

Characters' Cultural Contrast in Toni Morrison's *Tar Baby*

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Abstract—The examination of Toni Morrison's *Tar Baby* enables me to discover how Green and Jadine's love relationship turns into a nightmare because of their cultural differences and family members' opposition to their union. After growing up in the white community, Jadine, a black female character is later shocked to find out that her way of behaving differs from that of her black-beloved partner who is attached to the black culture. Seeing this difference, she decides to fight vainly for the recovery of her black lost culture rejected by her white counterparts who are strongly opposed to the conception of racial mixing extolled by black leaders like Martin Luther King and Malcolm X, to quote only two. Through Jadine, the authoress shows not only how Whites urge Blacks to reject their own culture by accepting theirs, but also how difficult it is for them to share a love affair with their kinsmen or kinswomen who are bound to the white culture.

Keywords— Characters, Love relationship, Culture, Difference, Fight.

I. INTRODUCTION

This article examines characters' cultural contrast in Toni Morrison's *Tar Baby*. Published in 1981, this narrative is about Green and Jadine's love affair in France and the United States. They are known as black individuals with different cultures. The male character named Green embodies the black culture whereas Jadine who is his sweetheart represents the white one for growing up in a white community. After spending so many years of cohabitation with Whites, she finds it better to recover her lost black identity by having a love affair with Green who shows his attachment to the black culture through his way of behaving.

My choice of *Tar Baby* for this exploration is mainly justified by Toni Morrison's portrayal of black characters' cultural contrast which makes it difficult for them to go further in their love relationships. According to Allan Mannet, who initially examined it, "*Toni Morrison's Tar Baby is a novel about disputes and conflicts rooted in traditional biases and prejudices that exist on race, class, and gender levels in a capitalistic society*".¹ As for Junior Carson, "*Tar Baby shows how some of Morrison's characters are presented as victims of their white peers' racist system in a land ruled by Whites*".² These reviewers have critically analyzed the authoress's novel by revealing the racist atmosphere observed between Blacks and Whites in the United States. I am, however, interested in showing how Jadine vainly struggles to recover her lost black identity in a society dominated by Whites through her love affair which urges me to concentrate on the answer to the following question: To what is Toni Morrison's *Tar Baby* the

portrayal of Blacks' social experience in the United States? I hypothesize that the authoress's presentation of Jadine as a black female character molded by the white culture and Green as the embodiment of all those Blacks who are still attached to the black culture, attests of her endeavors to account for Blacks' social experience in this great nation.

Knowing that the novel examined throws light on the social experience of Blacks on the American social, I find it necessary to resort to the sociological and the psychological approaches to better conduct the above hypothesis. The sociological approach helps me examine the kinds of social relationships that characters have with their fellows in their respective societies, for "*art is not created in a vacuum; it is the work not simply of a person, but of an author fixed in time and space, answering to a community*" (Krutch, quoted by Scott Wilbur: 1962, 123). The psychological approaches which is the application of Freudian theories to all the literary process, from the mind of the writer and the motives of the characters he creates to the reactions of the reader, enables me to analyze the characters' wounds deriving from their cultural differences, because according to Freud: "*Literary Naturalism, especially French, presents the image of man as victim of environment and or biology*" (Freud, quoted by Scott Wilbur, *ibid.*, 69).

Two main points are discussed in this article: The first is characters' cultural contrast in the white man's world. The second tackles the impact of this cultural contrast on characters' love affairs.

II. CHARACTERS' CULTURAL CONTRAST

In Toni Morrison's *Tar baby*, Green and Jadine are presented as two black Americans whose culture differs from that of each other because of their social settings. While the first grew up in the United States, especially in the black community with his family members who taught him a lot about the black culture, the second grew up in the community of Whites in Paris with the ignorance of the black culture. After killing his wife accidentally, Green runs away from the United States to Paris where he meets Jadine. Their first encounter, the novel reads, happens the day he is caught by Sydney, hiding in the closet of a white lady for fear of being arrested, jailed or killed by the police because of his crime committed and his status of being a paperless foreigner. When some Whites express their opinion about his fate, the narrator explains that "*Jadine said nothing. She did not dare*" (*TB*, p. 67). This means that Jadine refuses to participate in the arrest

or killing of her black fellow, for she sees him as a young black man capable of being her beloved partner in the future.

The novel reveals that after having a bath, Green who “looked like a gorilla” (TB, p. 111) because of his black skin color, appears handsome. This new physical appearance finally urges Jadine to fall in love with him: “Besides that fear and the fear of fear, there was another authentic loathing that she felt for the man. With him she was in strange waters. She had not seen a Black like him in ten years” (TB, p. 108). After being attracted by each other’s beauty, Jadine finds it better to have Green for husband in order to recover her lost black culture. For, she thinks that being in touch with him as his beloved partner will enable her to learn more about this culture viewed as a heritage left to them by their ancestors. Toni Morrison’s mention of this female black character’s attachment to Green informs the reader about the participation of black women in the fight for their heritage in the United States. Jadine’s deep love for Green evidenced through the sentence “there was another authentic loathing that she felt for the man”, attests of her proudness to belong to the black race in spite of her adopted culture pictured as the consequence of the white man’s supremacy over Blacks in this great nation.

What the reader may find a bit shocking about this love adventure is the way Jadine falls in love with Green without even questioning about their cultural differences. For, while she behaves after a fashion of Whites because she grew up in the white community, her beloved partner whose parents are black bloodily, behaves in an African way and knows more about the racist system which gangrenes the American society: “Well, you are. Like you were just born. Where are your family? Home, I guess. You don’t know? I haven’t been back in a long time. Where in Florida are you from? Eloë. Eloë? What on earth is that? A town? A town, yeah” (TB, p. 147). These interrogations which inform the reader about Green’s origin are not particular to him, but common to millions of Blacks who were taken against their will to the United States where they were turned into slaves, as confessed by the historians Tindall and Shi in these terms: “They came from lands as remote from each other as Angola and Senegal, the West coast of Africa (...) They were packed tightly together in slave ships and subjected to a 4- 6-week Atlantic passage so brutal that one in seven captives died on route” (Tindall and Shi: 1989, 46).

What is true is that Jadine’s eagerness to have Green for husband is that of a woman who thinks that she has found a man of her life capable of meeting her demands. Being from the black race like Green, she certainly thinks that her beloved partner’s family members will be happy to celebrate their wedding. But what she seems to ignore is that her adopted white culture will constitute a great hindrance to their love affair, because her sweetheart and his family members are still heart-wounded with regard to the ill-treatments inflicted on them by Whites in the United States. While they consider themselves as human being who deserve good treatments, they white counterparts see them as second zone citizens. This wrongful view over Blacks is therefore what makes many of them reject Whites when it comes to the choice of a partner to get married with.

Jadine’s motivation to share part of her intimate life with Green recalls that of a female character named Sylvia whose marriage with Matthew in Erich Segal’s *Only Love* (1997), fails because of her father’s opposition to their union. “While Matthew thinks that he, as an American man, can fall in love with any woman whatever her origin, beliefs, or social position, other characters like Silvia’s parents do not share the same view” (N’zambi-Mikoulou & Massala: 2020, 181). After several years of cohabitation Matthew is later shocked and humiliated to find out that his beloved Silvia is forced by her father to get married with Nico, a rich male character who is Italian like her: “Wasn’t there an Italian girl? My eyes were imploring him. I mean, there had to be. Silvia was with me; I know she was. She’s beautiful, dark-haired, about five foot ten. I’m sorry, Tammuz said again with surgical certainty, but there wasn’t anyone else on the plane” (Segal: 1997, 129). But what is worth mentioning is that despite Green’s cultural contrast with his fellows in Paris, he ends up discovering this city thanks to Mrs. Valerian’s help. This white woman shows her love for him by letting him stay with her until his return to the United States. Toni Morrison’s endeavors to inform the reader about such a solidarity which should be observed among all people regardless of their racial belonging, is nowhere more evident than in the following passage wherein one sees how Gideon, another black male character devotes his time to showing the town to Green:

Mr. Green alias Son drifted off with Gideon and Thérèse in the Prix de France. With country people’s pride in a come-from-far guest, they paraded the American Negro through the streets of town like a king. Gideon even got one of his friends to give them a free taxi ride to the outskirts of town, and then they had to walk and walk and walk up into the hills to Place de Vent before they reached the powder pink house where he lived with Thérèse and, sometimes, Alma Estée (TB, p. 128).

The authoress compares Green to a “King” to show how a black man should normally be treated or welcomed in a given community. Despite the questions put to him by Jadine who behaves after a fashion of Parisians, Green’s origin is recognized through his English accent which sounds American: “An excellent solution. Excellent.” Valerian chuckled. He seemed to be enjoying himself thoroughly. “You’re not local, are you? Your accent is American. Am I correct?” “Yeah” (TB, p. 79). He is completely happy to find out that his American identity is recognized by Whites outside of the United States. The sentence “your accent is American” gives more strength to him to fight for his recognition as a full American citizen in the United States. From his encounter with Mrs. Valerian, Green learns more about his place in this “land of justice and democracy”. He no longer considers himself as an outsider, but as a true citizen of the American nation. One understands that helping a black walk over the streets of a given city is a sign of love. It is indeed thanks to this kind of love that Green ends up helping Mrs. Valerian heal her disease with his dying plants which are often neglected by the majority of Whites. For, while Blacks’ culture leads them to resort to traditional medicine in order to

find solutions to their problems of health, Whites' culture, however, urges the latter to be attached to the modern medicine:

What's the matter with it?" asked the man. "Looks sick." Valerian turned the pot around for a different view. "I don't know. It's been in bud like that for I don't know how long. They won't open no matter what I do." "Shake it," said the man. "They just need jacking up." And he walked over to the cyclamen and with thumb and middle finger flicked the stems hard as though they were naughty students. "What the hell are you doing?" Valerian reached out to grab the man's hand. "Don't worry. They'll be in bloom tomorrow morning." "If they are, I'll buy you a brand-new suit. If they die, I'll have Sydney chase you back into the sea (TB, p. 127).

Through this passage, Morrison wants her reader to understand that African Americans are attached to the nature left to them as a heritage by their ancestors. One knows that when these ancestors were taken to America during slavery to work as slaves on plantations, they came with their traditional culture and mastery of the nature thanks to which they used to take care of themselves. This means that the issue of characters' cultural contrast raised by Toni Morrison in her work of fiction is an actual-historical fact recognized by millions of Americans in the United States. It is, as a matter of fact, far from being from her personal imagination. Her mention of the sentences "if they are, I'll buy you a brand-new suit. If they die, I'll have Sydney chase you back into the sea" attests of her efforts to show how Whites feel superior to Blacks. For, such sentences inform the reader about their will and capacity to decide on the destiny of their black peers who are taken for granted because of their blackness and cultural belonging.

The novel reads that after fleeing for safety and freedom out of the United States because of his wife's death, Green's life remains unstable for eight years to the point that he finds it useless to get involved in a new love relationship. But Jadine's attractive-physical appearance ends up urging him to fall in love with her: "I've been at sea off and on for eight years. All over. Dry cargo mostly. Wrecks." "Married?" "Yes, ma'am, but she's dead, too. Before they put me in jail, I had that vehicle issue and had to leave Florida when she passed away. That's when I started fooling around on docks" (TB, p. 138). The sentence "before they flew me in jail" was the constant chorus heard from Blacks. For, "jail" was one of the forms of punishment for Blacks in the United States. In the novel, for example, one realizes that Green gets out of this "great nation" to avoid being jailed, not because he has accidentally killed his wife, but because he is black. For, committing a crime and being black at the same time is a byword for digging one's own grave in advance, as John Calvin Marshall in Julius Lester's *And All Our Wounds Forgiven* argues: "Killing a nigger really didn't qualify as a murder. You could only accuse somebody of murder if they killed a human being" (Lester: 1994, 111). Cheyenne who has been Green's lover has left unhealed wounds shortly after her death. Green's short

moment of love affair with her has compelled him to find a new woman to fulfill that emptiness:

He must have been looking for somebody specific. The chippy. The fast-ass, said Thérèse. For this reason, he went directly to her room. He spotted her from the hills because he knew she was here. Maybe he'll run her out of here. Back to the States, eh? Or France even. Where that big box came from. Maybe he's not a rider. Maybe he's an old boyfriend and he the one sent her the box, Gideon. Hold on. You going wild (TB, p. 92).

This passage may leave the reader with the impression that Green's coming on the Island, precisely at Mrs. Valerian's house is a prepared plan. It is, as a matter of fact, a random action viewed as a chance given to him by God to meet Jadine. In spite of their differences in terms of culture, because they behave and act differently, his love for her is undoubtable. Jadine's life differs from that of her black peers for the simple reason that she has not grown up within the black community. This means that she did not have the chance to grow up within a parental atmosphere. After losing her black parents at the age of five or six years old, she traveled abroad for studies: "Mademoiselle Childs...graduate of the Sorbonne...an accomplished student of art history" (TB, p. 99). Toni Morrison's mention of this quotation is viewed as a way for her to make the reader understand that unlike some Whites who consider Blacks as illiterate or brainless individuals, black Americans are not only interested in the education sphere, but are also able to achieve high positions thanks to their studies. By holding a high position in education, Jadine becomes a heroine and a light for all her black peers who still ignore the importance of studies. But her current culture deriving from the education that she receives daily from Whites is likely to constitute a great hindrance to the evolution of her love affair with Green, for the latter's family members are not ready yet to accept such an education which they consider as a way for Whites to express their supremacy over Blacks. What they seem to ignore is that referring to the history of African Americans in the United States, education was an important issue which helped them reach their goal, as evidenced by the historian Booker T. Washington who ended up creating his "Tuskegee Institution":

The education that the American Negroes most need for the next fifty or one hundred years should be mostly, but not exclusively along scientific and industrial lines. When I say scientific, I mean science so applied that it will enable the black boy who comes from a plantation where ten bushels of corn were raised, to return to the farm and raise fifty bushels on the same acre (Washington: 1898, 71).

Similarly, in Alex Haley's *Mama Flora's Family*, a black male character named Ned viewed as the double of Frederick Douglass also shows his attachment to the issue of education by devoting his time to teaching young Blacks in the South of the United States:

Ned was working on a farm in Kansas. He worked in the day: He rode a horse to school at night. This went on five, six years. When he finished, they gave him a

job teaching there. He stayed there till that the war started in Cuba, and then he joined the army. After the war he came back here. He wanted to teach at home now (Haley: 1999, 80).

What is worth retaining is that in Toni Morrison's *Tar Baby*, Jadine, a black girl crammed with the white man's culture, has succeeded in awaking her black sisters and brothers through her presence in one of the most prestigious schools called "La Sorbonne". One understands that Toni Morrison portrays Jadine as a black female character whose perception of life differs from that of her black peers. This perception which is not shared by the majority of Blacks who grew up in the black community finally leads a character named Michael to call into question her choices in life: "*My first year at college? He was there and we used to talk. He was...oh...clearheaded—independent it seemed to me. Actually, we didn't talk; we quarreled. About why I was studying art history at that snotty school*" (TB, p. 61). What the authoress raises here is the question of Blacks' choice of subjects with regard to the education given to them in the white man's world. During his encounter with Jadine, Michael who is the son of Valerian finishes up having a debate about Jadine's choice of "Art history" which, according to Green, has no link with her own culture. Such a choice of field evidences Jadine's cultural background. In spite of her being black bloodily and physically, her lifestyle is closed to that of Whites. For, the novel reveals that she thinks, speaks, dresses and behaves in a European manner, as noticed by her aunt Ondine who is astonished when finding her naked in her bedroom: "*You should put some clothes on and cover yourself up. I thought you asked me to come up and see your coat, not your privates*" (TB, p. 74).

Through Jadine and Ondine, one observes the conflict of cultures. Ondine who is rooted in the black tradition looks at Jadine's new lifestyle as a form of rejection of her own black culture. Her reproach to her here is a way to call her back to the African American culture which, she believes, is better than the European one. It is undoubtedly because of this European culture that Jadine ends up considering her own boyfriend as a rapist when he tries to have sex with her: "*You rape me and they'll feed you to the alligators. Count on it, nigger. You good as dead right now. Rape? Why you little white girls always think somebody's trying to rape you? White? She was startled out of fury. I'm not...you know I'm not white!*" (TB, p. 103). Jadine's consideration of Green as a rapist intertwines with that of little white girls who have the reputation of accusing their black counterparts of being brutal to them after a certain period of cohabitation. Through the word "nigger" which had and still has a negative connotation, Jadine shows her rejection of her own black identity. For, she looks at young black men as a threat because of the influence of the white man's culture. Such a wrongful view of her own black fellows is even shared by characters like Sydney and Ondine who consider themselves as emancipated black citizens, meaning that they should behave after a fashion of their white counterparts viewed as their employers:

Wait a minute. Whose side you on?" "Your side, naturally. Our side. I'm not arguing for him. What I

thought about it was revealed to you last night. All I want is for you to relax. Sydney, he's leaving. However, we are not, and I don't want any significant disagreement between you and Mr. Street regarding where that Negro slept, why it was there, and so on. I want us to remain here. Like we have been (TB, p. 86).

In this passage, Ondine and Sydney are arguing because of the presence of Green who is invited by their white employer. Ondine's interrogation "whose side you on" and Sydney's answer "our side", make the reader understand that in this white employer's house, Blacks are separated in different groups, and Green who has just come is not part of them. By depicting this situation, the authoress shows how some Blacks are ready to reject their black fellows by joining the white man's circle of oppressors, as evidenced by Lani Amhed in these terms: "*Since they separate themselves from the island's native population, they cannot be considered as pure members of the black community, but as mixed with the white culture represented by their employers*".³ What one discovers here is the power of the white man to impose his culture to Blacks who are viewed as inferior individuals because of their blackness. This imposition is therefore what urges some Blacks to espouse the white man's lifestyle in order to be considered as full American citizens. The desire to be considered as full American citizens finally urges some of them to reject their black fellows. This rejection which attests of their attachment to their white counterparts' culture appears a way for them to show their oppressors that they have accepted to do their will, as Malcolm-X confesses it in these terms: "*The white man has taught the black people in this country to hate themselves as inferior, to hate each other, and to be divided against each other*".⁴ Such a hatred raised by Malcolm-X is evidenced by Ondine who, in order to please her white employer, ends up ill-treating her own black fellows:

Can't do it anymore, she thought. Have to chase around too much. Her feet were too sensitive and her ankles too swollen to handle it, so she didn't want to ask Yardman to do it for her, but when he brought four or five young hens tied in a cage, she told him that she only needed one at a time—let the others peck around behind the washhouse and to "wring one of them for me while you're at it" (TB, p. 81).

What Ondine fears is her white mistress's anger against her. It is indeed because of this fear to be punished mercilessly that Sydney also has no alternative than blaming his own wife for passivity in order to please his white mistress. Running a White's house, as a cook and a butler, has given to some characters a certain privilege in comparison to others. For, there are some household tasks that Ondine and Sydney are not supposed to do: "*Well, what you don't have the strength for, Yardman is supposed to do. I don't want you running all over the yard after chickens. Killing them neither. We long past that, Ondine. Long past that*" (TB, p. 81). Such a privilege given to these characters by their employer is also given to Jadine who is hired in Mrs. Valerian's industry thanks to her knowledge in modeling, a job formerly reserved to

Whites. Green, a black male character who is aware of the restraints of this sector for young black girls in the United States, does not hesitate to question about Jadine's secret: "How much? He asked her. Was it a lot? His voice was quiet. What are you talking about? How much what? Dick. That you had to suck, I mean to get all that gold and be in the movies. Or was it pussy? I guess for models it's more pussy than cock" (TB, p. 103).

Jadine who embarks in this shameful industry is seen by her own boyfriend Green and other black characters in the novel as an "uncle tom"; a "traitor" who betrays her own kinsmen and kinswomen. For, sucking another man's "Dick" in public for gold and gaining popularity is for many Blacks a transgression of their customs and tradition. In the black society, these acts are reprimanded. But looking at the advantages these exhibitions offer to her, I mean, integration, acceptance by the white man, and living in luxury houses, Jadine puts a cross on the black culture and espouses the white man's one. The opulence in which they now live is shortly described by the authoress through Ondine's conversation with her husband: "Where do we sleep? Ondine? Me and you? You heard me. We sleep where we're supposed to. Where's that? It's nice down there, Sydney. And you know it is: sitting room, two bedrooms, patio, bath... Jadine sleeps up there" (TB, p. 85).

As it can be seen, the sentence "Jadine sleeps up there" attests of Jadine's proudness to share life with Whites whose culture differs from that of Blacks in many respects. This proudness viewed as the result of the white man's opposition to the conception of racial mixing in the United States, shows not only this black female character's cultural alienation, but more that of many young Blacks in this "so-called democratic nation". It is indeed because of this cultural alienation that some of these young Blacks' parents are often reluctant to give their blessing when it comes to marriages between their children and those of their fellows who are molded by the white culture, as demonstrated in the section hereafter.

III. THE IMPACT OF CHARACTERS' CULTURAL CONTRAST ON THEIR LOVE AFFAIRS

In Toni Morrison's *Tar Baby*, the impact of characters' cultural contrast is observed through Green and Jadine's love relationship. The novel reveals that despite their differences in terms of culture, Green and Jadine end up falling in love with each other. But Jadine who follows the white man's lifestyle in spite of her being black bloodily is rejected by her beloved partner's family members. For the later, she cannot share life with their son because of her incapacity to respect their way of behaving and acting in society. This is to say that her growing up in "Baltimore, Philadelphia and Paris" (TB, p. 148) is one of the main causes which constitute a great hindrance to her love affair with Green who is also rejected by Jadine's aunt because of his being a poor black foreigner caught in the closet: "And machete-hair she don't like it. Tried to keep them apart. But it didn't work. He finds her, swim the whole ocean big, till he finds her, eh? Make machete-hair too mad" (TB, p. 92).

The sentence "machete-hair she don't like it", evidences Ondine's opposition to her niece's love adventure with Green. The latter being black bloodily and physically is not lucky to be considered as a prospective husband for Jadine whose aunt does her best to keep the two lovers distant from each other. Her opposition to their love relationship is reinforced by her desire to have a gentle and civilized white man as a husband for her niece. Such an involvement of family members in the love affair of their daughters or sons is quite similar to what Alex Haley portrays in *Mama Flora's Family* through her female character named Flora who is rejected by her boyfriend's family, the Flemings, because of her blackness. She is chased out of the house and forced to leave the country:

It was a simple arrangement. The Flemings, desperate for a grandchild, had paid handsomely for Flora's baby. To avoid scandal, or any further claim on the child or the family, Flora was to be given twenty-five dollars to go away, to go north, or anywhere, to start a new life for herself (Haley: 1999, 56-57).

Despite her aunt's opposition to her love relationship with Green, Jadine does not yield to it and continues to keep contact with her boyfriend. The influence of the white culture is, in fact, what makes Ondine force her niece to abandon her fiancé in order to get married with a rich man who shares the same lifestyle as her. Ondine is skeptical about Jadine's future in Green's home due to his social class: "He ain't got a dime and no prospect of one" (TB, p. 164). For her, Jadine cannot get married with a poor black man who is viewed as the symbol of inferiority and dirtiness in the United States. Toni Morrison illustrates this category of poor black Americans not only through Green, but more through Gideon who is obliged to steal in order to survive. This act which is even condemned by the Bible is therefore what urges her Mistress to fire him from his job:

Gideon stole apples? Asked Son. Yep. Valerian's back was to them. I caught him red-handed, so to speak. Them, rather. She, Mary, had them stuffed in her blouse. He had some in each pocket. Sydney and Ondine both stopped eating. What did he say? When you caught him? Sydney was frowning. Said he was going to put them back. Valerian rejoined them and chuckled. So that's why they didn't come back to work. Ashamed. Oh, more than that, said Valerian. Much more than that. I fired him. Her too. You what? Ondine almost shouted (TB, p. 173).

Here, Valerian embodies all naughty white people who hire some poor Blacks to work as servants in their homes. When she invites the rest of servants at the table of brotherhood, she does not only have dinner with them, but also conveys a particular message; that of respecting her orders. Gideon's shameful story that has pushed her to fire him is a kind of warning to the rest of Blacks hoping to continue working in the white man's house. Valerian's reaction against this black male character attests of her superior status as a white man who believes that he has no justification to give to a Black when it comes to punishing or beating him. Such a wrongful attitude of Whites over Blacks is certainly what pushes Green's family members to express

their discontent about his desire to have Jadine for wife. But the authoress account for such a desire appears as a way for her to show the participation of young Blacks in the fight for the mixture of culture in the white man's world. While their parents call it into question because of their white counterparts' racist system, their children, however, find it as an exit way to be accepted and considered as true citizens of a world which they think is also theirs because built up the sweet and blood of their ancestors.

But Green's rejection by Ondine is to some extent viewed as the result of his own precipitation with regard to the choice of a woman to get married with. Lovers are often advised that the choice of a given partner should not be made in a hurry, as Jo-Ellan Dimitruis and Marck Mazzarella state: "*Observing people properly takes time. Most people simply don't take enough time to gather information and reflect upon it. Instead, they frequently make critical decisions about people in a hurry, as if life was a game show in which quick answers scored more point*" (Dimitruis and Mazzarella: 1998, 10). This precipitation, far from being from the authoress's personal imagination, recalls Bernhard Schlink's account in *Flights of Love* wherein the reader sees how in "Sugar Peas", Thomas shows his deep love for Veronika without taking time to know her quite well: "*I have met a woman. I mean, I've fallen in love with a woman*" (Schlink: 2001, 151). It is indeed with regard to this kind of precipitation that in Richard Ford's *The Sportswriter*, a female character named X also falls in love with Bascombe, ignoring that he is a true womanizer:

While searching my office desk drawer for a sock full of silver dollars that my mother had left me, X discovered the letters, sat on the floor and read them, and then gave them to me when I came in with a list of missing cameras, radios, and fishing gear. She inquired whether I had anything to say, and when I replied in the negative, she entered the bedroom and started smashing apart her hope chest with a claw hammer and a crowbar. She tore it to bits, then took it to the fireplace and burned it while I stood outside in the yard mooning (Ford: 2001, 15).

In *Tar Baby*, Ondine's opposition to her niece's love adventure with Green evidences some Blacks' readiness to reject their own kinsmen or kinswomen after being molded by the white culture. What motivates her to act as such is nothing else but her desire to live in the white man's world not with her black culture, but with the white one. She knows it in advance that sharing life with a black partner in a country where racism reigns, is a byword for accepting rejection and victimization. Through Green and Jadine's love affair which recalls that of Romeo and Juliet in Shakespeare's fiction, Toni Morrison teaches all lovers how to react when they feel loved or find a true partner. She certainly means that any lover should not leave his or her partner easily, but should fight for the success of their love affair, as shown by Jadine who shows her deep love for Green in spite of her rejection by the latter's family members.

One understands that it is because of their differences in terms of culture that Green and Jadine's love relationship turns into a nightmare. These cultural differences, as portrayed in

the authoress's novel, appear as the consequence of their being born and grown up in different communities. While Jadine who is molded by the white culture has trouble to live after a fashion of Blacks, Green's attachment to the black culture urges his family members to call into question his love adventure with his sweetheart. Toni Morrison's account for characters' cultural contrast appears thus as a reverberating cry for racial mixing not only in the United States and France where the white man takes his black counterparts for granted thanks to his whiteness, but in every part of the world where people's unity is lacking because of their incapacity to valorize their peers' cultures. This account may lead the reader to classify her into the category of committed writers, because she devotes her time to fighting for people's unity by denouncing the problems which prevent the latter from going ahead in their respective societies, as she voices it out herself in these terms: "*If anything I do, in the way of writing novels or If what I write isn't about the village, the community, or you (the African Americans), then it isn't about anything at all*" (Morrison: 1984, 339).

IV. CONCLUSION

At the term of this exploration, I have discovered that Toni Morrison's *Tar Baby* is a revisitation of Americans' social experience. For, through Green and Jadine's love affair which breaks up because of their cultural differences, the authoress draws the reader back to the experience of her black American sisters and brothers' life experience in the United States. Her account for the emancipated black family members who are molded and behave after a fashion of Whites while rejecting their own black culture, attests of the white man's supremacy over Blacks in this great nation. The depiction of Ondine who blames her niece Jadine for dancing naked within her bedroom is a way for Toni Morrison to show the attachment of this black female character to the white culture viewed as the contrary of the black one. This attachment justifies the reason for which her love feelings for Green are objected by the latter's family members.

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- [14]. ² [http://www.en.m.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Junior Carson/Investigating Characters in Toni Morrison's *Tar Baby*](http://www.en.m.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Junior_Carson/Investigating_Characters_in_Toni_Morrison's_Tar_Baby), consulted on May 10th 2025, 5 p.m.
- [15]. ³ <http://www.ebay.com/Lani/Amhed/Racial> Conflicts in the United States, consulted on May 16th 2025, 4 p.m.
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