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01BP 4317 Lomé – Togo

Tél. : 00228 90 25 70 00/99 47 14 14

E-mail : participaction1@gmail.com

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LIGNE EDITORIALE DE PARTICIP'ACTION

Particip'Action est une revue scientifique. Les textes que nous acceptons en français, anglais, allemand ou en espagnol sont sélectionnés par le comité scientifique et de lecture en raison de leur originalité, des intérêts qu'ils présentent aux plans africain et international et de leur rigueur scientifique. Les articles que notre revue publie doivent respecter les normes éditoriales suivantes :

1.1 Soumission d'un article

La Revue *Particip'Action* reçoit les projets de publication par voie électronique. Ceci permet de réduire les coûts d'opération et d'accélérer le processus de réception, de traitement et de mise en ligne de la revue. Les articles doivent être soumis à l'adresse suivante (ou conjointement) : participaction1@gmail.com

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La revue publie des articles qui ne sont pas encore publiés ou diffusés. Le contenu des articles ne doit pas porter atteinte à la vie privée d'une personne physique ou morale. Nous encourageons une démarche éthique et le professionnalisme chez les auteurs.

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L'auteur d'un article est tenu de présenter son texte dans un seul document et en respectant les critères suivants :

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Un titre qui indique clairement le sujet de l'article, n'excédant pas 25 mots.

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Le prénom et le nom de ou des auteurs (es)

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Une courte présentation en note de bas de page des auteurs (es) ne devant pas dépasser 100 mots par auteur. On doit y retrouver obligatoirement le nom de l'auteur, le nom de l'institution d'origine, le statut professionnel et l'organisation dont il relève, et enfin, les adresses de courrier électronique du ou des auteurs. L'auteur peut aussi énumérer ses principaux champs de recherche et ses principales publications. La revue ne s'engage toutefois pas à diffuser tous ces éléments.

Résumé de l'article (obligatoire)

Un résumé de l'article ne doit pas dépasser 160 mots. Le résumé doit être à la fois en français et en anglais (police Times new roman, taille 12, interligne 1,15).

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Une liste de cinq mots clés maximum décrivant l'objet de l'article.

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-La structure d'un article, doit être conforme aux règles de rédaction scientifique, selon que l'article est une contribution théorique ou résulte d'une recherche de terrain.

-La structure d'un article scientifique en lettres et sciences humaines se présente comme suit :

- Pour un article qui est une contribution théorique et fondamentale :

Introduction (justification du sujet, problématique, hypothèses/objectifs scientifiques, approche), Développement articulé, Conclusion, Bibliographie.

- Pour un article qui résulte d'une recherche de terrain :

Titre,

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Résumé en français. Mots-clés, Abstract, Keywords,

Introduction, Méthodologie, Résultats et Discussion, Conclusion, Bibliographie.

Par exemple : Les articles conformes aux normes de présentation, doivent contenir les rubriques suivantes : introduction, problématique de l'étude, méthodologie adoptée, résultats de la recherche, perspectives pour recherche, conclusions, références bibliographiques.

Tout l'article ne doit dépasser 17 pages,

Police Times new roman, taille 12 et interligne 1,5 (maximum 30 000 mots). La revue *Particip'Action* permet l'usage de notes de bas de page pour ajouter des précisions au texte. Mais afin de ne pas alourdir la lecture et d'aller à l'essentiel, il est recommandé de **faire le moins possible usage des notes (10 notes de bas de page au maximum par article).**

- A l'exception de l'introduction, de la conclusion, de la bibliographie, les articulations d'un article doivent être titrées, et numérotées par des chiffres (**exemples : 1. ; 1.1. ; 1.2 ; 2. ; 2.2. ; 2.2.1 ; 2.2.2. ; 3. ; etc.).**

Les passages cités sont présentés en romain et entre guillemets. Lorsque la phrase citant et la citation dépassent trois lignes, il faut aller à la ligne, pour présenter la citation (interligne 1) en romain et en retrait, en diminuant la taille de police d'un point. Insérer la pagination et ne pas insérer d'information autre que le numéro de page dans l'en-tête et éviter les pieds de page.

Les figures et les tableaux doivent être intégrés au texte et présentés avec des marges d'au moins six centimètres à droite et à gauche. Les caractères dans ces figures et tableaux doivent aussi être en Times 12. Figures et tableaux doivent avoir chacun(e) un titre.

Les citations dans le corps du texte doivent être indiquées par un retrait avec tabulation 1 cm et le texte mis en taille 11.

Les références de citations sont intégrées au texte citant, selon les cas, de la façon suivante :

- (Initiale (s) du Prénom ou des Prénoms de l'auteur. Nom de l'Auteur, année de publication, pages citées) ; - Initiale (s) du Prénom ou des Prénoms de l'auteur. Nom de l'Auteur (année de publication, pages citées). Exemples :

- En effet, le but poursuivi par **M. Ascher (1998, p. 223)**, est « d'élargir l'histoire des mathématiques de telle sorte qu'elle acquière une perspective multiculturelle et globale (...), d'accroître le domaine des mathématiques : alors qu'elle s'est pour l'essentiel occupée du groupe professionnel occidental que l'on appelle les mathématiciens (...) ».

- Pour dire plus amplement ce qu'est cette capacité de la société civile, qui dans son déploiement effectif, atteste qu'elle peut porter le développement et l'histoire, S. B. Diagne (1991, p. 2) écrit :

Qu'on ne s'y trompe pas : de toute manière, les populations ont toujours su opposer à la philosophie de l'encadrement et à son volontarisme leurs propres stratégies de contournements. Celles-là, par exemple, sont lisibles dans le dynamisme, ou à tout le moins, dans la créativité dont sait preuve ce que l'on désigne sous le nom de secteur informel et à qui il faudra donner l'appellation positive d'économie populaire.

- Le philosophe ivoirien a raison, dans une certaine mesure, de lire, dans ce choc déstabilisateur, le processus du sous-développement. Ainsi qu'il le dit :

le processus du sous-développement résultant de ce choc est vécu concrètement par les populations concernées comme une crise globale : crise socio-économique (exploitation brutale, chômage permanent, exode accéléré et douloureux), mais aussi crise socio-culturelle et de civilisation traduisant une impréparation sociohistorique et une inadéquation des cultures et des comportements humains aux formes de vie imposées par les technologies étrangères. (S. Diakité, 1985, p. 105).

Pour les articles de deux ou trois auteurs, noter les initiales des prénoms, les noms et suivis de l'année (J. Batee et D. Maate, 2004 ou K. Moote, A. Pooul et E. Polim, 2000). Pour les articles ou ouvrages collectifs de plus de trois auteurs noter les initiales des prénoms, le nom du premier auteur et la mention "et al" (F. Loom et al, 2003). Lorsque plusieurs références sont utilisées pour la même information, celles-ci doivent être mises en ordre chronologique (R. Gool, 1998 et M. Goti, 2006).

Les sources historiques, les références d'informations orales et les notes explicatives sont numérotées en série continue et présentées en bas de page.

Références bibliographiques (obligatoire)

Les divers éléments d'une référence bibliographique sont présentés comme suit : NOM et Prénom (s) de l'auteur, Année de publication, Zone titre, Lieu de publication, Zone Editeur, pages (p.) occupées par l'article dans la revue ou l'ouvrage collectif.

Dans la zone titre, le titre d'un article est présenté en romain et entre guillemets, celui d'un ouvrage, d'un mémoire ou d'une thèse, d'un rapport, d'une revue ou d'un journal est présenté en italique. Dans la zone Editeur, on indique la Maison d'édition (pour un ouvrage), le Nom et le numéro/volume de la revue (pour un article). Au cas où un ouvrage est une traduction et/ou une réédition, il faut préciser après le titre le nom du traducteur et/ou l'édition (ex : 2^{de} éd.).

Ne sont présentées dans les références bibliographiques que les références des documents cités. Les références bibliographiques sont présentées par ordre alphabétique des noms d'auteur. Il convient de prêter une attention particulière à la qualité de l'expression. Le Comité scientifique de la revue se réserve le droit de réviser les textes, de demander des modifications (mineures ou majeures) ou de rejeter l'article de manière définitive ou provisoire (si des corrections majeures doivent préalablement y être apportées). L'auteur est consulté préalablement à la diffusion de son article lorsque le Comité scientifique apporte des modifications. Si les corrections ne sont pas prises en compte par l'auteur, la direction de la revue *Particip'Action* se donne le droit de ne pas publier l'article.

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AUDARD Cathérine, 2009, *Qu'est-ce que le libéralisme ? Ethique, politique, société*, Paris, Gallimard.

BERGER Gaston, 1967, *L'homme moderne et son éducation*, Paris, PUF.

DIAGNE Souleymane Bachir, 2003, « Islam et philosophie. Leçons d'une rencontre », *Diogenes*, 202, p. 145-151.

DIAKITE Sidiki, 1985, *Violence technologique et développement. La question africaine du développement*, Paris, Le Harmattan.

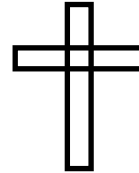
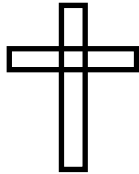
NB1 : Chaque auteur dont l'article est retenu pour publication dans la revue *Particip'Action* participe aux frais d'édition à raison de **55.000** francs CFA (soit **84 euros** ou **110** dollars US) par article et par numéro. Il reçoit, à titre gratuit, un tiré-à-part.

NB2 : La quête philosophique centrale de la revue *Particip'Action* reste : **Fluidité identitaire et construction du changement : approches pluri-et/ou transdisciplinaires.**

Les auteurs qui souhaitent se faire publier dans nos colonnes sont priés d'avoir cette philosophie comme fil directeur de leur réflexion.

La Rédaction

NE LES OUBLIONS PAS



L'année dernière, alors que le précédent numéro du ***Particip'Action*** était sous presses, nous avons appris avec beaucoup de peine le décès de notre très cher collègue et ami, le Professeur titulaire Taofiki KOUMAKPAÏ du département d'anglais de l'université d'Abomey Calavi au Bénin.

Cette année-ci, c'est également avec beaucoup de douleur que nous venons de perdre un autre très cher collègue et ami, le Professeur titulaire Serge GLITHO du département d'allemand de l'université de Lomé au Togo.

L'un et l'autre étaient titulaires d'un doctorat de troisième cycle et d'un doctorat d'Etat. Pendant de longues années, ils ont été des membres très appréciés du comité scientifique et de relecture de notre revue commune. Nous les remercions très sincèrement pour leur amitié et leur engagement.

Il s'agit de deux éminents enseignants-chercheurs qui, dans leurs domaines de spécialités, ont formé une relève solide et digne de confiance.

Gardons au plus profond de nos cœurs, la mémoire de leurs précieuses contributions au développement de nos deux pays.

Lomé, le 22 juillet 2022

Pour *Particip'Action*,

Pr K. M. NUBUKPO, Directeur de publication

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**AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALE AGENCY AND RACIAL COHESION IN
MORRISON'S *SULA***

Hodabalo POTCHOWAI*

Abstract

This study examines Morrison's attempts to combating racism in American society through her black characters. Through Sula in *Sula*, Morrison transcends racial boundaries and hatred for true tolerance and true love between African Americans and white Americans. Scrutinizing some critics' assumptions, this essay revisits, from a radical feminist perspective, Sula's rebelliousness and argues that her agency—her relationship with white community and her unorthodox behavior against Bottom laws—brings up racial cohesion between African Americans and white Americans. Moreover, the study recommends that failure to perceive Sula's radicalism as a positive change—as most critics overlook—leads the readership to misunderstand Morrison's envisioning of American social Eldorado without racism.

Keywords: Morrison, African Americans, Whites, racism.

Résumé

La présente étude fait le constat que Morrison se propose de combattre le racisme dans la société américaine à travers ses personnages noirs. A travers Sula dans *Sula*, Morrison transcende les frontières raciales et la haine pour une vraie tolérance et un vrai amour entre les Africains-Américains et les Blancs. Scrutant les hypothèses de certains critiques, cet essai repense, du point de vue du féminisme radical, l'esprit de rébellion de Sula et démontre que sa relation avec la communauté blanche et son comportement non-orthodoxe contre les lois de Bottom concourent à la réalisation du vivre-ensemble entre les Noirs et les Blancs. De plus, cet essai représente le rejet de l'attitude radicale de Sula comme étant un changement positif qui concourt au rêve de Morrison relatif à une société américaine sans racisme.

Mots-clés : Morrison, Africains-Américains, Blancs, racisme.

* Université de Lomé (Togo) ; E-mail : phodabalo17@gmail.com

Introduction

Morrison is internationally acknowledged as one of the most talented and influential African American writers. Scholars who read Morrison admire her literary dexterity and her addressing of social issues. Morrison is a worldwide African American female writer with enormous literary talents and whose novels address important social issues. *Sula* is one of the novels that reveal Morrison's undebatable literary craftsmanship, indeed.

Sula is one of Morrison's academic successes that achieve her fame worldwide through the heartbreaking issue of racism in America. In this masterpiece, racism is professed to be one of the most explored themes. Obviously, this novel cues readers on African Americans' sufferings in Bottom, a fictional black setting in America. In this place, racism remains African Americans' daily experience.

Morrison portrays racism as the wretchedness that anchors African American generations in successive time periods in *Sula*. To show how racism works out in the lives of black characters in *Sula* remains a matter of contention. *Sula* calls upon massive interests. Many scholars have explored racism in this novel but overlooked the role played by Sula in her setting, although she is the narrative force of the novel. More specifically, her agency is left undiscussed. Most of the scholars consulted discuss the author's portrayal of racism or Sula's radical change. Indeed, there stand reasonable critical receptions on the character of Sula about her radical change in the novel. For example, R. Prabha and T. Selvi (2016, p. 80) posit that "during her adolescence, Sula realizes that she would be more satisfied if she had more opportunity to live a worthwhile life according to her own will. Sula finds her power not within her community, but in her rebellion against it." In the same vein, B. Basu (1996, p. 97) is of the opinion that "far from seeking nourishment from the members of the community, Sula gives herself to a collective, ritual, devouring." Understandably, Sula is exposed

to the communal expectations and regulations. Moreover, for D. Hasanathi (2016, p. 111), Sula excludes herself from the African American community with her radical behavior compared with her grandmother, Eva, who is lovable, approachable and caring like most other residents. Sula knows that behaving like Eva and others can deprive her of her role for the community. Thus, caring for African American community and considering Whites as enemies is a risky choice. In this logic, Hasanathi claims that “Sula is counter foil to Eva, as she is a free, careless woman, least caring for people around her.” It is worth reasoning that Sula has a particular life choice among Bottom inhabitants. Moreover, C. Aruna and B. Rani (2016, p. 78) argue that “Sula is a rebel, individualistic with highly independent thinking. She goes according to her own views of inner being but she has to pay price for her extreme thinking which ‘Bottom’ could not accept.”

The demonstrations of the above scholars have some shortcomings. They necessarily explore the relationship between Sula and Bottom black residents. Sula is not, strictly arguing, a negative rebel. In addition, the objective of her deeds is not to jeopardize the Bottom’s communal life but rather to draw people’s attention on the necessity of racial change. It is worth realizing that Sula is a strong character Morrison endows with male principles to bring about this change in Bottom. Acknowledging that laws reinforce racism and breed hatred among Bottom residents (African Americans and Whites), Sula breaks these existing laws for racial acceptance. In sum, Sula’s agency demonstrates that racial acceptance and cohabitation between African Americans and Whites in Bottom is crucially important. Put differently, Sula transcends racial boundaries and hatred for true tolerance and true love between African Americans and white Americans.

It is central to argue that Sula’s rebelliousness is justified when one takes into account the racial environment in which African Americans and Whites live. Bottom establishes laws to keep black community distant from

white people, hence rendering the social fabric impossible. In this respect, examining the relationship between Sula and white people, U. Jain and T. Muzamil (2014, p. 173) have claimed that “in *Sula*, the protagonist Sula Peace dares to intermingle unhesitatingly with white men and finally she is put to rest by the whites in a decent manner.” These scholars suggest that Sula approaches the white men and they accept her as a full member of their society. The relationship between Sula and Whites must be studied more deeply than shallowly delved into it. It can thus be argued that the above scholars substantively overlook the racial cohesion whose artisan is Sula via her union with white community. Scrutinizing the consulted critics’ assumptions, this essay revisits, from a radical feminist perspective, Sula’s rebelliousness and argues that her agency—her relationship with white community and her unorthodox behavior against Bottom laws—brings up racial cohesion for African Americans and white Americans. Moreover, the study recommends that failure to perceive Sula’s radicalism as a positive change—as most critics overlook—leads the readership to the misunderstanding of Morrison’s envisioning of American social Eldorado without racism.

Radical feminism is used as a lens to examine the protagonist’s behavior which is seen as rebellious in a patriarchal society of Bottom. Radical feminism aspires for the radical roles’ change for women in every male-centered community. In this respect, women must occupy men’s roles as these men have failed. The example of Sula is convincing to some extent.

This essay is structured around two parts. The first part probes the manifestations of racism in *Sula*, while the second one examines Sula’s agency as a pathway to racial cohesion.

1. Manifestations of Racism in *Sula*

Defined as a race hate, racism appears under different shapes in Bottom, a black setting. This hatred is perceived on transportation means, on job fields and in the daily interactions between African Americans and white people. As a result, racism prevents African Americans—men and women altogether—from enjoying their full liberty and rights. For example, Helen Wright and her daughter, Nel, fall prey to racial segregation on train as the narration reads:

As they opened the door marked COLORED ONLY, they saw a white conductor coming toward them. It was a chilly day but a light skim of sweat glistened on the woman's face as she and little girl struggled to hold the door open, hang on to their luggage and enter all at once. The conductor let his eyes travel over the pale yellow woman and then stuck his little finger into his ear, jiggling it free of wax. 'What you think you doin', gal? (*Sula*, 1973, p. 20)

The passage portrays racial segregation. In this understanding, means of transport in this setting do not welcome all races together. Segregation on this train is highlighted by Y. Lin (2006, p. 529) who states that “during their trip to New Orleans in a segregated train, Helene Wright and her daughter Nel encounter a series of humiliations.” African Americans and Whites cannot take the same means of transport in Bottom. The fact of not accepting African Americans and white people on the train as shown in the above quotation demonstrates a living race hate in this black community. Whites' racist attitude always frustrates black people and makes them behave aggressively toward white society. Besides, the establishing of laws reinforces Blacks' exclusion from Whites.

Furthermore, the narration shows the living racism toward African Americans through Bottom's gigantic road building project. Regrettably, African Americans are humiliated by white racists. Morrison writes: “along with a few other young black men, Jude had gone down to the shack where they were hiring. There old colored men had already been hired, but not for

the road work, just to do the picking up, food bringing and other small errands” (*Sula*, 1973, p. 81). On Jude Green, the black character, Lin (2006, p. 530) has argued that “thanks to the bias against the color of his skin, Jude’s great expectation of a job turns into a pipe dream in the rainbow nation.” These quotations make it clear that African Americans and Whites do not have equal chances in terms of job opportunities in Bottom. Likewise, humiliating African Americans in this field demonstrates white superiority to these downtrodden people. R. DiAngelo (2011, p. 56) is right when arguing that “whiteness itself refers to the specific dimensions of racism that serve to elevate white people over people of color.” Comprehensively, there stands a race hate feeling in the behavior of white people toward African Americans. As African Americans lose equal treatment with Whites in job sectors in Bottom, this essay claims that black skin is despised by white racists. It is established that in the American context one comes across the same constant racial injustices toward African Americans in education and other networks. In this respect, E. Anderson (2015, p. 10) claims that all American social domains are replete with racism:

The wider society is still replete with overwhelmingly white neighborhoods, restaurants, schools, universities, workplaces, churches and other associations, courthouses, and cemeteries, a situation that reinforces a normative sensibility in settings in which black people are typically absent, not expected, or marginalized when present.

A scrutiny of this quotation shows that racism casts African Americans as ineligible people. As a result, racism renders hard life to them. It is worth highlighting that racial exclusion—blatant or subtle—has epoch-making effects on African Americans.

Morrison’s representation of African American women and men in *Sula* facing racism testifies to her resolution to expose and criticize racial injustices toward African American community. The second part of this

essay examines Morrison's outright rejection of racial hatred for racial love and cohabitation. She endows Sula with a revolutionary spirit to make this strategy perceivable to the readership.

2. Eponymous Sula's Agency: A Pathway to Racial Cohesion

As the narration reads, Bottom has attracted Whites from Valley after huge amounts of money have been spent for its development: "when black people lived there it was called Bottom... Generous funds have been allotted to level the stripped and faded buildings that clutter the road from Medallion up to the golf course" (*Sula*, 1973, p. 3). Bottom, then, is seen as a mixture of races—black and white. Sula is one of the influential African American residents in Bottom. She powerfully moves back to this setting after some years of absence. According to S. Panda and K. Sethi (2017, p. 6166), "Sula's leaving the city for creating an identity and then returns to make an illicit affair with Nel's husband, sleeping with whites, breaking the existing rules of the black community in the name of freedom." For Panda and Sethi, for the sake of freedom, Sula's character change has a twofold understanding: her relationship with Whites and her rebelliousness against the rules of her black society. More than considering freedom as her cherished aim, this essay suggests that Sula longs for a racial acceptance for African Americans and Whites.

It is imperative to note that the Bottom society has established laws that prohibit cooperation between Blacks and Whites. Hence, Bottom Blacks regard white people as enemies who violate their rights on a daily basis, preventing them from having decent lives. The relationship between Sula and the white people is mapped by her punishment and exclusion from black community. In this contention, B. H. Rigney (1991, p. 55) argues that "Sula is thus an intrinsic part of community just as she is a part of an idea of God." Obviously, Sula is a member of her society but she excludes herself from the commonness.

Nonetheless, one realizes that people's unfriendly attitude toward Sula does not change anything in her resolution to befriend Whites. A scrutiny of Morrison's utter portrayal of people's mood in the novel from children to the old people shows how these laws are deeply ingrained in their daily lives. Understandably, the unbreakable hatred toward white people living in Bottom cannot be overpassed.

In sum, Bottom Blacks despise Sula for having intimate companionship with white men where she oversteps the borders established by racism. In the mindset of the Bottom community, the racial borders must be firmly observed and applied toward Whites by every member since Whites are the source of their distresses. As demonstrated earlier, African Americans harshly suffer from white people when it comes to their liberty, job opportunities and transportation facilities as Bottom laws restrict the cohabitation between African Americans and white people. Exceptionally, Sula rejects these laws and opts for a personal freedom and seeks to unite African Americans and Whites. Hence, Sula's agency is crucial for the readership to consider in the achievement of black-white racial cohesion.

The idea of agency stems from my belief that Sula has adopted a defiant attitude which demarcates her from most of other Bottom Blacks. This eponymous character carries male principles. Morrison intermingles male and racial conflicting forces in the life of Sula to achieve a fully strong female Character. Sula lives in a society where African American women are the possessions of black men. As a result, women lack voice: they are seriously controlled and ostracized from male fields. In this society, women are invisible and their place is the house with all attributed roles. Sula breaks the existing shackles to occupy the "top" of Bottom with her rebellious conduct, although most men occupy the "bottom" of Bottom. Her revolutionary agency is beneficial to her community, a positive inclusiveness that profits to all of them. The radical change of Sula illustrates Morrison's objective to attribute male roles to African American

women in a male-centered community as is the central tenet of radical feminism. Generally, women playing male roles are depreciated in patriarchal societies. In the context of Bottom, male roles are denied to women. Yet, Sula emerges from female lethargy for the wholeness—women and men. Effectively, Morrison demonstrates that Sula's agency is a remedy to racial wounds for all the Bottom community.

Sula's agency is manifested through her relationship with Whites and her opposition to the prevailing laws when she comes back to Bottom. She is the strongest character in the narrative. When she returns to Bottom, she behaves and does things differently. As argued earlier, black inhabitants—men, women and children—retract themselves from white people except Sula. She adopts a radical way of living by breaking racial laws imposed by Bottom society—which separates African Americans from white people. One evidence of her agency is the love relationship she has with Whites that exasperates the Bottom community:

They said that Sula slept with white men. It may not have been true, but it certainly could have been. She was obviously capable of it. In any case, all minds were closed to her when that word was passed around. It made the old women draw their lips together; made small children look away from her in shame; made young men fantasize elaborate torture for her—just to get the saliva back in their mouths when they saw her. (*Sula*, 1973, p. 112-113)

This extract explicitly displays Sula's violation of racial laws established by Bottom. The defilement to these laws results in her ostracism. Sula, obviously, stands as the victim and the scapegoat of the communal anger. In the same perspective, M. T. Reddy (1988, p. 39) demonstrates that Sula disrupts the confidence among Bottom inhabitants:

Sula becomes the speck around which the townspeople grow, at least temporarily, in reaction to her having violated their most basic rules, chief among them the dicta against sexual relationships with white men and against disrespecting the elderly. Town gossip holds that Sula has done the unforgivable, slept with white men; this is a sin against the belief that black men 'own' black women.

This quotation highlights the anger of Bottom toward Sula who has become henceforth the common enemy of African Americans. In this regard, black people label her “roach” and “witch” unlike white people. Indeed, K. Idol (2017, p. 51) asserts that “the protagonist of the novel, Sula, is indifferent to a society that is a part of the world to her. It is a part of her, but not her center.” Put differently, Sula belongs to Bottom but not to the laws that govern its people’s lives.

Despite her society’s anger toward her, Sula does not give up treating white men as her lovers. In her mindset, making love with Whites is the best way to unite and reconcile black and white races in Bottom. As no man can take initiative for this reconciliation, Sula volunteers herself for the sake of the peace of the two races. She maintains the love affair with white men until her death.

Besides, Sula’s death is the strongest manifestation of racial cohesion. After her death, white people come to take care of her body: “It was Nel who finally called the hospital, then the mortuary, then the police, who were the ones to come. So the white people took over. They came in a police van and carried the body down the steps past the four pear trees and into the van for all the world as with Hannah” (*Sula*, 1973, p. 172). Noticeably, the white people carefully prepare Sula’s body for the burial: “The white people had to wash her, dress her, prepare her and finally lower her. It was all done elegantly, for it was discovered that she had a substantial death policy” (*Sula*, 1973, p. 173). As Sula is the sworn enemy of the Bottom Blacks, no African American takes part in the burial ceremony. All of them retract themselves from the ceremony and leave the task to the white people. Indeed, it is difficult for Bottom inhabitants to realize that white folks assume the control of a black person’s mortuary amidst racism.

Scrutinizing the course of events in this typical setting, “Bottom” means “low,” “limited reasoning,” or “shortness of thinking.” The writer

has used this concept to depict the narrow mind of Bottom black inhabitants who stand hostile to Sula. “Top” is the opposite of “Bottom.” Sula is “top.” The concept can qualify the open mind and maturity of Sula who prefers Whites to African Americans in order to solve racial matters.

Sula’s agency does not profit herself but the Bottom black residents. She combats their hatred against Whites which costs her life. It can be highlighted that her agency encompasses actions that upset her community members but simultaneously benefit them. She can be seen as the civil rights activist who devotes herself to the liberty and blossoming of all victims of racism. Most activists die in their battle and the masses profit the fruits of their struggle.

After Sula’s death, African Americans no longer undergo racial behaviors from their white neighbors. They have equal chances on work fields like the gigantic road building in Bottom: “Sula was dead or just after she was dead a brighter day was dawning. There were signs. The rumor that the tunnel spanning the river would use Negro workers became an announcement” (*Sula*, 1973, p. 151). This quotation illuminates the promising life conditions of African Americans after Sula’s death. Assuredly, the protagonist’s full name is Sula Peace. As her name shows, her name shines peace and equal rights after her death in Bottom.

Scrutinizing Sula’s relationship with Whites, this essay posits that Morrison discards racial biases and claims a race-free America. Likewise, she displays and criticizes some African Americans who respond to racial injustices with violence or hatred. The novelist indirectly condemns racial brutality and hatred. She has shown that African Americans’ uninterrupted odium of white racial oppressors always paralyzes American social life. It impedes and tears out the harmonious social fabric between African Americans and Whites in Bottom.

It is worth arguing that Morrison is one of the African American activists who fight racism and the violation of African Americans’ rights

through non-violence. Black civil rights' activists experienced the myriad of ill-treatments but make the courage and determination be the centerfold of their fight. Interestingly, the activists had courage and determination as a push-up in their efforts. For instance, faced with various intimidations and death threats, P. C. Gorski (2019, p. 785) holds that "racial justice activists endure a variety of stressors that could impact their abilities to remain engaged and effective in their activism." Undoubtedly, various stressors have positively impacted Morrison in her activism. When some civil rights activists sometimes use violence as a means to claim for the rights of African Americans, Morrison uses subtle means for this purpose. Other forms of means were used to demand equal rights for African Americans and white Americans. As D. M. Szymanski (2012, p. 344) has noted, "although many people think of activism as protest or the use of direct, often confrontational action, it actually includes a wide range of activities." Morrison's activism is resounding in most of her novels.

Moreover, Morrison combats the spirit of hostility among African Americans towards Whites and vice versa in America. It can be explained by the fact that abhorrence always renders racial contact difficult. Hence, it is imperative to create a revolutionary female character in order to draw African Americans' attention on the inevitability of tolerance and mutual acceptance which are the *sine quoi non* conditions to social fairness and stability in America. Through *Sula*, Morrison addresses white community as well. For the writer, racism is not only the concern of African Americans but also white people's. In this manner, the relationship between *Sula* and white folks is crucially central. She calls for the awareness raising, given the impact of racism yielded on the victimized African American subjects. More importantly, Morrison makes *Sula*'s and Whites' encounter inevitable as well as her opposition to African American community.

It can thus be argued that through *Sula*'s love for Whites and rebelliousness against her black community, Morrison condemns racism and

envisions white and black racial acceptance and cohabitation. Interestingly, Morrison negates racism in its broader sense. Evaluating Sula's attitude as a negative change that hinders Bottom society uproots Morrison's dream of America as an Eldorado of peace and love. As an activist, the writer combats racism under its various forms through *Sula* in American society.

Definitely, this essay has shown that Morrison portrays Bottom community with racial shackles and positions Sula as "a positive rebel" who brings about racial collaboration through her agency.

Conclusion

Drawing on *Sula*, this essay has revisited, from a radical feminist perspective, Sula's rebelliousness and argued that her agency—her relationship with white community and her unorthodox behavior against Bottom laws—has given way to the racial cohesion. Moreover, the study holds that failure to perceive Sula's radicalism as a positive change—as most critics overlook—entails misunderstanding Morrison's envisioning American social Eldorado devoid of racism.

Sula, this African American female revolutionist, has brought racial change in Bottom. Her agency shows that African Americans can throw away racial hatred and transcend racial boundaries for a harmonious life. In sum, this essay has shown that Sula is a solution to racial matters in her community. Most scholars have judged her as a dissenter who has isolated herself from her own community. Yet, overlooking her role played to solve racial problems shadows Morrison's strategy to combat racial attitudes for the sake of racial acceptance and cohabitation.

Sula's rebelliousness transcends racial walls. When African Americans—men and women—decide to seclude themselves from Whites, Sula crosses this boundary and befriends them. In this perspective, the fact of making love with white men is seen as a compromise between black and

white races, an act which unconditionally leads to racial acceptance and a perfect American society.

Sula becomes Morrison's tribute to academic success. My reading of *Sula* underscores racial acceptance, cohabitation and valorization in America where Morrison aspires for a unified community. The author envisions an American society exempted of racism. The foremost role, crucially essential, should be played by both Whites and African Americans altogether. The racial neutrality in America is one of Morrison's cherished aims. Working toward a race-free America is a collective undertaking. Certainly, for Morrison, Whites and African Americans should be committed to making American society great and strong without racial injuries. The writer seeks to heal her society with literature through *Sula*, indeed. As I. Visser (2014, p. 9) rightly argues, "Morrison's novels repeatedly draw attention to the importance of community in healing processes, and in particular to the role of women in communities." Obviously, the role of *Sula* is to heal Bottom from racism. Most definitely, Morrison's *Sula* has a therapeutic end.

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