



RESEARCH ARTICLE



HISTORY AND FICTION: BLACK AMERICANS' EXPERIENCE IN TONI MORRISON'S *SULA*

Dr Stancivique NDAMBI, Dr Hubert Franck Lylian MASSALA

¹(Enseignant chercheur, Chargé de Cours à Faculté des Lettres, Arts et Sciences Humaines (Université Marien Ngouabi))

Email: ndambistancivique@gmail.com

²(Enseignant chercheur, Maitre-Assistant à L'Ecole Normale Supérieure (Université Marien Ngouabi))

Email: hubertfrancklylianmassala@gmail.com

ABSTRACT



Toni Morrison's *Sula* is an accurate analysis of African Americans' experience of segregation after the emancipation proclamation of 1863. This means that this paper is based on the relationship between history and fiction. The city of Medallion where Blacks are suppressed and humiliated, their discrimination in the American army, and the reference to the World War I are aspects of historical realism in the novel. The work also shows how racial segregation and its perpetrators force Blacks out of the Whites community, and compel them to be confined in the ghettos as a way to remind them of their inferiority and exclusion from the mainstream American society.

Keywords: *African Americans, Racial Segregation, Historical Realism, Experience, Fiction.*

**INTRODUCTION**

Although Toni Morrison's *Sula* is not entirely devoted to racial segregation, the unfolding of the tumultuous twentieth century and its aftermath for African Americans is an essential part of this fiction. It tends to be among the aspects which establish a parallel between the author's text and American reality; denouncing racism, segregation, and injustice Blacks experienced in a democratic nation.

In effect, we should confess that we are not the first to work on Toni Morrison's *Sula*. For, a number of critical works have already been completed on it. Mohammed Sabbar Abdulbaqi for example thinks that this novel revolves around the "rationality" and "irrationality" that are according to her "*the two predominant aspects of emancipation process of African American women in relation to their community*" (Abdulbaqi: 2019, 640). Mrinalini however, examines the book as "*a fictional portrayal of African American women within her culture, idea of liberation is the hallmark of the corpus*" (Mrinalini:2020,pp.3618-3619). The question in this paper involves knowing how Blacks' experience in the tumultuous twentieth has influenced Morrison's imagination in *Sula*. Taken in this context, the use of New historicism and the sociological approach seem imperious to properly carry out this analysis. New historicism for instance helps us show that in Morrison's novel history inhabits fiction and that fiction is inhabited by history. In this regard, the author overtly makes known her ambition in this concern when she responds Chuk Palahniuk in these terms:

I'm always interested in the way in which the past affects the present and I think that

if we understand a good deal more about history, we automatically understand a good more about contemporary life¹.

Louis A.Monstrose who is one of the theorists of this approach also notes the importance of New historicism that he views as a method "*based on parallel readings of literary and non-literary texts of the same historical period*"². (Ijella: 2045, p.114) too, goes on the same context when she argues that:

the new orientation to history studies may be characterized as a dynamic dialogue between literature and history and it has a reciprocal concern with the historicity of texts and the textuality of history.

Our task therefore is to glance at the malevolent impact of racism and segregation that gangrene the American society in the 1950s and even beyond. There are two sections: the first highlights the notorious Whites' racist and discriminatory practices that prevailed in American society all through the 20th century. The second, however, seeks to show how the novel contextualizes the issue related to the newly founded black nation in the United States after the two great wars.

1-THE TYPOLOGY OF WHITES' RACIST AND DISCRIMINATORY PRACTICES

In writing *Sula*, Toni Morrison pictures it as the recreation of racist and segregationist attitude of Whites to Blacks in the United States. Perhaps, it is the reason why the novel opens with a huge image of a highly segregated city called Medallion, where:

¹ <https://www.brainyquote.com/authors/c/chuck-palahniuk.htm>

² <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/louismonstrose>



The nigger got the hilly land, where planting was backbreaking, where soil slid down and vanished away the seeds and where the wind lingered all through the winter (...) white people lived on the rich valley floor in that little rives town in Ohio; and the blacks populated the hills above it. (Sula: 1973, p.5)

This passage describes a highly segregated American city. For, sentences like “the nigger got the hilly land” and “white people lived on the rich valley” tell peak on this segregation which divides Whites and Blacks in Medallion. The first sentence for instance is a direct reference to the quarters populated by Blacks in urban ghettos or in rural areas where they were confined and lived unreasonably under a deep sense of inferiority that was inculcated them by the vicious White supremacists. The second, however, spotlights a rich and developed community of Whites. There is no doubt that the author’s interest is to rebuke the Blacks’ initial status of “semi-human being” that took place immediately after the American Civil War in 1865 and the emancipation proclamation of Blacks in 1863, which are in their essence, parts of American history. Therefore, the contrast between Blacks and Whites’ living conditions and the inferior position of the first are described through the city of Medallion which, because of the presence of Whites in it, “is called the suburbs now, but when black people lived there it was called the Bottom” (Sula: 1973, p.3). This utterance is a direct reference to Blacks’ inferiority in the United States. For, the word “suburbs” stands for all that is luxurious and paramount, whereas, “bottom”, refers to what is relegated behind. It is true that many Whites believed that scientific

achievements and social development were significant to prove their supremacy over Blacks who invented nothing and achieved less scientific progress. Because the white man’s living place is located in the valley and is called “suburbs,” the narrator describes Whites as angles from paradise where living conditions are splendid, but in the black folks’ “Bottom,” life is overwhelmed with substandard conditions. Certainly, that is the reason why in the twentieth century, Whites regarded their black counterparts with disdain and racist eye that pushes Morrison to start her narrative with a strong image about racial segregation to show sorrow, sadness, grief, and anger towards racism and its perpetrators:

I always looked upon the acts of racist exclusion or insult, as pitiable from the other person. I never absorbed that I always thought that there was something deficient about such people.³

Yet, racism exerted upon African Americans in the United States goes beyond the simple policy of not allowing race interconnection in the sense that it takes new forms in entering American institutions. The dilemma faced by African Americans on this point is perhaps articulated by Shadrack, a World War I veteran who is chased from the military hospital where he is supposed to be treated for battle stress:

His hair was parried low on the right side so that some twenty or thirty could discreetly cover the nakedness of his head, come on.

3

<http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/c/chuck-palahniuk.html>



Pick up that spoon. Pick it up private, nobody is going to feed you forever (...) "pick it up, I said, there's not point to this..." (Sulu: 1973, p.9)

This passage clearly paints the persistence of racial discrimination after the First World War. Shadrack, who is victim of this white racist view, is Blacks' representative in a violent world. One notices that the author's interest is to display the collapse of the Black Americans' dream. For, most of African-Americans believed that their participation in a worldwide conflict of this kind would help accelerate the process of their integration in American society. Unfortunately, American authorities like the members of the hospital staff in the novel think that Shadrack does not deserve to be treated in a white hospital for the simple reason that he is Black. Then, the author views Shadrack's participation in the war not as a fight for true democracy, but as an act of dying for the protection of the white man. For, he fights in France to protect the American borders. Unfortunately, this America, the author argues, is far from recognizing Blacks' efforts and their equality to the white race. This non recognition can be viewed in the way that the main character, Shadrack, is rejected in a white hospital. In effect, Shadrack embodies all disdains brought about by the spectre of racism implemented by Whites and which Blacks endure for times not only in America, but beyond its borders. These frustrations cause pains and cries within the black community wherein Blacks are deprived of all commodities. Shadrack who embodies this black minority is described as follows:

Twenty-two years old, weak, hot, frightened, no daring to acknowledge the

fact that he didn't even know who or what he was...with no pass, no language, no tribe, no source, no address book, no comb, no pencil, no clock, no pocket handkerchief, no rug, no bed, no can opener, no faded postcard, no soap, no key, no tobacco pouch, no soiled underwear and nothing nothing nothing to do...(Sula:1973, p.12)

This passage recalls a picture of a coloured soldier who worries about his irrational identity in a highly segregated nation. The Word "nothing" which is repeated three times clearly illustrates the image of Blacks pleading for justice in the postwar years. Shadrack who represents many hundreds of Blacks in the United States believes that his participation in World War I will help him gain first-class American citizenship. Unfortunately, he is disillusioned. For, the army itself promotes a frightening upsurge of racism. The historian Litwack has discovered that these American Forces were:

a rigidly segregated army into which more than a million blacks were inducted at all levels the dominant racial attitude of white America, including the doctrine maintained through the war that blacks were inferior to whites. (Litwack: 2002, 1)

In this context, Shadrack who is described having been "*found himself in December 1917, running 10th his comrades across a field in France*" (Sula: 1973, p.7) is with no doubt a powerful allegory of approximately twenty thousand black men out of seven hundred and fifty thousand men who constituted the regular American army at the beginning of the war. Thus, the author's burning desire is to let the reader discover President



Woodrow Wilson's promiscuity with the black folks, following his promise of a "New Freedom" for Blacks. One then senses the elliptical presence of this emblematic figure of American history through the author's use of the phrase "December 1917," which is itself emblematic of the date when American forces landed down on the battlefield in France under the rule of President Woodrow Wilson:

In the words of president Wilson, states went to war in 1917 to make the world safe for democracy and black American, hoping that their participation in the war effort might yield a little of that democracy at home, made significant contribution to the allied war effort (James M. Banner, Jr., and all:1971,192)

Through this historical passage, one discovers how Morrison's narrative intertwines with the American past. For, it conveys a similar message with the author's literary discourse. What means that Morrison's text is grounded in true life events of American society. Indeed, the need to be more accurate with the evil of racial segregation she has to denounce here takes her into a journey to American public places where the evil of racism is also roaming. In *Sula* for example, the presence of such a peculiar behavior becomes unbearable in the American transportation network with reference to the mulatto female character named Helene Sabat, a daughter from a Creole white father and a black female New Orleans prostitute who, along with her daughter, are humiliated, as the narrator evidences:

they entered a coach peopled by some twenty white men and women. Rather than go back and down the three wooden steps

again, Helene decided to spare herself some embarrassment and walk on through to the colored car. (Sula:1973, p.20)

This tirade contains an accurate assessment of the revival of "Jim Crow laws" in the years following the end of the First World War. These laws, the author argues, entitled Blacks inferior in every life spheres, including segregation in transportation which is associated with the black experience in this part of the world. On this point, the reader is introduced to this historical reality in these terms:

railroad-car segregation began in 1891. In 1910 and 1911, the legislature passed laws dictating that railroad companies provide separate waiting rooms in the road stations.⁴

From this rule would inevitably be born the climate of threat that gangrened the suppressed black American community. The case of Helene Sabat and her daughter Nel Wright who are threatened by a nameless white conductor aboard the train during their journey to New Orleans is an illustration:

As they opened the door marked COLORED PEOPLE ONLY, they saw a white conductor coming toward them. It was a chilly day but a light skin of sweat glistened on the woman's face as she and the little girl struggle 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 struck his little finger into his ear, jiggling it free of wax.

⁴ Segregation in the American system of transportation accessible at: <https://www.cliffsnotes.com/study-guide/literature/sula.html>.



"What you think you doin',gal?"(Sula: 1973, p.20)

It is this negative image of the white conductor that epitomizes the inhumanity of White racists' behavior. The interrogation "what you think you doin' gal?" deserves much attention, because it is associated with the White man's violence to Blacks. It shows Whites' superiority to the Blacks they consider not only inferior, but non-American citizens who have no right in American society. Indeed, the global meaning of the interrogation signals that something wrong and threatening has happened to the Black lady who is shocked by the way the conductor speaks to her. This attitude of Whites, in fact, is reminiscence of the way Whites used to address adult Black women in the United States. The author's commitment about the threats of Whites in the American system of transportation seems to be clearly rendered by the protagonist Nel Wright who negatively appreciates the trip in these terms: "*it had been an exhilarating trip but a fearful one*"(Sula:1973,p.28). Historian Hodges brings evidence on this point when he writes:

The policy of Jim Crow and the insufferable rudeness of bus drivers .These Whites drivers, almost always from the lowest class, addressed grown men and women as "Boy" and "Gil," and talked to them, and to anyone else who was Black, in the most harsh and strident tones. (Hodges: 1974, p.9)

One easily infers that what the novelist raises within her fiction has a direct link with history. For, the question of segregation in transportation described by the author is found in true sequences of American life. In both, fiction and reality, one finds

that the victims of this racist view are Blacks. This relationship urges us to think of this novel not as a book of history, but as a discourse on history. The novel assumes that under fear to be hurt though morally or physically by the vicious White conductor, Helene and Nel quickly move to a wagon exclusively reserve to Blacks:

He stood there staring at her until she realized that he wanted her to move aside. Pulling Nel by the arm she pressed herself and her daughter into foot space in front of a wooden seat. (Sula: 1973, p.21)

Cynicism reaches its paroxysm when racism turns from its initial "separate but equal" doctrine as introduced by Plessy v. Ferguson in 1896 to be "separate and not equal" too. The sense of the latest allegory can be exemplified by the way Blacks are deprived of all opportunities and the right of freedom despite the 13th , 14th and 15th Amendments, which "*declared slavery illegal, entitled the Black people to enjoy the same protection as the Whites and to protect black rights.*"(Evayoulou:2009, p.44) .

Here again, the reader discovers how Morrison's text intertwines with American reality. In fact, the text shows how American authorities failed to fulfill recommendations admitted by the emancipation proclamation charter that occurred in 1863. Many states, especially those in the South, used 'Jim Crow' legislation to physically or morally brutalize their black counterparts. The scene when Tar Baby, a black character is abruptly arrested and put in jail best illustrates it:

On Saturday afternoon Tar Baby had stumbled drunk into traffic on the New River



Road. A woman driver swerved to avoid him and hit another car. When the police came, they recognized the woman as the mayor's niece and arrested Tar Baby. (Sula:1973, p.132)

What the reader discovers here is the malevolence behavior of White racists represented by the police who decide to release the mayor's niece and put poor Tar Baby in prison because he is black. The word 'police' implies the institutionalization of racism through the use of brutality outlawed by the American constitution since 1787. The title of chapter 8: "1939" stresses on that persistent impact of racism and its perpetrators. For, we know that Blacks continued to be discounted in national scene even during President Franklin Delano Roosevelt whose program of "New Deal" in the 1930s titled Blacks as full American citizens and restricted what one commonly called the "Blacks' invisibility" in American society. It means, over more than three decades, from the reconstruction in 1866 to the 1930s, those Blacks continued to pay tribute due to the color of their black skin.

One of the agonies of blacks' existence amidst an increasingly hostile White supremacist world is brutality and lynching. Such physical threats represented by White supremacists take more shape in Tar Baby's experience when he is badly beaten in the cell where he is incarcerated. The narrator explains that "*he was twisted up in a corner badly beaten and dressed in nothing but extremely soiled underwear.*" (Sula: 1973, p.132)

Here, the reader discovers first how Morrison tries hard to mention the "emasculating police brutality," that took place in the United States all

through the twentieth century. Then, the sentence highlights the endless failure of the "anti-lynching legislation" passed in 1920s; for some vicious Whites in some states dreadfully continued to violate Blacks' Civil and human rights even during and after President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's rule. Maybe, Morrison's intent is to unveil how the most researching scientific findings supporting the inherent inferiority of Blacks survived, and have given rise to the deliberate separation of the two races. If this is the case, one may still wonder about what life would be like in the Negro's world.

Thus, the interpretation of the Blacks' experience through the tumultuous twentieth century describe by the author cannot be limited to the simple portrayal of racial segregation in its strict literary sense. The reader can also sense how this need to write history in fiction draws the writer to the newly fashioned Negro's world that was observed in the United States during the 20th century.

2-THE IMAGE OF A NEGRO'S WORLD

One of Morrison's purposes in *Sula* is to inform the reader about the socioeconomic situation of Blacks that she represents through the concept 'Bottom,' the Negro's quarter in Medallion, Ohio. The first handicap the novel signals for the black community is quiet natural. For instance, the land where Blacks are confined is an unfavorable area for agriculture:

the nigger got the hilly land, where the planting was backbreaking, where soil slid down and washed away the seeds, and where the wind lingered all through the winter. (Sula: 1973, p.5)



In comparison to Whites who choose the “rich valley floor.” (Ibi., p.5). Here again, the notion of “separate but unequal” doctrine mostly appears in various forms. Perhaps, “the black people would have disagreed, but they had no time to think about it” (Sula: 1973, p.6), because they were weak in a society ruled by racist whites people.

As it can be seen, this tirade outlines the unconscious return to a new form of enslavement of the free Negroes who would only depend on their hostile white counterparts. It is reasonable that still the black man’s harvest is unsatisfactory; his economic power is weak, and that, want still remains in his community. Certainly, this is what gives strength to the persistence and remarkable domination of the white race over the black one. On this point of inequality between the two communities, the narrator explains:

It was better down in the Valley, since, as always, the hills protect it, but up in the Bottom black folks suffered heavily in their thin houses and thinner clothes. The ice-cold wind bled what little heat they had through windowpanes and ill-fitting doors. (Sula: 1973, p.152)

Here, the phrases “thin houses” and “thinner clothes” call up some more explanations: Firstly, they show that except natural obstacles such as climate and soil infertility, the Negro’s world is also confronted with both the substandard housing condition and the inadequate dressing equipment which are all embedded facts in the history of the United States. Secondly, they describe the black folks in all their weaknesses and misery in the sense that they lack means that can help them own a plot of

land or comfortable houses, nor buying clothes of quality. Furthermore, the passage casts light on the existence of the black folks’ “nation within American nation”; a truth that the author tries to uphold through the use of the word “Bottom.” This word is essentially emblematic of the ghettos created by Blacks apart from the rest of the community as they were forced to dwell into ghettos in the large cities. But the analysis in a broadest sense, admits the reader discover the historical phenomena of black masses displacement from rural areas to urban industrial centers, and which gave rise to the newly founded quarters in the twentieth century, some of which known as “ghettos.” There is no doubt that because of the land poorness and the lack of financial means which became rampant, hungriness became much frequent in the ghettos where malnutrition raged.

In *Sula*, the image of the black boy character, Betty who is admitted in the country hospital after having had an accident is a good example to see how the author is engaged to contextualize the issue related to poor diet that prevailed in the black community in the United States. The narrator asserts that “the doctor said poor diet had contributed substantially to the daintiness of his bones.”(Sula: 1973, p.114)

This is to say that the young boy is not well fed. The food he eats is not of quality. That is why Teapot’s skeleton is constituted of sensitive bones too feeble to resist a violent shock. Then, the text draws the reader back to the sanitary crisis due to poor diet amidst the Bottom inhabitants. The author reconstructs such embedded fact of American history when the narrator speaks in the following terms:



By the time the ice began to melt and the first barge was seen shuddering through the ice skim on the river, everybody under fifteen had croup, or scarlet fever, and those over had chilblains, rheumatism, pleurisy, earaches and a world of other ailments. (Sula:1973, pp.152-153)

The phrases such as "everybody under fifteen" and "those over" have an inclusive meaning. They define the impact of different epidemics spread, which touch most of social layers, taking altogether both little children and old people. For, the inhexhaustive list of the diseases mentioned in this passage is essentially historical in its essence, and one may say, these are pathologies from the daily life of the ghettos inhabitants. Moreover, the segregationist policy introduced by some vicious whites upon the black man who is confined in the ghettos gives rise to communal vices. The scene when Eva experiences domestic violence from her husband BoyBoy tells the truth:

After five years of a sad and disgruntled marriage BoyBoy took off. During the time they were together he was very much preoccupied with other women and not home much. He did whatever he could that he liked, and he liked womanizing best, drinking second, and abusing Eva third. (Sula: 1973, p.3)

The last sentence of this passage defines Eva's husband as a tyrant, battering her wife, causing physical and moral pains in her. For, the phrase "a sad and disgruntled marriage" tells peak in the concern of multiform sufferings that African - American women faced in this part of the world. The author, we observe, makes use of strong words such as "womanizing," "drinking," and "abusing," which

are emblematic concepts revealing communal vices that prevailed in the community of Blacks in the United States. Another interesting feature of communal vices can also be seen through Hannah who refuses "to live without the attentions of a man and after Rekus' death had a steady sequence of lovers, mostly the husbands of her friends and neighbors." (Sula: 1973, p.42). Hannah is deeply involved in sex affairs. She does not fear anyone in the society nor her little girl Sula Peace, who at age three, surprises her mother having sex with a man:

Sula came back home from school and found her mother in the bed, curled spoon in the arm of a man. Seeing her step so easily into the pantry and emerged looking precisely as she did when she entered, only happier, taught Sula that sex was pleasant and frequent, but otherwise unremarkable (...).So she watched her mother's face and the face of the men when they opened the pantry door and made up her own mind.(Sula:1973, p.44)

The notorious sex affairs can also be visualized through the protagonist Sula Peace who, after having watched her mother in sex with men, involves herself in prostitution when she is grown up. The novel underscores many sex devices including both female and black male characters too many to fully include here. One of the most signal features regarding prostitution is the opening to protagonist Sula's sexual intercourse with Ajax in her grandmother's bed: "she went and waited for him in Eva's high bed, her head turned to the boarded-up window."(Sula: 1973, p.128).The narrator explains that Ajax: "swallowed her month just as her thighs had



swallowed his genitals, and the house was very, very quiet."(Sula:1973,p.131). What the reader sees through the character of Sula Peace reflects the twentieth century malevolent impact of Black confinement into ghettos. For, the related sex issue is evidently part of the Blacks experience in the United States. Like the community of Blacks the author has created in *Sula*, the historian Hodges also observes that:

The ghetto – North and South – was a world apart, in which Blacks played out their role in the sordid drama of American racism and discrimination. It was these twin evils that consigned Blacks citizens to debilitating poverty, substandard housing, inferior education, high rates of unemployment, community vice and pathology (nurtured from outside),and emasculating police brutality. (Hodges: 1974, p.217)

The reader notices that Hodges' view in this passage matches with Morrison's imagination as far as blacks' experience in "the Negro's world is concerned " That is to say that the author's story about the Negro's world she refers to as "Bottom" is not her own invention, but it is grounded in the history of the United States. In effect, racism and discrimination which become rambling in the Negro's world engender not only vices, but also reinforces cohesion among colored people who, either individually or in groups, set out to challenge it with energy.

In *Sula*, apart from the evocation of the evils devastating social welfare in the Negro's world, there are many good initiatives for Blacks: resisting cultural alienation, promoting unity among Negroes, and

taking quick actions to defend themselves against their oppressors in order to secure true democracy for all Americans regardless of skin color. This struggle for the dignity of the "colored people" is for instance, exemplified by Eva who denounces Sula Peace's mindless behavior of prostitution she acquired after having spent a decade in the white society, carries the stereotypical seductive behavior in the black community: "*you sold your life for twenty dollars a month*" (Sula: 1973, p.93). Here, the reader may sense the author's attitude of sadness, grief, sorrow, and anger toward millions of Blacks she presents as pessimists or traitors who failed to develop pride and confidence in their blackness. In other terms, this sentence echoes the behavior of many millions of the alien Blacks who abandoned their own traditions and became more concerned with the whites' culture as a way to ensure their real emancipation. Mohammed S. Abdulbaqi for instance, argues that "*the protagonist Sula immensely turns to a mindless girl revolting against whatever is social and disciplined and accordingly loses her social emancipation.*" (Abulbaqi:2019,p.643). The reader is now caught to visualize the escalating cultural conflict between whites and Blacks. On this point, Bernard Well confesses that "*Sula represents the actual and imagined force of evil in black community.*" (Well, quoted by Abdulbaqi: 2019, p.643). Evidently, in black culture, it is shameful for a woman to have more than one man as it is the case in Europe where it is called "polyandry." This means that, Morrison is not only a novelist, but also a reformist and a militant who joins her voice to all Blacks who not only agrees on the goal of equal rights with Whites, but also speak -ill of racial integration of Blacks. Eva who is the embodiment of



the Blacks' struggle for the reestablishment of self-confidence warns her little daughter Sula Peace of the danger out to come when she says: "*Bible say honor thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long upon the land thy God giveth thee*" (Sula: 1973, p.93). The reference to the fifth commandment from the "Holly Bible" tends to be an elliptical way the author uses to evoke the countless calls made by black conformists and reformists in the twentieth century. Furthermore, the passage spotlights Blacks' attitude of fury and rage face to the distains the white man bears against them. The author's intend, is therefore, to inform the reader that Blacks should stand as one if they want to free themselves from the dreadful and profound sense of inferiority in which the white man had placed them. They would then achieve their blackness too long scorned in the United States and build a more sustainable society with established Black rules. Unquestionably, the reader can easily discern how Morrison's discourse is fixed in the American past. For, the prominent black leader Marcus Garvey for instance, pleaded for a return to African values that he announced in his famous program in 1916, the same as Morrison does it though elliptically in this novel. Garvey thoroughly suggested for the redemption of Africa and tended to encourage unity of the Black in diaspora all over the world, and wanted to create Black rules which could help them build a strong community on the hostile American land.

In fact, Garvey recognized that Blacks are viewed as an inferior race simply because they lack structuration and they ignore their capacity to produce as the other races do. This alienation of the black community is hence, the embodiment of the

Blacks' curse causing the newly form of their enslavement in the modern American society.

Another aspect of developing pride and confidence in their blackness can also be illustrated on pages 158,159 , 160,161, and 162 when the protagonist Shadrack's "*National Suicide Day*"(Sula:1973, p.7) is described being joined by many black demonstrators who decide to march in Bottom, Medallion, Ohio in order to denounce racism and its perpetrators. An example of the fury and rage by the joyless black folks who fiercely castoff the white man's domination and seek for more changes is given in the following passage:

When they got down to where the sidewalk started, some of them stopped and decided to turn back, too embarrassed to enter the white part of town whooping like banshees. But except for three or four, the fainthearted were put to shame by the more aggressive and abandoned, and the parade danced down Main Street past Woolworth's and the old poultry house, turned right and moved on down the New River Road.(Sula:1973, p.161)

Here, the author demonstrates how the black minority does all endeavors to organize self-help in an alien and hostile town of Medallion. Her aim is certainly to let the reader be informed of the existence of defiant organization and individuals who used to fight in such a way against the vicious Whites' racism and its effects upon them. In this context, Shadrack's 'National Suicide Day' and its membership's behavior can easily be assimilated to historical organizations like the National Afro-American League (NAAL) founded in 1890;the



Niagara Movement that occurred in 1905, The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) created in 1909, the Universal Negroes Improvement Association (UNIA) in 1914, to quote only a few. Most of those organizations following Dr. King's doctrine of "nonviolence" purported to mobilize, promote and insure the welfare of Blacks on the American soil, so does Shadrack's National Suicide Day in this fiction. That is to say, Morrison's story is shaped from what happened in the United States, and that her discourse is the recreation of the American History. Indeed, the author does not limit herself on describing legal actions for, she also describes insolate ones. A good example of such a militantism tactic is also to be illustrated by the protagonist Sula Peace who decides to cut off the tip of her finger as a way to warn a mob of white boys attacking her along with Nel Wright on their way to school. The reader is told that just as the confrontation with the gang of harassing boys began, Sula Peace raises her voice and speaks in such a threatening tone: "if I can do that to myself, what you suppose I'll do to you?" (Sula: 1973, Pp.54-55), meaning that Sula Peace is ready to commit a crime. One sees how the author's discourse revolves around the defiant mood held by many millions of the black inhabitants in the United States over the 1950s when they were determinate to suffer no longer, inferring all means necessary to fight back the Whiteman. In this particular context rests clearly the deepest sense of the relationship between Morrison's text and the history of the United States. For, none coordinated and insolate actions of Blacks were commonly observed in this part of the world. Hodges who led researches on this point discovers for instance that there was one ancient and unnamed

Black woman who "summoned up the general determination, as she trudged along on the road, when she said: "My feets is tired, but my souls' refreshed" (Hodges: 1974, p. 227). It is eminently clear that in terms of courage, the behavior of this real-life of an American personality, echoes Sula Peace in this novel. This easily establishes a connection between historical truth and the author's imagination. Certainly, the author's interest is also to display the impact of the Blacks' pressure upon their White opponents. For, in a way or another, the Negroes' claims for equal rights culminated into veritable bloody confrontations, which became unbearable and paved the way of what Benjamin Evayoulou has termed as "a process of racial regeneration in the United States" (Evayoulou: 2005, p.132). Evidently, throughout the parallel reading between history and fiction rests the deep sense of the title of this paper.

CONCLUSION

In Toni Morrison's *Sula*, history and fiction twist together, and that the novel as a whole is a fictitious account which deals with the Black experience from the early 1900s, through the 1950s, to the 1970s. The very beginning section of this paper has, for instance, revealed that the author's use of the image of an American city divided into two parts (Negros on the one side and Whites on the other) is the key element showing how the author has written her work with an eye to history. For, during the bleak and joyless postwar periods, Blacks as those Morrison has created in her novel, populating "Bottom, Medallion, Ohio" were still being suppressed and humiliated in an alien and hostile America. In connection with the second section, it has been illustrated that the



author's use of the word "Bottom" is nothing else than a way to contextualize the Negroes' world, especially the ghettos that flourished in the twentieth century. And in the course of her discourse, Morrison has identified the black man's world to things with negative meaning such as poverty, anger, epidemics, pathologies, and communal vices like prostitution with reference to Sula Peace. All these notions constitute a kind of armature, helping the author to shape the image of the Negroes' world. For, these words are essentially drawn from the lexicon of Blacks' experience in ghettos.

REFERENCES

- Abbott, Porter. (2003). *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bell, Bernard W. (1989). *The Afro-American Novel and its Tradition*. Amherst USA: Massachusetts.
- Claude, J.B. (1959). *Les Etats-Unis : Histoire et Civilisation*. Press Universitaire de Nancy.
- Douglass F., (1982). *The narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Duvall, John N. (2000). *The Identifying Fictions of Toni Morrison: Modernist Authenticity and Postmodern Blackness*. USA, New York: Palgrave.
- Ellison, Ralph. (1952). *Invisible Man*. New York: Signet Books.
- Eigeldinger, Marc. (1987). *Mythologie et intertextualité*. Paris: Edition Slatkin.
- Evayoulou, Benjamin. (2007). "An Intertextual reading of Charles, John's *Dreamer* and Julius, Lester's *And All Our Wounds Forgiven*". *La Saison des Pluies*, n°5. Janvier, pp.61-76.
- Evayoulou, Benjamin. (2010). *The autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman and the Tradition of the African American Novel*. Paris: Ed Paari, SLC, n°4. December 2010. pp. 217-228.
- Foster, E.M., 1963. *Aspects of the Novel*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Franklin, John, Hope and Moss, Alfred. (1978). *From Slavery To Freedom. A History of Negroes American*, 6th (ed). New York: Knopf.
- Hodges, Norman, E.W. (1974). *Black History*. New York: Monarch Press.
- Mbalia, Doreatha. (2004). *Toni Morrison's developing Class Consciousness*. Selinsgrove: 2nd ed, Susquehanna.
- Morrison, Toni. (1973). *Sula*. New York: Knopf.
- Mohammed, Sabbar, Abulbaqi. (2019). "Rational an Irrational Emancipation of Women in community: A critical Analysis of Toni Morrison's *Sula*." *Al-Iraqia University/ college of Arts*. Researchgate.net publication, pp.639-658.
- Payre, Charles. (1990). "Men Led, But Women Organized" in Crawford V.L.Ed. *Women in the Civil Rights*. New York: Cason, pp.121-130.
- Robinson L.A. (2005). "Full of Faith, Full of Hope: African American experience from Emancipation to Segregation," William R.S.& William G.S(eds), in *Eyes on African American History, Cultures, and Society*. Washington DC., USA: Department of states. pp.105-123.
- Samoyault, Tiphaine. (2001). *L'intertextualité: Mémoire de Littérature*. Paris : Nathan.
- Tindel, George and Shi, David. (1988). *A Narrative History*. New York: Norton & Company.
- Washington T.B. (1967). *Up From Slavery*. New York: Airmont Books.
- Wormer, Richard. (2000). "The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow". USA, February: The New York Times.

II-WEBSITES

- Cindy,Vallar,"Historical Fiction vs History" accessible at <http://www.cindyvallar.com/histific.html>.
- Louis Adrian Montrose, an American literary theorist and academic scholar. His viewpoint about new criticism approach accessible at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/archetypalliterarycriticism.html>.
- Louis, Adrian, Montrose Quotes accessible at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/louismontrose.html>.
- Morrison, Toni's interview with Palahniuk, Chuck accessible at: <https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/c/chuck-palahniuk.html>.
- Segregation in the American system of transportation accessible at: <https://www.cliffsnotes.com/study-guide/literature/sula.html>.
- "Rational and Irrational Emancipation of Women in Community": A Critical Analysis of Toni Morrison's *Sula* by Mohammed Sabbar Abdulbaqi accessible at: <http://www.researchgate.netpublication.html>.