
the slaves as humans, which makes him understand how enslavement is inhumane and insulting. Furthermore, Calhoun starts to feel involved in slavery, when his hand is stained with the slave’s blood: “My stained hand still tingled. Of a sudden, it no longer felt like my own. Something in me said it would never be clean again, no matter how often I scrubbed it or with what stinging chemicals” (123). Calhoun begins to realize his evolvement in slavery, which makes him feel guilty, and he decides to cut his hand off: “[W]ithout thinking I found my left hand lifting the knife from my waist, then using its blade to scrape the boy’s moist, black flesh off my palm, and at last I swung it up to slice it across my wrist and toss that into the ocean” (123). When Calhoun decides to cut his hand off and throw it into the ocean, he is confessing his guilt and is trying to clear his guilty conscience. However, this guilt is calmed down, when Ngonyama stops him, because he understands that Calhoun feels ashamed, and he forgives him in return, which helps Calhoun to forgive himself too.

By confessing and forgiving himself, Calhoun becomes a human. In relation to forgiveness, Kelly Oliver refers to Julia Kristeva’s psychoanalytical forgiveness theory: “The agency of forgiveness enables us to become human beings and enter the world of meaning” (Oliver 185). Through forgiveness, the person becomes a human in understanding the world; he becomes an individual. It is when one realizes that the ‘other’ is ‘self’ that “reconciliation becomes the attempt to live with the otherness of the unconscious” (186). It is accepting the otherness within the self. Therefore, Calhoun starts to consider the Allmuseri as ‘self’ and not ‘other’, when he sees himself as one of them. He is also accepting to live with his otherness. Calhoun is also transgressing the laws of slavery: “[W]hat is confessed and forgiven is the agent’s transgression of the social/universal inherent in asserting itself as a particular or singular subjectivity” (186). Calhoun confesses and regrets being involved in slavery, and by forgiving himself he stands against slavery and rejects the idea of enslaving the Allmuseri.

Calhoun’s metamorphosis develops through the psychic revolt he experiences, when he encounters his father. When the Allmuseri were shipped on the Republic, their god was shipped with them in a crate and “[e]very day it had to eat” (Johnson 166). Every day someone has to go to the god to feed him. After the Allmuseri revolt, they order Calhoun to go down to feed their god. The god came out of its crate in the shape of his father: “I knew the infernal creature—this being who delighted in divesting men of their minds—had chosen to present itself to me in the form of the one man with whom I had bloody, unfinished business: the runaway slave, […] my father, the fugitive Riley Calhoun” (167). Calhoun’s father ran
away from slavery when Calhoun was three. Calhoun’s mind is invaded by his father; he is eager to find him: “[W]ho was [my] father? […] I have searched the faces of black men on Illinois farms and streets for fifteen years […] primarily to give him a piece of my mind, followed by the drubbing he so richly deserved for selfishly enjoying his individual liberty” (112). Calhoun is constantly searching for his father, to blame him for abandoning him and his family, in order to enjoy his freedom: “All my life I’d hated him because he had cut and run like hundreds of field hands before him” (169). Calhoun’s hatred towards his father haunts him and has a great effect on his psychological growth, since this hatred deprives him from feeling his freedom (Byrd 134). When he encounters his father, he learns more about him: “We was kings once. […] We lost a war—naw, a battle. So now we’s prisoners. And the way I see it we supposed to keep on fightin’” (Johnson 170). Calhoun’s father was agitated of being enslaved, and he used to remind his people constantly of being unfairly enslaved. Therefore he encouraged them to revolt against their slavers. As a result, he escaped his enslavement, but then he was captured and killed.

This encounter changes Calhoun’s feelings towards his father after he has found out what a great man his father was. This drains his feelings of hatred. Calhoun goes into an imaginary or a psychic revolt through his encounter with his father. His revolt can be described as “a revolt in the psyche that enables us to live as individuals connected to others” (Oliver 143). The psyche is able to connect to the social; in other words, the person feels himself as an individual and belongs to a community at the same time. It is when the person finds his culture that he is made part of the society: “[T]he movement between singularity and society is fluid and operates in an open system of exchange that makes possible belonging to the social as singular” (173). Calhoun’s psychic revolt made him connect to his father and overcome his feelings of loss and abandonment, which gave him a feeling of belonging to the social. Through this encounter, he understands his true father and his father’s rejection of enslavement, which, in return, gives him the sense of independency and individuality. Consequently, Calhoun gives the god a name: “Suddenly I knew the god’s name: Rutherford. And the feel of the ship beneath the wafer-thin soles of my boots was different” (Johnson 171). Giving the African god his own name means that he feels the connection to his ancestors, which provides him with a sense of worthiness. Calhoun’s conscience drains his hatred towards his father and releases his anger that “has stained his memory of his father”
(Byrd 135). As a result, he feels like a new person, who has a decent father. Through this psychic revolt, Calhoun feels that he is an individual, who belongs to a society.

Calhoun’s final metamorphosis frees him completely and turns him into a real free and independent human being. After his encounter with his father, he faints and turns unconscious for three days, and when he returns to consciousness he is ready for his final metamorphosis. When the violent storm hits the Republic, Calhoun is exhausted and paralyzed:

I lay, as in a chrysalis, until I could hear no longer, then fell again through leagues and leagues of darkness, the paralysis of my legs spreading upward toward my groin, deadening and numbing as it went. There came tremors, as if I were bursting or splitting apart. For a few seconds I was blind. Huge, frosty waves pitched the Republic, rolling her so prodigiously the floor shook and the cabin walls panted. (Johnson 181)

His paralyzed body in a chrysalis symbolizes his rebirth, and the tremor that goes into his body turns him into a new person. By describing Calhoun’s pain, Johnson shows that Calhoun surrenders to the powerful changes going through his body, which signal the death of the former existence (Byrd 136). He is also showing how the new self is emerging through his final metamorphosis. Calhoun is depressed after the sinking of the Republic: “I did not care for myself anymore, only that my mates should survive” (Johnson 181). After the Republic sank, most of the people on the ship died, only a few survived. He wished that everyone on board would have survived the disaster: “I felt guilty simply for being alive. By surviving, I sometimes felt I’d stolen life from Cringle, or was living on time belonging to Ngonyama and the other mates; I felt like a thief to the bitter end” (188). Calhoun became a new man after this process that changed his view of life: “The voyage had irreversibly changed my seeing, made of me a cultural mongrel, and transformed the world into a fleeting shadow play I felt no need to possess or dominate, only appreciate in the ever extended present” (187). In this metamorphosis, Calhoun leaves his greediness and selfishness behind. He is transformed into a new person, whose aim in life is only to appreciate what he has, not living on oppressing or dominating others. His voyage on the Republic taught him the meaning of humanity and how slavery is inhuman.

Calhoun’s final metamorphosis is the continuation of his psychic revolt that even changed his physical appearance: “I’d lost most of my hair. […] My beard was Biblical in length, my joints Job-like in their creaking” (Johnson 190). Calhoun’s psychic revolt is not a
revolt of a slave against his master; rather it is a revolt of the body and the psyche, which are affected by the colonizer. Oliver explains how Fanon focused on the connection between the body and the psyche: “[C]olonization affects both the body and the psyche in ways that are inherently connected and that the colonization of psychic space operates through denying the colonized the social space for meaning making” (Oliver 147). Therefore, freedom means freeing the body and the psyche from alienation and making them become part of the social. Consequently, as Oliver refers to Kristeva, psychic revolt is a transformation or evolution, when revolution takes place on the level of the unconscious. In other words, psychic revolt is a silent revolt, when only the imagination of the agent operates in the unconscious to bring the conscious into existence (148). This psychic revolt always happens temporarily, until the agent is free from his alienation and melancholy. Therefore, at the end of his final metamorphosis, Calhoun is able to understand and live a sovereign life. As a result, his free body and psyche make him live as a real free man.

However, not only Calhoun goes through metamorphoses, but the Allmuseri as well. When the Allmuseri people first come on board, they are static from the shock of slavery; they are peaceful, obeying their oppressors, whereas after their revolt, they become different people, as Calhoun states: “Stupidly, I had seen their lives and culture as timeless product, as a finished thing, pure essence or Parmenidean meaning I envied and wanted to embrace, when the truth was that they were process and Heraclitean change, like any men, not fixed but evolving and as vulnerable to metamorphosis” (Johnson 124). Johnson relates the Allmuseri metamorphosis “to the oppositions between Parmenides and Heraclitus, an opposition between stasis and flux, permanence and change” (Conner xxi). Parmenides emphasized the permanent and unchanging: “Parmenides concludes that the creation is fixed, complete, and static” (xxi). Heraclitus, on the other hand, stressed constant change, which is resembled to the flow of water that changes during its flow. In order to gain their humanity, the Allmuseri are metamorphosed into warriors to gain their freedom. They start to see themselves as inferior and cannot accept the fact of being enslaved. Therefore, they have to change into warriors in order to live with dignity and self-respect. Both Calhoun and the Allmuseri go through different changes, not accepting to be victimized by their oppressors. Their metamorphoses made them gain their real freedom and live with self-respect.
4. Sublimation through Psychic Revolt

After the revolters kill Manon’s husband and free Sarah, her people give her social support, and therefore, they can be referred to as the imaginary father, who links the social and the psychic space. When Sarah escapes to her freedom, Manon tries to stop her. Sarah, in return, resists her furiously, as Manon narrates: “She turned on me in a fury, tearing at my face with her free hand, her sharp nails digging into my already wounded cheek” (Martin 124). Sarah becomes very aggressive with her mistress, because she is fighting for her freedom. She was oppressed and alienated by the Gaudets with no real social contact and no real identity. However, after she escapes and gains her freedom. Her people support her and make her feel human. Manon tells her later: “I’m sure they all made you feel very important, very much the poor helpless victim” (208) Therefore, they play the role of the imaginary father, who cares about and supports his daughter. Oliver points to Kristeva’s explanation about the notion of the imaginary father or the loving third, which can give the oppressed social support: “[T]he imaginary father can help supply the missing link between social and psychic space” (Oliver 127). By linking the social and the psychic space, the oppressed will learn to love and appreciate himself. Without the imaginary loving father, the oppressed feels depressed and worthless, and lacks social support. Therefore, by accepting the loving third or the imaginary father, the agent shows his positive social side: “[T]he accepting third or supportive social space allows the entry into the symbolic to be playful and sublimational” (139). Sarah’s loving imaginary father is her people, who support her and bring her a real social support. Her people help her to get her voice and her true identity back and to nourish both her body and her psyche. Sarah is able to sublimate with her people’s help, since they support her and help her to show her real identity. Her imaginary loving father is transferred into a social person, who integrated her into a new social life.

In addition to finding her imaginary father, Sarah’s temporary freedom brings her voice back, because she can live as a superior. When Sarah escaped from her enslavement, she was disguised as a white man: “She has travelled about the country as a free white man” (Martin 205). This new form of disguise makes people respect her and look at her as a superior, as a free white man. She is experiencing the feeling of superiority and freedom, the feeling of owning herself. It is a feeling that even the white woman can never feel. Sarah finds her voice, the “self-defined voice, [which] express[es] a fully articulated womanist standpoint” (Collins 100). Sarah is transformed into a new person, who belongs to the élites and not to the
slaves. Her shame, anger, melancholy and silence have disappeared, because she is a free woman now, who is respected by all. Sarah was silenced, because she was invisible to her masters. However, when she becomes visible to her people in a safe space, she gets her voice back.

Even though Sarah’s freedom does not last, she does not lose her voice. When Sarah is captured and returned to her mistress Manon, she is more broken than before her escape, but with time she gets her health and identity back. She is not silent as before, as she tells Manon about her freedom: “When you gets to the North […] they invites you to the dining room, and they asks you to sit at the table. Then they offers you a cup of tea, and they asks, ‘Does you want cream and sugar?’” (Martin 208). Sarah tells Manon how she was respected in the North, where slavery is abolished, while she is oppressed and humiliated in the South. She also confirms to Manon her admiration of freedom: “It appeal to me” (208). Sarah has changed after she has sensed her freedom. Patricia Collins writes about Sandra O’Neale, who describes that when the black woman finds her safe space, she gains a self-defined voice, which encourages her to confront and resist her oppressor: “[T]hese safe spaces help Black women resist the dominant ideology” (Collins 101). The safe space makes the black woman resist her otherness, which, in turn, makes her feel her freedom. Even Manon notices the change: “It was more than I had ever heard her say […] She had changed; she’d gone mad” (Martin 208). To Manon, this change would not suit her, since she is used to look at Sarah as inferior and oppressed. If Sarah would gain her freedom, Manon would not be able dominate her, and she would not be superior.

Sarah was offered a social space, which makes her sublimate and live like a human being. She was broken after she returned to Manon: “[S]he arrived more dead than alive […] she looked like a skeleton” (Martin 205). She refused to eat or speak. During this period Sarah was going through an imaginary or a psychic revolt. This revolt “can restore the ability to sublimate and authorize the agency of those othered” (Oliver 154). Social support makes the marginalized authorize his otherness that has been denied. This authorization of the otherness can be revolutionary, which offers a social space and helps the marginalized to sublimate by showing self-confidence in confronting and resisting the oppressor. That Sarah gets her voice back shows that she is able to assimilate and accept her otherness with the help and the support of the free community in the North, which helps her sublimate and free her psychic space. Therefore, even after she was brought back into slavery, her psychic space remains
free. Oliver refers to Freud, who suggested that women are less able to sublimate than men, since they are socially repressed and do not gain enough social support, due to their subordinated position in society. However, when they sublimate, their bodies discharge their drives, and they become social beings: “The goal of sublimation is connection or communion with others. Even aggressive drives become socialized when they are sublimed into art or language” (Oliver 89). Sublimation becomes distinguished in the language chosen in communication when the words leave emotional effect on the listener, even when the language becomes aggressive. Although Manon does not agree with what Sarah tells her about her feelings of freedom, she is very much affected by her speech. Sarah’s sublimation comes through the social space she was offered, which makes her feel her humanity.

On the whole, slaves revolt against their victimizers to free themselves from the pain of the enslavement they suffer. Revolts often occur violently, reflecting the violent treatment of the slaves’ victimizers. In Middle Passage the slaves revolt violently, killing most of the crew. They treat the rest of the crew with humiliation to make them feel the pain of the oppression. In Property, the slaves revolt on different plantations and kill the whites as a way to gain their freedom. The slaves are urged to revolt by the free slaves, who believe that the slaves must fight the white men to gain their humanity. However, revolts require self-sacrifice, since the slaves refuse to live with humiliation; therefore, they prefer to die for their emancipation rather than living under the oppression of their masters. Furthermore, Calhoun frees himself from the binary oppositions by going through different stages of spiritual and psychological metamorphoses to free himself from those binary oppositions, which enslave his mind. These metamorphoses make him feel his real freedom. Finally Sarah, who escapes temporarily from her enslavement, frees her psychic space and gains her voice, which makes her appreciate herself as a human.
Conclusion

The American history witnesses how African slaves were brutally victimized by the slave traders in the Middle Passage and by the landowners on plantations. Europeans bought slaves in Africa and transported them to America to work on plantations in order to increase their capital and to develop the new-found land. Therefore, the Europeans regarded themselves superior to nonwhite races and considered the African slaves inferior and primitive, which created a racism that lasted for centuries. African-American history focuses mainly on slave victimization and how this victimization bred revolts in the Middle Passage and on the plantations. Many writers narrated slave victimization in their fictions and illustrated historical facts about the struggle of the slaves in gaining their freedom to be treated equally with the whites. *Middle Passage* by Charles Johnson illustrates the struggle of the slaves in the Middle Passage and how they gained their freedom by revolting against the ship crew. *Property* by Valerie Martin continues to show the victimization of the slaves on the plantations and how this victimization makes the slaves revolt calling for their emancipation and their humanity. This helped me to discuss and analyze slaves’ victimizers, victimization and how victimization breeds revolt historically and theoretically starting with *Middle Passage* and continuing with *Property*, showing an order of analyses.

In *Middle Passage* the slave traders are described as pirates, since they illegally participate in the slave trade. Furthermore, they are criminals, who escaped from their countries to use their freedom of domination and oppression over other people on the free sea, where there is no law to control their oppressive powers. As a result, they see themselves superior to their slaves and give themselves the right to dominate them and victimize them. These powers of control are violent, which destroy the slaves and make them lose their humanity and self-respect. One slave oppressor in *Middle Passage* is Papa Zeringue, the Creole of color and one of the benefactors of this trade. He contributes to the oppression of the slaves through his power in order to increase his wealth. He gains power of domination through his illegal wealth, and with this power he gives himself the right to dominate people with less wealth and less power. Furthermore, he stands against the white race, because he does not want to lose his power or his wealth to the whites. When the minorities gain wealth, they aim to control other groups including the majority groups to keep their power, which creates racism. Furthermore, Calhoun, the newly freed slave, suffers from binary oppositions. He is a free slave, but he is still seen inferior by the ship crew and the slaves due to his
blackness. Binary oppositions create a double consciousness, when the person’s mind feels inferior and enslaved in his society, while his body is free. This third personality is unbalanced and cannot last for long, as the person will go into a psychic revolt to be completely free or surrender and perish.

Oppression continued after the slaves were sold to the land owners on American plantations, since the law gave land owners full freedom to deal with their slaves. African slaves were owned by their masters and were deemed as their private property. In *Property* the slaves are victimized by their white owners. Sarah, the black female slave is victimized and treated with disgust by Manon, her half French Creole mistress. The white female’s position in society stands between the white male and the black female. Therefore, in order not to lose her power, she decides to oppress her black female slave to protect herself from the white man’s oppression, who sees himself as superior to her. The white man is another victimizer of the black female slave. Manon’s husband, the white man, rapes Sarah and silences her, since the white male stands on the top of the social hierarchy, and the black female is seen as the lowest cast in her society. As a result, she decides to live with her silence and her shame of being oppressed, since her psychic space is colonized, which means that her body and her mind are colonized and controlled by the white man.

African-American slaves could not accept this humiliation, and as a result, they started to call for their freedom and humanity by resisting and revolting violently against their white oppressors. Revolts are products of oppression and often happen through violence, which was practiced on them by their oppressors. In *Middle Passage* the slaves revolt violently against the ship crew and kill most of them. One of the main violent revolts in *Property* is done by a number of slaves, who revenge Sarah’s rape and kill many slaveholders, including her white master. In using violence, slaves can gain their autonomy and their true identity, which was taken away by the white man. They also make their oppressors understand their pain of being victimized. As a result, they will be recognized by their victimizers, who will fear them and respect them in return. Furthermore, slaves sacrifice their lives for freedom, since they refuse to be enslaved and their death shows that they prefer to die rather than to be enslaved and humiliated.

The slaves on the Republic are forced to dance on the deck, but their dance becomes a kind of resistance, when they release the pain of enslavement through their aggressive movements. This dance is related to their values of dignity and resistance, since it symbolizes
special characters of resistance, like the spider trickster. Calhoun frees himself from his binary oppositions and is transformed into a real free man through spiritual and psychological metamorphoses. These metamorphoses make him forgive himself for contributing to slavery and appreciate his life as a real free man. He also starts to stand against slavery to realize that victimization is the opposition to humanity. In *Property*, Sarah is captured and returned to Manon, but during her escape she experienced freedom among her people, who are seen as the loving third or the imaginary father. Therefore, her psychic space is freed from the pain of oppression. Throughout revolts, slaves gain a sense of self-value and gradually learn to like and appreciate themselves. Emancipation means autonomy, and the opposite to surrender. Therefore, through slave revolts, many people started to understand the pain of enslavement, which opened the path to abolition of slavery, and offered the African slaves a new free life with self-respect among the white Americans.
Works Cited

Primary Sources


Secondary Sources


