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RETHINKING RACIAL STRUGGLE IN POST-RACIAL AMERICA: AN ANALYSIS OF PAUL BEATTY'S *THE SELLOUT*

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RESUME

La question du racisme dans une Amérique dite post-raciale est de plus en plus récurrente dans la littérature Afro-Américaine. En témoigne *The Sellout*, roman publié en 2015 par Paul Beatty, un romancier noir Américain. En déconstruisant la notion de post-racialité qui prévaut actuellement aux Etats Unis d'Amérique, le présent article montre comment Paul Beatty repense la lutte contre le racisme anti-noir dans un environnement où le racisme opère non seulement de façon subtile, mais continue d'impacter le quotidien des communautés noires Américains.

Mots clés : Littérature Afro-Américaine – Amérique – racisme anti-noir – Roman –post-racial – repense

ABSTRACT

The issue of racism in post-racial America is more and more discussed in African-American literature. This is proved by *The Sellout*, a novel published in 2015 by Paul Beatty, an African-American writer. While deconstructing the notion of post-racial America, this article shows how Paul Beatty rethinks the struggle against anti-black racism in an environment where racism itself is not only subtle but it still impacts the daily lives of black American communities.

Key words: African-American literature – America – anti-black racism – novel – post-racial - rethink

I- INTRODUCTION

With Barack Obama's 2008 election and his two terms presidency, it is generally believed that the American notion of post-raciality that started since the enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 has become a reality. The political and social discourse of post-racial America views racial discrimination as a thing of the past. "However, social and economic fetters still chain the blacks." (Usman and Ashfaq, 2021, p. 2733) American racism has not completely gone away. It has simply shifted from visibility to invisibility. Alluding to the slipperiness of contemporary racism and its ongoing effects on the daily lives of black American communities, Elaine Jones, director of the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund eloquently argues: "Racism today is like carbon monoxide. You can't see it or smell it, but it's deadly." (Lawrance Bobo, 1996) Another way of putting this is to say that American racism is likened to a conundrum, therefore difficult to address.

Since the announcement of American post-raciality, a number of scholars have been musing over the complexity and diversity of contemporary racism from different perspectives. In the collection of essays entitled *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness,* Michelle Alexander (2010) investigates the issue through the criminal justice system. Because of the disproportionate rate of black youth incarceration, she refers to the law enforcement system in America today as "The New Jim Crow". Edwardo Bonilla-Silva (2000) reflects on the new language developed by contemporary racists to avoid appearing awkward in the allegedly post-racial society. He groups their semantic move under four central frames of color-blind racism that includes *abstract liberalism, cultural racism, naturalization racism: and minimization racism*. Lawrence Bobo's (1996) "Laissez-Faire Racism: The Crystallization of a 'Kinder, Gentler' Anti-Black Ideology" suggests that contemporary racism encompasses an ideology of victim blaming. The worldview consists in accusing black people for being responsible for their own plight. As for John F. Dovidio and Samuel L. Gaertner (2004), they thoroughly discuss the attitude of white individuals they refer to as *aversive racists*

in their article of the same name. John F. Dovidio and his colleague argue that aversive racists "sympathize with victims of past injustice, support the principle of racial equality, and regard themselves as nonprejudiced, but, at the same time, possess negative feelings and beliefs about blacks, which may be unconscious." (p.3)

Pondering over the contradictions between the reality of racism in contemporary America and the rhetoric imposed by the post-racial agenda that views racism as anathema, two main questions are worth asking. Is the notion of American post-raciality a reality? How can the struggle against anti-black racism be conducted in a post-racial environment where racism itself is characterized by its slipperiness?

Based on Paul Beatty's *The Sellout*[1], this article re-examines the notion of post-racial America highlighting the complexities of the racial struggle of the era. The analysis is theoretically based on post-structuralism through Jacques Derrida's concept of deconstruction. Derrida himself does not clearly define the concept. But Terry Eagleton (1983) asserts;

> Derrida is clearly out to do more than develop new techniques of reading: Deconstruction is for him an ultimately *political* practice, an attempt to dismantle the logic by which a particular system of thought, and behind that a whole system of political structure and social institutions, maintains its force. (p.128)

Indeed, the dismantlement Eagleton is alluding to in the above-quote occurs while seeking to undo binary oppositions in the literary text. The article splits into three main parts. While the first part discusses the illusion of the notion of post-racial America, the second one scrutinizes the racial struggle engaged in *The Sellout.* As for the last part, it explores the genre and tone used by the author to convey its massage while circumnavigating the social sanctions imposed by the post-racial agenda.

[1] Paul BEATTY, *The Sellout*, Farra, Straus and Giroux, 2015. All subsequent references to this book will directly appear in the text under the abbreviation (T S), followed by the page number.

I- THE ILLUSION OF POST-RACIAL AMERICA

The ideology of post-racial America presents the United States as a country completely reconciled with its racial past. However, evidence that American post-raciality is a lie permeates Paul Beatty's *The Sellout*. In the opening page of the novel, the narrator completely deconstructs the worldview that contemporary America is a place where racial discrimination no longer exists. He starts his narrative by exposing the contradiction in words and deeds. In the soliloquy he has in the Supreme Court of the United States of America, he asserts:

> This may be hard to believe, coming from a black man, but I've never stolen anything. Never cheated on my taxes or at cards. Never snuck into the movies or failed to give back the extra change to a drugstore cashier indifferent to the ways of mercantilism and minimum-wage expectations. I've never burgled a house. Held up a liquor store. Never boarded a crowded bus or subway car, sat in a seat reserved for the elderly…, yet somehow crestfallen, look on my face. But here I am, in the cavernous chambers of the Supreme Court of the United States of America…my hand cuffed and crossed behind my back, my right to remain silent long since waived and said goodbye to as I sit in a thickly padded chair that, much like this country, isn't quite as comfortable as it looks. (TS, 3)

In these first lines of the prologue of *The Sellout*, Beatty's unnamed narrator appears ventriloquizing in the Supreme Court of the United States of America. In the preliminary words of the quote, he intends to deconstruct the false personality imposed on him because of his skin color. In fact, in the collective imagination of mainstream American, the black person is views as innate criminal. This misrepresentation of the black man that gained audience in the alcyon days of American Slavery still prevails in the allegedly post-racial America. The narrator intends to set things right in the mind of the reader. That is why unlike what is generally believed, he precises at the outset that as a black person, he has never stolen anything, never cheated on his taxes or at cards etc. More understandably, he persists that he has never committed any of the crimes black males are stereotypically labelled but he is still viewed as a criminal.

At the end of the quote, Beatty's narrator bluntly states that like the chair in which he is sitting in the court, contemporary America "isn't quite as comfortable

as it looks." Put it simply, the worldview that America is a suitable place for all races is an illusion. Despite progress in the racial issue, black men are still considered as inborn criminals. That is "the gap between reality and rhetoric" contemporary America intends to cloak in order to obey the post-racial agenda of painting everybody white and pretending that the country has attained racial equality. (TS, 22) The narrator of *The Sellout* vows to reveal that truth to the world.

Actually, Beatty's unnamed narrator is summoned before the Supreme Court for holding a slave and restating segregation in Dickens, a fictionalized neighborhood of Los Angeles in contemporary America. Through the soliloquy he has before this jurisdiction, he consciously or unconsciously unearths all the negative stereotypes used in the heyday of American Slavery to facilitate the enslavement of Africans and their descendants. It proves that practices that were true in antebellum America are still true today. Through this self-talk, he unveils the reality embedded in the collective imagination of contemporary white racists. It is obvious that racists still associate black people's image with disobedience and criminality. In fact, the black male is always viewed as an inborn criminal. That is the reason why the narrator insists that he has never committed any of the crimes his race is stereotypically labelled. The idea is to present the country as the surest place for any race, a place where color no longer matters.

Despite the effort to cover the reality of American racism, it unconsciously comes out whenever white racists engage in conversations. As a black person born and raised in contemporary America, the narrator is used to experiencing such a behavior from contemporary white racists. Accordingly, he is not offended when;

> At the zoo, [he] stood in front of the primate cage listening to a woman marvel at how "presidential" the four-hundred-pound gorilla looked sitting astride (…..) the informational placard, pointed out the "presidential" silver-back's name coincidentally was Baraka." (TS, 5)

The semantic field used by the white couple in the joke above is revelatory. Considering the racial history of the country and the then social context, the grammatical terms "presidential", "gorilla" and "Baraka" employed in the passage

are indicative enough that the white couple is alluding to Barack Obama, the American first black president. Portraying the gorilla as presidential is tantamount to saying that the president is synonymous with the primate. The adjective 'presidential' combined with the name 'Baraka' they attribute to the ape in the racist attack reinforces the link the white couple tries to establish between the black dude and the primate. In fact, black people are still considered less than human. On that ground, the narrator introduces himself as, "the Scopes monkey, the missing link in the evolution of African-American jurisprudence come to life" (TS, 7). That is a subtle way of asserting that America a country of Whites. Black citizens are still viewed as intruders. They do not belong.

Shockingly, the authors of the racist comments, like the one the narrator eavesdrops at the zoo are expert in exonerating themselves. While caught red-handed disrespecting the black race, they always deny their acts pretending that they are not racist or black people a too sensitive. Thus, the narrator of *The Sellout* concludes that "this whole city's Freudian slip of the tongue" (TS, 5).

According to Freudian psychoanalysis, the slip of the tongue is one of the royal ways through which the unconscious thoughts and feelings reveal themselves to the outside world. In the case of American racism, the repressed elements imposed by the post-racial agenda and embedded in the unconscious of white racists escape the control of ego and inadvertently appear through Freudian slip of the tongue. So, for the narrator, the discourse that dehumanizes African Americans is recurrent in the city of Washington. He means, in the whole country. That is the reality post-racial America tends to hide. The narrator deems his act of revealing the truth about American racism so embarrassing and uncomfortable for white racists that it is as if he has "whispered 'racism' in a post-racial world" (TS, 262).

The racial joke by the white couple the narrator eavesdrops at the zoo may also be alluding to Amiri Baraka, the black poet and founder of the Black Arts Movement. Instances of black character's dehumanization scatter all over *The Sellout*. It is clear enough that despite the progress in the racial issues, anti-black

discourse is still persistent in the society. Alluding to the first black president or the black poet with racial slur in a joke unveils the disrespect of white racists towards black authorities. As noted, the narrator of *The Sellout* and his community are overtly denied their humanity. Because of the daily acts of dehumanization black American communities are subjected to in their everyday life, the narrator decides to "plead human" at his trial. (TS, 15) This symbolic act is his rejection of the fake humanity post-racial America intends to impose on him and his community. By the same token, Hampton Fiske, his appointed defendant attorney tries to prove his client's humanity by offering the jury a bowl of fruit. As he puts: "This is an example of my client's humanity." (TS, 265) According to Beatty's unnamed narrator, the notion of post-racial America is an illusion bequeathed to the country by the failure of the civil rights movement. Lampooning the outcomes of this landmark social movement, he ironically says, "the only tangible benefit to come out of the civil rights movement is that black people aren't as afraid of dogs as they used to be" (TS, 19). Through this quote, the narrator wants to make the reader know that the American civil rights struggle failed to attain its principal objective of providing equal treatment for all races.

Everything considered, it is obvious that the American notion of post-raciality is a social fiction. Racism still exists in the society but in a subtle form. Talking about the illusory character of Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, William Edgar Dubois subsumes the slipperiness of American racism in the following quote: "the slave went free; stood a brief moment in the sun; then moved back again toward slavery." (Cited in Michelle Alexander, 2010, p.20) Revealed here is that anytime a system is officially abolished, it is immediately followed by a brief transition and then replaced by a new system that equates the former one. In fact, white racists have always found a way to preserve their privilege. Scholar Reva B. Siegel (1997) refers to this dynamic as "preservation-through-transformation." (p.1113)

Despite the progress in the racial issue, black characters still endure race-related injustice in their everyday life. As portrayed in the storyworld of *The Sellout*,

racial discrimination still exists. The American notion of post-raciality is like painting every citizen white in order to avoid facing the reality of race in the country. Post-racial America is an illusion, that is the reason why the narrator initiates a struggle to transcend the issue.

II- RACIAL STRUGGLE IN *THE SELLOUT*

The racial struggle initiated in *The Sellout* is not only allegorical, but it takes two different forms. While a group of black intellectuals led by Foy Cheshire, the villain attempts to change portions of black history to suit the post-racial agenda, the narrator and Hominy, his self-appointed slave militate to make racism more suspicious again.

At the death of Dr. F. K. Me, the narrator's father, Foy the villain and his followers immediately take the control of the Dum Dum Donot Intellectuals. By the way, founded by Dr. F. K. Me, the Dum Dum Donot Intellectuals is a think tank specialized in musing over race-related injustices faced by Blacks in contemporary America. But since the death of the founding father, Foy and his followers turn the place into the intellectual vortex of the denial and distortion of black history. Those people the narrator ironically refers to as "wereniggers" meet monthly to exhibit their revamped versions of American literary classics. (TS, 96)

In effect, American Slavery and the plights it entails are the cornerstones of black American history. They constitute an important portion of black identity because without slavery, there is no African American. So, instead of being ashamed and uncomfortable before this artefact, black people should rather appropriate them. This portion of history should not be wiped out in the name of post-raciality. Trey Ellis (1989) buttresses the idea when he says black people "no longer need to deny or suppress any part of our complicated and sometimes contradictory cultural baggage to please either white people or black."(p. 235) Foy Cheshire and the "scary subset of black lycanthropic thinkers" do not apprehend the reality from the same perspective. They plot to efface traces of American Slavery from the records. The hidden reason is that the opponents of the narrator

find those artefacts so humiliating and embarrassing for their race that they entrust themselves with the mission to rewrite American literary classics replacing all the 'n-word' by their euphemism. They suggest "the 'n-word' is the most vile [sic] and despicable word in the English language." (TS, 98) At a meeting of the Dum Dum Donut Intellectuals, Foy publicly defends his theory of replacement in these terms:

> One night, not long ago, I tried to read this book, Huckleberry Finn, to my grandchildren, but I couldn't get past page six because the book is fraught with the 'n-word'. And although they are the deepest-thinking, combat-ready eight- and ten-year-olds I knew, my babies weren't ready to comprehend Huckleberry Finn on its own merits. That's why I took the liberty to rewrite Mark Twain's masterpiece. Where the repugnant 'n-word' occurs, I replaced it with 'warrior' and the word 'slave' with 'dark-skinned volunteer'. I also improved Jim's diction, rejiggered the plotline a bit, and retitled the book *The Pejorative-Free Adventures and Intellectual and Spiritual Journeys of African American Jim and His Young Protégé, White Brother Hucklebery Finn, as They Go in Search of the Lost Black Family Unit.* (TS, 94-95, title italicized)

The passage above reveals Foy Cheshire's intention to simplify Mark Twain's classic in order to facilitate reading for his grandchildren and the future generation of African Americans. But while doing so, he consciously or unconsciously dilutes the original meaning of the novel as he replaces what he refers to as "n-word" by their euphemism. This argument is a cover-up. The passive ideology behind his action is to get rid of the racial shame of his people in order to meet personal satisfaction. As can be noted, Foy and the "wereniggers" have started a program of great replacement. Their plan is to bastardize the original versions of American literary classics replacing them by the one that suit the post-racial world. Their act is construed as painting everybody white to avoid talking about racism in the country.

In response to Foy's plan to mitigate or cloak parts of their black identity in order to suit the ideology promoted by the colorblind society, the narrator militates for more racism. His goal is to make racism more conspicuous again. Beatty's unnamed narrator suggests that painting everybody white to hide the reality of American racism will not help to solve the problem. He believes his plan to make racism more visible again will place the issue at the center of the debate. Doing so,

the authorities will be compelled to confront the issue and solve it forever. The narrator refers to his mode of struggle as "Unmitigated Blackness". Defining Unmitigated Blackness, Hampton Fiske his appointed defense attorney puts;

> Unmitigated Blackness is essays passing for fiction. It's the realization that there are no absolutes, except when there are. It's the acceptance of contradiction not being a sin and a crime but a human frailty like split ends and libertarianism. Unmitigated Blackness is coming to the realization that as fucked up and meaningless as it all is, sometimes it's the nihilism that makes life worth living. (TS, 277)

In the passage above, the narrator clearly states what he means by Unmitigated Blackness. He defines his theory as the character's acceptance of the racial situation the way it is and the refusal to be affected by it. In fact, racism endured by the black denizens of Dickens in post-racial America is so subtle that it has become almost invisible. But it is still damaging for the black characters. Face to this new social reality, the narrator suggests his people should adopt a strong psychological attitude. Which means accepting, their black identity with all its contradictions.

Unmitigated blackness or Stage IV black identity is considered as the highest stage of Dr. F. K. Me's theory of Quentessential blackness. Dr. F. K. Me, the narrator's father is an esteemed psychologist. Founder and sole practitioner of the Liberation psychology in the black neighborhood of Dickens, his intention is to free his people from race-based traumatic stress disorder engendered by the gentrification of the last bastion of blackness in contemporary America. He considers "blackness [as] a state of mind." (TS, 275) Theoretically, he hypothesizes four stages of black identity. And 'Unmitigated Blackness' seems the highest and safest. It functions as a protective armor against post-racial racism. This state of mind implies the acceptance of black history with all its contradictions. To use Hampton Fiske's words, "Unmitigated Blackness is simply not giving a fuck." (TS, 277) It implies the acceptance of one's authentic identity without caring about societal judgement or approval. An attitude that provides black characters with a

strong mindset. If adopted by the entire black communities, that can help to transcend contemporary racism.

To help the black community of Dickens have the strong psychological attitude he promotes, the narrator proposes to make racism more visible again. His plan consists in bringing back Dickens on the map. By the way, *The Sellout* is set in Dickens, a fictional black neighborhood of Los Angeles. The place is deemed "the Last Bastion of Blackness" in contemporary America. (TS, 150) Erstwhile "the murder capital of the world", this impoverished locality has become an embarrassment to America today. (TS, 67) The name Dickens itself conjures the demon. It was a mark of shame for white America therefore isolated and finally abandoned. But with the rise of property values in contemporary America, white people have become very interested in that neighborhood again. Consequently, Dickens is exposed to a serious gentrification that results in its evanescence. The disincorporation of this impoverished black neighborhood has been possible with the complicity of corrupt black politicians and the greed of white America for land. Over time, Dickens has completely disappeared from the map of Los Angeles. As argues the narrator:

> The city of Dickens's disappearance was no accident. It was part of a blatant conspiracy by the surrounding, increasingly affluent, two-car-garage communities to keep their property values up and blood pressures down. (TS, 57)

The passage reveals that the effacement of Dickens from the map of Los Angeles did not occur overnight. Both black and white characters are to be blamed. But the act affected the denizens of this impoverished community so hard that many of them completely lost their mind. In fact, Dickens is the only place where they feel themselves at home. So, dispossessing them of this last bastion of blackness is akin to literary wrenching them from parts of their black identity. Consequently, with the disappearance of Dickens, the black communities have literary disappeared, too. They are turned into homeless people in their own country. Dickensians have totally lost their identity. The cognitive dissonance that results from this disappearance makes many of the citizens lapse in insanity.

As argues Terry Eagleton (1986), "all language […] is ineradicably metaphorical, working by tropes and figures; it is a mistake to believe that any language is *literally* literal." (P.126)

Thus, in Beatty's allegory of unmitigated blackness, Dickens is the sublimated image of black America. It represents black culture and history with all the contradictions and discomfort it entails. The people of Dickens symbolize contemporary black Americans. The plight they endure is intimately related to the past and present of American racism. However, the evanescence of Dickens, the last bastion of blackness in contemporary America is construed as white racists' intention to clean the embarrassing parts of black history from the records because they do not fit the post-racial world. Hominy Jenkins and the narrator's struggle to bring back Dickens through Unmitigated Blackness is tantamount to restoring black identity.

At the behest of Hominy Jenkins who acts as his slave and mentor, the narrator progressively redefines the border lines of the town according to *The Thomas Guide to Los Angeles County* (2015). In the beginning, people who did not know them before mistake them for fools or performer artists. But they are joined later by other members of the black community who have been longing for change. The project begins as personal before becoming a communal affair.

The narrator and his erstwhile slave reinstitute segregation in many areas of the town namely on Marpessa's bus, in a local school; and then in a hospital. Finally, Dickens surprisingly reappears on the map of Los Angeles again. The sudden reappearance of Dickens during the weather forecast symbolizes the restoration of the Black American communities' identity. But the narrator's act brings him before the Supreme Court of the United States of America. He is accused of violating the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments to the US Constitution in a case entitled "*Me vs the United States of America*". After a sequence of trials and retrials, he finally wins.

However, the fact of being subpoenaed before the Supreme Court of the United States of America proves that with the status of post-raciality, talking about race without being in the criminal justice's line of fire has become very complex. With the advent of the notion post-raciality, vehement denunciation of American racism is no longer suitable. Thus, the genre and tone used to tackle the issue need to be rethought as Paul Beatty does in *The Sellout*.

III- GENRE AND TONE IN *THE SELLOUT*

Like all his novels, Beatty's *The Sellout* is a literary fiction. Its message is conveyed with black humor and a lot of laughter. The rationale behind this choice is to tackle the racial taboos while avoiding the social sanctions imposed by American post-raciality. Denouncing the American issue of race the way Paul Beatty does in *The Sellout* is not acceptable in America today, that is why he does it with a great deal of humor. As Gerald D. Naughton (2022) states, "For many readers, [*The Sellout*] would be incomprehensibly offensive, if not for its supposedly 'satirical' texture." (P.4) Thus, with the advent of the post-racial era, talking about racism without filter has become a taboo. But under the umbrella of humor, Beatty "violates [those] race related taboos in order to confront readers with the avoidances that those taboos impose." (Anker, p.255)

Beatty's novel includes miscellaneous jokes in which the author highlights negative stereotypes previously used in the western world to portray Africans and their siblings in order to facilitate their enslavement. He dexterously manipulates those preconceived ideas with a lot of absurdities. The author of *The Sellout* argues that he resorts to this specific genre and tone to lampoon post-racial racism because he simply wishes to do something different and pleasant. He says, "black people talk about blackness a lot, but they don't talk about it like this. It's either too-honey or too earnest or too a lot of things." (https://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/03/paul-beatty-author-of-the-sellout-on-finding-humor-in-issues-of-race.html)

In view of the tone and genre Beatty uses to address racism in America today, many critics refer to *The Sellout* as a satire even if the author is not wholly

comfortable with the word. In an interview with Tom Gatti (2016), he argues, "I don't hate the word, but I try to resist because it's so limiting…when somebody says 'satire', you think 'Oh, it's funny' and stop there. But you don't ask yourself questions." (P. 44) More importantly, Beatty believes placing his novel on the same shelve with satirical books hinders the comprehension of the message he intends to convey. If classified as 'satire', what the reader sees even before reading the novel is humor. He will be so enthralled by humor that he will hardly push the reflection beyond and see the backbreaking task the author does to denounce post-racial racism. In a nutshell, accepting to label his work "satire" does not help the reader grasp the passive ideology of the author.

Although Beatty refuses the word 'satire', he recognizes that irony and humor occupy a very important place in his work. In the introduction to *Hokun* (2006), he even positions himself in the literary tradition of "the black …clown", a "scapegoat and sage, unafraid to tell the world, as the Fool told Lear...thus validating our humanity through our madness." (p.11) Indeed, in order to escape the social sanctions imposed by America's status of post-raciality, Beatty wraps the reality of race in the country into the husk of humor before casting it to the world. On that ground, *The Sellout* should be read through the lens of humor.

Despite his rejection of the word *satire*, Beatty recognizes that the originality of his work rests on its ability to tackle contemporary racism with black humor. He says the humor in his work finds its source in "anger" because,

> "African Americans, like any other Americans, are angry people with fragile egos. Humor is vengeance. Sometimes you laugh to keep from crying. Sometimes you laugh to keep from shooting…black folk are mad at everybody, so duck, because you're bound to be in someone's line of fire. (P.16)

The above-excerpt proves that both black and white Americans are emotionally endangered by the situation of race in the country. On that ground, they find solace in excessive humor. Humor and laughter are the main defense mechanism they unconsciously deploy to tame their anger. Put it simply, the excessive humor and laughter prevailing in Beatty's satire are the sublimated

version of the anger embedded in the characters' psyche. Astonishingly, despite the satirical texture of the book, its narrator is sent before the Supreme Court of the United States of America. This prosecution is the proof that despite the ubiquity of racism in post-racial America, overtly talking about the issue remains unacceptable even if it is done under the umbrella of humor.

VI-CONCLUSION

The analysis has proved that the worldview according to which the American notion of post-raciality that started with the enactment of the Civil Rights Acts (1964), has become perfect since Barack Obama's election (2008) is an illusion. There is still a huge gap between rhetoric and deeds. The picture of the country which is presented to the outside world totally differ from what the black characters in the novel endure in their everyday lives. Today, anti-black racism has become so subtle that it is almost invisible. However, the black characters portrayed in the novel understudy are subjected to race-related injustices in their day-to-day life. Their plight is intrinsically linked to their past as slaves. The situation is not only dehumanizing for the black race but also very embarrassing for the post-racial status of the country.

Today, overtly confronting the complicated issue of race in America is amount to questioning its status of post-raciality. That is why, Paul Beatty rethinks the racial struggle of his time in *The Sellout*. In his 2016 Man booker prize-winning novel, he adopts a very subtle mode of struggle he refers to as Unmitigated blackness. Thus, he ironically restates slavery and resegregates various areas in Dickens, a fictionalized black neighborhood of Los Angeles in contemporary America. Doing so, he wishes to make racism more conspicuous again so that the issue can be addressed without taboo. To reach this objective, the book is written like a collection of jokes. With bawdy humor, those jokes vehemently address racism in America today while permitting the author to escape the social sanctions imposed by the post-racial society. The jokes also unearth all the negative stereotypes and absurdities used to portray Africans in the heyday of American

slavery. That is the proof that despite progresses in the racial issue, things have not completely changed. Anti-black racism is still persistent in the American society.

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