Female Bonding in Sula and the Women of Brewster Place: A Freedom Nest Threatened by Patriarchal Institutions and Social Perceptions.

Ndeye Fatou DIOUF

Doctoral Student, ARCIV Doctoral School, Department of Literatures and Civilizations of English-Speaking Countries, Faculty of Art and Human Sciences, Cheikh Anta Diop University (Senegal)

ABSTRACT

In *Sula*, Toni Morrison paints the marvels of female friendship in the American society where race, class and gender define Black women's lot. Personified through the characters of Sula and Nel, Morrison pictures how togetherness alleviates the young girls' social burdens and consolidates their selves despite their distinct personalities. In *The Women of Brewster Place*, through seven stories, Gloria Naylor portrays women's bonding in its different shapes as their redeemer in defiance of the social, psychological and economic conditions in the Black community. In both novels, Naylor and Morrison represent female bonding in its dynamic as Black women's healer in the African American community where they are subjected to oppression because of their position as the other of an "other". However, the two authors draw particular attention toward men's destructive social power embodied in institutions like marriage but also how women's tendency to homogenize the black female characters' self-definition hinders their empowerment. Both authors' views of the assets of female community are confirmed by the recent conditions of African-American women. Nevertheless, the query remains on how far togetherness drives Black women in their way to empowerment in America.

Keywords : Black women, bonding, empowerment, patriarch, self-definition.

INTRODUCTION

In different ways, women have taken part in struggles by African Americans through literature. Mostly remarkable during the General Renaissance of Black literature (History. com,2018) diaries, short stories, sketches and autobiographical novels, helped them describe exploitation and oppression. The unending racial injustice invited them to the literature of protest in the 20th century. Memoirs and social criticism were also of actuality during the civil rights movement with the murder of activists.

Despite their impregnation in Blacks' liberation, African American women had not so far a social group to fully belong to. Their social situations revealed them as victims of inherent conditions : that of being women and Black. Ignored by the Civil Rights Movement, their conditions as former slaves did not favor them in the women's liberation movement. Black women's unfruitful contribution to emancipation movements is emphasized by La Toya Lova in the following: they "*fought alongside the the*(sic) *feminist and the black man, poorly underrepresented* (…) *as black and as a woman.*" They "*were basically invisible*" *(La Toya, 2022 :3).* Women of color were thus the minority eclipsed from the communities because of gender, class and race. Such circumstances made difficult their survival in the racist and white-dominated patriarchal American society.

Recoursing again to literature, the rise of Black feminism in the 1970's enabled them to wage their war. Excluded and abused, "*the black woman emerged, determined to speak* "*her story.* " (Purkayastha, *2016 :* 3801). That new trend of female writers, in the example of Toni Morrison who later inspired Gloria Naylor,

focuses not only on their experience but also and especially on the power of female community in their works to line women's way to salvation. In *Sula* and *The Women of Brewster Place,* they revive African American women's cooperative force to adversity during slavery to highlight how they nurture each other to survive in a community where they fit any social scheme.

This article aims to show how African American writers, particularly Naylor and Morrison, propose strategies to empower women via female networks, particularly friendship. In its dynamic, women's communion unburdens them from racial segregation and sexual discrimination. They, at the same time, make a wake-up call toward existent divided lines to women's empowerment such as patriarchal institutions and social perceptions. Then, the authors' picture of women's ability to untie the chain of subserviency and stand high in the race and gender-determined society is going to be challenged to their actual conditions to verify their views.

METHODOLOGY

For this research, the novels *Sula* and *The Women of Brewster Place* are the main references to analyze Toni Morrison and Gloria Naylor's views of the power of female friendship and its limitations on both authors' points. Then critical works ranging from scientific and academic papers are considered to emphasize the approaches of the two authors' literary representation of Black female community and its various perspectives on colored women's lives.

For contextualizing purposes, websites are also used for a mixing approach of data (quantitative and qualitative). They provide updated historical facts related to Black women's condition in the United States and testimonies confirming their situation out of the literary representation. The extent of women's community development around the world and its impacts are also measured through online sources tracing their activism and the different stages staggered. Statistics on different social fields serve to highlight how Black women in the United States still evolve in the circle race, class and gender restrict them. Recent information enables to verify the assets of Women's communities despite the existent patriarchal structures power and helps trace eventual perspectives of women's bonding. The process consists of reading, analyzing, and interpreting information. In some cases, a comparison is necessary for the validation of the most authentified sources.

Women's Friendship in its Dynamics: a Social Healer

African American writers of the 1970's mark the revival of friendship theme at a time when its decline in some disciplines, especially literature, constituted a labyrinth. Linked so far to Ciceron, Aristotle and so on, Naylor and Morrison in the context when it is question to heal African American women from a three-ness (Sara Lomax-Reese March 22, 2018) which hinders their inclusion in the American society, unearth friendliness among black women as "*the ultimate antidote to overcome the triple subjugation faced by them*" (Dhavaleswarapu, 2016 :95). Female community, with its various attributes, provides women the social space their belonging in terms of race, class even gender could not at that time.

In *Sula* as well as *The Women of Brewster Place*, Morrison and Naylor confirm female connection through friendship, particularly the means to provide black women's social equilibrium. It constitutes the power which bears their different experiences and personalities and at the same time makes it a social advantage. While focusing on its healing facets through characterization, the two authors emphasize differences which disfavor their inclusion in the American white and black male communities the main asset in their communion which can bear various faces and relieve any social ailment.

Connections between female characters in the two novels appear under different shapes, which stand any social shortage. Through Nel and Sula, Morrison pictures a female friend as an other added to the self for a

sense of completeness, a dream materialized, a dearth filled in. In Morrison's words, based on the separation between Sula and Nel for some years, she highlights friendliness social power while perceiving Sula's return to Nel's life as the reacquisition of lost abilities: "*It was like getting the use of an eye back, having a cataract removed* " (Morrison, 2004 : 95). Friendliness covers a wide range of social gaps in the girls' lives. It restitutes the self Black feminine characters lost in their everyday experience in a community where they are at the bottom of the scale, to mean the American society in general and the Black one, in particular. It makes tangible a world one just thought possible through dreams.

Sula and Nel are thus the concretization of each one's visions. Through their characters and personalities, each comes up to the other's expectations in the environment which offers them very little for their self-satisfaction. "*They were solitary little girls whose loneliness was so profound it intoxicated them and sent them stumbling into Technicolored visions that always included a presence, a someone, who, quite like the dreamer, shared the delight of the dream*" (Morrison, 2004: 50- 52). Their connection builds a world of self-sufficiency where differences constitute a social capital and make each one an alternative to the other. It frees them from the weight of their immediate social environments. Each stands for the other the gem blooming their circles which hitherto oppressed, and instill love, peace and comfort instead :

Nel, who regarded the oppressive neatness of her home with dread, felt comfortable in it with Sula, who loved it and would sit on the red-velvet sofa for ten to twenty minutes at a time—still as dawn. As for Nel, she preferred Sula's woolly house, where a pot of something was always cooking on the stove; where the mother, Hannah, never scolded or gave directions; where all sorts of people dropped in; where newspapers were stacked in the hallway, and dirty dishes left for hours at a time in the sink, and where a one-legged grandmother named Eva handed you goobers from deep inside her pockets or read you a dream (Morrison, 2004: 29).

In Morrison's portrayal of friendship's impact on Black women characterized by Sula and Nel, it encompasses every social gap they are seeking or fighting for. They act as halves joined to make a force which overcomes every social obstacle. With Sula, Nel no longer cares about "*pulling her nose*" or using the "*hot comb*" to fit her mother's idea of beauty. Sula, on her side, armed herself with the courage to defy the boys' racist attacks. Both also keep the secret about Little Chicken's death throughout the whole novel despite their mutual attachment was not static.

In Sula and Nel's togetherness, Morrison emphasizes friendship's power in the two young girls' lives, it sustains them. In their company self-esteem, safety, protection, and secrecy are at the rendez-vous. Their surrounding with its turbulences become obsolete. "*They found relief in each other's personality*" (Morrison, 2004: 53). Their world fits their social perceptions in each other's company. In the various situations they nurture each other, Morrison foreshadows togetherness as a means to overthrow the patriarchal authority and racism when Sula defies the boys and Nel, on her side, disregards the ideal of beauty symbolized by the pulled nose and straight hair.

In the same way as Morrison and from another perspective, Naylor depicts Black women's community as a way to escape their harsh realities in the American circle. Suppose Morrison, traces the challenges Sula and Nel overthrow because of togetherness such as their family burden, the boys' racist attacks and overcome their loneliness as only children, Naylor on her side, focuses on the difficulties women come up with because of their connection. In seven stories, she recounts African American conditions and how female companionship helps them out. In her works, she pictures friendliness dynamics first in the various backgrounds of the characters, their separate experiences, stories and the shape of their relations depending on circumstances.

The female community's impact on African American women's survival of their various experiences in Naylor substantiates Morrison's ideal of differences potential. Seen as the brake toward their integration into

the American society, Black women's diversity frees them from their diverse social plagues. Their distinct backgrounds, experiences and differences in terms of age constitute the representation of their communion as a social whole which repairs any damage, either from the gender counterpart or a racial matter.

Through Mattie and Etta, she paints friendship in the form of sisterhood, they are each other's rescuers no matter the situation. Victim of Butcher, rejected by her father and seeking to protect her son, Mattie found refuge at Etta's. That same friendship also survives Etta's multiple escapes from Rutherford, Tennessee, and New York to Brewster Place. In any situation, it restores what is lost in the social environment where one's self wanes when mirrored through perceptions, rules and patriarchal institutions. However, that power fades when faced with that affinity epitomizing Black women's freedom and self-consciousness. In Etta's appreciation of Mattie's company, Naylor points out friendship as Black women's sustentation "*She breathed deeply of the freedom she found in Mattie's presence. Here she had no choice but to be herself.*" (Naylor, 1983 :56)

Besides, Kiswana and Cora Lee constitute another duo in which Naylor personifies black women's sisterhood. Bachelor without children and from Linden Hill (the setting of educated Blacks), Kiswana in her first encounter with Cora Lee left her concern about the block to inform Cora about her son Sammy eating pieces of stuff in a garbage can. Naylor describes Kiswana's attitude toward Sammy as if he was her child she found doing nonsense: "*holding a struggling and cursing Sammy by the collar*" (Naylor,1983:104). That behavior shows how Black women stick to each other's well-being without being acquainted. Then she built a certain familiarity enabling them to discuss and inquire about each others' condition.

In Kiswana's intrusion into Cora's life, Naylor shows the power of women's affinity to alleviate their social burden. Kiswana raised her awareness as far as her sense of responsibility toward her children is concerned and invited her to build quieter environments for them. Her answer "*But babies grow up*" (Naylor, 1983: 108) changes Cora's attitudes toward her children for the best. She not only realizes how neglected she has been so far but made up her mind about the future of her babies. Kiswana symbolizes the social reformer in her life since as her babydolls, she only cared for them when they were younger.

Moreover, Eva Turner and Mattie, on their side, reflect mother and daughter relation. Experience unites them so that each cannot feel the other's strangeness. Their first meeting reveals their companionship curing. Eva's own story helps Mattie empty secrets hitherto unfold. "*Miss Eva unfolded her own life and secret exploits to Mattie, and without realizing she was being questioned, Mattie found herself talking about things that she had buried within her*" (Naylor 1983: 36). Their cohabitation attenuates each one's social weight and gives place to shared occurrences, comfort, advice, otherwise a social communion outweighing any circumstances. Mattie regained the home and parents she lost sight of so far, Eva found in her and Basil her child and grandchild but also companions for Ciel. Both Women reconnect their links through each other.

In their different shapes, both authors highlight how female friendship virtues resist circumstances more than any other affinity. Women's company alleviates any burden and gives place to comfort, freedom, and giggles. It stands for the "magic" Nel alone could see. Tested to love power in *Sula* and *The Women of Brewster Place*, friendliness, in the end, overcomes dispute and betrayal. Naylor conveys the potential of amity through Mattie's response toward Etta's reproach, in which she underlines the privilege of their common experience as friends no matter the situation: "*They shared at least a hundred memories that could belie those cruel words. Let them speak for her*" (Naylor 1983: 67). Morrison, on her side, pictures it in Nel's acceptance that it is her separation with Sula that defaults in her existence "*we was (sic) girls together*" (Morrison, 2004: 174)

Besides, female community's positive social impact keeps being pointed out in the fact that it rescues women from any common lot. In The World Women Conference- VI, Ananda Majumdar regards it as the

main strength which can turn out their different social conditions. It embodies the power to their freedom. Based on the social influences of female bonding, he confirms the recognition of the weight of their togetherness on society in the following: "*An initial message has reached out to society that women are stronger when they are together*" (Majumdar, 2023: 214)

Furthermore, he generalizes its influences in his perception of women's communion as the main solution to their multiple plights. Initiated in patriarchal-dominated communities as exemplified in *Sula* and *The Women of Brewster*, it saves them from any form of subjugation inflicted because of gender. Such a point directs his view of a women-only community. For him: "*it is a fact that they have always been neglected and excluded*" (Majumdar, 2023**:** 214).

Female communion thus restitutes the social abilities society has denied them which in turn places them on the lowest scale dictating their view of themselves, their place and their contribution to the society but also their rights. Therefore, women's togetherness extracts them from the oppressive cage, unmutes them and arms them with the courage to fight for their inclusion. In Majumdar's words it "*raises confidence in them to raise their voice and concerns and their power*"(Majumdar, 2023**:** 215).

In addition, contemporary testimonies also reinforce the healing assets of women's togetherness in its dynamic with the various social advantages they procure. United, women learn about the difficulties they come through in general, otherwise they broaden their knowledge of their various experiences in society. Female bonding continuous marvels reveal that their alliance saves them beyond their immediate circles, meaning the family and surrounding community as emphasized by Morrison and Naylor. They have curing effects in any environment where the feminine character faces difficulties because of gender prejudices. Different stories gathered from Youstory illustrate the way women's bonds grow marvellous around the world**.** According to Vanshika Goenka "*Women communities become spaces where women can share career advice and create opportunities for each other, together*" (Youstory: 2020). Despite being a safe place, female communities facilitate their openness to the world be it personal, social or professional.

Naylor as well as Morrison picture Black women's togetherness as the peaceful nest where each one's social burden is attenuated. In their differences in terms of experience, age, environmental realities, social and sexual penchant, women's togetherness heals and comforts. It is the power uniting them to their final victory as symbolized in Mattie's dream where women of all ages, different social and sexual penchant, suppress the wall of exclusion, discrimination and abuse. The views of both authors as far as the impact of female community is concerned are confirmed by various contemporary evidences either in their effects or their adaptability to their social plights. However, despite the marvels of women's communion, both authors call attention to possible hindrances to social liberation which connection among and between black women only constitutes the open gate. In the various affiliations, the interference of men remains a threat. That alarm from both is also going to be considered in their context and dynamic.

Patriarchal Institutions : a Hindrance toward Women's Self-fulfillment

Seeing black women's struggles against social barriers imposed by race and gender, Morrison and Naylor have not just proposed women's communion in their diversity as their healer and a powerful force to overthrow the tendency they, at the same time, call attention toward its eventual impediments. Among those stands the patriarchy. The latter, according to Aparna Dixit, is "*a system of male domination that subordinates women* " (Dixit, 2020: 86-87). Various realities and institutions have so far privileged men over women in societies. In the American one, particularly the Black community, women of color are subjected to a double patriarchal power. They are under the domination of a dominated group, to mean Black men. As a consequence, their situation as others of an "other" becomes inherent in their social conditions, even connection among themselves.

Black men's influence on their gender counterparts' lives is of concern to female writers seeking to trace a way to salvation, especially Naylor and Toni Morrison. As such, in her foreword of *Sula* particularly, Morrison questions the facets of female bondings in case men do not meddle: "*What is friendship between women when unmediated by men?*" (Morisson, 2004:xiii). There, she highlights the impacts of men's inclusion on women's empowerment.

Such an inquiry constitutes an alert toward men's intrusion and its harms. Therefore, Morrison's idea behind the word "men" is decorticated, named and pointed out for its outcomes. In Dr. Shabeer Ahmad et *al*.'s interpretation, it consists of marriage and class as institutions embodying men's power over women's communion. Otherwise, "*the black women need to be on guard against all those forces which endanger the consistency of their mutual companionship*" (Shabeer Ahmad et *al.,*2020: 322*)*. As for Dr. Ravichand that inquiry stands for how patriarchal institutions represent a danger to female friendship**.** (Ravichand**,** 2017)

In *Sula* and *The Women of Brewster Place*, both authors exemplify the impacts of the patriarch through different literary processes to emphasize their threat toward women's freedom. In Morrison's work, the character Jude personifies the patriarchal institution and its influences on Sula and Nel's compagnonship. Morrison's different portrayal of that relationship after the introduction of Jude reveals how female connections wane when faced with black men's implicit or explicit power. Jude characterizes institutions which empower men and affect women and their relationships.

First, the circumstances in which Jude decided to get married reveal women's conditions dependence on men. Through Nel, Morrison stresses the ways dynamics in women's lives rest on their male counterparts, particularly on their desire to prove their manhood which, in turn, is emperiled by their "other", the white man. In its social significance, marriage thus illustrates how women are alternatives and scapegoats in men's frustrations. Unable to pride himself on having built the road, he took the manageable option of marrying Nel. The role of authority black men are dispossessed of faced with the white one is revived in his decision to marry.

However, for Morrison that privilege is not just limited to the female character, it overthrows her social links. She then pictured men's authority's different impacts firstly, in her balance between love and friendship in Nel's character*: "Greater than her friendship was this new feeling of being needed by someone who saw her singly*" (Morrison, 2004:119)**.** There, Morrison portrays the psychological stage of Nel's detachment. Attributing the weak tie to friendship, Morrison accentuates how love personified in Jude or the patriarch puts a barrier between the girls. As a consequence, their togetherness which nurtured them so far faces a divided line, because that love relation, in its characteristics, favors Nel's experience of being cherished separately from Sula. Otherwise, that comparison stands for Nel and Jude versus Nel and Sula and her impression reflects each one's weight in her life. To sum up, Morrison's higher appreciation of love reveals a shortage in female characters' affinity once men intermeddle.

Nel's attachment to Jude hides her distance from Sula, making Jude the symbol of whatever appreciates and is appreciated by Nel only. Therefore, the balance between love personified by Jude and friendliness facets in Sula epitomizes men's interference. Then their marriage celebration officializing male authority foreshadows the obvious separation between the girls in Sula's departure from Mediallon and Nel's life with Jude. Morrison's connection between Nel and Jude's relationship to Sula and Nel's friendship represents how harming is men's control toward female communion.

In its power to resist time, space, distance and circumstances, Morrison confirms female bonding fragility faced with the patriarchy when it splits once again due to men's power. Sula's relationship with Jude disqualifies their strong affinity forever. His love is the experience both girls cannot share or Nel does not allow to. Once again Jude's interference, otherwise the symbol of the patriarchy decides on Nel and Sula's

affinity.

In addition, the character of Hannah helps Morrison highlight how women fail to enjoy the assets of friendship because of their regard toward men. Women's attitude regarding Hannah confirms the patriarchal influence on female friendship particularly when embodied in marriage institution. In the community, women could bearly develop an affinity with her because of her particular interest in their men, she threatened their marriages. Morrison's various references to her links with women through "*seldom and short-lived*" or "*one-time friend*" (Morrison, 2004:115) show how men are among the main conditions for women's unsuccessful communion**.**

Just like Morrison, Naylor represents the social hierarchy's influential impact on women's communion. For Naylor, the main peril in women's bonding is men. In Brewster Place, where Black women are the respite for their female companions, men's influence always defeats that strong bond between women. It is the violence the women of Brewster Place inflict on one another. Through marriage or plan, men are the main threat to women's peaceful social nest.

In the different affinities which particularities reside in women's differences ranging from age, perceptions, personality and experience, questions related to men mostly raise tensions. In Naylor, the patriarchy not only overshadows friendship but also reduces its assets into a conflictual background. Etta and Mattie Micheal's affinity in which the typical sisterhood is pictured, surviving Etta's different scapes from societies as well as Mattie's separation from her family, illustrates such an influence.

Among the ups and downs of both ladies' lives and affinity, giggles, comfort and help rescued till Reverend Wood joined their circle. There, Etta's project to seduce and have him marry her shapes her regard toward Mattie's suggestion. For the first time, their differences reflect discord. Etta's desire to follow Wood causes her misinterpretation of Mattie's idea. In the various ways she considers Mattie's words, Naylor highlights how the patriarch through Wood negatively impacts women's communion. His influence is embodied in how Etta characterizes their distinct views and categorizes each other in terms of decency and indecency. With the latter word, Etta ranges Mattie among people eying her up according to her social penchant.

In the same way as Jude and Reverend Wood, Eugene symbolizes an explicit patriarch in Mattie and Ciel's relationship. He overtly makes use of his authority as Ciel's boyfriend and Serena's father to act against their friendship. His ideas toward Mattie are not always favorable to the women's companionship. His recurring observations blurred Ciel to the extent she accused Mattie of hating her man.

Patriarchal structures thus keep sharp their influence on Black women in America. Unable to save them from the white community's racism, men manifest their frustration caused by their inferior position compared to white males on their gender counterparts. Despite such a burden, they threaten any of their conduct toward empowerment among which the strength of their togetherness. In Black men's way of binding women as the scapegoats of their inferiority or through their authority in marriage links, their influence on women's self and social fulfilment gives right to Keisa N. Blain affirmation cited in Majumdar's work according to which : "*the biggest challenge for women in the United States is patriarchy* "(Majumdar, 2023**:** 220).

In the various social representations of men in *Sula* and *The Women of Brewster Place*, both authors paint the patriarchy's destructive power over women's bond through marriage institutions or even love. Male characters in the two novels embody the weapon toward women's connection destruction. Suppose their intrusion gives place to arguments and disputes in Naylor, Morrison portrays it as the shovel digging women's gulf. They bear negative vibes to the affinity which redeems, heals and provides social peace and resilience. That social power starting in the familial or conjugal circle requires women's attentiveness toward their ability to hinder their inclusion in other spheres as economic or professional inclusion.

Nevertheless, the patriarchy is not the only social brake toward women's power, Black female characters fixed self-definition also impacts their affinities.

Social Expectations : A Divided Line toward Women's Togetherness

In *The Women of Brewster Place* and *Sula*, Morrison and Naylor focus on the healing assets of female friendship to picture it as a means to rescue Black women. They, at the same time, call attention to social brakes such as patriarchial institutions embodied in men's influences on their communion and also how their internalized conditions as women and blacks surviving in the American circle shape realities or even social duties hindering their empowerment.

Social and economic conditions as well as stereotypes characteristics of colored people in America constitute the building blocks of the specimen of the Black female character. Evolving in a society where their race lives under the shadow of the white dominant and ruling society, Black women also bear the burden of gender. In their community, they are the "*slaves of the slaves*" (Padhi, 2014:38). They are thus positioned on the lowest scale compared to white women and black men. Such different characters shape the prototype of Black women in America. Serving the white community, they assume familial roles as wives and mothers in the Black one.

Those realities placing women of color at the inferior scale make up their perception of feminity. They consider their self-worth when they are in a position to help, to serve others. That social duty women appropriate themselves because of the social conditions they evolve since slavery is in various ways defined to highlight the way stereotypes build social and self-expectations for Black women. For Aniyah Marie Daley, it stands for self-sacrifice. She bases her conceptualization of women's condition on the fact that they are very concerned about caring for others. For her: "*the demands of Black women are so excessive that they have lost touch with their self-regarding virtues, causing them to have ethical imbalances within themselves* ". (Daley, 2023: 65). That detachment from their character determines the regard on their self-worth shaped by how they are useful to others, meaning "*women consider themselves good and valuable if they are able to care for others*" (Daley, 2023: 65).

Those expectations found their social regards as mammy, to mean the motherlike woman or the matriarch. Thus their idea of womanhood hovers within the sphere gender, class and race restrict them. In her study of "Women's Life Writings", Vallier highlights how such conditions make marriage and motherhood the main demonstration of womanhood among African-American women. Based on women in their diversity, his consideration of their condition linked to history reveals the fact that "*many of these women wished to marry and have children. At the turn of the twentieth century, motherhood remained important in the lives of women of color*" (Vallier, 2023: 56)

That same perception is supported by Collins' idea of women's empowerment in Black Feminist Thought. On his side, he focuses mainly on the impacts on their social liberation. For him, the interconnection of race class and gender, defining black women's position as well as their view of feminity constitute the same brake toward women's empowerment. Since in their desire to fulfil their duty, they tighten the chains of social subserviency.

Such social roles women attributed themselves to, which in turn shape their regard of marriage and motherhood as the representation of womanhood are in Morrison and Naylor pictured as the main hindrance toward their social liberation. In both authors' works, they highlight how black female characters' inflexibility regarding their self-definition threatens their empowerment embodied in their communion. First, on Eva's conclusion after inquiring about Sula's plan for marriage and motherhood, Morrison confirms how familial roles stand as the main illustration of Black womanhood, in other words, their ideal of normalcy in women's lives. "*When you gone to get married ? You need to have some babies. It'll settle you.*"

(Morrison, 2004: 92-93). Despite Eva's experience with BoyBoy and her sacrifices to bring up her children, her opinion toward familial roles let us perceive it as Black women's main lot.

In *Sula*, Morrison represents how Black women's condition limits their view of feminity to roles attributed to, present disadvantages toward their communion. Sula's different regard causes various social treatments, particularly from ladies in the community. Her distinct approach to feminity consisting of her desire to make herself condemns her. Her option to care for herself makes her the social plague, the excluded. Contrary to the mass, she chooses to escape Black women's "self-sacrifice" (Daley, 2023), and break the chain of oppression in some way. As a woman and Black, her alternative to focusing on her self-fulfilment separates her from Women's community. Her acts' divergence from women's view of their social expectations makes her a social outcast. In place of marriage, she uses men for her social convenience: "*She went to bed with men as frequently as she could* " (Morrison, 2004**:**122)

Then in Morrison's portrayal of her distinct penchant as a main difference she and Nel cannot enjoy together, she emphasizes how women's self definition which turns into social expectations impacts their communion. Nel and Sula's relationship has so far confirmed the power of divergences. However, Sula's alternative is the difference Nel cannot swallow, it constitutes their divided line. Having settled herself through marriage with Jude and motherhood, Nel from then on represents the community which regards Black women's worth through their conformity to their ideal of womanhood and condemns female behavior contrasting the expected one. Their distinct views of womanhood represent a gulf in their friendship, even if their differences were hitherto the basis for their togetherness.

Sula's option for independence and self contrasting to Nel constitute the only difference both girls cannot enjoy. In Nel's representation of a black and colored woman, she is deprived of that choice Sula adopts. Apart from her familial role, any other option is not worth it for her. She characterizes Sula's freedom which cannot give way to her aspirations. Their final discussion and the way each one sticks to their points reveals how the female characters' empowerment through communion declines when faced with the expectation of common self-definition or even homogenization.

In *The Women of Brewster Place*, Naylor also pictures those same social expectations, turned into women's duty as the main divergence between her personages. Characterized in The Two and particularly their option for lesbianism, Naylor shows how a different approach to Black women's perception deprives the female character of their merit but also handicaps the potential of their togetherness.

First, in women's impression of The Two, particularly their social environment, Naylor paints how Black female characters weigh feminity in women's relations with men. Lorraine and Theresa are, first of all, eyed up in their relationship with men. The Two's disinterest toward the masculine figure epitomizing their role as a carer, regarded as a break to normalcy and unnatural stands as the confirmation of Black women's view of womanhood consisting of their preoccupation to meet ideals.

In Brewster Place, Naylor portrays how they weaken the tie which could lead to their final triumph as victims via women's response to the TWO's indifference toward expectancies,. The various ailments their community heals are sacrificed for the girls' different penchant. As a consequence, any step against the Two represents a pace back toward their salvation. Through Sophie's behavior at the meeting, Naylor emphasizes how their consideration of differences hinders setting up their associations, they abandon their common lot and give place to questions of decency and indecency which consist of each social orientation. And also their campaign against their lifestyle empowers the patriarchal domination and oppression embodied in the gang's rape of Lorraine and the latter's death.

In both authors' representation of Black women's perception of their role, they paint how it causes social division in women's community. The two novelists picture the clan of Us consisting of characters

conforming to expectations and Them, those setting another alternative than marriage and motherhood. In Morrison, it is Sula's interest in making herself versus Nel, the feminine figure personifying black women's common destiny in Medaillon. In Naylor's work, women's regard toward The Two's lifestyle gives place to exclusion and social isolation.

Thus, Morrison and Naylor, while depicting the impacts of women's high regard for dissimilarities, call their attention to the extent to which their expectations resultant of their condition impact their empowerment. Their ideal of feminity imposing a fixed self-definition shapes their refusal to consider the distinct experiences and penchant causing their self–inflicted oppression. Referring to Daley, Black women's empowerment requires African American women to make an effort to overcome the social constructs standardizing their experience, what she names after: " *unconscious pattern of attitude* " (Daley, 2023:215)

Black Women's Disposition in the United States :

Regarding Black women's position in the United States, they have staggered various steps in their fight for equal rights. Not only are they readjusting their self-definition, departing themselves from social constructs aiming at keeping them in their stage of servility, but also they are becoming more flexible regarding their condition. Their diverse fights reflect their various experiences as women standing for a common lot as victims of racism, sexism, homophobia and classism. The heterogeneity Morrison and Naylor portray as a gulf becomes an advantage in their fight enabling them to engage in different civil rights movements.

In "Black Women's of Today Society", Toya Love lists those different paces women have stepped in their fight. For her: "*The Black Woman of Today's society is trying to transcend the stereotypes that have followed her for many years: mammy, matriarch, sexual siren or Jezebel and the welfare mother or queen*" (Toya, 2020:4). She then highlights their rise in America illustrating it by their various and dynamic achievements : *"We have become first ladies, academy award winners, grammy winners, Nobel prize recipients, the list goes on. We are exuding "black girl magic"* (Toya, 2020:4). Furthermore, quoting Ladson-Billings, she lists women's strength driving to their such an accomplishment :

But more than just exuding magic, Black women, according to Gloria Ladson-Billings; "They are strong. They are smart. They are brave. They are resilient. They are capable. They are so much more than what society claims they are. They are responsible for almost every civil rights movement that tackles racism, sexism, homophobia, classism, and ability discrimination. What makes them more than magic is that they have not allowed all of the things they are up against to deter them from continuing the fight for justice and rights. (Toya, 2020:4)

Nevertheless, Black women in America have not fully achieved their goal consisting in erasing discrimination based on race and gender. The wage gap is still significant, making it difficult for them to meet both ends. According to the *National Women's Law Center (*News One Staff, 2023), Black women make only 67 cents for every dollar earned by white and non-Hispanic men. Compared to Women "*Black women earn on average* $5,500 less per *year and experience higher unemployment and poverty rates than the U.S. average for women*" (Chinn et al., 2023: 213). A condition that Ashley's testimony of her experience as a Black woman in the American society certifies. For her: qualifications and experience are not enough for a Black woman in America, she has had to fight for career opportunities and a fair salary. Added to such difficulties, they still face discrimination, called out names and so on.

Besides, health disparities constitute another challenge for Black Women in the United States. Research by Perry demonstrates that the intersection of race and gender persist on their condition related to health, both physical and mental. Statistics reveal that Black women totalize the higher mortality rate. According to Perry "*each year approximately 700 women die in the United States from causes related to pregnancy or childbirth. The death rate for Black women is three times higher than the rate for White women*

” (Perry, 2020: 2).

In addition, they are underrepresented in the political field, particularly in the highest offices, despite the rise of a generation of female political leaders. Structural racism and sexism hinder their political inclusion. Compared to Black men, who have been elected officials for generations, Black women have the higher eligibility voters. Equating White women in the number of registered voters, Black women are still vastly underrepresented nationally among political candidates, *"making up only 2% of challengers to incumbents"* (Perry, 2020). Therefore, Black women's challenge is not yet over because of their situation in the political field, health and the professional one.

CONCLUSION

In Sula and *The Women of Brewster Place*, Morrison and Naylor join African-American women in their fight against racism, sexism and classism. Both authors suggest female bonding as a means to face their triple subjugation in American society. They portray the power of Black Women's community over their social, economic and psychological conditions.

Suppose Morrison focuses on how friendship helps two young girls escape the immeadiate environmental pressure and focus on their ideal despite their distinct personalities and education Naylor, on her side, emphasizes the power of women's community in its dynamic. In its diversity ranging from age, class and experience female bonding constitutes a social force, enabling them to nurture one another. It supports their social plight as Black and women in the American society. Female bonding bears various faces such as sisterhood and mother-daughter relations and heals any Black woman's ailment. Both authors also highlight differences as a capital basis, strengthening them in any circumstances.

However, the two authors draw attention to the negative impacts of men's intrusion represented through patriarchal institutions such as love alliances, or marriage. In their different social position, men threaten women's peaceful communion and healing assets. On their side, Women are called toward flexibility regarding their roles. They need to depart from a self-definition homogenizing their social penchant and sexual orientation, which in turn weaken their communal force, otherwise, their internalized stereotypes hinder their empowerment.

Considering Black women's rise in various fields in America, the salutary impact of their joint force to fight for their inclusion confirms both authors' belief in Black women's communal strength as their social liberator. Nevertheless, there is still a long way toward breaking the wall race, class and gender erects to their liberation. Believing in Black women's power to untie the chain of gender and race, they are called to unite their force and push themselves to the highest political offices to end up with racism and problems related.

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