

General Introduction: Rewriting Slave Narrative

This research is an inquiry into Charles Johnson's novel *Middle Passage*. The inquiry basically focuses on how Johnson presents history of slave narrative in the form of fiction and as a document of subaltern consciousness. This novel is, thus, the mirror of traditional history of subaltern consciousness of black people in the form of fiction. The identity, history and existence of self and the community are presented in the novel through the voice of Rutherford Calhoun.

The novel depicts the political agenda of nineteenth century. Johnson's political contemporary status of African American people reflects the real picture of nineteenth century. The novel exposes the root of (human "being") complication of African American experience and performing its own self-consciousness. Johnson presents Allmuseri, a minor community of black people who lacks unity of being. The fiction is the source of reality and imagination. The imagination collects the history of subaltern consciousness of slaves in American society.

Winner of the 1990 National Book Award for the novel *Middle Passage*, only second African American man to receive this honor, he is concerned with a tradition that roots black experience firmly within American experience, with the complexity of African American truth. In the *Middle Passage*, the writer simultaneously and contradictorily acknowledges its debt to preceding western writing and defines itself against African American authors who have been narrowed in their description of New World black life that instead of presenting its multiplicities and its underling philosophical concern, they have repeated observation of historians. As a result Johnson scrutinizes many African American realities through the support of nineteenth century history. Johnson has created revision fables of traditional African American narratives and relates them to a variety of philosophical construct. Tradition

is being historicized and the events are presented in the form of fictional date that supports the fiction. Johnson tries to show what the reality and truth through imagination. Johnson recreates the history as a meaningful fiction so that he could expose the structure of identity and the role writing plays in the reconfiguration of the self-consciousness and also could save the perception and culture and the existence of black.

Johnson has depicted the similar subject matter, which has already been raised by his contemporary African American writers. The issue is the historical and racial discourse. Except Charles Johnson, other contemporary African American writers shows the historical possibilities but Johnson here operates the historical dates those are true. History supports to create fiction. He takes the support of history but fictionalizes the events from different ways. The events are true. The fiction is made from the source of historical background of African American slave narrative.

Johnson's *Middle Passage* is characterized by strong interest and emphasis on the growth of consciousness, philosophy and history. Like others, Johnson strongly believes that reality can be defined as a sum of many perceptions. He subjects the reconstruction of African American history and recreates the world of African American experience through different perspectives and possibilities. Indeed, many writers are content with what is available in the traditional literary conventions, Johnson is more interested in enriching contemporary African literature by searching appropriate approaches and form that reclaim African American sense of consciousness, history and identity.

This novel, *Middle Passage* brings its epic scope and nineteenth century African sea-faring literature. The main character, Rutherford Calhoun, who narrates the whole story, is a newly freed slave stowing away on a slave ship to escape from

marriage and through the ship's "cargo", captured member of the fictional Allmuseri tribe of wizard. Johnson charts Rutherford growth from a self-serving opportunist to a responsible man and adds a new dimension to the slave narrative by creating a narrative who speaks the intellectual voice. Calhoun has to fight off Ebenezer Falcon's "courtship" whose words are just as seductive as the nightmare of the god of Allmuseri tormenting. Calhoun is the mouth speaker of Johnson's novel *Middle Passage* who is in meditation. His meditation is the quest for eternity.

Rutherford connects the loss of his father with the loss of any sense of personal history of familiar ties. When his father left him, Relley Calhoun essentially eradicated Rutherford's relationship with his life, leaving deep wounds that the narrator did not address until he faces the image of his father soon after his conversation with Cringle. Rutherford is in the moan situation after his meeting with the monster. He has chosen present itself to him in the form of the one man, his father, with whom he had bloody, unfinished business. Rutherford has spent most of his narrative running: running from law in New Orleans, running from papa, running from Isabel. At the height of the peril at sea, Rutherford is forced to stop running. When he first sees the form of his father, Rutherford has obviously been deeply wounded by his father's decision to abandon his family and he feels that nothing his father could say would make up for the loss that Rutherford has suffered. By the end of their encounter, however Rutherford realizes that his father is and will always be part of him, hearing a mosaic of voices, each one immanent in the others. He seemed his presence that of countless others. At the moment, we see Rutherford finds himself and accepts his father as a part of his past and present.

From the commencement of the novel, *Middle Passage's* protagonist Rutherford Calhoun is in the ship that is his house. Other people who were known as

slave in the ship, they were without their own house. They were refugees from an uncertain origin and are subject to marginalization. There was not stability for them. They were living in this catastrophic situation. The situation remaindered here in the novel, is the real situation of the 1830. Johnson fictionalizes the scenario of the slave on the base of history. Writing is a means of controlling self and controlling one's history, one's sense of loss.

Rutherford Calhoun faces his past and his deepest emotion. He finds his father as a monster. It is because his father is also a cause of his domination. They themselves felt hegemonic and become passive followers. This moment in the novel prepares for the change that is revealed in Rutherford. Soon after, by facing his past Rutherford suggests the coming generation to be free in the future.

Rutherford Calhoun and Peter Cringle share their histories with each other in the few calm moments before they know the republic will be torn apart. Trying to communicate Calhoun's feeling about his father to the first mate, he explains: "I don't even know my father is, I have no family, tradition to maintain in a way I have no past" (53). This shows that Calhoun is in search of his father (roots), means gaining his self-awareness and consciousness. His father means not only his predecessor but also what their history and identity was. Rutherford connects the loss of his father with the loss of any sense of personal identity and history.

After Calhoun's observation leads him to the conclusion that all forty crew members aboard the Republic (the ship) are loners in search of a new place, Calhoun talks about them that refugees from responsibility and like social misfits ever pushing westward to escape civilized life, took to the sea as the frontier that welcomed miscreants, dreamers and the fool. Calhoun comes to believe that he is searching for self, but creating one despite Captain Falcon's ominous talk about a person's "no

self'. Calhoun's broad knowledge in self-centered individualism makes it possible for him to play a game with both; the captain and the crew members. But Calhoun betrays the Allmuseri captives by informing the captain about the god of Allmuseri, and is tormented by a sense of guilt. After spending three days feeding the Allmuseri god and meeting his long-lost father, Calhoun believes that he has reached a new level of self-awareness, is to be conscious person. A knowledgeable person can recognize what the reality was as well as present situation now.

In *Middle Passage*, Johnson has followed the tradition and experience of African American literature. Johnson questions the structure of human and literary identity by testing the capabilities of binary opposition, dualism and abstraction to contain meaning and experience, he radicalizes this faith and makes innovative demands on writing to show and speak the complexities of experience, consciousness and change. In the novel Calhoun reminds the reader of the African American literature, i.e. Ralph Ellison's Rinehart in the *Invisible Man*. A character that has many personalities: Calhoun is at the same time a learned African American former slave, a pragmatic liar, a survival specialist, a wooer and the one who is being wooed. He thus becomes the ultimate symbol of history of American life. In Johnson's novel, Calhoun has to balance the influence of both western culture epitomized in the book by captain Falcon's propensity to philosophize life and the indigenous African culture, represented by the presence of the Allmuseri god to protect his emotion, integrity and individuality. In America, Afro-American people were obliged to sit in-between. Johnson has drawn the real reflection of the American society of nineteenth century.

Middle Passage concerns one sixty-six day sea-battle, but the number nine recur as the number of entities in the ship's log, which constitute chapter division

in Johnson's convoluted narrative. The present time chronology of the sea mutiny evolves by log entries for "June 14, 1830", "June 20, 1830", "June 23, 1830", "June 28, 1830", "June 30, 1830", "July 3, 1830; the "same day", "August 1, 1830", and "August 20, 1830". Of course Johnson's fictional sea accounts overtly signify on an actual historical events which is as "indelible mark in history" the mutiny aboard the slave ship. In the dates written above there is sea faring. Sea faring is the struggle. This struggle happens when transmitting from one place to another is for the search of existence and identity. This novel *Middle passage* has included the fix events which represent the whole history metaphorically. Calhoun differently repeats the migrant-to- resident pattern. He has tried to involve in American Revolution, but only because Calhoun's parents had been Northern peers of Blackman as colonial era slave long before Calhoun's birth in Illinois in 1807. He gives specific information about his Manumission, migration and arrival in New Orleans on May 23, 1829, a year prior to his shipping out for Africa. Calhoun initially feels no filial kinship to the motherland, but after the slave mutiny he becomes a surrogate father to an African child. In other words, the detachment is which Calhoun initially expresses towards Africa after he is conscious.

Several conspiracies, singular and group, recur in *Middle Passage*. Falcon is a conspiring commander who recruits Calhoun to aid him in conquering the mutinous white crewman who demands Calhoun's allegiance; the plotting group of Allmuseri slave led by Ngonyama also demands Calhoun's loyalty. During these shifts in power, Calhoun follows the lead of his military model.

The battle of New Orleans recurs in *Middle Passage* as Falcon's "Jacksonian" extermination of the Allmuseri slave. Falcon is the spirit of opposition, dualism, repression and conflict. The slaves revolt in the *Middle Passage* is more

protracted, but equally lethal. It involves sorcery and begins slowly bad weather several days prior to June 11, 1830, when Calhoun becomes recorder of the mutiny. However, Falcon acts with Jacksonian resolve to decimate everyone, including himself by suicide. Calhoun Squibb the cook, the three African children are the only survival of the revolt Johnson has depicted the history of nineteenth century, 1830 it means he has given the date that was in time of his father. After that, that is a great change in the concept of Afro-American people. They are ready to do any work for their freedom.

In the previous generation, black people were only following the given history, identity, rule and concept that is given by the whites. They were blind supporter, followed the rule and regulation of white .At the time the situation and the condition of the black was worse. But the coming generation of black is totally different. Rutherford Calhoun is an example of coming generation. He is ready to create his existence and identity himself. So there was vast difference between the period of his father and him. It means there is a generation gap. The new generation cannot bear the pathetic condition that is caused by the power of whites' .So, Johnson through the article of Rutherford Calhoun abroad the Republic imagines the history. By focusing in the interrupted space in African American history Johnson tries to fill the historical gaps with countless variation of the narrative of the subaltern. The history of the subaltern had created difficult situation to Afro-American peoples.

The 1830 census revealed that only 3,775 free blacks, about two percent of the total free black population, owned 12,760 slaves. Black slave-holder was a tiny minority. Although most of these black slave owners were in the south, some also lived in Rhode Island, Illinois, New York and Border States. Some blacks owned other blacks for humanitarian purposes. One minister for instance, bought slaves and

then enabled them to purchase their freedom from him on easy terms. Most often, black slave-holders were free blacks who bought their own family member with the purpose of later freeing them. But many engaged in slavery for purely selfish rather than humanitarian reason. In the novel, Calhoun also shows his attitude towards the benefit of himself but later in the voyage he came into realization of his work and changes himself. This change found in Calhoun is the subaltern consciousness of the African American and as a result achieves the goal in favor of blacks.

So, Johnson rewrites the slave history of 1830 that was true. Johnson by fictionalizing the slave history wants to depict the real subject matter. This subject matter comes through imagination which is a fantasy, but based on historical accuracy. So, it seems to be real as well as true. He has tried to search the minor events of day to day life of the Allmuseri community (African community). The subject matter here is presented about the history of slavery. The history of slavery is written in the perspective of writer's consciousness (subaltern consciousness).

Charles Johnson's *Middle Passage* has summoned much criticism since its publication in 1990. Many critics, scholars and novelist, have analyzed the novel from racist discourse, post colonial, double-consciousness, search for identity and mythical perspectives. These approaches, no matter whether they are author oriented or reader oriented or language oriented, have tried to interpret it in multiple ways. The approach of present research is a distinct one in the sense that the present research analyzes the vision of the marginalized peoples, i.e. the consciousness of the subaltern people.

S.X. Goudie discusses several of the racist discourse that influences Charles Johnson's writing in the *Middle Passage*. He clarifies the *Middle Passage* as a racist discourse. "*Middle Passage*, however, certainly does speak to the experience of some

of those thirty million people and to the experience of many white readers as well” (29). The critic shows that the history of black begins from the racist discourse.

Asharf H.A. Rushdy analyzed the *Middle Passage* as an outline of phenomenological perspective. He adds: “The ideas of inter subjectively includes the condition of the individual’s being unpositioned in the world of each person having a relationship with the tribal community” (377). This criticism highlights that *Middle Passage* focuses on the peoples position how they are living there.

Homi K. Bhabha, comments on the novel from post-colonial perspective. He focuses on how the slave-master relationship plays into literature about Africa. He critically examines on how freedom and character’s struggle for the culture are central issues. He claims *Middle Passage* as an example of post-colonial writing. He says:

Middle Passage is the voice coming from this focus on an enunciation through the time-log and into modernity. Johnson’s feats in part, consists of the fictional activation of collective cultural memory, but mainly, it is a new imaging of what occurred in the gapes of or hegemonic historiographic. Rutherford Calhoun experiences a particular colonialist and post-colonialist and by imaging this moment in time, by damming the stream of real, bringing the flow to a stand still in a reflux of astonishment. (253)

Linda Hutchon observes *Middle Passage* as a historiographic metafiction, “Charles Johnson’s *Middle passage* contains a variety of themes and allusion. The novel is examined as an example of historiographic metafiction” (753).

Virginia Walt Smith regards the criticism of the book as a document of double-consciousness: “Calhoun acquisition and dispensation of poly-history derives from his re-birth experience with the Allmuseri who literary posses’ double-

consciousness having one brain in the heads and another in their spines” (42). Smith also examines “a troop of double-consciousness occurs as Calhoun becomes translator and descriptor of Falcon’s text, which is infused with real and fictional knowledge” (15). Smith has emphasized the novel from double-consciousness perspective. This very perspective seems in the context of the central character, Rutherford Calhoun.

Daniel Scott examines the novel *Middle Passage* as the search of identity:

Johnson questions the structure of human and literary identity by testing the capabilities of binary opposition, dualism and abstraction into content meaning and experience. Our faith in fiction comes from an ancient belief that language and literary art all speaking and showing- clarifying our experience. (3)

John Haynes detonated the book *Middle Passage*, suggesting that the protagonist’s “romantic racism” perhaps demonstrates “the extent of his incapability to get in touch with his own history” (23). The critic shows that the history of black begins from the racist discourse.

Walby Celestin views Rutherford’s journey with the Barbara mythology, “his turugu ego world, sacrifices his Seth Ian self becomes food for the Allmuseri god, and lunched to “transfigure all [...] make [...] peace with the recent past by turning it into world” (190-91). Walby makes clear that the Allmuseri god depicts the real myth of Barbara.

The above mentioned reviews and criticism indicate that the novel can be dealt with various perspectives such as racist discourse, post-colonial perspective, double-consciousness, existential searching of identity and mythical viewpoint and so on, but the main contention of this researcher is to deal with the issue of the subaltern consciousness. It also attempts to show how the novel examines the reality of the

history of black slave of the nineteenth century and their protest against the domination.

Thus, the research paper is to analyze Johnson's *Middle Passage* as the consciousness of the Afro-American people. In the novel, the slave narrative is reflected in central's narrative voice, representation, activities, consciousness and determination. To interpret this novel from subaltern consciousness, various ideas will be critically analyzed in the succeeding chapters.

The present research has been divided into four parts. The first chapter has presented a brief introduction of *Middle Passage*. It has presented an introductory outline of the present study. The second chapter tries to explain the theoretical modality that is going to be applied in this research. It explains shortly about subaltern consciousness (studies) with the philosophical, intellectual and historical background. On the basis of the theoretical modality outlined in second chapter, the third chapter analyses the literary text of the *Middle Passage*. The fourth chapter is the conclusion of the entire research on the basis of textual analysis in the third chapter.

II. Subaltern Studies: A Methodological Overview

Literature is multifarious phenomenon, so is history and entire literary genre. Though literature and history are treated as two different disciplines, they share same medium of expression, a narration. From the very beginning of western writing, history is regarded as objective and based on fact. The historians are compelled to choose narration as only means through which they could write history. But this narration as a means of expression is always subjective and written from the narrative voice of the dominant people. Narration is ultimately limited to human artifact so it is unable to carry the actual event, in any case when these dominant people as historian tries to bring past event in text of present time, they only narrate those events which they kept in their mind by creating themselves in the centralized form (voice). In this case, 'Subaltern Studies' as a perspective blurs the boundary between the dominant people and the dominated people. Subaltern Studies gives the existence to the literary genres of the marginalized people by redrawing the boundary of historical fact and fiction.

This research is an inquiry into Charles Johnson's *Middle Passage* from the subaltern studies. So the researcher attempts in to use subaltern studies as a tool to analyze the novel, *Middle Passage* as a document of subaltern conscious. Before doing this, a brief critical introduction of on subaltern studies is presented in this chapter.

What is a subaltern study?

Subaltern studies or subaltern is a term Antonio Gramsci used referring to subordinate social groups or class. Gramsci identifies slaves, peasants, religious groups, women, different races, and the proletariat as subaltern social groups. The

study referring to these subordinated, marginalized groups and producing an actual history of theirs is called subaltern studies.

Gramsci's notation of subaltern concept develops over the period of time. In his first notebook (1929-30), Gramsci uses the term "subaltern" in the literal sense, referring to non commissioned military troops who are subordinate to the authority of lieutenants, colonels and generals (48-54). In later notes, he used the term figuratively, in non military instances, in regard to positions of subordination or lower status. Gramsci first uses the term "subaltern" with regard to social class. He writes, "subaltern classes are subject to the initiatives of the dominant class, even when they rebel: they are in a state of defense" (51). It is in the sense that subaltern groups are subordinate to the ruling groups, policies and initiatives.

In 1934 he began notebook 25, which was "special" thematic notebook devoted exclusively to the subaltern, entitled "On the Margin of History (The History of Subaltern Social Groups)". He regroups rewrites and expands the notes from his earlier notebooks. In Notebook 25, Gramsci identifies slaves, peasants, and religious groups ... as subaltern social groups. His historical focus includes ancient Rome, the medieval communes and the Modern state as well as a decision of the bourgeoisie as a subaltern group that transformed its socio-political position. Gramsci produced his work in a subaltern or subordinate position. He was subject to the prison authorities and the Fascist government. So, his notes on the subaltern, as with all his prison notes, are exactly that: they are notes. They are fragmentary, unfinished and cryptic.

Gramsci's interest in the subaltern was three folds. From his notebook, it is clear he was interested in producing a methodology of subaltern historiographic, a history of subaltern classes, and a political strategy of transformation based upon the historical development and existence of the subaltern. History, politics, literary criticism and

cultural practices are all under consideration in his analysis of subaltern history. In his notes, Gramsci is interested in showing how the subaltern came into being. His analysis of the subaltern is interwoven with his political, social, intellectual, literary, cultural, philosophical, religious and economic analysis.

Antonio Gramsci's, notes on Italian history opens with a section entitled 'History of the Subaltern Classes: Methodological Criteria'. This book of Gramsci serves as a coded way of referring classes. From this notion, subalternity exists in degree or levels of development: some group maintains higher level of political consciousness and organization than others, and some groups exercise more autonomy initiative than others.

A group of unorganized peasant farmers could perhaps represent an example in his instance, in which the farmers are not conscious, individually or collectively of their possession with the prevailing social relations. This illustrates that subaltern groups are not equivalent, that they are differentiated by their level of political organization. There are "marginal" or "peripheral" elements of the subaltern that are developed; they have not achieved political consciousness of their possession or attempt to organize politically. Because of this, these groups do not leave evidence of their activities in historical record, which makes groups difficult to 'trace'.

The history of subaltern classes is necessarily fragmented and episodic, in the activity of these classes there is a tendency toward unification, albeit in provisional stages, but this is the least conspicuous aspect, and it manifests itself only when victory is secured. When the people fail to obtain desired reforms from the commune authorities, they seceded, with support of prominent individuals from the commune, and after forming an independent assembly. They begin to create their own magistracies similar to the general system of the commune, to award a jurisdiction to

the captain of the people, and make decisions of their own authority and giving rise to a whole legislative authority. The people succeeded, at first practice and later formally, enforcing the inclusion into the general status of the commune of provisions that previously applied only internally to those registered as “people”. The people then came to dominate the commune, overwhelming the previous ruling class (notebook 3). From Gramsci’s perspective, this is an example of how a subaltern group that was subordinated to a dominant group gained power and eventually became a new dominant group.

Gramsci was concerned with how literary representation of the subaltern reinforced the subaltern’s subordinated positions. He is engaged in cultural, political and social criticism, in a technique of social life. He is attempting to destroy certain beliefs and attitude towards the world and life that are presented as truth but are in fact “narrow and impoverished”. The significance of Gramsci’s focus on literature that depicts the subaltern in passive, humble or subordinate positions is to show that such work actually reinforces the positions of the subaltern and contributes to the consciousness and common sense of the masses to an extent that they do not question such views and accept them as fact rather than opinions. This is an aspect of research that the integral historian has to take into account in his or her research of the subaltern. In Gramsci’s view:

The subaltern or integral historian has to analyze not only the historical events of the subaltern but also the historical process in which the subaltern are perceived, presented and depicted in literary and historical document. In historical or literary documents, the subaltern may be presented as humble, passive or ignorant, but their actual life experience may prove the contrary. Hence, the integral historian has to

analyze critically the way in which intellectual represents the conditions and aspiration of the subaltern (23 - 25).

Although the Marxist thinker of Italy, Gramsci used the term 'subaltern' but it actually started from rewriting history especially by Indian, South American and other writers. In the beginning subaltern study only focuses on rewriting history. It tried to claim that whatever was written in the history was the elitist perspective. And thus, the history should be written from subaltern perspective. Subaltern perspective refers to term that refers for the people living in bottom, dominated people and marginalized people by the elites.

Within the last 25 years, a subaltern has become a very popular enterprise. Inspired by Gramsci's books and articles on subaltern studies many Indian, South American and other's writers focused their writings on this subject matter ' subaltern studies', ' subalternity', ' subaltern perspective' etc. These writers agree and disagree with Gramsci's perspective and create their own assumption on subaltern perspective. The current popularity of subaltern analysis stems mostly from Ranjit Guha's subaltern studies collective and Gayatri Spivak's famous article, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Other writer's who focuses their writing on subaltern studies are Partha Chattarjee, Vena Das, Dipesh Chakrabarty.

In the preface to Subaltern Studies I, Ranjit Guha states: "to promote a systematic and informed discussion of subaltern themes in the field of South Asian Studies and thus helps rectify the elitist bias characteristic of much research and academic work in this particular area (vii-viii)".

The point is to challenge elitist historiography and to eliminate aspects of subaltern history as they relate to class, cast, age, gender and so forth. Guha states "the range of contribution to the series may even remotely match the six point project

envisaged by Antonio Gramsci in his 'Notes on Italian History' (vii-viii). He further states that this project is appreciated; it is not clear how Gramsci's six points is to be used if Guha views Gramsci six point as purely methodological criteria. In contrast of Gramsci definition, Guha defines subaltern groups as "the people" and "non elite". In Weberian fashion, Guha categorized the elite into three ideal categories: dominant foreign groups, dominant indigenous group and regional groups that act on the behalf of other two groups. Therefore, Guha's approach to rewriting Indian Colonial history from a subaltern perspective is from the group of "the people" or "non elite".

Gyatri Chakravorty Spivak in her critic of Guha's contends that the idea of defining the subaltern "as a difference from the elite" and attempting to "investigate, identify and measure the specific" is "essentialist and taxonomic" (284-85). In this project the problem is that it requires one not only to know the consciousness and position of the subaltern but also to represent that consciousness. In Spivak's view the subaltern leave little or no traces of their existence within elite, colonial documents and, if the subaltern is represented at all, they are represented as the other with in dominant elite ideology. It is in the sense that the subaltern can not speak, according to Spivak because representation of subaltern is embedded within the dominant discourse.

Related to Spivak's understanding of Gramsci's conception of the subaltern is the issue of representation that she raises with regard to the work of Foucault and Deleuze. Spivak contends that "Foucault and Deleuze confuse their distinct type of representation with the notion of a unified European subject, while in Marx the distinction is apparent with regard to the concept of class, for Marx recognizes that class is a condition but that classes are not unified" (276- 279).

Spivak points two types of senses of representation: “representation as ‘speaking for,’ as in politics and representation as ‘re-presentation’ as in art or philosophy”. The distinction between the double senses of representation is an attempt to avoid subjective essentialism and to understand that macro logical representation affects political representation. Spivak, instead of taking only the concept of representation take the notion of Marx, class consciousness.

Following her discussion of representation, Spivak moves on to discuss the nature of subaltern. She makes comment on Gramsci’s conception of subaltern class:

Antonio Gramsci’s work on the class extends the class-position/ class-consciousness argument isolated in the eighteenth Brumaire. Perhaps, because Gramsci criticizes the vanguardistic position of the Leninist intellectual, he concerned with the intellectual’s role in the subaltern’s culture and political movement into hegemony. This movement be meet to determine the production of history as narrative (of truth). In text such as ‘ The Southern Question,’ Gramsci consider the movement of historical-political economy in Italy within what can be seen as an allegory of reading taken from or prefiguring and international division of labor. At an account of the phase development of the subaltern is thrown out of joint when his cultural macro logy is operated, however remotely, by the epistemic interference with legal and disciplinary definitions accompanying the imperialist project. (283)

Similarly, in the eighteenth Brumaire, Gramsci writes:

the proletariat can become the leading and the dominant class to some extent that it succeed in creating a system of class alliance which

allows it to mobilize the majority of the working population against capitalism and bourgeois state.(186)

Gramsci focuses on the subaltern is too macro logical for Spivak because he situate the subaltern within an ensemble of social relations: relation of production, “legal and disciplinary” function of the state, and relations of hegemony within civil society. It seems clear that Spivak does not agree with Gramsci’s notion of phase development. She defines the subaltern differently that from both Gramsci and Guha. For her, the subaltern are not nearly the non elite: they are “the paradigmatic victims” of the international division of labor- namely, “the women of the urban sub-proletariat and of unorganized peasant labor. (185)

In Gramsci’s view, disorganization is an element of subalternity but not the determining element, since a subaltern group can exercise some level of political organization without any level of hegemony and therefore still be subject to the activity of dominant groups. In his conception, organization alone will not resolve group marginalization; only the transformation of the relation of subordination will resolve group marginalization. For Spivak, the subaltern is not just oppressed, but the subalterns are those people that are so displaced; they lack political organization and representation. The subaltern are unorganized and do not openly speak, they do not represent themselves politically or textually. For her, representation and organization are key to subalternity and once they are achieved the subaltern cease to be subaltern. She states:

I don’t think that I declare myself to be allied to the subaltern. The subaltern is all that is not elite, but the trouble with those kind of names is that if you have any kind of political interest you name it in the hope that the name will disappear. That’s what class consciousness

is in the interest of: the class disappearing. What politically we want to see is that the name would be a possible. So what I am interested in is seeing ourselves as namers of the subaltern. If the subaltern can speak then, thank god, the subaltern is not a subaltern anymore. (158)

In this sense if the subalterns are organized and represent themselves, they are no longer subalterns. Spivak says that when a line of communication is established between a member of subaltern groups and the circuits of citizenship or institutionalism, the subaltern has been instituted into the long road of hegemony.

Partha Chatterjee in her essay ‘ Cast and Subaltern Consciousness’ raises her argument about the religious beliefs and practices of subordinate cast groups of India, which are often based on principle of those of the Brahmanical religion. She raises her question for us: what does this observation mean for a description of the consciousness of the subaltern classes? We can sense that subaltern consciousness in the specific cultural context of India cannot but contain cast as central elements in its constitution. Religion seems to be a constitutive force in subaltern consciousness.

Marxist has stated the question of religion in subaltern consciousness with the greatest insight. From Gramsci’s Prison Notebook- the part entitled ‘The Philosophy of Praxis’ – analyzes the consciousness of the subaltern classes which is contradictory, fragmented held together in a more or less haphazard whole – the common sense. Common sense is formed, and transformed in the course of a historical process which brings dominant and subordinate classes into relation with each other. The common sense changes in the course of the historical process of relation between dominant groups. Religion for the dominant groups offers the necessary ideological justification for existing social divisions but for subordinate masses religion enters their common sense as the element which accesses them as

access to a more powerful cultural order. Gramsci's comment suggests to a methodological approach in which subaltern consciousness as contradictory, consisting of two opposed elements – one autonomous and the other borrowed. To give sufficient concreteness to the concept of subaltern consciousness she takes reference from adequate critic of cast system.

Marxist argument claims class stratification may be the relevant principal in understanding the history of Europe and in her view Indian society is based on a completely different principal, namely hierarchy and the consequently caste must replace class as the fundamental explanatory framework. In her 'The New Peasant Movement in India', she has argued for a long time that the main lines of conflict are no longer between middle low caste peasants on one side and high caste landlord on the other, but are now between the rich farmers and the agricultural laborers – the poor peasants. She has suddenly woken up to the realization, again on purely on empirical ground that the peasant movement, claiming to represent the united interest of all categories of peasants.

She takes different castes of the Indian society as a reference and shows the domination/ hegemony of the so called higher caste to the lower caste in the name of dharma or religion. The lower caste is being marginalized and is treated as if others from the higher. She wants to create the history of subaltern or the marginalized people by raising their voice (consciousness). For her subaltern consciousness is not nearly structured, characterized solely by negativity. It is also history saved and developed through a changing process of interaction between the dominant and the subordinate but only the dominant culture has a life in a history and subaltern consciousness eternally frozen in its structure of negation.

Veena Das takes the reference of Sumit Sarkar to characterize and describe subaltern studies. Sarkar goes on to define subaltern consciousness as having positive and negative dimension. To support his idea he takes an example: examples of positive consciousness are participation in railway strikes, whereas to strike for cow protection is seen as evidence of negative consciousness. Sarkar also points out that there are recurring patterns that are similar in militant protest of this period; regardless of whether we are examine mass participation on a national issue, or a communalist or caste movement. In the view of Veena Das the distinction between positive and negative dimension of subaltern consciousness is not useful. She states firstly that it is important to recognize that the repertoire of collective action at any particular historical period is limited and groups can innovate only on the margins. Secondly, it is not easy to characterize caste or ethnic consciousness as 'negative', as if it had an essence of its own, for it also depends on the interactional context within which this consciousness is being articulated. In this context the contribution of subaltern studies makes an important point in establishing the centrality of the historical movement of rebellion in understanding the subaltern as subject of their own histories. So, for Veena Das subaltern studies perform our understanding of tribes, castes or other such group is to restore to them their historical being.

Like Veena Das, Dipesh Chakrabarty also takes the reference of Ranjit Guha and Indian society. They describe subaltern studies as elitist. For Guha subaltern studies was part of an attempt to align historical reasoning with larger moments for democracy in India. The declared aim of subaltern studies was to produce historical analysis in which the subaltern groups were viewed as the subjects of history. As Guha put it once in course of introducing a volume of subaltern studies: "We are indeed opposed to much of the prevailing academic practice in historiography for

its failure to acknowledge the subaltern as the maker of his own destiny. This critique lies at the very heart of our project” (15).

Using people and subaltern classes synonymously and defining both as the “demographic difference between the total Indian population” and the dominant indigenous and foreign elite, Guha claimed that there was in colonial India, an “autonomous”, domain of the “politics of the people” that was organized differently than the domain of the politics of the elite. Guha’s separation of elite and subaltern domains within the political had some radical tendency in global Marxist historiography until the 1970s was to look on peasant revolts organized along the axes of kingship religion, caste etc as movements exhibiting a “backward” consciousness, the kind that, in his work on social banditry and “primitive rebellion”. He suggests that the nature of collective action against exploitation in colonial India was such that it effectively led to a new constellation of the politics.

To ignore the participation in the modern political sphere could cause for a Eurocentric Marxism would lead, according to Guha, only to elitist histories. For one would, then, not know how to analyze the consciousness of the peasant- the discourses of kingship, caste, religion and ethnicity through which they expressed themselves in protest- except as a backward consciousness trying to grapple with a changing world whose logic it could never fully comprehend. He insisted that the peasant’s was not a backward consciousness- a mentality left over from the past- a baffled by modern political and economic institutions yet resistant to them. Peasant uprising, inevitably a struggle on the part of rebels to destroy all symbols of social prestige and power of the ruling classes: “It was this fight for prestige which was at the heart of insurgency. Inversion was its principal modality. It was a political

struggle in which the rebel appropriated or destroyed the insignia of his enemy's power and hoped thus to abolish the marks of his own subalternity" (22).

By showing focus of Guha upon the word "political", Dipesh Chakborty wants to prove that Guha's point was that the arrangement of power in which peasants and other subaltern classes found themselves in colonial India contained two very different logics of hierarchy and oppression. The semiotics of domination and subordination were what the subaltern classes sought to destroy every time they rose up in rebellion. Guha further state that the peasant is a figure of the past and must mutate into the industrial worker in order to emerge, eventually as the citizen- subject of modern democracies. Where this mutation does not quite occur yet the peasant still becomes an actor in the modern political sphere/ as in anti colonial nationalism, the peasant remains, as we have seen, the bearer of a prepolitical consciousness. Guha argues in introducing subaltern studies as irreducibly split into two distinct logics that get braided together all the time- the logic of formal, legal and secular frameworks of governance and that of relationships of direct domination and subordination that derive their legitimacy from a different set of institutions and practices, including those of dharma (dharma is often translated as "religion")- then Guha's writings help open up a very interesting problem in the global history of modernity and citizenship.

Guha's two formulations- that both nationalism and colonialism were involved in instituting in India a rule of capital. Subaltern studies in principal was opposed to nationalist histories that portrayed nationalist leaders as ushering India and its people out of some kind of precapitalist stage into a world- historical phase of "bourgeoisie artifacts of democracy": the rights of citizenship, a market economy, freedom of the press and the rule of law. There is no doubt that the Indian political elite internalized and used this language of political modernity, but this democratic tendency existed

alongside and interlarded with undemocratic relationship of domination and subordination.

Guha's quest for a history in which the subaltern was the maker of his own destiny brought into focus the question of the relation between texts and power. Historical archives are usually collections of documents, texts of various kinds. Guha begins his elementary aspects by recognizing the problem that peasants do not speak directly in archival documents, which are usually produced by the ruling classes. He uses a diversity of disciplines in tracking the logic of peasant consciousness at the moment of rebellion. His elementary aspect is a study of the practices of insurgent peasants in colonial India, not of a reified category called consciousness. The aim of the book was to bring out the collective imagination inherent in the practices of peasant rebellion. He makes no claim that the insurgent consciousness that he discussed is indeed conscious, that it existed inside the heads of peasants. He doesn't equate consciousness with the subject's view of himself. Rather, he examines rebel practices to decipher the particular relationship between elites and subalterns and among subalterns themselves. He even emphasizes the need for the historian to develop a conscious strategy for reading the archives. The aim of this is not to discern and sift the biases of the elites, but to analyze the very textual properties of these documents in order to get at the history of power that produced them (subaltern).

In Dipesh Chokrabarty's views, scholars of subaltern studies take the criticism into account in their work. The charge that they do not tackle gender issues or engage feminist scholarship has been met to some degree by Ranjit Guha, Partha Chatterjee and others. The influence of deconstructionist and postmodern thought in subaltern studies may be traced in the way in which the work of Partha Chatterjee in the 1990s come to privilege the idea of fragment over that of the whole or totality.

Where does subaltern studies- both the series and the project- stand today? At the crossing of many different pathways, it seems the original project has been developed and furthered in the work of individual members of the collective. The members of collective are David Arnold's, study of British Colonialism in India in terms of histories of contested bodily practices. *Colonizing the Body*, David Hardiman's studies of the political and economic culture of subaltern lives caught in emergent forms of capitalism in the Indian state of Gujarat. *The coming of the Devi and Feeding the Baniya* and Gautam Bhadra's study of a number of texts having to do with peasant society in eighteenth and nineteenth century Bengal, *Iman o nishan* are examples of project in which the possibilities of the original theoretical historiographic project are worked out and illustrated through concrete, historical examples.

Defenders of subaltern studies point that the public sphere- in India and elsewhere- has fragmented under the pressure of democracy and that it cannot be united artificially by a Marxism that insists on reducing the many diverse experiences of oppression and marginalization to the single axis of class or even to the triple axes of class, gender and ethnicity. Chakrobarty makes the point of this exercise to rebut the charge that subaltern studies lost its way by falling into the bad company of post colonial theory. Through a discussion of what Guha wrote in the 1980s, he sought to demonstrate some necessary connections between the original aims of the subaltern post coloniality. Subaltern studies were not a case of the application to Indian material of methods of historical research already worked out in the metropolitan Marxist tradition of history from below. It was in part a product of this lineage but the nature of political modernity in colonial India made this project of history writing nothing short of an engaged critique of the academic discipline of history itself.

For Chakrobarty, the peasant did not have to undergo a historical worker in order to become the citizen- subject of the nation (to be human). The peasant who participated in forms of mass nationalist struggles against the British was not a prepolitical subject. The formal granting of the rights of citizenship to the Indian peasant after the achievement of independence from the British simply recognize his already- political nature. If the peasant was not pre political and was not to be treated simply as an object of anthropology, then the very history of the politicization of masses in India showed that the political included actions that challenged the theorist's usual and inherited separation between politics and religion. It can be seen in retrospect that subaltern was a democratic project meant to produce a genealogy of the peasant as citizen in contemporary political modernity.

In the succeeding chapter an attempt has been made to study Charles Johnson's *Middle Passage* by mobilizing the theoretical insights of subaltern study. This chapter attempts to apply the theoretical concept develop in the second chapter to justify the hypothesis of the research to support the question of subaltern consciousness which is the main focus of this researcher; the text will be quoted and analyzed.

III. Subaltern Consciousness in Johnson's *Middle Passage*: A Textual Interpretation

The novel depicts the marginalization of African American people. It also shows how they become conscious of marginalization. The novel *Middle Passage* focuses on the socio-political structure of the 19th century African American community where they (Africans) are being marginalized and they want to come to the mainstream by searching their identity, existence and self.

Charles Johnson's *Middle Passage* presents nineteenth century American sea-faring literature through the speaker, the protagonist, Rutherford Calhoun. He, a newly freed slave and irrespirable rogue, is desperate to escape unscrupulous bill collectors and an impending marriage to a priggish schoolteacher named Isadora. He jumps aboard the first boat leaving New Orleans, the Republic, a slave ship en route to collect members of a legendary African tribe, the Allmuseri. Thus, begins a daring voyage of horror and self-discovery by gaining consciousness.

Middle passage offers a positive theme of subaltern consciousness. Johnson shows how the stripping away of the illusion of an autonomous self – that 'self' itself is a recurring theme in postmodernist writing – need not result in alienation, personal despair, and disintegration. Johnson also incorporates the plot structure and themes of genres such as epic, the romance, the sea story and the slave narrative. Meaning accumulates in the form, infuses these fiction with the conscious distancing of irony, parody and even force.

Johnson overwrites those historical fictions of the unity of being of the Allmuseri community of the nineteenth century that looks like truth. In his work, Johnson has shown the great interest- debunking notion of racial and cultural difference where it is said that we are essentially connected with one another and with

one another's ancestors, in spite of any apparent differences. Johnson claims:

Any one knowledgeable about genetics . . . can so you that if you go back fifty generations in the life of any person, he or she shares of common ancestor with every other person on this planet. None of us can be less closely related than 50th cousins. When we trace the gene back to A.D. 700, race dissolves. (43)

Johnson here poetically notes, a relative perspective, black or white, male or female, that encounter the transcendence of relativism. The phrase logically proves that since all being and its predecessor's text comments on its predecessors. In turn, it can currently shape each. Therefore, Johnson simply tries not to write a slave like narrative, but rather to open up his novel to all other slave narratives and text. Hence, the novel's reliance on literary, historical and philosophical allusion and the incorporation of character from Herman Melville's novella, *Benita Careno*. In the novel, text and character emerges as process of consciousness building and meta-awareness.

Rutherford Calhoun is a picaresque hero of the *Middle Passage*. Soon he finds himself "on unfamiliar terrain where Calhoun appears odd and outnumbered, where he is different from everybody else"(Bernal 24). In this case, only the black American on a merchant ship is setting out to pick up an illegal cargo of ruthless and comically bigoted captain. All characters in the novel, including Rutherford are essentially caricatures grotesque. As a philosopher, Johnson doesnot believe that fictional character can represent real people but tries to represent real story of the nineteenth century by giving fictional date and time of the African-American society.

Middle Passage traces over the length of the text, the line of race and gender in a similar breakdown and restructuring of what it means to be a man, what it means

to be black, what it means to be human. Like the body's involuntary response to untruth or the loosening of Rutherford's grasp on the boundaries of life and death, gender undergoes a shift from the more automatic and involuntary (uncritical) assertion of social given "of all the things that drive men to sea, the most common disaster, I've come to learn, is women" (1), to confounding those regulated borders by gaining access to the validity of particular experience and awareness. Rutherford Calhoun creditors made a conspiracy of giving him the choice of prison or marriage. Calhoun thought imprisonment is far better than marriage with Isadora. So in this case, it was spirited Boston schoolteacher named Isadora Bailey who led him to become a cook aboard the Republic.

Rutherford is told by Cringle after shortly commencing his seafaring exercise that "3/4 s of the world surface is covered by that formless Naught and I dislike it, Calhoun being hemmed in by nothing, this bottomless chaos breeding all manner of monstrosities and creatures that defy civilized law" (42). This postmodern interest in nihilism is the sense of universal interconnectedness and considering the absurdity the reality of slavery yet.

Johnson attempts to contradict pervasive chaos with the very nature of slave trading, broken families, confusing rides on the sea language barrier is through his imposition and redefinition of the significance of home. *Middle Passage* reflects the consciousness of slaves in apparent, insistence on the importance of locating a home as a center of identity and ownership. It is difficult to understand how a freed or escaped slave could ever feel fully at home after having experienced forced dislocation. So, when Rutherford say to himself, discussing in New Orleans early in the novel, "Here Rutherford is home" (2). It can tend to think that he will not call New Orleans home for all that long. Home is surely a tenuous notion for many slaves.

It becomes an absolute heaven for Calhoun, which is however, soon, to be an uncertain heaven. Home is the basic requirement for each that lacks the stability of the character in the novel. Home remains for Calhoun a possibility, if it is never a full of relative term however for a freeman Calhoun must call it only temporarily the grotesque Republic his home. This ship stands as a reminder of Calhoun's past as the collective past of herded slaves.

By the end of the novel, Calhoun accepts home as being a destabilized concept and certainly a relative term. Before the rescuer of the Republic cargo, Calhoun states, "I desperately dreamed of home . . . if this weird, upside-down caricature of a country called America, if this land of refugees-this Caldron of mongrels from all I rightly call home, the n age: I was of it "(179). Calhoun's claim is of being disillusionment of the pains of all history; the history is all of his ancestors. Here he resembles most a slave taken in a dazed state, with no concept of time from his home. Calhoun has shown proof that he can go beyond his solipsistic obsession with physical sensation and sensual titillation. As idea of comfort home becomes an acceptance of multiplicity, decent redness.

Johnson's use of slave narrative tradition is neither straightforward nor strictly parody; it seems not only to parody but also actually to invest the structure of the classic slave narrative. While narrative of the life of Frederick Douglass adopts a highly serious, melodramatic emotional rhetoric, *Middle Passage* undercuts and puts into question not only concerning the style and tone of the slave narrative but also its very foundation of progression from the dark night of slavery to the glorious day of freedom and consciousness. In fact Douglass narrative touches on the concept of slavery as state of mind as well as legal state of body. Douglass's narrative progress from the dusk of birth as a slave is through the deep height of complete mental and

spiritual bondage to the brilliant light of physical freedom. Rutherford Calhoun's spiritual journey takes us in the opposite direction. Rutherford, like Fredrick Douglass, was born into slavery but was granted his manumission by his dying owner, Pelege Chandler, before the opening of the narrative. We learn that Rutherford's manumission has not allowed him to be happy and self-directed, but has instead lead him to a life of petty crime, drink, womanizing and running from commitment of any kind.

Rutherford is an ex-slave who discovers that his freedom is only the different types of slavery. In the first few pages of the novel Rutherford refers to "the hour of my manumission – as a day of such gloom and depression" that he cannot bear to speak of it (3). Gaining his freedom has only trapped him further in the futile struggle to preserve and promote his individuality : Running from the disappointment (from his brother Jackson and marriage with Isadora), Rutherford puts him away on a ship full of white men who like him, are running from their failures and humiliation on share to a worse fate at sea. Peter Cringle is the first mate who informs him immediately that "being on a ship is being in jail, while the chance of being drowned to boot" (25), about slavery, freedom and consciousness of that is being turned on his head during his *Middle Passage*. It is the progresses from America to Africa before returning to different ideas of Rutherford with a totally different idea of freedom, into the bondage of marriage and responsibility with Isadora.

Calhoun left his dying owner, Peleg Chandler, before the opening of the novel but his brother didn't leave the owner. He further narrates "since my manumission I'd brought a world of grief on myself" (92). We learn that Rutherford has rejected his brother Jackson Calhoun as a hopeless uncle Tom, a sort of spiritual idiot who so rejects the idea of ownership, when Chandler asks him to decide, he replies "I could

ask for land, but how can any man even you sir, own something like those tress outside?" (117). The implication is that Jackson never felt that Chandler owned him, because ownership is just a misguided figment of the imagination. Therefore he was voluntarily serving Chandler as Rutherford and all the rest of Chandler were dependents.

Johnson compares the presence of Jackson Calhoun, the slave who freely chooses to serve his master after his manumission. Jackson's initial presence reminds us that he is a Christ figure and he is described in magical realist term as a sort of Francis of Assisi, who is so selfless and light that he can lie down on a flock of birds and be carried into the sky. When Jackson insists that their master split the inheritance equally among all of his slaves and ex-slaves, they're offspring and relatives (leaving Rutherford to inherit only \$40.00, a bed pan and a Bible). Rutherford becomes a thief, stealing the principle that he himself has had his own identity stolen from him and therefore he has the right to steal other's property, security and sense of self. In the end of the *Middle Passage* and Isadora Bailey teaches him that he doesn't need material possessions or a stolen sense of self to be a free and happy man.

Rutherford learns in his voyage that the more men try to escape the bends of others, the more trapped they become in bondage to their own egos, moreover, according to Johnson, no man is truly free of bonds to the entire social universe of others. Even captain Falcon' the arch-investors who was financed this voyage informs Rutherford, "I'm captain' cause I know how to bow and scrape and kiss rich arises to raise money for this run" (147). Rutherford is forced to acknowledge that captain Ebenzer Falcon is slave to the investor, who in turn is slaves to fortune hunters. By the end of the novel, Rutherford has come to be conscious that his brother Jackson Calhoun was, while still a slave, the freest man he had ever known and Rutherford

himself is rid of the need to “posses or dominate” (187) his own life or the world.

Rutherford Calhoun, the central figure and the narrator of *Middle Passage* is confined spatially and temporally to space “in-between”, in-between the ship’s crew and Allmuseri, in-between factions of the ship’s crew and in-between generations of African American. Calhoun’s first experience of inter-position between the crew and the Allmuseri illustrates his multiply generated subject construction well. During Calhoun’s first evening in Bangalang, Squibb warns Calhoun that he might be mistakenly captured and sold like Allmuseri: “Better yuh keep your noodle down, Illinois . . . or yun’ll be sold too . These blokes don’t know you’re a sailor. And they don’t care” (60). Calhoun’s exclusion from the rest of the crew suddenly becomes apparent (not that it is unnoticed before), Calhoun is accepted from the society of the crew because the slave dealers just don’t care that he is also a sailor. His difference, signaled only by the color of his skin, is all that matters. But at the same time, Calhoun must isolate himself from the Allmuseri-a-self-imposed but necessary exile. He shows treading the space between sailor and future slave.

The Allmuseri, by recognizing Calhoun’s difference from the rest of the Republic’s crew, also position him in the middle space between sailor and Allmuseri, American and African. Ngonyama, whom falcon selects as an overseer, is the first of the Allmuseri to make this recognition. Calhoun said that Ngonyama could not distinguish any of the white crew individually and asked him, “How do their families tell them apart?” (75). Asking of this question by Ngonyama to Calhoun shows that he is different from the rest of the crew member and is similar to that of the Allmuseri. Calhoun knows that he has been singled out because unlike the rest of the crew, he is black. But on the other hand, at least in Calhoun’s mind, Ngonyama maintains significant cultural separation from him. Calhoun may be a lessen barbarian

than the white, but he is a barbarian nonetheless. Thus, at the moment of recognition, a moment that determines Calhoun 's eventual survival amongst the Allmuseri ' mutineers', Calhoun suddenly becomes part of a nether space, neither Allmuseri nor white American, he lies in the *Middle Passage*.

Eight-year-old Baleka and her mother also contribute to Calhoun's exclusion from the social space of both crew and Allmuseri. When the mother's imposition of guilt forces Calhoun into sharing his meals with Baleka, Calhoun again notices his relegation to the *Middle Passage* at the point of recognition. Calhoun is different from the whites and therefore must act as liaison:

By and by, we were inseparable. This was how mama wanted it, having decided her child's survival might depend on staying close to one crew member who looked most African, asking me decipher the stranger the strange behavior of the whites and intercede on their behalf. (79)

By recognizing Calhoun as distinct from the rest of the crew, Baleka's mother also, in effect excludes him from whiteness. Even, Diamelo, who does not trust Calhoun recognizes him as distinct from the remainder of the crew, he offers Calhoun the chance to prove his loyalty to the Allmuseri, an offer no white crew member would be given. As Diamelo says, "on whose side is he? I wouldn't trust this one not until he has broken away from them" (135).

Calhoun becomes painfully aware of his middleliness (and the remarkable attendant feeling of isolation) moments later, when cringle marvels at Calhoun's willingness to side with the Allmuseri. Calhoun responds, "I'm not on anybody's side! I'm just trying to keep us alive! I don't know who's right or wrong on this ship anymore, and I don't much care! All I want is to go home!"(137). These expressions

of rage not only reveal the frustration inherent in being unable to identify fully and comfortably with the borders, but also highlight in Calhoun's colonial existence – the problem of 'home', by considering 'home' to be the location of salvation. Calhoun's dilemma lies in his automatic invocation of home a better place, a place of fixed borders as opposed to middleness.

When the voyage ends, Calhoun is still at sea, bound to Isadora but unable to consummate the union. In the Republic also Calhoun lies in the middleness between the Republic's crew and the Allmuseri, the uncharted space between America and Africa, white and black. The *Middle Passage* has left an indelible imprint on Calhoun's psyche (he is being conscious).

Rutherford Calhoun is being made consciousness of his middleness by the Allmuseri people such as Ngonyama, Baleka and her mother, Diamelo and the crew member Cringle also plays a significant role for creating awareness of their slavery and they revolt against the Republic crew for their freedom, for their identity of being and race, for their culture and religion.

Johnson's appropriation of Melville's "Benito Cereno" character, represented as Allmuseri ship mutineers, speaks not only to the reality of fiction and fiction of reality which is very postmodern concept indeed, but also to the interconnectedness of slave rebellion for identity. From fiction, Johnson's mirrors another fiction of Melville, but both tales speak the ways in which the consciousness of slavery and slave rebellion can be related and retold. Like fiction, like writing, the Republic is "in a word was from stern to stern, a process" (36). Johnson's central character, Calhoun is essentially a writer, transcriber of history, a creator of fiction and writing, and a conscious slave, a source of reacquisition of power, a source of information control and profounder of the rebellious aspect on the other character.

The Allmuseri tribe is presented as humble passive or ignorant. The ship Republic stops at the African shore to collect the Allmuseri tribe. Then “a woman pitched her baby overboard into the water, two men tried to follow, straining against their chains, falcon but them until blood came” (66). Calhoun seeing the scenery of the domination and punishment to the Allmuseri, become conscious and said:

It was then hair started going white unable to watch, I repaired to sit alone in the cook room, my head in my hands and back against an oven of such antiquity it was usually hotter on one side than the other, so that Squibb’s tipsy cakes (so called since he laced them with rum) rose crooked and once they were frosted the top layer would gradually slide off. Clearly, nothing on the Republic was as it should be, but it behooves me for the slave of my own character, shabby as this is, to explain how murderous my thoughts become after taking part in the become after taking part in the captivity of the Allmuser. (66)

The slaves are interwoven with political, social, intellectual, philosophical, religion, physical, literal, cultural domination by the white’s crew of the Republic. Captain Falcon issued shipboard major-demons, and appointed Ngonyama for this and is given old shirt and tar splattered trouser, being clothed like the crew. Falcon also gives better food and a few minor tasks for him. “The best way to controlling a rebellious nigger is to give him some responsibility” (74). It was captain falcon’s belief that slave insurrections could be prevented if for every ten prisoners one was selected to oversee the other’s and keep them in line/ track.

Falcon is presented as the spirit of opposition, dualism, repression and conflict. “Conflict is what it means to be conscious. Dualism is a body structure of the mind. Subject and object, perceiver and perceived, self and other mind were made for

murder and slavery is social correlate of deeper, unnoticed wound" (98). *Middle Passage* clearly sets Falcon's (and the west's) dualism against the unifying vision of the 'captured' Allmuseri who saw them as savages. In their mythology European had once been members of their tribe-rulers, even for a time but fell into what was for else people the blackest of sin. The failure to experience the unity of 'being' everywhere was the Allmuseri vision of hell. Rutherford negotiates the space between those that have no history and those who have too much caught between the two, Rutherford and the American experience and by extra-polation, any human endeavor that searches for identity, experience and new beginnings is a fantastic exercise in neither/nor of American carving its way out of the two in between the two. American is not only the result of European influences, but it is also the result of African, Asian and Native American as well. This contradictory America, so invisible to Rutherford at the novel's opening is clear at the end.

Captain Ebenezer falcon said after the Allmuseri captured the ship to Calhoun that he is no freer that the Africans.

She wasn't our ship from the start, Mr. Calhoun. Every plank and piece of canvas on the Republic, and any cargo she is carrying from clew to earring-including that creature below - belongs to the three blokes who outfitted her in New Orleans and pay our wages. See someone has to pay the bill. I'm captain` cause I knew how to bow and scrape and kiss rich arses to raise money for this rum. I didn't come up in the last bucket, you know. I knew how to reach'em. Which wasn't easy, cause they don't like to be seen. Each one of'em expects his investment to be returned. Mebbe tripled, like I promised. If we fail, they won't be forgiving. These are the men we have to appease, not them whoresons

and rowdies outside. Oh, I know what you're thinking. We suffered the unexpected. Surely they will understand. But I'm telling you then won't see nothing' cept that I took their money-a lot of money, lad- and they'd just as soon see us drown, if I sail home empty-handed, as hear me report their fixed capital seized control of this bring and swung her back to Bangalang. (147)

Falcon reminds Calhoun that man is born free but no man is truly free of bonds to the entire social universe of others Calhoun lastly came to know that it was papa Zeringue who buy and sell slave when he himself was black. This is the greatest betrayal Calhoun ever known.

Cringle states the historical process how the Allmuseri are being perceived? Allmuseri are old people, older than the Kung Tribe of southern Africa. He said they are not like all of us, not like Calhoun also, though he is black. Rafel Garcia, a Spanish explorer said "they're a hole tribe-man, women and tyhes – of devil worshipping, spell-casting wizards" (43). Calhoun said "all Allmuseri, I had been told, had a second brain, a small one at the base of their spines" (61). Physically they seemed a synthesis of several tribes, as if longevity in this land had made them a biological repository of Egyptian and sub-Saharan eccentricities or – in the Hegelian equation – a clan distilled from the essence of everything that came earlier.

For those of us who equate information and documentation with history, the tribe cannot be real. But what exactly it might be represent a metaphor for our fears of differences. A part of Calhoun's mystical vision is the potential fear and guilt of the slave holders something more basic, more primitive than our minds and culture? Something more evolved than our intellect and culture? These are question without answer, for like the original log, the Allmuseri can't be read, and they are an

unreadable text, as in substantiated by the fact that they have no fingerprints. They have a second brain at the base of their spines; however, this brain would seem to be located in their asses. But they are not a tribe who is to be limited history. Whatever they might be, they represent a possibility of power.

In the sixth entry of the book through the voice of narrative, we know that blacks were brought from below to dance from the music of Tommy's flute and to let them breathe fresh air. Inside the ship below Ebenezer falcon a 'tight-packer', arranged the Africans in two parallel rows, their backs against the lining of the ship's belly. Slave came half dead from the depth. They are like eyeless contortionists who are emerging from a shadowy platonic cave. From Plato 'Allegory of the cave' we have known that people taken out (in the world of knowledge) from the cave (dark world) after year passed their eyes get dazzled and find hard to face the surface reality. Likewise the Africans found hard to come in the sun. Then, Rutherford, "right then I decided our captain was more than just evil. He was the devil" (120). Johnson further claims,

Stupidity, I had seen their lives and culture as timeless product, as a finished thing, pure essence or permanent meaning 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 as the body of the boy we'd thrown oeverboard.

Ngonyame and may be all the African I realized, were not wholly Allmuseri anymore. (124)

Middle Passage asserts racial identity as a hybrid, active process of being that reads and interprets itself and the culture that surrounds it. It is this awareness of identity that Johnson holds as a means to a larger humanistic end: the liberation

perception, the opening of epistemological perspective and ontological perspective and ontological meaning, not just for African American but for all people. Caught in the moment of this revelation by gaining consciousness Rutherford cries:

for all the sewage I carried in my spirit, my failures and crimes, foolish hopes and vanities, the very faults and structural flaws in the blueprint of my brain (as falcon put it) in a cleansing nigh as god as prayer itself for it washed away not only my hurt after hurling the dead boy overboard but yes, the hunger for mercy as well. (127)

It is at this point of utter self-consciousness, this moment of ultimate responsibility devoid of the desire for the mercy that relies on justification or excuse that the body not so much loses its grip on Rutherford 's soul as it merger within it. He is black, but he is not bound to sit on one or the other side of an artificially imposed and enforced racial, social dichotomy.

Washed by the moments of tears, prayers and acceptance of responsibility, Rutherford – thief and liar caught in the loop of appropriation and definition become himself. He proves to be far more certain of how his life and the lives of all other persons overlap, join and depend on each other. Rutherford Calhoun, the wily survivor of before, ironically ensures his greater survival from this point on by relinquished his death-grip on hi interest himself “searching myself, I discovered I no longer cared if I lived or died” (127). It is from the particular transitions and transgressions African-American experience arises, but ultimately they go far beyond specifics feeding the universal question of origin and destiny.

Johnson by writing traditional slave narrative collects the history of subaltern consciousness. By presenting the Allmuseri, a minor community of blacks who lack unity of being, when they once become conscious they form their unity and revolt not

only against their master physical domination but also revolt to their cultural, religious and others domination. Once the mutineers take control of the ship, it is decided that:

The master's house must be dismantled. Only Allmuseri was to be spoken by the crew when in contact with the newly empowered bondmen. Cringle was to use maps Ghofan was preparing; he did not trust the ones falcon had left. In addition to this, he forbade us to sing in English, his oppressor's tongue, whilst we worked. He said we must learn their stories. Nurture their god. Allmuseri medicine was to be treat sickness and injures. (154-155)

Diamele's command oddly and anachronistically seems the reminiscent of the Black nationalistic movement, signals as attempt to dismantle the master's tools, more precisely the tool of language that which the slave narration could not dismantle for he or she had to persuade in common ground. There is something strangely refreshing in Calhoun awareness of the Allmuseri fight for freedom. His father did not fight; rather he fought his fantasy and others in the fields, chafing under the bondage and every other constraint as well: "marriage and religion, as white men imposed these on Africans" (170). Calhoun is able to live rebellion vicariously through the Allmuseri.

Johnson not only presents black domination and the consciousness gained by them, he also presents the rebellion and awareness of domination that lies in white people. The crew members of the Republic are aware of the domination of their captain who has taken about all responsibilities. They don't trust upon their captain. Cringle says, "Rutherford we're here to decide the best way to put this ship back on a steady course. A crew has to trust its captain. Those of us here don't. We think it's time to change leadership" (86). But their aim of changing leadership came in vain

when black slave (Allmuseri) captured the Republic and made them their slaves and are sentenced to death.

Johnson focuses on slavery as a particular historical moment. Instead of specifying the subject, he universalizes the concept which reminds us of the possibilities of many forms of continued physical, psychological and cultural enslavement. During the course of *Middle Passage*, Rutherford discovers several things:

First he learns that a culture can not be possessed because it is an unstable entity. He also learns, though, that bonds and connections are a matter of surrendering to another order of being and are not simple determined by racial or biological destiny. (337)

Johnson explores the potential of slavery in great detail in this presentation of the Allmuseri. Though the reader is uncertain whether the tribe's mythology holds any truth, we see apparent changes in the tribe's make up. Its communal philosophy, once its members have been enslaved. The tribe "was not the world of multiplicity, of me verses thee" (140). The idea of people as chattel changes the whole perception of commerce and ownership. The European desire to possess the Allmuseri leads the Allmuseri desire to possess the European. Perversely, a notion of human ownership becomes cyclical. After the mutiny, Calhoun notes that "suddenly the ship felt insubstantial a pawn in a large game of property so vast it trivialized our own struggles on board" (150).

Rutherford started his journey from Illinois to the ship Republic and later in the ship Juno. From this travel ex-slave Rutherford becomes conscious and come to know that neither of us are freeman nor can we get rid of it. His brother Jackson was while still a slave, the free man he had ever know and he himself is rid of the need to

“posses or dominate” (187), his own life or the world.

Calhoun observes his inability to make love to Isadora, his memories of the *Middle Passage* kept coming back, reducing the velocity of his desire and its violence, and in place of his longing for feverish love. That is making left only a vaster stillness that felt remarkably full. Calhoun describes his inability as “a feeling that, just now, I wanted our futures blended, not our limbs, our histories perfectly twined for all time, not our flesh” (208). Because of this experience and self awareness Calhoun now seeks a different kind of connection. He seeks history differently, as continuum, a process, and not numerous transcendent moments. At the novel’s end, “Isadora drifted towards rest, nestled snugly beside me, where she would remain all night while we forgetful of ourselves, gently crossed the flood and countless seas of suffering” (209). This awareness of all human suffering (quite Buddhist) is recognition not of one slave’s fight but of the fight of all oppressed and all suffering.

Johnson through Calhoun proves to be far more responsive to the injustice of slavery at this point than when he joined the crew of the republic without hesitation, far more certain of how his life and the lives of all other overlap, join and depend on each other. Rutherford, the wily survivor of before, ironically ensures his greater survival from this peasant of relinquishing his death- grip on the interests himself: “searching myself, I discovered I no longer cared I lived or died” (127). It is his “individual consciousness grappling meaning” (philosophy 60), that Calhoun is aware of his history, identity and being, that it shows the consciousness of the subaltern.

Middle Passage belies stasis in favor of the dynamic, evacuates structures of ‘self’ and fills them with that entire dichotomy denies. This crossing of boundaries simultaneously erases them and collapse the structures of ‘being’ in upon themselves.

This transgressiveness, this insistence on transition, this collapse of 'reality' is the site of meaning: it is a leap of awareness that attempts:

rediscover the point of rupture to establish, with greatest possible precision, the division between the implicit density of the already-said, a perhaps involuntary fidelity to acquired opinion, the law of discursive fatalities, and the vivacity of creation, the leap into irreducible difference. (142)

The outcome of leap, the outcome of this interrogation of experience is a fluidity of meaning and value that revivify all regimes of meaning and consciousness. *Middle Passage* crosses the borders of containment and identity, eluding the false gods of fixity and resolution. Thus, key to *Middle Passage* is the transitional space and realization of the self, history, culture, tradition, identity and the consciousness.

IV. Conclusion

After the discussion and analysis of Charles Johnson's *Middle Passage*, the researcher reaches to the conclusion that Johnson presents the history of slave narrative in the form of fiction and as a document of subaltern consciousness.

Johnson presents Rutherford Calhoun as a writer and creator of fiction who narrates the whole events through monologue, which posses many truths. He presents the reality of freedom, slavery and contemporary stratus of African American people in the form of which collects the history of subaltern consciousness of slave the slaves. He has presented Allmuseri tribe to represent the endemic quality of inter subjective. A problematic situation here in the novel seems of the Allmuseri and exposes their lacks of 'unity of being' and complications of African-American experience.

Johnson's fiction shows the homage to the picaresque about sea travel, human nature and self discovery in a riveting and thrilling way. This detailed, historically precise and phase of the trans-atlantics slave trade and on the adventures of ex-salve, is in an advertent. He also presents an unwilling participant in the enslaving of the Allmuseri tribe. He had given the fictional date of the year 1830; to make the fiction seems to be real. The story is presented through the protagonist of the novel Rutherford Calhoun, recently freed slave, who is in the voyage.

In the novel Allmuseri tribe has been presented as the subaltern group, marginalized group and is shown in the positive way. They didn't eat meat and were easy to feed. They didn't like property. They were so simple to wear cloth. They required no medicine. They seldom fight and steal things. They feel so sick if they wronged anyone. These all characteristic of Allmuseri have clearly proved that they

were so simple and loving creature. But the reality and culture of Allmuseri have already been abducted and were taken to make slave of their master.

Johnson focuses on slavery, psychological notion and about the subaltern consciousness. During the course of *Middle Passage*, Rutherford Calhoun discovers several things about cultures and dignity, about disillusionment of himself and the other character.

The Allmuseri tribe is presented as humble, passive and ignorant. They are being chained and are being dislocated from their homeland. They are treated cruelly by the ship crew and the captain. But also they remain passive. They lack unity of being. Calhoun plays the vital role for them (slaves) to make conscious. When subaltern group that was subordinate to a dominant group revolted against them, they gained power and eventually became the new dominant group. In the novel *Diamelo* was presented as signifier of a new dominant group after their revolution. He ordered the member of the crew to follow the Allmuseri language, culture etc.

Johnson focuses on slavery and reconsideration of slave narrative and shows the physical subjugation. The slave narration is implied understanding on the part that the narrator is free but physically he is damaged. Since he has a sense of subjectivity, he will be free slavery great in the presentation of the Allmuseri we witness a kind of cultural enslavement, Allmuseri do not respect another culture and another slavery. Calhoun also realizes at the ending part of the novel that he has changed his seeing; made him cultural mongrel and felt no need to possess or dominate after the voyage. He has lost to control because he has gained experience with the Allmuseri.

Calhoun makes clear that after so many adventures that he is interested to knit the future relationship with Isadora not the flesh but their perfect historical twined for all time. This is said by Calhoun when Isadora drifted towards rest. She would remain

al night while they forget themselves. He gently crossed the flood and countless seas of suffering. This awareness of all human suffering is recognition not of one slave's fight (of consciousness) but the fight (of subaltern consciousness) of all oppressed and suffering people. They have deep understanding. They are co-operating indirectly and we get this from the denouement of this novel.

Johnson rewrites the slave history of 1830 by fictionalizing the slave history of Allmuseri. For that he deals with the minor events of day to day life. He has used the real subject matter through the experience of Rutherford Calhoun, who narrates the whole events from his experience. Rutherford narrates the events of the nineteenth century who travels through Illinois farm to New Orleans, New Orleans to the ship republic and from the republic to the ship Juno. Thus, Charles Johnson's *Middle Passage* is a document of subaltern consciousness as it focuses on the subject matter of freedom, slavery, identity crisis and the consciousness gained by the slave.

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