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Editorial

La *Revue Internationale de Langue, Littérature, Culture et Civilisation* (RILLiCC) est une revue à comité de lecture en phase d'indexation recommandée par le Conseil Africain et Malgache pour l'Enseignement Supérieur (CAMES). Elle est la revue du Laboratoire de Recherche en Langues, Littérature, Culture et Civilisation Anglophones (LaReLLiCCA) dont elle publie les résultats des recherches en lien avec la recherche et la pédagogie sur des orientations innovantes et stimulantes à la vie et vision améliorées de l'académie et de la société. La revue accepte les textes qui cadrent avec des enjeux épistémologiques et des problématiques actuels pour être au rendez-vous de la contribution à la résolution des problèmes contemporains.

RILLiCC met en éveil son lectorat par rapport aux défis académiques et sociaux qui se posent en Afrique et dans le monde en matière de science littéraire et des crises éthiques. Il est établi que les difficultés du vivre-ensemble sont fondées sur le radicalisme et l'extrémisme violents. En effet, ces crises et manifestations ne sont que des effets des causes cachées dans l'imaginaire qu'il faut (re)modeler au grand bonheur collectif. Comme il convient de le noter ici, un grand défi se pose aux chercheurs qui se doivent aujourd'hui d'être conscients que la science littéraire n'est pas rétribuée à sa juste valeur quand elle se voit habillée sous leurs yeux du mythe d'Albatros ou d'un cymbale sonore. L'idée qui se cache malheureusement derrière cette mythologie est que la littérature ne semble pas contribuer efficacement à la résolution des problèmes de société comme les sciences exactes. Dire que la recherche a une valeur est une chose, le prouver en est une autre. La *Revue Internationale de Langue, Littérature, Culture et Civilisation* à travers les activités du LaReLLiCCA entend faire bénéficier à son lectorat et à sa société cible, les retombées d'une recherche appliquée.

Le comité spécialisé « Lettres et Sciences Humaines » du Conseil Africain et Malgache pour l'Enseignement Supérieur (CAMES) recommande l'utilisation harmonisée des styles de rédaction et la présente revue s'inscrit dans cette logique directrice en adoptant le style APA.

L'orientation éditoriale de cette revue inscrit les résultats pragmatiques et novateurs des recherches sur fond social de médiation, d'inclusion et de réciprocité qui permettent de maîtriser les racines du mal et réaliser les objectifs du développement durable déclencheurs de paix partagée.

Lomé, le 20 octobre 2020.

Le directeur de publication,

Professeur Ataféï PEWISSI,

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Ligne éditoriale

Volume : La taille du manuscrit est comprise entre 4500 et 6000 mots.
Format: papier A4, Police: Times New Roman, Taille: 11,5, Interligne 1,15.

Ordre logique du texte

Un article doit être un tout cohérent. Les différents éléments de la structure doivent faire un tout cohérent avec le titre. Ainsi, tout texte soumis pour publication doit comporter:

- un titre en caractère d'imprimerie ; il doit être expressif et d'actualité, et ne doit pas excéder 24 mots ;
- un résumé en anglais-français, anglais-allemand, ou anglais-espagnol selon la langue utilisée pour rédiger l'article. Se limiter exclusivement à objectif/problématique, cadre théorique et méthodologique, et résultats. Aucun de ces résumés ne devra dépasser 150 mots ;
- des mots clés en français, en anglais, en allemand et en espagnol : entre 5 et 7 mots clés ;
- une introduction (un aperçu historique sur le sujet ou revue de la littérature en bref, une problématique, un cadre théorique et méthodologique, et une structure du travail) en 600 mots au maximum ;
- un développement dont les différents axes sont titrés. Il n'est autorisé que trois niveaux de titres. Pour le titrage, il est vivement recommandé d'utiliser les chiffres arabes ; les titres alphabétiques et alphanumériques ne sont pas acceptés ;
- une conclusion (rappel de la problématique, résumé très bref du travail réalisé, résultats obtenus, implémentation) en 400 mots au maximum ;
- liste des références : par ordre alphabétique des noms de familles des auteurs cités.

Références

Il n'est fait mention dans la liste de références que des sources effectivement utilisées (citées, paraphrasées, résumées) dans le texte de l'auteur. Pour leur présentation, la norme American Psychological Association (APA) ou références intégrées est exigée de tous les auteurs qui veulent faire publier leur texte dans la revue. Il est fait exigence aux auteurs de n'utiliser que la seule norme dans leur texte. Pour en savoir

plus, consultez ces normes sur Internet.

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Le comité de rédaction exige APA (Auteur, année : page). L'utilisation des notes de bas de pages n'intervient qu'à des fins d'explication complémentaire. La présentation des références en style métissé est formellement interdite.

La gestion des citations :

Longues citations : Les citations de plus de quarante (40) mots sont considérées comme longues ; elles doivent être mises en retrait dans le texte en interligne simple.

Les citations courtes : les citations d'un (1) à quarante (40) mots sont considérées comme courtes ; elles sont mises entre guillemets et intégrées au texte de l'auteur.

Résumé :

- ✓ Pour Pewissi (2017), le Womanisme transcende les cloisons du genre.
- ✓ Ourso (2013:12) trouve les voyelles qui débordent le cadre circonscrit comme des voyelles récalcitrantes.

Résumé ou paraphrase :

- ✓ Ourso (2013: 12) trouve les voyelles qui débordent le cadre circonscrit comme des voyelles récalcitrantes.

Exemple de référence

Pour un livre

Collin, H. P. (1988). *Dictionary of Government and Politics*. UK: Peter Collin Publishing.

Pour un article tiré d'un ouvrage collectif

Gill, W. (1998/1990). "Writing and Language: Making the Silence Speak." In Sheila Ruth, *Issues in Feminism: An Introduction to Women's Studies*. London: Mayfield Publishing Company, Fourth Edition. Pp. 151-176.

Utilisation de Ibid., op. cit, sic entre autres

Ibidem (Ibid.) intervient à partir de la deuxième note d'une référence

source citée. Ibid. est suivi du numéro de page si elle est différente de référence mère dont elle est consécutive. Exemple : *ibid.*, ou *ibidem*, p. x.

Op. cit. signifie ‘la source pré-citée’. Il est utilisé quand, au lieu de deux références consécutives, une ou plusieurs sources sont intercalées. En ce moment, la deuxième des références consécutives exige l’usage de *op. cit.* suivi de la page si cette dernière diffère de la précédente.

Typographie

-La *Revue Internationale de Langue, Littérature, Culture et Civilisation* interdit tout soulignement et toute mise en gras des caractères ou des portions de textes.

-Les auteurs doivent respecter la typographie choisie concernant la ponctuation, les abréviations...

Tableaux, schémas et illustrations

Pour les textes contenant les tableaux, il est demandé aux auteurs de les numérotter en chiffres romains selon l’ordre de leur apparition dans le texte. Chaque tableau devra comporter un titre précis et une source propre. Par contre, les schémas et illustrations devront être numérotés en chiffres arabes et dans l’ordre d’apparition dans le texte.

La largeur des tableaux intégrés au travail doit être 10 cm maximum, format A4, orientation portrait.

Instruction et acceptation d’article

A partir du volume 2 de la présente édition, les dates de réception et d’acceptation des textes sont marquées, au niveau de chaque article. Deux (02) à trois (03) instructions sont obligatoires pour plus d’assurance de qualité.

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LITTERATURE

**Gentrification, Gender and the Challenges of Community Dialogue
for Sustainable Peace in Toni Morrison's *Sula* and Cleyvis Natera's
*Neruda on the Park***

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Abstract:

This study discusses the representations of gentrification as challenges to sustainable social peace in Toni Morrison's *Sula* and Cleyvis Natera's *Neruda on the Park*. From Claude Duchet's perspective of sociocriticism, which holds that the reader must be interested in the social in the text, and based on feminist literary criticism, particularly on postmodern feminism, which stresses the role of speech acts that ground for gender inequalities, the study argues that the experience of community dialogue, stability, and sustainable peace among ethnic minorities in the United States of America can help build sustainable peace in Africa. And women's mediating power contributes substantially to building such a peace, notably through actions that ease tensions and strengthen social cohesion.

Key words: Cohesion, conflict, dialogue, gender, gentrification, peace.

Résumé :

La présente étude met en lumière les représentations de la gentrification comme défi à une paix sociale durable dans les romans *Sula* de Toni Morrison et *Neruda on the Park* de Cleyvis Natera. En s'appuyant sur la sociocritique, selon la perspective de Claude Duchet, qui recommande une herméneutique sociale du texte littéraire, et sur la critique littéraire féministe, notamment le féminisme postmoderne, qui met un accent particulier sur les actes de langage à l'origine des inégalités de genre, l'étude a trouvé que le dialogue communautaire, la stabilité et la paix durable au sein des minorités ethniques aux États-Unis d'Amérique peuvent aider à la consolidation de la paix durable en Afrique. Dans ce contexte, la gente féminine y contribue énormément à l'apaisement et à la cohésion sociale par son pouvoir médiateur.

Mots clés : Cohésion, conflit, dialogue, genre, gentrification, paix.

Introduction

All over the world, gentrification is becoming a matter of increasing concern, especially for housing activists, housing-policy makers, city-planners and in low-income neighborhoods. The impact of gentrification on social fabric, social dialogue and cohesion is also getting progressive attention in academic circles. In this perspective, this study seeks to answer the following central question: ‘how does the gentrification-gender nexus work in *Sula* and *Neruda on the Park* and how does it affect community stability?’

The study is based on the following assumptions: gentrification is an issue that essentially lies at the intersection of class, housing and gender problems. Gentrification of low-income neighborhoods is intrinsically unfair and produces social crises, with effects of exclusion on already marginalized populations in general, and particularly women. Thus, gentrification becomes a process as well as a crisis that wears down social homogenization, cosmopolitan cohabitation, community dialogue and social peace. And like all crises, it particularly affects women. However, the search for a solution to this crisis obviously excludes women, and a tailored gender approach. But, addressing the gentrification process and the ensuing tensions from a gender perspective can help speed up the process of resolving tensions, since women, gender and housing policies share unquestionable bonds.

The first section of this study lifts the veil on gentrification and how it appears as a literary motif in Toni Morrison's *Sula* and in Cleyvis Natera's *Neruda on the Park*. The second section highlights the dynamics behind gentrification, as portrayed in both novels, while the third section sheds light on its impacts on social fabric and community stability. Eventually, the fourth and last section shows why addressing gentrification-related problems from a gender perspective matters. All these sections are preceded by a brief introductory section which attempts to make "gentrification", the main concept in use here, less confusing and easier to understand.

1. Gentrification: Concept Clarification

Concept clarification seeks to obtain a common understanding of the term “gentrification” in connection to the environment of the study and make its meaning as explicit as possible. ‘Gentrification’ was first coined, in the 1960s, by Ruth Glass, born Ruth Adele Lazarus, a German-born British sociologist, to describe the habit of upper middle-class households purchasing properties in the traditionally deprived East End of London. Glass’ approach of ‘gentrification’ tries to explain the different waves of middle-class migration to East End of London and their choice to settle in this residential area, and also sheds light on the potential impact these waves could have on the deprived and lower-income residents in such area (Glass, 1964). *The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (2009) loosely defines ‘gentrification’ as “a gradual process in which an area in bad condition where poor people live is changed by people with more money coming to live there and improving it.” But, if it is acknowledged that gentrification allows the influx of middle-class or wealthy people who renovate or rebuild homes and businesses in poor areas; it is a much more complex process which often results in an increase in property values and the displacement of earlier —usually poorer— residents. Indeed, all the improvements in the community attract higher income individuals, often pushing out longtime residents. The concept is a recurring narrative pattern that resonates throughout Toni Morrison’s *Sula* and *Neruda on the Park*.

2. Gentrification as a Literary Motif in *Sula* and *Neruda on the Park*

Morrison’s *Sula* and Cleyvis Natera’s *Neruda on the Park* are separated by a time interval of half a century. However, these novels address the gentrification issue in a very vibrant manner. The disintegration of the social fabric and the breakdown of community dialogue, as a result of the displacement of deprived and low-income residents resonate throughout *Sula* and *Neruda on the Park*. Indeed, Toni Morrison and Cleyvis Natera use gentrification as a literary device in their respectively *Sula* and *Neruda on the Park*. Both novels capture in a very vivid way the geographical displacements and more specifically the conflicts associated with gentrification-induced displacements.

2.1. *Sula*: An Anti-Gentrification Novel

Morrison's *Sula* has traditionally been read as a story about female friendship. It could also be fairly acclaimed for its vivid capture of gentrification's adverse effects. Indeed, gentrification takes center stage in this novel and structures the plot from beginning to end.

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. The beeches are gone now, and so are the pear trees where children sat and yelled down through the blossoms to passersby. Generous funds have been allotted to level the stripped and faded buildings that clutter the road from Medallion up to the golf course. They are going to raze the Time and a Half Pool Hall, where feet in long tan shoes once pointed down from chair rungs. [...] There will be nothing left of the Bottom (the footbridge that crossed the river is already gone) [...] (*Sula*, 3-4).

So runs the beginning of the short prologue of Toni Morrison's *Sula*. The excerpt above describes the leveling of 'the Bottom', the setting of the story, a fictional black neighborhood located in the hills above the valley town of Medallion, Ohio, in order to create a golf course for high-income people, mainly Whites.

Decades ago, only white people lived in Medallion while the Bottom was an all-black community. But, now, the Bottom, the neighborhood that was previously inhabited entirely by Black people, and where the white people formerly would never have set foot, has become a suburb of the valley town Medallion and is predominantly owned by Whites. The Bottom, the once-worthless land that a white farmer boss jeeringly gave to his black laborer is now being transformed into a cosy and a socially desirable place for white people.

In the long excerpt above, the narrator laments the destruction of the Bottom neighborhood and the subsequent loss of local stores and businesses and many other spots known to the inhabitants, that were razed “to make room for the Medallion City Golf Course” (*Sula*, 3), forcing many low-income residents out of that neighborhood. This is therefore ample evidence that gentrification is at play in the novel *Sula*, where it remains an essential theme.

2.2. *Neruda on the Park*: A Well-Crafted Story about Encroaching Gentrification

In the opening chapter of Cleyvis Natera’s *Neruda on the Park*, the reader is introduced to Nothar Park, a fictional Dominican and immigrant community in northern New York City on the cusp of great change. The nearby neighborhoods are being razed to make way for luxurious condos, to the great despair of long-term residents such as Eusebia.

Eusebia shook her head. What should I do? I don’t want to leave my home, the old woman said. [...] That day, she’d been sure it would never happen to her. Why had she thought they were immune? Today, Eusebia pushed the laundry cart out of her building. It was so heavy she had to use the strength of her entire body as she got it out of the building, through to the sidewalk. The noise from the construction started at exactly 7am, as she crossed the street into Nothar Park. It was deafening. There was hammering and yelling, and huge machines put in place just to amplify all the noise. Maybe it wouldn’t be so bad. Maybe this construction wouldn’t yield displacement. But what else could they be building but luxury apartments? Fancy, expensive and meant for people who didn’t look like any of them. How would she fix this mess? (*Neruda on the Park*, 7 —NOTP, for further references)

In this description and in countless passages throughout the novel, Cleyvis Natera reveals the heavy construction works associated with gentrification. She also brings into limelight the lamentations of low-income, long-term residents of Nothar Park, the gentrifying neighborhood, who are displaced by the ‘built environment’, just to let high-income Americans in.

3. The Dynamics of Gentrification in *Sula* and in *Neruda on the Park*

In *Neruda on the Park* and in *Sula*, the dynamics of gentrification is fueled by a mix of what Peter Marcuse (1985), a scholar who took a closer look at the relationship between gentrification and displacement, describes as ‘direct displacement’, ‘indirect displacement’ and ‘cultural displacement’.

3.1. Direct Displacement and Indirect Displacement

Direct displacement usually occurs when residents can no longer afford to remain in their homes due to rising housing costs. Residents may also be forced out by lease non-renewals, evictions, or physical conditions that render homes uninhabitable as investors await redevelopment opportunities. Thus, gentrification can trigger direct displacement if it drives up housing costs beyond what a low-income renter or homeowner can afford, or if it encourages landlords to harass tenants and neglect their properties. As for indirect displacement, it refers to high-income people moving into a neighborhood, as low-income residents move out. Generally, in a gentrifying neighborhood, when homes are vacated by low-income residents, other low-income residents cannot afford to move in because rents and sales prices have increased (Marcuse, 1985: 217).

In *Neruda on the Park*, gentrification-induced displacements are either caused by rent price increases or by the harassment and the eviction of renters by landlords, as exemplified in the excerpt below which describes how the Guerreros’ landlord sent out a letter offering all renters a buyout or an opportunity to buy the apartments. In fact, the landlord is aware that none of the renters can afford these apartments because their prices are out of reach for all of them.

The entire building without heat made the dust weigh more, a sting to the eye that forced repeated blinks. To the right, a pile of letter sized manila colored envelopes [...] From the landlord. The Tongues’ envelope was at the very bottom of the pile. The letter was in Spanish. Had the landlord ever bothered translating a single document for them before? Of course not. The three women lifted their eyeglass chains and put their readers on. The building was turning all the apartments into condos. Each resident

would be offered a generous buy-out of the lease. Or, sure, they could buy the apartments. Either way, their days as renters were numbered. The noise across the park quieted; they didn't know when the machines had been turned off. Each of the three women turned to Eusebia. The question hung between them delicate as a single string from a spider to the wall (*NOTP*, 12).

As Peter Marcuse points out, residents may also be forced out by physical conditions that render homes uninhabitable. It is actually the case here, as the landlord left the entire building without heat, making it difficult for residents to live there. In fact, all he really wants is to get all the low-income and long-term residents out so as to allow higher-income residents in.

In *Sula*, the gentrification process unfolds more subtly as it is backed by tricks by landlords and business persons willing to invest money in the renovation of the Bottom neighborhood. Gentrification, indeed, plays an outstanding role even in the fabled origin of the Bottom. According to a short anecdote narrated in the prologue, the Bottom got its name from a trick played on a black laborer by his white farmer boss, who promised the black man that if he would do some difficult chores for him, he would be free, and would receive in addition to his freedom, a fertile land as compensation. But, when the work was completed, the white farmer explained to the black laborer that the bottom land he promised him was actually situated up in the hills, adding that that piece of land was the best, because from God's viewpoint it was the "bottom of heaven". The black man gladly accepted this explanation and the piece of land; but he would later realize that the Bottom was a land cursed with endless erosion; a land that could be farmed only through backbreaking labor and toil. As black community moved out of the Bottom the area was redeveloped and turned into a golf course frequented by wealthy white residents (*Sula*, 5-6). Contrary to what low-income residents of the Nothar Park are experiencing in *Neruda on the Park*, with regards to gentrification, in *Sula*, low-income residents of the Bottom experience less harassment and intimidation from landlords. Bottom residents are rather victims of landlords' tricks.

3.2. Cultural Displacement

Sula is a fictional work, but it is not the fruit of Morrison's sole imagination. In fact, the setting, naming and characterization at work in *Sula* have been culled from real-life experience in the USA, especially from the huge Urban Renewal and the large-scale municipal projects that occurred mainly in 1950s and 1960s, and by which predominantly Black urban slums were torn down and rebuilt, with modern, upscale housing, shops and highway overpasses. As a result, many communities, particularly black communities were displaced, losing contact with a cultural legacy and a sense of place and belonging. In other words, the neighborhood itself ceased to exist. As Singh (2019: 78) points out, "the neighborhood known as Bottom in *Sula* seems to resemble a predominantly Black neighborhood in Detroit, known as 'Black Bottom'. This area was redeveloped in an urban renewal project in the 1960s, and largely wiped out as a result".

Literature is the reflection of society—it forms a part of the culture that society nurtures and develops—, is a fact that has been widely acknowledged (Cros, 2003: 37). On this issue, Duchet (1979: 4) helpfully writes, "there is nothing in the text that does not result from a certain action of society". Thus, fiction can be conceptually grasped, through this lens, as the interaction of literary creation and the social, economic and political phenomena of any given era. Cleyvis Natera's *Neruda on the Park* makes no exception. The plot of this novel lifts the veil on a realistic and an ever-gentrifying New York, where even Brooklyn and Harlem are "washed out, white out" and where "everything forever changed" because of the increase in rents (*NOTP*, 37). Gentrification impacts both the Bottom and Nothar Park neighborhoods in many ways, and the outcomes of such impact range from landscape reconfiguration and increased costs for residents to cultural loss and community disintegration.

4. The Impacts of Gentrification on Social Fabric and on Community Stability

Many urban planners, housing policy-makers and researchers see gentrification as a boost to urban revitalization and a boon to the public purse. While this interpretation rings true in many respects, the reality of

gentrification is much more complex, thereby allowing many other researchers and housing activists to look at gentrification as a phenomenon with huge social costs, causing the continued displacement of low-income households to poorer areas. In fact, what makes the gentrification debate so difficult and so interesting at the same time is that it lies at the intersection of many scientific disciplines.

If gentrification is said to be advantageous and beneficial to urban communities, because of the opportunities it provides the residents with, including strengthening basic social service delivery; it is more often than not a destroyer of neighborhoods. Gentrification is a process where higher income individuals force themselves into urban communities, while longtime residents are forced out, thereby causing the eradication of culture in close-knit communities. It is arguable that landscape reconfiguration, gentrification-induced rent increases, residents' displacements or evictions, and the subsequent disintegration of social links and cultural loss have an impact on the social fabric and community stability.

4.1. Landscape Reconfiguration and Increased Costs for Residents

Looking at how *Sula*'s plot unfolds and how *Neruda on the Park*'s plot also evolves, one may find that it is high-income residents who really benefit from gentrification, by moving to gentrifying locations while financially disadvantaged residents are moved out of those neighborhoods. Low-income long-term residents are not able to stay and benefit from new investments in housing, access healthcare services or infrastructures, due to the rising rents. These have some consequences on community harmony.

A primary cause of gentrification-related displacement is increased rent costs for renters and housing tax increase for homeowners. Indeed, gentrification reconfigures the neighborhoods' landscape by shrinking residential options for poor residents while it expands them for more advantaged and wealthier residents (Hwang & Ding, 2020: 412). As the direct result of gentrification, the neighborhoods change and most families, long-term residents, are being displaced. The income stratified housing markets added to discriminatory mortgage and lending practices,

increase housing needs, but also exacerbate minorities community members' vulnerability to access decent housing.

In *Neruda on the Park*, the narrator puts it clearly when he describes how the construction company in charge of building the luxury condos in Nothar Park neighborhood is trying to push long-time residents out of that neighborhood:

The building was turning all the apartments into condos. Each resident would be offered a generous buy-out of the lease. Or, sure, they could buy the apartments. Either way, their days as renters were numbered [...] The question hung between them delicate as a single string from a spider to the wall. How to fix this mess? (*NOTP*, 26)

Thus, in *Neruda on the Park*, as this is also the case in *Sula*, the new apartments are expensive and not within the reach of low-income residents, therefore forcing these residents to leave their traditional dwelling place; leaving behind a part of their history, without any possibility of recovering it.

Due to the increased costs generated by gentrification, low-income residents from deprived communities are pushed to the margins of the city, as Ross (2019: 72) explains:

Today a full-time minimum-wage worker cannot afford a one-bedroom apartment in 99 percent of U.S. counties and nearly half of all renters are behind on rent [...] or experience other material hardships. In addition, roughly 6,300 people are evicted each day – a disproportionate number of whom are Black women. As a result, low-income communities of color are increasingly facing displacement from their communities.

Another true issue with gentrification is that it fails to include the residents in the changes that occur in the neighborhoods. Residents are excluded from both the design and the implementation of gentrification projects which they only experience in a very passive way, causing thus lot of frustration and bitterness. Several scholars (Sumka, 1979; Hartman, 1979; Le Gates & Hartman, 1986; Marcuse, 1986; Atkinson, 2000; and

Slater, 2008) to name but a few acknowledge that gentrification-induced displacement is both socially and culturally harmful.

4.2. Cultural Loss, Mental Illness and Community Disintegration

Gentrification does not cause residents to lose their homes only. Indeed, there is much more at stake. The culture of the place these residents are used to and the social connections they have striven to build all over the years too are threatened to disappear. Describing residents' loss of contact with the cultural legacy of their neighborhoods, Fullilove (2004: 39) eloquently writes: “You’re never just losing the house [...] You’re losing the culture of the place, the political power you had, the neighborhood, the social connections. You cannot just put those things in a box and take them with you. The losses are extraordinarily high.”

In *Sula* and in *Neruda on the Park*, when the Bottom and the Nothar Park, respectively an African-American community in Ohio, and a Dominican enclave in Upper Manhattan began to gentrify, the influx of higher-income residents and businesses changed the cultural identity of those neighborhoods and also impacted its longtime residents' mental health. The longtime low-income and working-class residents of these two fictional neighborhoods felt a sense of disconnection from neighborhoods where they've lived for years. They also felt that kind of psychological burden, as they lost a large measure of who they were and are now a mere shadow of people they used to be.

Gibbons, Barton and Tom (2020: 151) shed light on the gentrification-induced stress. They point out that this stress is mainly caused by the fact that though residents may be able to remain in their homes, they feel they no longer belonged in their neighborhoods. They feel and live a kind of cultural and mental displacement.

In *Neruda on the Park*, the presence of the demolition companies in Nothar Park and the beginning of the construction works have become an obsessive thought that consumes Eusebia Guerrero and other residents' entire day, destabilizing them psychologically and even physically, as seen in the excerpt below:

Maybe this construction wouldn't yield displacement. But what else could they be building but luxury apartments? Fancy, expensive and meant for people who didn't look like any of them. How would she fix this mess? At the thought, she felt her body hurled into the air. The cart fell over and she fell to the side of it. Both hands went out instinctively to break her fall, one touched the trunk of the tree on the way down, the other awkwardly slipped on the dirt. A loud thud. Then a stinging pain. Her head had hit the ground. Hard. Then, the weight of the cart, which inexplicably fell over on top of her, all that weight on her head. A gash opened on the back of her head somewhere. Eyes closed, she felt a torrent of blood down her neck, rivulets on her skin soaking her shirt, scarf, and coat. Eyes opened, the blood spread not down like it was supposed to but out, right around her, dispersing into the air (*NOTP*, 10).

Eusebia fears that community solidarity and stability will disappear due to gentrification. Indeed, many inhabitants of Nothar Park owe their survival to the active solidarity shown by the members of this community. Had it not been the presence and the intervention of The Tongues, Eusebia would have collapsed again in the street (*NOTP*, 63). In fact, community members are quick in supporting each other, in difficult and stressful situations, long before the arrival of first aid or firefighters.

With the demolition works and the construction of luxury condos, the residents of Nothar Park will soon be dispersed and they are unlikely to reunite. Their support towards each other will neither survive their dispersion, nor will their solidarity, which will be diluted, along the disorganization of the neighborhood, inhibiting their caring ability. Gentrification adversely affects gentrified areas' residents' sense of neighborhood community connection and also makes their sense of neighborhood belongingness and willingness to cooperate with neighbors shrink.

4.3. Gentrification as a Driver of Social Tensions in the Selected Narratives

From a general point of view, gentrified areas are faced with many internal tensions and conflicts which include—but are not restricted to—tensions between old and new inhabitants. There is also the case where tension is between first-wave and second-wave gentrifiers, the former demonstrating indifference towards the latter (Goodchild & Cole, 2001; Atkinson, 2005; Cheshire, 2007). Finally, and most importantly there is the tension fueled by long term residents who openly showing antagonism to gentrifiers (Damaris, 2004; Freeman, 2006; Lees et al., 2008).

It is common for long term residents to not easily socialize with gentrifiers. Gentrification seems to produce more tension between these two groups rather than less. As Rose Damaris (2004: 280) explains, there is an “uneasy cohabitation” when it comes to gentrification and social mix. The excerpt below, culled from *Neruda on the Park*, says a lot on the existing tension between long term residents and gentrifiers:

‘We’re going to stop all of it,’ Eusebia said. ‘The building across the street, them trying to sell our apartments. Them trying to push us out of our homes. We’re going to find a way to stop it all.’

The women looked at her, incredulous.

‘What do you mean we?’ one asked.

‘The four of us,’ Eusebia said, ‘we’re going to stop it’ (NOTP, 81).

Indeed, Eusebia, the female protagonist, has devised an increasingly dangerous series of schemes to stop the construction of the luxury condos in order to protect her community from gentrification. She is now trying to convince many other women to join her in her fight against the gentrifiers and hang on to their homes. Her neighborhood, Nothar Park, an ethnic Dominican enclave, considered a no-go area, years ago, is now a trendy destination, with cosy apartments, and with bars and clubs attracting revelers from all over New York.

Gentrification rarely is a tool for social mixing. Rather than creating a more cohesive collective identity, it usually produces tension between gentrifiers and longtime residents (renters and homeowners) and creates a distance between them, because it is based on policies that ignore the structural inequalities linked to access similar opportunities for residents of run-down neighborhoods (Slater et al., 2008).

5. Exploring the Feminization of Anti-Gentrification Fight

In *Sula* as in *Neruda on the Park*, it is the female protagonists, Sula and Eusebia, who are at the forefront of the fight against the harmful effects of gentrification on their communities. In so doing, Morrison and Natera try to send a strong message to the whole world: gentrification should neither be regarded as an exclusive housing crisis issue, nor as a topic that is essentially and exclusively related to economy. But it should also and above all be analyzed from a gender inequalities' perspective.

5.1. The Gender-Gentrification Nexus

The nexus between gender and gentrification can hardly be denied. As Maden (2013: 16) explains, “gentrification is gendered because housing, power and urban space are gendered. Anything that makes housing more precarious is going to impact women in distinctive ways.” In the most simplistic terms, gentrification exacerbates the feminization of poverty. So, the feminization of poverty should no longer be regarded as a consequence of lack of income only, but rather as the result of gender biases, the absence of working gender policies, and the deprivation of opportunities caused by gentrification. Gentrification can also be, as Gil (2020: 21) points out, a key driver of domestic violence targeting women, just as it can negatively affect women's responsibility of parenthood: “When social housing is hard or impossible to access [...] women who face domestic violence or other dangerous housing conditions have fewer options for support and safety. The responsibility of parenthood—which still falls disproportionately on women—is also made even more difficult.” Similarly, Charleswell (2015: 79) argues that “[gentrification] is a matter where race, class, and gender intersect. And, for this reason, gentrification must be recognized as a feminist issue”. Natera and

Morrison seem to join Maden and Charleswell in acknowledging that gentrification and gender are intertwined issues.

5.2. Nel and Eusebia as Anti-Gentrification Heroines

In *Sula*, Morrison presents the gentrification process from the perspective of Nel, a female character, as she comments on the impact that the process has had on Blacks, especially black women. “Whites limit the employment opportunities for blacks by only hiring them in servile positions with low wages, which forces many of [them] to find work outside of the town” (*Sula*, 68), Nel explains. She also looks back on the history of the Bottom and Medallion and narrates, with nostalgia, how most Blacks have left the hills and how rich whites have taken over, building new homes which erased the history of the black community that once existed in the city. Likewise, in *Neruda on the Park*, it is the mother Eusebia Guerrero who is leading a group of women, including the Tongues, to prevent the construction of a luxury complex of condominiums in their neighborhood, as part of a gentrification process. When asked, in an interview (Sugiuchi, 2022: 4), why she explores the nuances of women's ambition, particularly the pitfalls faced by women in *Neruda on the Park*, particularly with regards to gentrification, Natera declares: “I wanted to explore the complications of ambition through the lens of womanhood and hopefully create space for dialogue around the costs to our own bodies at constantly hustling to achieve, to break ceilings, especially when that pursuit acts in service of the same systems that keep our communities marginalized.”

Reading the issue of gentrification through a feminist/womanist lens helps to uncover how multifaceted and complex this issue is. In fact, the feminist perspective helps understand how gentrification increases oppression and displacement of vulnerable populations, particularly women who are often already negatively impacted by the effects of sexism, and racism, as is the case in *Sula* and *Neruda on the Park*. It also helps understand how and to what extent, by moving women, gentrification threatens livelihood maintained by these women and indirectly erodes the communities whose stability largely rests on this livelihood and on women solidarity.

Ultimately, it is no exaggeration to argue that gentrification increases oppression essentially targeting women; especially low-income women, women of color, leaving them vulnerable in the process of the gentrification-induced displacement. So, without broader attention to the gendered aspects of gentrification, efforts made to offset the negative impact of gentrification on women and on communities in gentrified areas are likely to produce little to no effect.

Conclusion

The nexus between gentrification, gender and the challenges of community dialogue forms the problem that this study addressed and around which arguments have been developed. The core findings of this study are as follows: firstly, while gentrification is welcomed for its potential to improve neighborhoods' physical condition and regarded as a solution for urban revival, it becomes a problem in areas where it exacerbates vast income/wealth inequality and reinforces exclusion. Secondly, if gentrification process is said to be inevitable and irreversible, it should not be seen as a fate. Gentrification, it seems, is not the real problem. The problem is the absence of local equitable development policies and strategies which ensure that long-term residents and renters can enjoy residential stability.

On the whole, two main sets of conclusions can be drawn from the above-mentioned findings. First of all, unless the issue of income/wealth inequality and inclusion is properly addressed, neighborhoods experiencing gentrification will continue to be driven apart, and residents of these neighborhoods, especially low-income residents will continue to experience the negative effects of gentrification for a longer period. Secondly, adopting policies that prevent longtime minority residents from being displaced and which allow them to stay and enjoy resources and opportunities, including the implementation of a property tax relief program, which prohibits increases in property taxes for long-time low- and middle-income homeowners and renters, could be a beginning of solution to gentrification's adverse effects.

The end of gentrification is a long way off, as cities continue to transform, not only in America, but also in Africa. And in the African

context, the growing number of neighborhoods experiencing gentrification, and all the tensions associated with this phenomenon, should rather be perceived as an invitation to city planners, community leaders, housing activists, housing-policy makers and researchers to reflect on the underlying factors of these tensions. In such a context, a solution-oriented approach of gentrification should be envisioned so as to mitigate gentrification's adverse effects on gentrified neighborhoods, on long term residents who are forced to flee these neighborhoods, and on the many people who do stay in these neighborhoods even after they gentrify.

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