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Revue scientifique  
de littérature,  
des langues et  
des sciences sociales

ISSN: 2411-6750



Université Félix Houphouët Boigny



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**REVUE SCIENTIFIQUE DE LITTÉRATURE  
DES LANGUES ET DES SCIENCES SOCIALES**



17/2022

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**Indexation:**

**Fatcat (<https://fatcat.wiki/container/qq5brdiztnatfkcb3ce5kxaypi>)**  
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## Éditorial

Bien chers toutes et tous,

Nous revoilà ! Á nos retrouvailles semestrielles !! Avec Germivoire, notre Revue vôtre ! OÙ, de vous à nous et de nous à vous, des échanges sont faits. Dans le cadre scientifique !! OÙ sciences humaines ou d'autres sciences entrent en communion et exposent des résultats de certaines de leurs quêtes générales ou particulières. Résultats qui seront vus et appréciés, espérons-le, par d'autres personnes intéressées par les sujets traités. Puisque Germivoire est une Revue en ligne/online.

Dans le labour de ce cadre ou périmètre cultivable á diverses couches, les récoltes semestrielles présentes se sont révélées variables de saveurs. Et la variété des saveurs donnent un bon goût particulier á ce numéro de Germivoire.

Et ce bon goût particulier vient des récoltes mises ensemble des champs aux parcelles différentes que sont l'allemand, l'anglais, l'espagnol, la géographie, les lettres françaises modernes, la philosophie, les sciences du langage et de la communication et la sociologie. Pour s'en faire une idée selon son intérêt á l'instruction, tout esprit curieux pourrait se référer aux différentes étiquettes de ces récoltes dans notre table des matières.

Á vos plaisirs solaires !!

**Brahima Diaby**

## **Sacrificial Motherhood and Family Survival in Toni Morrison's *Sula***

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### **Abstract**

Motherhood, a complex and difficult term, implies sacrifices. These sacrifices are needed for family welfare. Mothers who comply with these traditional roles receive praises from their community members. On the contrary, those who shirk these sacrifices are viewed as pariahs. In *Sula*, Toni Morrison goes beyond traditional roles apportioned to women and casts a different meaning on motherhood. She constructs female characters exhibiting characteristics reserved for men in society. Drawing from the womanist theory, this paper pinpoints unusual sacrifices made by these female characters and shows how their sacrifices contribute to the well-being of their whole family members.

**Keywords:** Motherhood, sacrifice, womanism, matriarchy.

### **Résumé**

La maternité, un terme complexe et difficile, implique des sacrifices. Ces sacrifices sont nécessaires pour le bien-être de la famille. Les mères qui se conforment à ces rôles traditionnels reçoivent des éloges de la part des membres de leur communauté. Au contraire, celles qui se dérobent à ces sacrifices sont considérées comme des parias. Dans *Sula*, Toni Morrison va au-delà des rôles traditionnels attribués aux femmes et donne un sens différent à la maternité. Elle construit des personnages féminins présentant des caractéristiques réservées aux hommes dans la société. En s'appuyant sur la théorie womaniste, cet article met en évidence les sacrifices inhabituels consentis par ces personnages féminins et montre comment leurs sacrifices contribuent au bien-être de tous les membres de leur famille.

**Mots clés:** Maternité, sacrifice, womanisme, matriarcat.

## **Introduction**

Motherhood is variously interpreted based on each community's perspective. Its representation is sometimes problematic in American literature in general, and in African American novel in particular. Many writers have given much thought to African American woman's conditions in their creative works. Kimberle Crenshaw (1991: 1244) argues that "because of their intersectional identity as both women and of color within discourses that are shaped to respond to one or the other, women of color are marginalized within both". Often, women are wrongly or rightly represented as victims of some norms of the society. They don't always have chances they deserve to evolve. Most writers, especially males, have cast traditional images of a mother on their female characters. Dr C.S. Lakshmi, a renowned feminist writer (1990: 72) explains this situation in these terms: "the need for begetting a child and emotions towards a child are naturally lodged in the body of a woman. This need exists as a biological adjunct, like a nail, hair or appendix. Those without these needs or unable to execute this need are defective in some ways. The woman who does not bear a child is incomplete, unfulfilled". Obviously, this representation of women/mothers is limited to biological functions without any consideration of psychological and sociological dimensions of these women/mothers. It limits the women to second-class citizens, making them inferior to men. No wonder, women play secondary roles such as cooking, housekeeping, childbearing and child keeping in many creative works by males. Winifred Farrant Bevilacqua (1983: 3), refuting the secondary roles imposed on women, states the following:

women's development as free and independent beings and their achievements in many of the endeavours they have undertaken have been hindered by the fact that they have generally been forced to occupy a secondary place in the world in relation to men, not out of any biologically imposed necessity but because of elaborate educational traditions, cultural patterns and social structures firmly under the control of men.

From this excerpt, traditions and cultures of some societies lead to biased appreciation of males' and females' roles. Motherhood becomes more complex in such communities. Elaborating on various difficulties pertaining to motherhood in American context, Lea



Johanna Delcoco-Fridley (2011:2) notes: “American motherhood have been defined and enforced by a white, middle-class, hetero-normative patriarchal society”.

Surprisingly, within the same context, Toni Morrison, the renowned African American female writer, well-known for her examination of black experiences in the American racist society, received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1993. Distancing herself from men-ascribed roles to women, Morrison presents a challenging yet different story in *Sula* (1973). She creates female characters who play important roles in their families. By doing so, these female characters assert their womanhood. Their strenuous efforts to assert their freedom invites a critical analysis.

This paper analyses these female characters’ unusual sacrifices for their families’ welfare. The paper equally scrutinizes the writer’s strategies to build strong female characters who support their whole families. In the process, the paper revisits African American women’s biased representation in the racist and sexist American society.

I rely on the theory of womanism to develop my clusters of ideas. Indeed, “womanism is rooted in black women’s concrete history in racial and gender oppression” (Collins, 1996: 10). It

goes back to the Southern black folk expression of mothers to female children ‘you acting womanish’[...] ‘womanish’ girls acted in outrageous, courageous, and willful ways, attributes that freed them from the conventions long limiting white women. Womanish girls wanted to know more and in greater depth than what was considered good for them. They were responsible, in charge, and serious (Ibid, 11).

From the foregoing, womanism gives voice to black women to express themselves. It is worth noting that this theory and black feminism can be used interchangeably, as observed in Alice Walker’s *In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens*. In the same wavelength, some specialists of women studies Keith Green and Jill LeBihan (1996: 229), specialists of women studies, note:

feminist critics generally agree that the oppression of women is a fact of life, that gender leaves its traces in literary texts and on literary history, and that feminist

criticism plays a worthwhile part in the struggle to end oppression in the world outside of the texts [...] feminists are always engaged in an explicitly political enterprise, always working to change existing power structures both inside and outside academia. Its overtly political nature is perhaps the single most distinguishing feature of feminist scholarly work.

For these critics, a feminist critic should redefine gender roles in order to give female characters opportunity to perform activities enabling them to correct false images society imposes on women. Sandra Gilbert corroborates the need to empower female characters with the most distinguishing features. She (1996: 228) declares that most feminist critics speak like “people who must bear witness, people who must enact and express in their own lives and words the revisionary discovery that the experiences of women in and with literature are different from those of men”. Toni Morrison substantiates Sandra’s position in *Sula* by ascribing to female characters important roles thought to be male characters’ sole prerogatives. This paper explores these female characters’ sacrificial roles in the novel. It is articulated around two parts. First, it deals with mothers’ sacrificial motherhood. Second, it examines family and sustained well-being as the result of these mothers’ strenuous efforts.

### **1. Sacrificial Motherhood as Portrayed in *Sula***

Kristen Harrison et al. (2005: 79), key figures of female self-objectification, theorize: “objectification theory posits that Western culture socializes girls and women to self-objectify by adopting the third-person perspective on their bodies”. Corroborating this, Steve Bearman (2009: 33) posits: “as sexism is internalized, women are trained to adopt the role of observer and evaluator, judging their own and one another’s appearance”. Morrison challenges this theory about girls and women or wives in society. In *Sula*, she marks herself out by creating strong female characters who sacrifice themselves in various ways to ensure their family well-being. To allow her readers to fully grasp the essence of her female characters’ sacrifice and their hard times, Morrison sets her novel *Sula* in Bottom, where the living conditions of

African Americans, in general, and African American women, in particular, are unbearable and appalling. She pictures the setting as follows:

in that place, where they tore the nightshade and blackberry patches from their roots to make room for the Medallion City Golf Course, there was once a neighborhood. It stood in the hills above the valley town of Medallion and spread all the way to the river. It is called the suburbs now, but when black people lived there it was called the Bottom. One road, shaded by beeches, oaks, maples and chestnuts, connected it to the valley (Morrison, 1973: 3).

The above quote invites readers to inquire about “The Bottom”, known as “The Medallion City Golf Course”, the place where black people live. Indeed, “The Bottom”, the lowest part of the country, is a metaphor used by Morrison to prepare readers in their analysis of the area. Calling a place “The Bottom” means there is nothing attractive about it since it is a hidden area as opposed to the top, which is visible. The metaphorical name of the setting gives a hint about the dark and harsh realities in the area. Besides, Morrison associates “The Bottom” with ‘beeches, oaks, maples and chestnuts’ that inform her readership of the area’s difficulties, where attempt to achieve motherhood demands much effort. Moreover, with its many challenges, “The Bottom” stands as a “hell” for many characters. In short, the place is likened to a bush which needs tilling and clearing.

Morrison uses this difficult setting to empower her female characters whose actions have been socially acclaimed. She has expressed her view about her female characters’ representation in interviews. As Davila (2002: 38) puts it, “Morrison’s interviews provide the reader with her concerns in developing a narrative that directs itself toward a new feminist theory for Black women in order to empower their lives for social transformation”. Describing the living conditions under which black people, especially black women, live in the Bottom, Morrison pinpoints a black woman as follows:

There will be nothing left in Bottom (the footbridge that crossed the river is already gone), but perhaps it is just as well, since it wasn’t a town anyway: just a neighborhood where on quiet days people in valley houses could hear singing sometimes, and, if a valley man happened to have a business up in those hills—collecting rent or insurances payments—he might see a dark woman in a flowered

dress doing a bit of cakewalk, a bit of black bottom, a bit of “messaging around” to the lively notes of a mouth organ. Her bare feet would raise the saffron dust that floated down on the coveralls and bunion-split shoes of the man breathing music in and out of his harmonica (3-4).

This passage sheds light on challenges both black men and women face in making a living in racist American society. Specifically, the black woman mentioned in the passage dances a cakewalk, a pre-Civil War dance originally performed by slaves on plantation fields. This dance was performed on black slave plantations before and after emancipation in Southern States. It is the dance Black women performed in the Bottom to make a living. Thus, all their suffering in making ends meet in such racist and sexist society.

Tores Davila (2002: 1-2) elaborates on Morrison’s motherhood life which correlates with her female characters: “while teaching at Howard, Toni Wofford met Jamaican architect Howard, Morrison; at the moment Morrison was teaching, raising a son, taking care of a family, and frustrated with her married life”. Worth noting, Morrison raised her family alone, which evidently has shaped her character. In creating a female character whose means of survival lies in dancing, she is aware that dancing provides a black woman with a scant means to meet her personal needs and those of her family, which is telling of this woman’s sacrificial motherhood. However, it is not exhaustive when it comes to sacrificial aspect *Sula* incorporates. Further scrutiny of the novel unveils more sacrifices by women.

As said earlier, Morrison’s experience with family raising reads through her writing techniques and shapes her female characters. When she titles the first chapter of *Sula* “1920”, she allegorically alludes to a period after the World War I, a hard time for humanity. It is at this hard time that she allows Helene to be born and raised by her grandmother in Medallion. The hidden theme in Helene’s birth at this hard time as a burden to her grandmother is sacrificial motherhood, which has become Morrison’s traditional theme throughout her novels. Parvin Ghasemi (2010: 236), a critic, offers:

One can discover an evolving and progressive exploration of black motherhood in Morrison's novels. This pattern of progression begins with Morrison's revision of motherhood in *The Bluest Eye*, which portrays a black mother whose absence of motherly feelings contributes to the physical and mental deterioration of her daughter, Pecola.

In clear, black motherhood is a common topic Morrison deals with in her writing. Contrary to *The Bluest Eye* in which she portrays Mrs. Breedlove as an absent and alienated mother, she constructs responsible female characters who embody motherly feelings in *Sula*:

The red shutters had haunted both Helene and her grandmother for sixteen years. Helene was born behind those shutters, daughter of a Creole whore who worked there. The grandmother took Helene away from the soft lights and flowered carpets of the Sundown House and raised her under the dolesome eyes of a multicolored Virgin Mary, counseling her to be constantly on guard for any sign of her mother's wild blood (Morrison, 1973: 17).

From the above, Morrison not only puts Helene, a daughter of a whore, and Cecile, her grandmother, in a familial relationship but also in austerity, for Cecile has to sacrifice herself for their survival. This close relationship Morrison builds between Helene and Cecile is fastidious. She gives room to the reader to know Helene's origins and how Cecile will contribute to her development. Making Helene born of a woman known as a whore, Morrison reveals the challenging task before the girl's grandmother. Understandably, Cecile takes her away from her mother out of the love she has for her. She does not want to see the girl grow in an environment conducive to her becoming also a whore. In fact, it is a risky decision Cecile has taken. However, despite all the challenges, she has successfully assumed this role by bringing Helene up according to Judeo-Christian religious principles of holiness. As mentioned in the previous excerpt, Helene is raised under the "dolesome eyes of Virgin Mary". Understandably, she has lived a holy and respectful life and becomes a fulfilled person in the black community. Hence, the reader fathoms Cecile's sacrificial motherhood, as she has committed herself to her granddaughter's physical, psychological and spiritual needs.

Interestingly, Cecile has passed this virtue of sacrificial motherhood on to Helene. Indeed, through transmutation of motherly love and daughterly love, Morrison makes Helene inherit Cecile's sacrificial motherly affection. She empowers her to pass on this education to

the next generation. Prior to this responsibility, she allows Helene to achieve motherhood in the following way: “her daughter was more comfort and purpose than she had ever hoped to find in this life. She rose grandly to the occasion of motherhood—grateful, deep down in her heart, that the child had not inherited the great beauty that was hers” (Morrison, 1973: 18). Helene’s achievement as a successful mother in *Sula* is a sign of perpetuation of quality education. Parvin Ghasemi posits that,

Morrison’s views on black motherhood are especially enlightening for their in-depth cultural and historical dimensions. She examines the trying experiences of mothers in slavery and racist societies and explores the potential of the individuality of mothers against the censures and restrictions of American society in general and African American communities in particular.

Ghasemi’s position on Morrison’s views about black motherhood involves a culturally and historically assigned mission to represent the future of education in African American community by mothers. Thanks to the light shed on transmutation of self-sacrificed mother, Morrison has Helene make a sacrifice which is underlined in the following:

Under Helene’s hand the girl became obedient and polite. Any enthusiasms that little Nel showed were calmed by the mother until she drove her daughter’s imagination underground.

Helene Wright was an impressive woman, at least in Medallion she was. Heavy hair in a bun, dark eyes arched in a perpetual query about other people’s manners. A woman who won all social battles with presence and a conviction of the legitimacy of her authority (Morrison, 1973: 18).

With the adjectives ‘obedient’ and ‘polite’ to describe the girl in the afore-mentioned excerpt, it is clear that Helene brings her daughter up well. An impressive woman, Helene is empowered by Morrison with legitimate authority to make decisions and rules that are accepted and followed by others. Her portrayal with such strong capabilities undoubtedly reveals her being a role model for her daughter. She shows forth qualities of a self-sacrificed mother.

Apart from Cecile and Helene, Morrison endows another character, Eva, with some authoritative characteristics, especially in her meticulous handling of her home. The following

depicts a discussion about mothers' responsibility in the home: "Hannah was waiting. Watching her mother's eyelids. When Eva spoke at last it was with two voices. Like two people were talking at the same time, saying the same thing, one a fraction of a second behind the other" (Morrison, 1973: 71). From the foregoing, one can notice Eva's authority as a mother. She wields power which she detains from experiences collected through the dynamics of interactions between white people and African Americans, and environment allocated to African American community in the manner of Medallion. Concerning the origins of power, Petersen (2020: 50) argues:

Understanding the many ways in which power works allows us to claim experiences as authority, to maneuver within and around institutional norms, and ultimately to create change where we need it. Those who are marginalized may actually know more about power than those who think they possess it.

Thanks to Petersen's light on the origins of authority, the reader understands why Eva is such an authoritative woman in *Sula*. Her talks unveil how unquestionable and irreversible her decisions are. This authoritative power Eva gained from experiences wins her privilege, since, as Peterson (2020: 51) posits, "we are privileged with the knowledge we gain through experience. Such experiences give us authority over our own lives and identities". In the end, Eva's authority helps her bring her home under control when she gives instructions.

Not only that, Morrison has Eva get involved in two sacrifices, which define her as a good mother and a trustworthy woman in the black community. Her first sacrifice is her accepting to have her leg cut, as speculations reveal it: "somebody said Eva stuck it under a train and make them pay off. Another said she sold it to a hospital for \$10,000" (Morrison, 1973: 31). Secondly, she throws herself in fire when her daughter, Hannah, is burning in her room:

Then somebody remembered to go and see about Eva. They found her on her stomach by the forsythia bushes calling Hannah's name and dragging her body through the sweet peas and clover that grew under the forsythia by the side of the house. Mother and daughter placed on stretchers and carried to the ambulance.

Eva was wide awake. The blood from her face cuts filled her eyes so she could not see, could only smell the familiar odor of cooked flesh (Morrison, 77). The rationale behind Eva's sacrifice must be understood. First, she agrees to have her leg mutilated in order to have enough money to care for her family. Second, she is ready to sacrifice her own life so as to have her children succeed in life. The burning fire does not prevent her from going to the room where her daughter is struggling with fire. This is undeniable motherhood sacrifice, making Eva Peace a Christ-like character in *Sula*. Through her, Morrison is informing readers that no sacrifice is too much for a mother who loves her family. In clear, motherhood consists in seeking the well-being of one's family. The next part elaborates on this.

## **2. Family and Sustained Well-being as Portrayed in *Sula***

Both husbands and wives suffer when they have to live separately, especially when they have to raise children as a single parent. From studies, single mothers suffer greatly in relying on welfare care as sole means to cater for their children. As a matter of fact, relationship between welfare state and single mothers crosses all ages. It has been a concern of writers and scholars all over the world. In this regard, Hannah Zagel et al. (2018: 171) note:

the relationship between the welfare state and single mothers' economic wellbeing should be analyzed through a life-course lens. It is widely accepted that the increase in single motherhood, although taking place at different rates across countries, is one of the major demographic developments in societies today and poses new challenges for welfare states.

This quote clearly highlights an increase in the percentage of single mothers depending on welfare. It is worth checking whether the welfare favors single parenthood in a context where the focus is mostly on women and not men.

While dealing with the challenges of ideal motherhood, Delcoco-Fridley (2018: 3) observes: "motherhood has traditionally been a duty for many women. However, the standard of the ideal mother as defined by American culture was often difficult for many women,



particularly multi-ethnic women, to achieve”. Aware of the difficulty mothers are facing in American context, Morrison not only depicts their sacrificial life in *Sula*, but their pivotal role in their family members’ upbringing as well. To be sure, mothers’ sacrifice ensures their daughters’ brighter future. For instance, Eva’s sacrifice leads her to build a big house for her family:

(Once when Hannah accused her of hating colored people, Eva said she only hated one, Hannah’s father BoyBoy, and it was hating him that kept her alive and happy.) Happy or not, after BoyBoy’s visit she began her retreat to her bedroom, leaving the bottom of the house more and more to those who lived there: cousins who were passing through, stray folks, and the many, many newly married couples she let rooms to housekeeping privileges, and after 1910 she didn’t willingly set foot on the stairs but once and that was to light a fire, the smoke of which was in her hair for years (Morrison, 1973: 37).

An analysis of Eva’s house as mentioned in the above text is worth making. The house is so big that the narrator has to confess: “Sula Peace lived in a house of many rooms that had been built over a period of five years to the specifications of its owner, who kept on adding things: more stairways—there were three sets to the second floor—more rooms, doors and stoops” (Morrison, 1973: 30). This might, no doubt, push readers to wonder why she endeavors to possess such a big house, a wonder Janice M. Sokoloff (1986: 431) unequivocally erases: “Eva’s history is connected to the family and community over which she presides. The stark fact of her missing leg is linked to her heroic efforts to preserve her children against disease and poverty”. Understandably, Eva is struggling for her family’s well-being. Qualifying her efforts as heroic is telling of Morrison’s redefinition of motherhood where women go beyond traditional roles assigned to them by society and perform heroic tasks reserved solely for men.

One can go further in the scrutiny of reasons sustaining Eva’s possession of house. Indeed, owning a house confers honor and respect to its owner. No doubt, Eva has garnered respect and honor from her community members by having her own house. Never again would she be disturbed by landlords or landladies’ claims. It ensues that her family and she

would be psychologically, socially and economically balanced. To cut it short, Eva Peace owns a house for her family to be at ease. Her possession of a house facilitates her efforts to well educate her children Hannah, Eva Pearl and Ralph Plum. Besides, the house contains rooms available for cousins and even stray folks and couples. Thus, Eva's sacrificial motherhood benefits many people. From a humanist view, she caters for her whole family, including nuclear family and large one.

Concerning her nuclear family, Eva works to ensure her children's shelter, safety and well-being. To be sure, her daughters grow safely under her shelter until their marriage. Morrison informs:

Under Eva's distant eye, and prey to her idiosyncrasies, her own children grew up stealthily: Pearl married at fourteen and moved to Flint, Michigan, from where she posted frail letters to her mother with two dollars folded into the writing paper. Sad little nonsense letters about minor troubles, her husband's job and who the children favored. Hannah married a laughing man named Rekus (41).

This passage basically conveys the idea that marriage hovers on the verge of the fame. It is one of mothers' greatest aspirations to see their daughters get married without early pregnancy. As a matter of fact, Pearl and Hannah's respective marriage reveals Eva's efforts to spare them all the troubles of early pregnancy. Interestingly, they enjoy peace and happiness in their various homes, handling well all the house chores and taking good care of their husbands. All these are the fruit of Eva's efforts to ensure her children's well-being.

Eva's generosity beyond her family members is another proof of her unprecedented motherhood sacrifice. Apart from ensuring her own daughters' well-being, she extends a helping hand to other children whose parents are bereft of means to assume their full responsibility. Morrison clarifies:

Among the tenants in that big old house were the children Eva took in. Operating on a private scheme of preference and prejudice, she sent off for children she had seen from the balcony of her bedroom or whose circumstances she had heard about from the gossipy old men who came to play checkers or read the *Courier*, or

write her number. In 1921, when her granddaughter Sula was eleven, Eva had three such children. They came with woolen caps and names given to them by their mothers, or grandmothers, or somebody's best friend. Eva snatched the caps off their heads and ignored their names. She looked at the first child closely, his wrists, the shape of his head and the temperament that showed in his eyes and said "Well. Look at Dewey. My my my my my" (37).

This excerpt depicts Eva as a generous mother. Through her love and compassion, she extends her generosity to others. Unlike some mothers who only cater for their own children, Eva makes no difference between her own children and those in her neighborhood. She takes in her house any downtrodden children. Not only does she meet these children's needs, but she also takes care of their mothers by providing for their needs. Morrison reveals: "slowly each boy came out of whatever cocoon he was in at the time his mother or somebody gave him away"(38). Besides feeding these children, Eva takes in charge their school fees and stationeries: "when the golden-eyed dewey was ready for school he would not go without the others. He was seven, freckled dewey was five, and Mexican dewey was only four. Eva solved the problem by having them all sent off together" (38-39). By feeding and schooling these children, Eva has become a stakeholder of the best living conditions of others in society.

Morrison's concern for the well-being of her female characters and their children is visible throughout the novel. Nel, Helene Wright's daughter, is a case in point. Well-bred by her mother, she gets married to Jude who responsibly assumes his parental role until Sula snatches him away. But when Jude leaves Nel, she seeks a job to take care of her family:

Because Jude's leaving was so complete, the full responsibility of the household was Nel's. There was no more fifty dollars in brown envelopes to count on, so she took to the cleaning rather fret away the tiny seaman's pension her parents lived on. And just this past year she got a better job working as a chambermaid in the same hotel Jude had worked in. The tips were only fair, but the hours were good—she was home when the children got out of school (Morrison, 1973: 139).

The well-being of Nel Wright's children is evident in the above passage. As Morrison puts it, she takes the full responsibility of the household, for she cannot stand her children's suffering.

She works hard and serves as a chambermaid to provide for these children's needs. With her support, her children grow up reaching an incredible development. As a result, she makes an implicit confession:

Things were so much better in 1965. Or so it seemed. You could go downtown and see colored people working in the dime store behind the counters, even handling money with cash-registered keys around their necks. And a colored man taught mathematics at the junior high school. The young people had a look about them that everybody said was new but reminded Nel of the deweys, whom nobody had ever found (Morrison, 1973: 163).

This quote shows things getting better and better for Nel and her family. She impacts progressive change around her, corroborating Frank Fanon's (2008: xviii) statement: "what matters is not to know the world but to change it". Morrison might share this Fanonian position about the world, as she offers hope for positive change through Nel. Indeed, she makes Nel foster change for her children. As a single parent after the departure of her husband Jude, Nel sacrificially invests in her children's development, a sacrifice which constitutes the major concern of every parent in any society. Thus, she serves in portrayal of family and sustained well-being in *Sula*.

## **Conclusion**

The objective of this paper has been to analyze unusual sacrifices made by female characters in contributing to their families' welfare. The paper has scrutinized strategies used by Morrison to build strong female characters supporting their whole family. All in all, this paper has pointed out Morrison's portrayal of a fruitful relationship between mothers and daughters in *Sula*. Mothers are ready to sacrifice themselves for lifesaving purposes. Following the example of Cecile, Helene, Eva and Nel who have been very active, the paper has unveiled unconditional, multifaceted and multiple sacrifices made by mothers in their children's upbringing, especially when they are single mothers. In *Sula*, mothers are ready to

have their body cut in order to secure a bright future for their offspring. They have deprived themselves of life pleasure for their children's good education. With their sacrifices, these mothers have provided strong households for their daughters and secured them a holistic development. Simply put, these children have lived from difficult situations to achieve physical and professional success thanks to their mothers' sacrifices. Thus, Morrison is inviting both fathers and mothers to sacrifice all it should take to provide for their children's needs for the latter to blossom and fulfil their God-given potentials. Challenges of man-made norms, which tread on motherhood, should be taken up for the social welfare as a whole.

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