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**Elocution Ploughing
in the Road of Eloquence**



In the Name of Allah,
Most Gracious, Most Merciful
Allah will
Raise up to suitable ranks
And degrees, those of you
Who believe and who have
Been granted knowledge
And Allah is well acquainted
With all ye do⁽¹⁾.

1. Abodullah Yussif Ali, The Holy Quran, Text Translation and Comment, (Kuwait : That El-Salasil, 1989) 1509, lyat 11, Sura, Mujadila, or The Woman Who Pleads.

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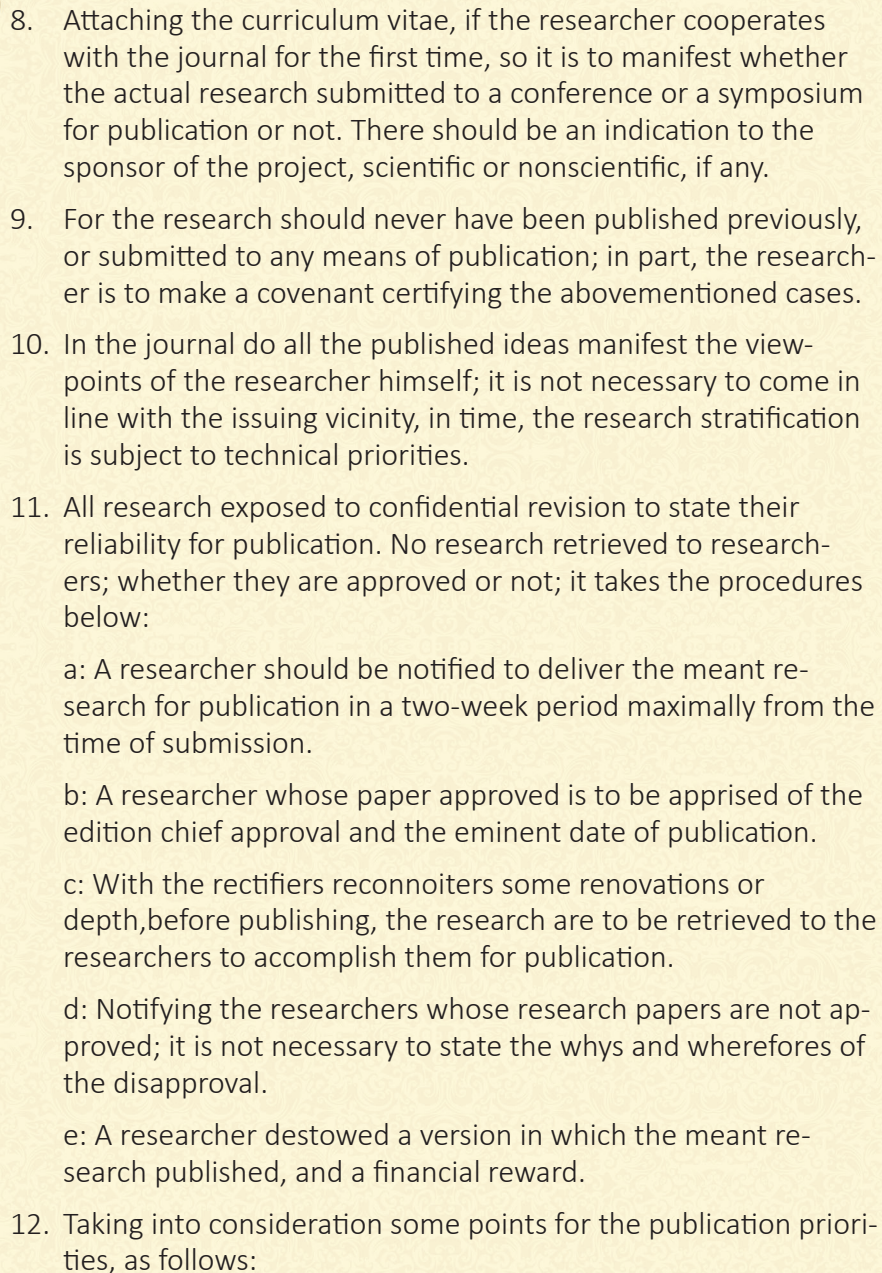
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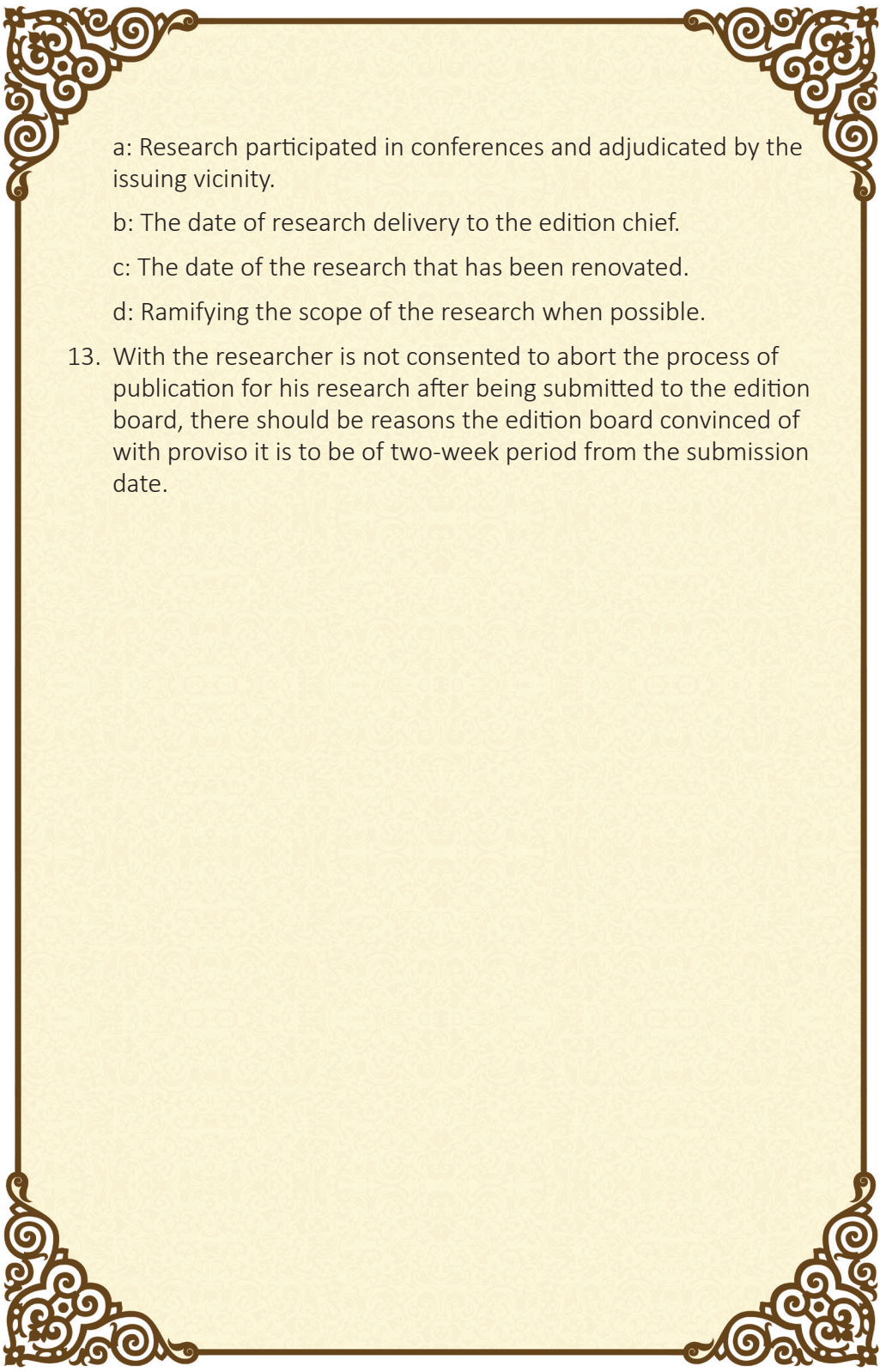
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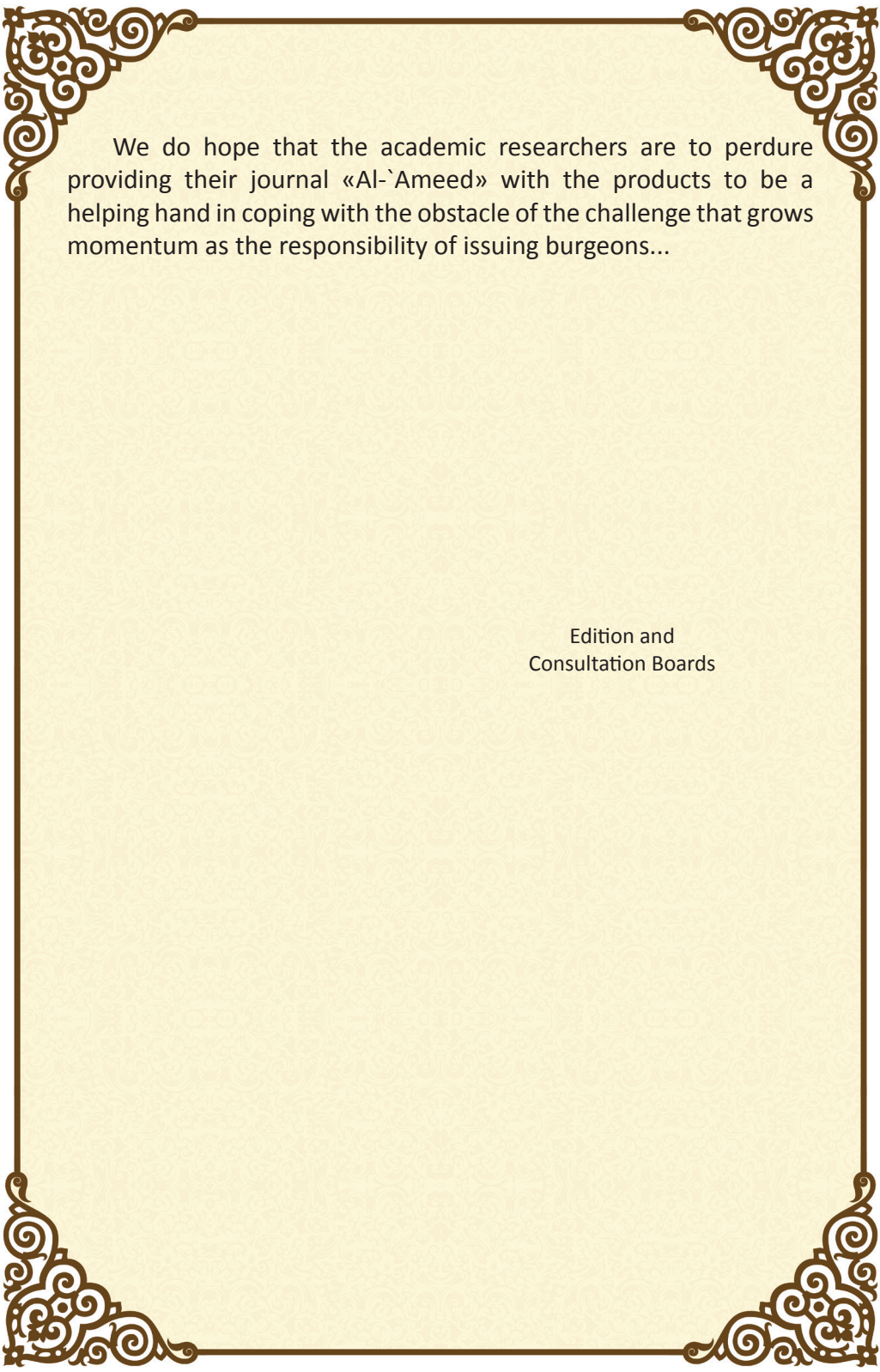
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The more the product augments, the more producers take responsibility. What is more here, the product is knowledge; the producer incarnates a doctrinal monolith in the society . Issuing the sixth edition in the plough of such a journal substantiates a sixth threshold in the ladders of responsibility for the personnel in charge to the readership. Such casts them all in a cultural crestive challenge.

One of the salient challenge tributaries is to specify an issue in an edition preponderant over all the papers ; it is inconvenient to have a pivotal issue many researchers delve into. Then only then, the two boards , the consultation and edition, reach consensus to choose The Road of Eloquence for the master of elocutionists , the sapient , the commander of the believers Ali Binabitalib (Peace be upon him) since the topics of the text are panoramic and a barren soil to dig deeper and deeper for various knowledge sources. There is propensity for focusing upon the language of the text to fathom the concealed details of how it is molded and woven phonetically , technically , structurally and semantically. In time, it is to leave the other ones for the coming editions by the might and the power of Him.

The second of the challenge tributaries is to implement the policy of diversity in the topics published in each edition. It is so significant a challenge as the previous one. Thus, the issue of the research papers varies due to the different knowledge fields in the humanist sciences system, whether they are under the lime light or not.

The sense of diversity in topics emanates from the fields Quranic, historical, geographical, social, philosophical , phonetic , literary and foreign.



We do hope that the academic researchers are to endure providing their journal «Al-`Ameed» with the products to be a helping hand in coping with the obstacle of the challenge that grows momentum as the responsibility of issuing burgeons...

Edition and
Consultation Boards



**BRER FOX
AND BRER RABBIT
IN
TONI MORRISON'S TAR BABY**

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...Abstract...

Toni Morrison has borrowed from her African heritage to criticize the Afro- Americans acculturation to the WASP (white, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant) culture. Morrison's novel addresses blacks and whites. The prologue harangues a message that everyone has a certain position to occupy and a specific function to achieve, and that nobody is better than the others. Weak things are found to produce mighty things, and base things are found to bring glory to the world. Hence, blacks are not lesser than whites.

The novel is based on a legend about animal characters in a fable tale, Brer Fox and Brer Rabbit. The term «Tar Baby» is used as a derogatory term for black people in the US, but Morrison gives the term a positive connotation.

The characters waver between assimilating to the white dominant culture and preserving one's African cultural heritage, i.e, Jadine is a «race traitor» who is acculturated to the materialistic values of the white culture. She willingly embraces the white culture, attempting to stripe her African identity off racial and national titles, simply showing off her naked self. Son makes Jadine feel that her denial of black heritage and her family is disgusting. He wants to rescue her from the white world and brings her back to the Eloë.

The novel highlights the dangers of assimilation and acculturation. Toni Morrison wants to tell the readers that women cannot be feminine without appreciating their African heritage first, and that the dominant white culture destroys African Americans' self-image. The novelist highlights the importance of adhering to her African roots and renounces the idea of uprooting African heritage through superabundant assimilation or acculturation to the white culture.





... ملخص البحث ...

استعارت توني مورسن من تراثها الأفريقي لتوجيه النقد للنظرة السائدة الأمريكية الأفريقية من الثقافة البروستانتية والانكلوسكسون البيضاء.

وروايتها (الـاخ فوكس والـاخ رابت) تخاطب السود والبيض على حد سواء. وتصدر مقدمتها أننا دافئا على ان كل شخص لديه موقعا يحتفظ به او عملا معينا يقوم على انجازه حيث لا احد افضل من الاخر.

الأشياء الواهنة يمكن ان تنجز اشياءً جبارة وكذلك الاشياء المتدنية يمكن ان تلبسنا أكاليل المجد في العالم. من هنا فأن السود ليس اقل شأنًا من البيض.

تمحورت الرواية حول اسطورة بشخصيات حيوانية داخل حكاية خرافية: الـاخ فوكس والـاخ رابت. استخدم مصطلح (صبي القار) كمصطلح تصغير للناس السود في امريكا لكن مورسن اعطته هذا المصطلح معنة ايجابياً.



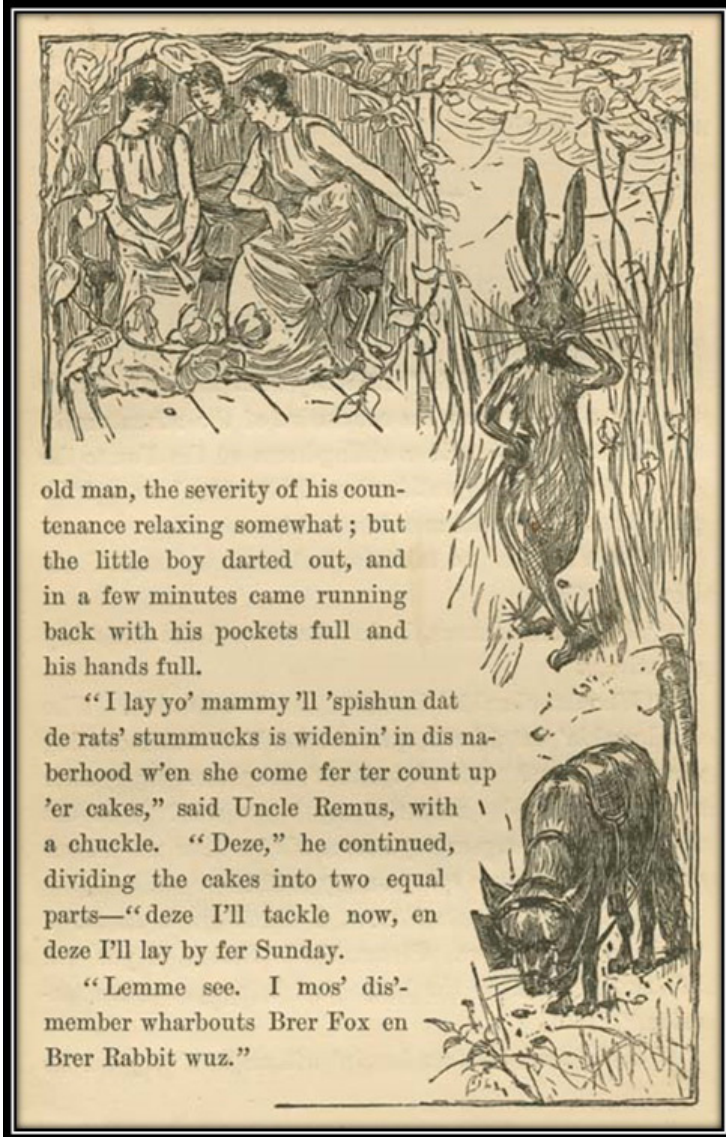
Toni Morrison has borrowed from her African heritage to criticize the Afro- Americans acculturation to the WASP (white, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant) culture.

The novel opens with a verse said by Saint Paul: «For it hath been declared unto me of you, /my brethren, by them [which are of the house] of Chloe, /that there are contentions among you» **(1Cor.1:11 KJV)**. This verse urges to end contentions and discrimination. Similar to Saint Paul's message, Morrison's novel addresses blacks and whites. The prologue harangues a message that everyone has a certain position to occupy and a specific function to achieve, and that nobody is better than the others. Weak things are found to produce mighty things, and base things are found to bring glory to the world. Hence, blacks are not lesser than whites. In the Guardian, Morrison criticizes racial discrimination in the USA, saying, «In this country American means white. Everybody else has to hyphenate.»⁽¹⁾

The novel is based on a legend about an animal character in a fable tale, in which the character Brer Fox (the devious, cruel villain) makes a doll out of a lump of tar, hiding it by the road to entrap his enemy Brer Rabbit (the dim-witted sidekick)⁽²⁾. When Brer Rabbit comes, he perceives the tar baby's lack of manners; Brer Rabbit punches it and becomes stuck. The more he struggles with it, the more he is entangled in it. While Brer Rabbit is stuck, Brer Fox ponders how to dispose of him. Brer Rabbit pleads not to be thrown in the thicket. Then, an animal suggests throwing the rabbit into the thicket to die. The rabbit pleads for her life, and then it gives a whoop and bounds away, calling out the other animals: «This is where I live!».⁽³⁾

Tar Baby (1981) is set on an imaginary Caribbean Island. In the novel, characters are African masks that are regarded as the dwelling of the spirit. African masks represent a spirit; it is strongly believed that the spirit of the ancestors possesses the wearer⁽⁴⁾. Jadine, an





old man, the severity of his countenance relaxing somewhat ; but the little boy darted out, and in a few minutes came running back with his pockets full and his hands full.

“ I lay yo’ mammy ’ll ’spishun dat de rats’ stummucks is widenin’ in dis naberhood w’en she come fer ter count up ’er cakes,” said Uncle Remus, with a chuckle. “ Deze,” he continued, dividing the cakes into two equal parts—“ deze I’ll tackle now, en deze I’ll lay by fer Sunday.

“ Lemme see. I mos’ dis’-member wharbouts Brer Fox en Brer Rabbit wuz.”

Source: Data adapted from Commons Wikimedia.

«Women, Brer Rabbit, and Brer Fox»

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Women,_Brer_Rabbit,_and_Brer_Fox,_1881.jpg (accessed 2 July 200)





educated black model, and Son, a handsome drifter, meet at the estate of Valerian Street, who is accompanied by a fragile wife, Margaret, and their black servants, Sydney and Ondine Childs. The novel portrays a white man called Valerian Street who, after being retired at age 65, buys a tropical island, called L'Arbe de la Croix⁽⁵⁾. Jadine and Son fail to overcome cultural differences. They are two black Americans from very different social backgrounds: Jadine is difficult, seductive, and clever, while Son is anarchic. She is a beautiful fashion model who is sponsored into wealth by the Streets who employ Jadine's aunt and uncle as servants. Yet, they are stick to each other like the gum. Their struggle represents the struggle confronting black Americans seeking to live with integrity in the USA.

The story was originally published in Harper's Weekly (1881) by Robert Roosevelt (an uncle of the USA President Theodore Roosevelt); later, it was popularized in the late 19th century by Joel Chandler Harris, who published many stories that had been passed down by oral tradition⁽⁶⁾. Harris wrote the «Tar Baby» story in his Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings (1881)⁽⁷⁾. Tar Baby may be influenced by the American Cherokee «Tar Wolf» story, widely popular among Native American tribes, and by the African folklore «Ghana»⁽⁸⁾. The «Tar Baby» stories were originally printed in an 1845 edition of the Cherokee Advocate⁽⁹⁾, and could be traced back to trickster figures in South Africa⁽¹⁰⁾. Most of the Brer Rabbit stories were originated in «Cherokee myths»⁽¹¹⁾ and were melted into the culture of African slaves⁽¹²⁾. According to James Mooney, the «Tar Baby» story is common to Native American tribes among whom the African influence is undoubted.⁽¹³⁾

However, storytelling is very important in African American history. Because African slaves were illiterate, they preserved their ancestral heritage through storytelling, i.e., the stories of a trickster hare were transmitted by the black slaves (the Bantu-speaking people in Africa), who were working on the plantations, from generation to generation to the New World⁽¹⁴⁾. Knowing the ancestral history is a prerequisite to be an intelligent writer, the narrator believes that one must surrender to the language of one's culture, claiming that





the original source of fiction is drawn from African American folk and oral traditions.⁽¹⁵⁾

The trickster adventure embodies the idea of being among the oppressed people; he represents the enslaved African who outsmarts his white slave owner through cunning⁽¹⁶⁾. He is a trickster and a hustler with a multidimensional character; the trickster represents extreme behavior which people may be forced to use in extreme circumstances in order to survive. In other words, sometimes people are obliged to use extreme measures in extreme circumstances. Cunningly, Brer Rabbit outwits his arch-enemy, Brer Fox, but never through brawn. Brer Rabbit is an anti-hero, mocking the powerful and bending the rules⁽¹⁷⁾. So, Brer Rabbit can be both a folk hero and a villain⁽¹⁸⁾ or both Africans and African Americans.^{(19) (20)}

In addition, Joyce Hope Scott suggests that Morrison refigure the mythic «fall» from the Garden of Eden as a parallel myth to the African American animal fable of Br'er Rabbit and Tar Baby⁽²¹⁾. Morrison's own view is that the fall operates to redeem the sinfully innocent inhabitants of L'Arbe de la Croix. It is Son, the transgressor, who can set free the spiritually bound Valerian. Ironically, Valerian and Margaret wait for their son, Michael, to visit them. It is not their son, Michael, who comes, but rather America's own native Son⁽²²⁾. Valerian's love to Son transcends race line, because Son unconsciously compensates Valerian's nostalgia for his absent son. As John Irving aptly puts it, Morrison uncovers all the racial fears felt by whites and blacks alike. Prejudice exists between whites and blacks in the Street's house, and between the black people and the local populace.⁽²³⁾

Throughout African American history, black men are seen as barbarous animals who can rape a white girl⁽²⁴⁾. The white people of the house feel superior, and later are threatened by the blacks. When Son is discovered in Margaret's bedroom closet, she grows hysteric. Because he is a black man in her closet, she thinks he intends to rape her and masturbates on her clothes and shoes.

The term «Tar Baby» is a syncope of Brother Rabbit, which reflects the habit of addressing another man as brother in African and





Cherokee cultures⁽²⁵⁾. It implies many connotations. The idea that a problem gets worse the more one struggles against it becomes part of the U.S. culture. Moreover, white Americans use the term «tar baby» to mock African American civil rights leaders⁽²⁶⁾. It is used as a derogatory term for black people in the US or a Maori⁽²⁷⁾; as a result, some people suggest avoiding the use of this term in any literary context. An article in The New Republic argued that people are «unaware that some consider it to have a second meaning as a slur» and it «is an obscure slur, not even known to be so by a substantial proportion of the population». It continued that, «those who feel that tar baby's status as a slur is patently obvious are judging from the fact that it sounds like a racial slur»⁽²⁸⁾. Additionally, the term «tar baby» sometimes implies a positive connotation. Brer Rabbit represents the African slaves who use their wit to overcome adversity and to revenge on their white slave-owners. In the «Foreword», Morrison declares that tar is not only «the strange, silent center, but the sticky mediator between plantation owner and slave»⁽²⁹⁾. In an interview, Morrison says about using the term «Tar Baby» in her novel:

Tar Baby is also a name, like 'nigger,' that white people call black children, black girls, as I recall.... At one time, a tar pit was a holy place, at least an important place, because tar was used to build things.... It held together things like Moses' little boat and the pyramids. For me, the tar baby came to mean the black woman who can hold things together.⁽³⁰⁾

Morrison gives the term «tar baby» a positive connotation. For her, tar baby means a black woman who can hold things together⁽³¹⁾. She uses the term as a pejorative and reclaims it, in the sense that Jadine makes an inadequate tar baby, since she is not the black woman who can hold things together in the sense of being a nourishing woman for her family and black community⁽³²⁾. It is only at the end of the novel that Son describes Jadine as a tar baby who holds together the worlds of the whites and blacks, youth and dead ancestors.

Additionally, the black foster parents, Sydney and Ondine, fail their adapted daughter, Jadine. She does not receive adequate parenting. Both her parents are dead by the time she has been twelve,



and her uncle and aunt, Sydney and Ondine, have raised her. Tar Baby is about preserving one's cultural heritage. Ondine says to Jadine:

A girl has got to be a daughter first... and if she never learns how to be a daughter, she can't never learn how to be a woman... good enough even for the respect of other women.... You don't need your own natural mother to be a daughter. All you need is to feel a certain way, a certain careful way about people older than you are.

(TB, 281)

Jadine gives nothing back to her foster parents. She feels no obligation to help them, as they get older. Near the end of the novel, Ondine feels aggrieved about the situation. She says to Sydney, «I stand on my feet thirty years so she wouldn't have to. And did without so she wouldn't have to» (TB, 283). Ondine teaches Jadine not to be ungrateful daughter; a woman is not able to love or become a wife if she does not know how to be a dutiful daughter to her parents and her African ancestors; Jadine is acculturated to the materialistic values of the white culture, thinking of human bond in terms of money. Ondine hands to her white master Valerian Street the responsibility for educating Jadine, and he sends her to European schools, which alienate her from her own cultural heritage. Ondine and Sydney are identified too closely with their white employers to the extent that they bring up their niece according to the white culture; consequently, Jadine has little sense of her responsibility as a woman to carry her cultural heritage and keep family. Moreover, Morrison's novel highlights the dangers of assimilation and acculturation. She wants to tell the readers that women cannot be feminine without appreciating their African heritage first.⁽³³⁾

The tensions between Jadine and Son indicate that blackness is not a static essence but contains differences that are as intractable as differences between members of separate races⁽³⁴⁾. Jadine is dressed in a canary yellow dress and is named copper Venus on the cover of magazines. As a magazine casual, Jadine becomes half-white and half-black. Notably, Morrison demonstrates that the dominant white culture destroys African Americans' self-image⁽³⁵⁾. Jadine wants to strip her African identity off racial and national titles, simply





showing off her naked self: «I wonder if the person he wants to marry is me or a black girl? ... What will happen when he finds out that I... don't want to straighten my hair...I want to get out of my skin and be the only person inside-Not American-not black-just me?» (TB, 47).

Filled with desperate rage, Son makes Jadine feel that her denial of black heritage and her family is disgusting. He wants to rescue her from the white world and brings her back to the Eloë. He wants to transform her and disrupt her existence by imposing his insinuations onto her psyche through spiritual intrusions into her dreams. He attempts «to breathe into her the smell of tar and its shiny consistency» (TB, 102).

Andrew W. A. LaVallee suggests the idea of the «race traitor» conflict; central to this idea is the «disassociation from, and racist perspective on the traitor's race of ethnic group»⁽³⁶⁾. It is the conflict of a woman, who discards her ancestral heritage and culture to adopt another, and who tries to reconcile herself to the «night women who want to bring back the prodigal daughter. Jadine, on the other hand, wants to rescue Son from what she perceives to be his «white-folks-black-folks primitivism» (TB, 275). She attempts to acculturate him according to the values of the white dominant culture:

The night women were not merely against her (and her alone-not him), not merely looking superior over their sagging breasts and folded stomachs, they seemed somehow in agreement with each other about her, and were all out to get her, tie her, bind her. Grab the person she had worked hard to become and choke it off with their soft loose tits. (TB, 262)

Jadine willingly embraces the white culture. During a final confrontation, she feels that she is fighting not Son but the Diaspora mothers, who have seduced him. She knows herself to be inauthentic when she sees the woman in yellow with the tar-colored skin, spits at her. The woman in yellow, the Diaspora mothers, and the horsemen stand for the black roots, ancestral heritage, and history.

The legend of the blind horsemen is used as a metaphor for Son's connection to his roots. They are supposedly descendents of African





slaves who escaped to the island, and thereby evaded the horrors of being subjugated to slavery. The blind horsemen, living in the hills of Isle des Chevaliers, represent the wild man, whose roots are in nature, whereas New Yorkers are the epitomes of the white urban civilization⁽³⁷⁾. Son has a free spirit and does not want to be bound by the civilized world, and by laws that are constructed by white men. Jadine diametrically opposes to his way of thinking⁽³⁸⁾. Morrison gives the character, Son, a mythical dimension, by associating him with the first black horsemen, who have trampled Isle des Chevaliers.

Son Green, as the name implies, is a son of earth mother, associated with ancestral heritage and nature. His connection with the sea and trees embodies what Wilfred Cartey calls the «essential ontology of Africa»⁽³⁹⁾, in which the world of the spirit and nature is «alive and gives life to the living»⁽⁴⁰⁾, and in which an essential continuity is preserved between earth-mother, whose breast provides sustenance to son, and a child who is the son of all Africa. Simultaneously, Son, «son» of earth mother and «son» of Africa, is the character who dramatizes the tension between African values and western culture⁽⁴¹⁾.

The white people think of the horsemen as French, but to the native islanders, the horsemen are black and also blind. They are the former slaves, who become blind the minute they have seen Dominique (one of the Caribbean islands). They are marooned on the Isle des Chevaliers when the ship, on which they are transported has sunk. The slaves hide from the French, who have returned in search of them. When Son first arrives, Therese, the maidservant, thinks he is one of the horsemen. She thinks he has come to rescue Jadine, whom she views as a black woman enslaved by whites. At the end of the novel, Son acquires a kind of mythic status⁽⁴²⁾. Morrison renders the landscape mythic, as blind horsemen mate with the swamp women in the trees, rejecting the control of the island by the white colonial invaders.⁽⁴³⁾

Jadine operates as a tar baby in multiple ways. She also brings people together, accomplishing this not through love but by her ability to converse with people across race and class lines. By contrast,





Son is portrayed as fundamentally attuned to his African roots. He tells the story of the tar baby when he taunts Jadine. The tar metaphor is presented in the episode, in which Jadine nearly sinks into the tarlike substance near the swamps⁽⁴⁴⁾. Her efforts to extricate herself from the pit are overseen by women in the trees:

They were delighted when first they saw her, thinking a run-away child had been restored to them. Nevertheless, upon looking closer they saw differently. This girl was fighting to get away from them. The women hanging in the trees were quiet now, but arrogant -- mindful as they were of their value, their exceptional femaleness; knowing as they did that ... they alone could hold together the stones of pyramids and the rushes of Moses's crib; knowing their steady consistency, ... they wondered at the girl's desperate struggle down below to be free, to be something other than they were.

(TB, 183)

Though Jadine is likened to the tar baby in the folktale, she fails to become a true daughter of the African tradition. In a magic realistic scene, Jadine encounters the spirits of Diaspora mothers and her dead mother in a daydream, holding their breasts and pushing them out. She does not understand that the breasts are a symbol of women's responsibility to nurture the community. The Diaspora mothers represent the dead ancestors as well as Jadine's womanhood, or the naked self she is trying to rebuff: «She was scared of being still; of not being busy, scared to have to be quiet, scared to have children alone. ... She kept barking at [Son] about equality, sexual equality as though he thought women were inferior» (TB, 268).

The trees, representing the mother of nature, resemble the ghosts of Diaspora mothers, in Eloe, that remind Jadine of her original nature as a black woman. Being a model of a new liberal woman, Jadine cannot identify the trees dancing with her, denying her feminine instincts as well as her ancestors' history⁽⁴⁵⁾. Son wants Jadine to admit her black culture, to be a free woman, and to have her own children instead of taking care of the «white folks' children» (TB, 269).



Not able to adapt to the quiet life in Eloë, Jadine leaves Son and returns to New York. She lives the fashionable life in Paris and New York City. When Jadine arrives in Eloë, Florida, she is unable to appreciate its values. Son perceives her as the classic lure, the tar baby set out to entrap him.

L'Arbe de la Croix is a divided microcosm of American society. Morrison uses the French word «L'arbre de la croix» meaning, the tree of the cross-the dogwood or lynching. According to legend, the dogwood is chosen as the timber for the cross, during the Crucifixion of Christ. Distressed for being used for a cruel purpose, Jesus being nailed told the tree, «because of your regret and pity for my suffering, never again shall the dogwood tree grow large enough to be used as a cross»⁽⁴⁶⁾. Augustine Duru explores the meaning of the cross and the dogwood tree for the black American Christians. The lynching lives in the collective psyche of USA both black and white. It has great implications for the legacy of race relations in USA.⁽⁴⁷⁾

The cross/lynching tree symbol has a communal meaning. It means the liberation of both the oppressed and the oppressors. Duru presumes, for the liberal blacks, the meaning of the cross and the dogwood tree represents more than redemption and becomes a recurring theme in black experience⁽⁴⁸⁾. Additionally, Reienhold Niebuhr assumes that both the cross and the lynching tree are ugly barnacles; yet, there is something beautiful about them calling it the «terrible beauty of the cross»⁽⁴⁹⁾. In the light of what James Cone says, Morrison must «have a powerful religious imagination to see redemption in the cross, to discover life in death and hope in tragedy»⁽⁵⁰⁾. Hence, the novelist tries to find an analogy between the pain of Jesus on the cross and the dark periods in the history of the blacks.

Tar Baby does not have a clear conclusion. At the end of the novel, it remains unclear whether Son will join the legendary horsemen and go back to his African motherland, or whether he will follow Jadine and deny his African roots. Son and Therese, a black maidservant, are in a boat headed towards Isle des Chevaliers. Therese, the blind, shamanistic, old woman, believes that Son belongs to nature, not to urbanity and not to a woman who has no respect for Afri-





can traditional values. She never acknowledges the presence of the white Americans. On reaching the shore, Son goes towards the trees and starts running. A descendant of the «blind race», Therese also knows how to detach Son (Brer Rabbit) from Jadine (Tar Baby), who experiences the panic of a female Brer Rabbit.⁽⁵¹⁾

Karin Luisa Badt explains that Jadine fears being cast as a representative of her African race, joining its «fraternity»⁽⁵²⁾. She rejects the «ancient properties» of African culture that Son and the Diaspora mothers embody. The black Diaspora mothers are speaking with one voice, calling Son and Jadine to join them, in order to know their ancestral history⁽⁵³⁾. The daisy trees are associated with Son's return to his African origin: «After thirty years of shame the champion daisy trees were marshaling for war. The wild parrots ... could feel menace in the creeping of their roots», and «the ... trees stepped back a bit as if to make the way easier for a certain kind of man,» with the fugitive running «[L]ickety-split. Lickety-split. Looking neither to the left nor to the right. Lickety-split. Lickety-split. Lickety-lickety-lickety-split,» to join the blind chevaliers who «race those horses like angels all over the hills» (TB, 274, 305, 306). The term that sums up the novel, «Lickety-Split», represents the sound of the rabbit and of the horsemen to signify Son's freedom in the end. Like Brer Rabbit, Son, the black man, is a figure with the power to survive.⁽⁵⁴⁾

The novel ends with Son running towards his destiny, whether it is the white urban world of Jadine or the black horsemen who ride towards their African motherland. He is running towards his unknown fate just as Brer Rabbit running from his enemy Brer Fox and from the Tar Baby. Morrison highlights the importance of adhering to her African roots and renounces the idea of uprooting African heritage through superabundant assimilation or acculturation to the white culture.

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