



Revue

Infundibulum-scientific

Revue Scientifique des Langues,
Lettres, Civilisations, Sciences sociales
et Humaines

Numéro 9, Volume 1

Août 2025

ISSN: 2789-1666



Domaines

Langues, Lettres, Civilisation, Sciences Sociales et Humaines

Éditeur: département d'Espagnol de l'UFR Communication, Milieu et Société (CMS) de l'Université Alassane Ouattara

INDEXATIONS



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À propos de la Revue

La notion de science fait penser indubitablement à plusieurs disciplines. En ce sens, nous disons science de la vie, science du langage, science historique, science économique, etc. Ces différents types de sciences que nous énumérons ne constituent pas des éléments compacts, indissociables. En effet, la Science est un conglomérat de ce que nous pouvons qualifier de sous-sciences ou branches qui, mises ensemble, forment l'élément global qui n'a qu'une seule visée : La Connaissance.

La Revue *Infundibulum Scientific* n'est rien d'autre que ce vecteur Sciences-Connaissance. Elle se veut un carrefour, un croisement de plusieurs disciplines. Notre revue *Infundibulum* a pour objectif, de diffuser la quintessence des travaux des Enseignants-Chercheurs et Chercheurs de tous horizons, issus des langues, des lettres, des sciences humaines et sciences sociales.

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– Les auteurs doivent respecter la typographie française concernant la ponctuation, l'écriture des noms, les abréviations... Les appels de notes sont des chiffres arabes en exposant, sans parenthèses, placés avant la ponctuation et à l'extérieur des guillemets pour les citations. Tout paragraphe est nécessairement marqué par un alinéa d'un cm à gauche pour la première ligne.

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ÉDITORIAL DE LA REVUE

Nous portons sur les fonts baptismaux une nouvelle revue scientifique, *Infundibulum-Scientific*. Pluridisciplinaire, elle entend couvrir le vaste champ des Langues, Lettres, Civilisations, Sciences Sociales et Humaines. Certes, il existe déjà un certain nombre de revues scientifiques dans ce créneau en Côte d'Ivoire et en Afrique. Mais précisément, *Infundibulum* naît pour encourager l'émulation dans la quête de la qualité. L'ambition que porte *Infundibulum-Scientific* est d'offrir aux chercheurs et aux enseignants-chercheurs Ivoiriens et au-delà, africains, un espace d'échanges d'expériences, de débats et de collaboration, en prêtant une attention particulière aux besoins spécifiques des sociétés africaines aux prises avec des maux qui les déshumanisent.

Quand on enseigne dans une université, il est légitime de mettre ses productions scientifiques au service de sa promotion. Ainsi, nos chercheurs et enseignants-chercheurs, dans de nombreux cas, font leurs travaux scientifiques les yeux rivés sur le CAMES. Il faut inverser les choses. Les travaux destinés au CAMES doivent être conçus comme des contributions pour enrichir les connaissances scientifiques. Le développement de notre pays dépend dans une large mesure de la qualité de ces productions scientifiques, de la pertinence des solutions qui y sont proposées. Alors il faut sortir des sentiers battus pour ouvrir des routes nouvelles si nous voulons arriver à bon port. Il revient aux chercheurs africains de renforcer leur système de recherche confronté à de multiples défis. Mais il ne faut pas démissionner pour autant. Il faut s'armer de courage et de persévérance pour avancer.

Les sociétés africaines, du fait de leur histoire, sont aux prises avec des défis qui ont pour noms, violences politiques, système de santé défaillant ou inexistant, injustices sociales criardes, chômage à grande échelle...Le monde rural est livré à lui-même, privé de la moindre protection sociale, tel l'environnement dans lequel les chercheurs africains exercent leur métier. Ils ne sauraient continuer à fermer les yeux sur les situations dramatiques qui nous entourent et constituent le quotidien de nos peuples. Sociologues, historiens, géographes, politologues, philosophes, théoriciens de la littérature peuvent orienter leurs réflexions vers ces horizons plongés dans des ténèbres. Quant aux linguistes, ils ont le vaste chantier des langues nationales en voie de disparition. Dans le camp des sciences sociales et humaines les chantiers sont nombreux et urgents. Évidemment, ces types de travaux exigent un engagement, du courage et de la persévérance car il s'agit de la quête de la connaissance destinée à modeler l'environnement humain et social. La qualité intrinsèque d'un ouvrage, d'un article ou d'une communication constitue en soi un passeport y compris pour le CAMES. C'est dire que la qualité est dans le domaine scientifique ce qu'est une panacée pour une maladie donnée ou une clé universelle pour ouvrir le monde.

La revue *Infundibulum Scientific* se donne pour mission, sans prétention aucune, la tâche d'apporter sa contribution à améliorer les productions scientifiques des chercheurs ivoiriens et africains ; et même d'ailleurs. Elle se veut particulièrement exigeante sur la qualité des travaux qui lui sont soumis pour publication. La vocation de cette revue est d'incarner l'excellence. Tous ceux qui veulent collaborer avec *Infundibulum Scientific* doivent s'inscrire dans cette ligne.

M. Théophile KOUI
Professeur Titulaire des Universités CAMES
Ex-Directeur de publication
de la Revue *Infundibulum Scientific*

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SYMBOLISM OF THE TRANSCENDENCE OF RACIAL BARRIERS IN LANGSTON HUGHES' *NOT WITHOUT LAUGHTER*

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Abstract

Since its rework, African-American literature has been a wide field for understanding many societal issues related to American society. Among the forerunners of that literature, Langston Hughes is one of those who tackle racial issues related to the Blacks race to which he belongs. In *Not Without Laughter* (1969), he not only depicts systemic racial exclusion, but he also draws Blacks' attention on the necessity to acquire real freedom. In the same vein, the current study focuses on the identification of the literary tools he uses in his unique fiction to portray the Black and White communities in XXth century. Between simulation and education, Hughes clearly displays his favorite means for the acquisition of dignity. It also helps understand the origins of a secular race issue which surrounds colored people in the current American society.

Keywords : Symbolism, Racial Barriers, Color Line, Education, Freedom

Simbolismo de la trascendencia de las barreras raciales en Not Without Laughter de Langston Hughes

Resumen

Desde su creación, la literatura afroamericana ha sido un campo amplio para la comprensión de muchas cuestiones sociales relacionadas con la sociedad estadounidense. Entre los precursores de esta literatura, Langston Hughes es uno de las figuras que abordan las cuestiones raciales en relación con la raza negra a la que pertenece. En *Not Without Laughter* (1969), no solo retrata la exclusión racial sistémica sino que también llama la atención de los negros sobre la necesidad de alcanzar la verdadera libertad. En esta misma línea de idea, el presente estudio se apoya en la identificación de las herramientas literarias que utiliza en su única novela para describir la comunidad negra y la comunidad blanca en el siglo XX. Entre la simulación y la educación, Hughes muestra claramente su medio preferido para adquirir dignidad. También ayuda a comprender los orígenes de una problemática racial que perdura desde hace siglos y cuyos blancos son el blanco en la sociedad estadounidense actual.

Palabras clave: Simbolismo, barreras raciales, color line, educación, libertad

Symbolism de la transcendance des barrières raciales dans Not Without Laughter de Langston Hughes

Résumé

Depuis sa création, la littérature afro-américaine a toujours été un vaste champ pour la compréhension de nombreuses questions sociétales en rapport avec la société américaine. Parmi les précurseurs de cette littérature, Langston Hughes fait partie de ceux qui abordent les questions raciales en rapport avec la race noire à laquelle il appartient. Dans *Not Without Laughter* (1969), non seulement il dépeint l'exclusion raciale systémique mais aussi, il attire l'attention des noirs sur la nécessité d'acquiescer la vraie liberté. Dans cette même veine d'idée, la présente étude s'appuie sur le repérage des outils littéraires dont il fait usage dans son unique roman pour décrire la communauté noire et la communauté blanche au XX^{ème} siècle. Entre la simulation et l'éducation, Hughes montre clairement son moyen préféré pour l'acquisition de la dignité. Cela aide également à comprendre les origines d'une problématique raciale qui dure depuis des siècles et dont les noirs constituent la cible dans l'actuelle société américaine.

Mots-clés : Symbolisme, barrières raciales, color line, éducation, liberté

Introcuction

The denunciation of racial segregation has been one of the main characteristics of African-American literary productions for three decades (1950s-1970s). Among its forerunners, Lanston Hughes stands as one of the most prolific with his poems in which he vehemently proclaims the beauty of black race. Although, poetry is said to be his favourite means of expression, prose also represents a significant tool for him to depict injustices undergone by Blacks during that period. *Not Without Laughter* (1969) is an evidence of this fact. In this book which is the only prose among Hughes' bibliography, the reader can perceive how racial segregation has washed away Blacks' desire for happiness. Still in the same mood of haranguing black race, Hughes sets his only prose as framework for discovering Blacks' different channels to acquire freedom.

Thus, from hardships to accomplishment through resilience, one theme draws the readers' attention, the overcoming of racial barriers, one of the numerous obstacles to African-Americans' success. Working on this topic is a means for us to portray the symbolism which the author uses as his preferred channel to show Blacks' struggle against discrimination. This context raises a pivotal question that is phrased as follow : How does symbolism epitomize Blacks' struggle against racial barriers ? A relevant answer to this interrogation requires on the one hand, the elucidation of symbolysm as a literary tool and on the other hand, the identifiation of the textual elements that show racial barriers. To achieve these goals, we will make use of sociocriticism as a literary theory in the vision of Claude Duchet in order to explain how the African-American society is depicted in the text. Within this perspective, it is indispensable to structure our reflexion around three main axes, namely the presentation of symbolism as a tool for literary creation, then the presentation of the social context in which the novel is written, finally the identification symbolic features related to racial barriers.

1. Symbolism: a Tool for Literary Creation

The root of symbolism is the word "symbol" which derives from "sumbolon", a Greek word that refers to an object separated into two main parts whose union is a sign of agreement of two opposed groups of people. From this origin, it is necessary to understand how important symbolism is in society as it is used to convey the value or the principles that characterize each institution or field of activity. In this research, we specifically focus on its

literary version. Therefore, we lay emphasis on two main aspects of symbolism, namely the heroic and hurtful versions in literature for a better understanding of its use in the prose of Hughes.

1.1. A Means for Expressing Heroism

A simplest definition of heroism is provided by Liubov Ben-Nun in the following terms : “ Heroism is a term frequently invoked by society, usually describing the giving of oneself beyond reasonable boundaries. Heros are persons who are courageous, have empathic concern for others, and have a high degree of honesty” (L. Ben-Nun, 2021, p.2). We can infer from this meaning the whole of qualities required by the hero status. In other words, the qualities of a hero go beyond human apprehension, making him/her a godlike creature.

Within a context that underlines the unattainability of those godlike qualities, symbolism becomes a momentous way for humans namely artists or writers in general, to represent or to epitomize some values or individuals that negatively or positively sway their lives. In *Gem of the Ocean* (2006), the African-American playwright August Wilson exemplifies this factor with one of his protagonists known as Aunt Ester. She is an old woman displayed throughout the play as a source of healing and purification for Blacks. In this vein, she symbolizes the African wisdom and values that she inherited from her African ancestors. The heroic aspect of this symbol lies at the spiritual level of the traditional values inherited from their Black ancestors. In other words, Aunt Ester symbolizes a heroine given that she is the only one able to support the spiritual weight of the Black legacy in the whole black community.

Yet, the symbolism of heroes is a common link for many African-American writers regardless of their generation in so far as they all set up their literary creation on important figures or people who significantly fought for the improvement of Blacks’ social condition. This view is shared by Trudier Harris as she asserts it:

Martin Luther King Jr. is one of America’ s most revered heroes. Americans of all races, cultures, and background have expressed admiration for him, joined in celebrations of his legacy, and generally applauded what he did to bring about civil rights for African-Americans, which meant that many non-African Americans also experienced an increased belief in American democratic possibilities (T. Harris, 2014, p.2).

In this excerpt, the author highlights the importance of Martin Luther King Jr., which testifies his recognition by Americans as a great leader among those who paved the way for the acquisition of political, economic and social rights for Blacks. Unlike those of the warlike super hero whose physical assets are pivotal resources for victory, King’ s heroic resources emerge from the word, namely his hopeful speeches that pierced the moral boundaries set up

in Blacks' mind by a systemic segregation. Thus, those speeches grant him the capacity to mobilize his folks for rallying and denouncing racial segregation.

Symbolism as a momentous means to exemplify positive value is shared by literary artists. In this very context, the American novelist Chris Bohjalian fits the example with his novel entitled *The Buffalo Soldier* (2000). The sense of this emblematic title chosen by the author goes beyond a mere designation of a book, but rather a reminder of the 9th and 10th Black Cavalry Regiment of the American Army during the Indian war. In *The American Southwest* (2008), a book that records the legacy of the first Black American soldiers, we can read the following information:

Throughout the period of the Indian Wars, about 20 percent of the U.S. Cavalry troopers and 8 percent of the infantry soldiers were African Americans, and they fought nearly 200 engagements [...]. The Buffalo Soldiers rose above the challenges of harsh living conditions, difficult duty, and racial prejudice to gain a reputation of dedication and bravery. Stationed on the U.S. frontier from the 1860s to the 1890s, Buffalo Soldiers played a major role in the settlement and development of the American West. (*The American Southwest* 2008).

From the above, we can apprehend the pivotal role played by the Buffalo Soldiers in the fight against Native Americans to conquest western lands. It is therefore necessary to assert that Bohjalian's novel's title is pregnant with meaning. In other words, the author pays tribute to the first Black soldiers in American army.

As for the features of symbolism in that novel, they are woven around Alfred, the protagonist whose determination for success derived from the story he heard about the Buffalo Soldiers. His commitment to succeed despite the hardships makes him a model of courage and hope throughout the novel. In addition, Alfred is a character who symbolizes resilience in so far as he decides to take inspiration from the first Black American soldiers' experiences. As we declared above, symbolism is a significant way for humans, namely artists or writers, to keep in memory some values or individuals that negatively or positively sway their lives. In Bohjalian's context, the novel's title is a symbolism that partrays the Buffalo Soldiers as significant people in America's history and indirectly a valorisation of Black courage and skills.

1.2. A Means for Expressing Hardships

Amiri Baraka is another writer who also makes use of symbolism to depict systemic racial discrimination toward Blacks as a mark of the numerous hardships they undergo in American society. We can read this aspect of his literature in the following statement:

“Baraka is considered an icon of revolt against the American white racist society” (H. Salem, 2021, p.1). In his drama entitled *Dutchman* (1964), the story unfolds aboard a subway and one of the most striking scenes is the murder of Clay, a young-Black-American, by Lula, a white woman, on a racist ground in front of the passengers. The symbolic aspect of the play is perceptible in a metaphorical presentation of the whole system that comprises the American society toward Blacks. Such an idea is still inferable from the assertion of Baraka:

The metaphorical subway journey taken by Lula, Clay and the silent passengers mirrors a racist society speeding toward genocide (symbolized by the murder of Clay). The play, thus, denotes the genocidal nature of white races and urges black men to stand against any form of abuse, symbolized by Lula’s masochistic act. (H. Salem, 2021, p.1)

From the account made in this passage, we can affirm that the author purposely creates and contrasts the two characters (Lula, a white racist woman and Clay, a young black man) in order to depict the dangers related to a racist society in general and in particular the American society during racial segregation. In this context, the characters and the scene stand as a symbol that encompasses the whole system that governs America. In short, Baraka uses symbolism to convey awareness about a negative system that stains American democracy.

Moreover, the apprehension of symbolism as a channel to express hardships is perceptible in African-American women’s literatures, namely in the one of Alice Walker. Within this framework, the depiction of the patriarchal society and its negative impact on women are significant features of this literature. Indeed, the cultural heritage underlying society entrusts men with all kind of powers, either economic, political or religious, making it too difficult for women to reach their emancipation. Moving from the traditional society to the modern world, such is the universal characteristic of women history.

This secular wrong experience of women triggered their reaction throughout the world in all sectors of activity. In the literary field, Alice Walker uses her novel *The Color Purple* (1982) to portray those wrong experiences of black women due to the patriarchal social system that inhibits their desire to access emancipation. Such an intention justifies the position of Celie, a protagonist of the novel. Indeed, she is a female figure who is abused by men regardless of her will. Emmanuel Simparinka emphasizes this aspect of Celie’s life in his reflection on the effects of sexism in American society: “Celie, being raped by his stepfather and then being sent to be married to a harsh husband against her will illustrates the ill-treatment of women and that they were in one way or another, the male’s objects of pleasure” (E. Simparinka, 2022, p. 277). This passage speaks volume in the evocation of the dangers related to a patriarchal society upon women.

Within Alice Walker's literary context, Celie is a symbol that represents American women who are victims of abuses in the patriarchal society. It is a symbolism whose goal is the denunciation of male negative influences upon female. On the other hand, it aims at questioning a whole social system which, by a careful observation, seems to be solely in favor of men.

In the first part, we presented symbolism as a tool in literary creation, namely for expressing both heroism and hardships. In the second section, we will show the social context in which the novel is written in order to well understand the origins of racial barriers.

2. Presentation of the Social Context

Not Without Laughter (1960) is the only prose among Hughes' s numerous literary productions. Is it for the author a try in a genre that is different from his favorite (poetry) ? Whatever the reason for writing only one novel may be, it is necessary to acknowledge the success of that book either on the thematic, the textual and the narrative aspects. In this section dedicated to the social context, it is important to start by mentioning some of the regulations in American society namely in the years 1920s prior to the first publication of that novel.

2.1. Exclusion-Based Social Rules

Racial exclusion is an issue imbedded in American history since the legalization of slavery in the country. Although Blacks suffered more from this discrimination, its scope was not limited to them, but it also affected other races such as Native Americans and Asians. For example, several regulations were set up for preventing the mixing up of the white race and other races. In other words, they were meant to separate whites from the people of color. One of those rules is the racially restrictive covenant : "Racially restrictive covenants were widespread tools of discrimination used by white homeowners to prevent the migration of people of color into their neighborhoods during the first half of the 20th century" (N. Welsh, 2018, p.131). From this assertion, we can understand how often the society was hostile to people of color.

It is also necessary to precise that those covenants are supported by legal enforcement, which makes it difficult for landowners or homeowners to use their humanist assets to welcome people of color in their society. Still in the words of Nancy H. Welsh, three main reasons can justify this reality:

Nearly seventy years after Shelley¹ and 60 years after the Fair Housing Act, racially restrictive covenants remain common features of deeds. This may be for several reasons. First, since covenants run with the land, they become part of the land title in perpetuity. Second, the process to remove covenants is expensive and time consuming. Third, the majority of owners may not be aware that their properties are subject to racially restrictive covenants. (N. Welsh, 2018, p.131)

On grounds of the three reasons in the passage above, social inclusion appears to be an illusion for Blacks.

Moreover, the Jim Crow laws and their havocs speak volume in terms of racial discrimination. They were discriminatory laws enforced by the legal system to end the relative interactions between Blacks and Whites in southern states during Reconstruction². They are manifested through the expulsion of Blacks from public places and also their lynching which C. Vann Woodward highlighted in his book entitled *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (1955): “As conditions evolved, more thorough segregation started appearing in the 1890s, with public sentiment shifting towards repressive measures against African Americans, culminating in violent incidents such as lynchings” (C. Woodward, 1955, p.11). These lines testify, in addition to racially restrictive covenants, that Jim Crow laws were among the systemic exclusions program against Blacks. In the following part, a presentation of the setting is an essential factor leading to the comprehension of characters’ motivation to cross racial barriers.

2.2. An Overview of the Setting

In a literary context, the setting refers to the place and the time (the period) in which the story occurs. This means the place and the time are significant factors for the critical understanding of a literary production, either fiction, poetry or drama. In *Not Without Laughter*, the story is set in the fictional town of Stanton in the State of Kansas which, according to critics, is inspired from Hughes’ home city, namely Lawrence which is also a city in Kansas. In terms of place, the whole story happens in a binary framework whose components are a small African-American community and a white section in Stanton County.

As for the time, we need to specify that the novel was firstly published in 1930 which refers to the 20th century, an era in which African Americans underwent severe

¹ A name that makes reference to U.S Supreme Court case Shelley v. Kraemer which ruled judicial enforcement on racially restrictive covenant.

² The period from 1865 to 1877 during which the southern states that had secede rejoined the Federal State.

discriminatory actions in all sectors. The ultimate reactions were the Civil Right Movements across the country in order to denounce injustices against Blacks but mainly for the acquisition of civil rights. The period also saw the birth of the Harlem Renaissance, a cultural, literary and artistic movement initiated by African-American Scholars in order to promote Blacks' skills. It is in this very context that Hughes wrote his novel which can be evaluated as one of the most striking in the denunciation of racial exclusion. All the information above gives insight into his contribution in that movement. It even draws the attention of a scholar such as Justin Baillie:

Hughes and his contemporaries had different goals and aspirations than the black middle class. Hughes and his fellows tried to depict the "low life" in their art., that is, the real lives of blacks in the lower social-economic strata. They criticized the divisions and prejudices within the black community based on skin color (C. Neube and A. Dhliwayo, 2021, p.3).

Baillie' s assertion lays emphasis on the main goals of African-American Scholars by reworking the movement (Harlem Renaissance). It is intended to depict the precarious living conditions of Blacks as well as negative perceptions related to skin color.

The novel effectively displays the low life through the living conditions of the protagonists by means of the flash-back made by the narrator :“Now ; we niggers all lived at de edge o' town in what de whites called Crowville, [...]’ we did right well raisin’ cotton an’ sweet ‘taters an’ all. ...we all started fixin’ up our houses an’ paintin’ our fences, an’ Crowville looked kinder decent” (L. Hughes, 1969, p.71). It is a flash-back in which the narrator reminds the living conditions of Blacks during slavery. It is used to describe the way White Folks used to treat Blacks during that period. With the exclusion-based social rules and the overview of the setting, we can have a contextual understanding of the novel. In the following part, we will lay emphasis on the symbolic features.

3. Symbolic Features Related to Racial Barriers

Racial barriers are the outcome of racism which, in the American context, prevented many people of color, namely African-Americans, from their civic and social rights. To emphasize its influence in educational disparities, Jones and Miller provide us with a clear definition of racism:

Racism [...] is a system of structuring opportunity and assigning value based on phenotypic properties (e.g., skin color and hair texture associated with “race”). This system unfairly disadvantages people belonging to marginalized racial groups and damages their well-being, unfairly advantages individuals belonging to socially and politically dominant racial groups, and ultimately undermines the full potential of the whole society (M. Khalid and F. Subotnik, 2023, p.12).

Through this definition, Jones and Miller apprehend racism as a negative system that can negatively shake the bases of society. As well, in the novel, many Blacks are jobless because of restrictions related to race. We can identify this aspect with Jimboy whose quest for a better job remains unsuccessful because of his belonging to Black race: “There was no well-paid work for Negro men, so Annjee didn’t blame Jimboy for going away looking for something better” (L. Hughes, 1969, p.31). If the situation of Jimboy is an evidence of the drawbacks of racial barriers, it also is pivotal to see another aspect related to the framework of the novel.

3.1. Social Contrast

The theoretical aspect of this research is characterized by sociocriticism. Therefore, it is necessary to understand that theory in Claude Duchet’s view by means of Bernabé Wesley’s assertion : “In a text published in 1971 in the first issue of *Littérature*, Claude Duchet defines socio-criticism as a semiological criticism of an ideology with the logo of society at the center and not outside³” (B. Wesley, 2023, p.7). In this statement, Duchet underlines the importance of society in the criticism on any literary creation. Therefore, “the society of the novel” is the first concept we can mention in this research. According to Duchet, “it is not all about applying some norms and labels but rather questioning about novelistic practices that produce a social framework, which I call the society of the novel⁴” (C. Duchet, 1973, p.448). In other words, the society of the novel is the society as represented in the novel.

In *Not Without Laughter*, Stanton is the society of the novel and it is modelled on the real one in the real society. Not only does it display social contrast on the infrastructural aspect but also in the portrayal of the characters’ living conditions. A relevant illustration is in the following excerpt : “He (Sandy) had never had a room of his own before. He had never even slept in a room alone, but here his aunt had given him a small chamber on the second floor” (L. Hughes, 1969, p.235). The narrator makes a comparison between Hager’s house which represents Sandy’s former living place and Tempy’s house where he is now living. Yet, the narrator shows the new life of Sandy with his Aunt Tempy: “A few days she [Tempy] took him to Wertheimer’s, the city’s largest store, and outfitted him completely” (L. Hughes, 1969, p.236). “Jimboy was working on a lake steamer and was seldom home, and she

³ **Original text** : « Dans un texte paru en 1971 dans le premier numéro de *Littérature*, Claude Duchet définit ce qu’il appelle alors « la socio-critique » comme « une sémiologie critique de l’idéologie » qui a pour but « d’installer [...] le logos du social au centre de l’activité critique et non à l’extérieur de celle-ci ».

⁴ **Original text** : « Il ne s’agit pas d’appliquer des normes et des étiquettes, mais d’interroger les pratiques romanesques en tant que productrices d’un espace social, que j’ai proposé d’appeler société du roman ».

[Sandy's mother] couldn't have Sandy with her anyway until they got a nicer place" (L. Hughes, 1969, p. 237). All these passages inform the reader on the contrast between the black community and the white section in Stanton. Such a spatial exhibition by Hughes is a perfect metaphorical representation of American society in the novel.

The dialects also display social contrast for the black community is characterized by informal English whereas on the white section characters speak formal English: "Huh! A storm's comin. [...] Sho is a storm comin. Said Aunt Hager" (L. Hughes, 1969, p. 3). "Come in, chile, Said Aunt Hager" (L. Hughes, 1969, pp.3-4). All these different utterances are made by Aunt Hager, the old Black woman, in order to draw the neighborhood's attention on the storm when she saw the sky turning gray. This alert is made in an informal English which is much more characteristic of the black community in Stanton. Opposite, the reader can easily identify Tempy who is a sophisticated African-American woman living in the white community. Throughout the novel she expresses herself in a formal English: "If you like milk, I'll get it for you... Now, how are your clothes? I see your stocking has a hole in it, and one pants-leg is hanging" (L. Hughes, 1969, p.236). Unlike her mother and sisters who speak in a dialect characteristic to the poor society, Tempy uses the formal English, which is observable in the conversation with Sandy her nephew. Yet, we can apprehend the coexistence of formal and informal English in the novel as an expression of the social contrast.

By modelling the language of the characters on the exact language spoken by both communities in real life, Hughes applies himself to what Duchet calls *sociality*⁵: "The sociality [...] alludes to a socio-historical context recognizable by reading the novel" (K. Djiman, 2010, p.32). Likewise, the reader can identify the dialects of both communities as a symbol that refers to an aspect of American history, namely racial segregation.

3.2. The Outcomes of the Color Line

The color line in American history is a notion that dates back to "Ivory v. Ferguson"⁶ in 1896. Its instauration has fostered discrimination toward colored people despite the rights acquired after the war of secession. In southern areas, "the Balck codes" and "Jim Crow Laws" were strongly used to keep them out of secured environment.

Langston Hughes portrays those negative practices in *Not Without Laughter* with the objective to keep them in the collective memory of African-Americans, but also to preserve a

⁵ Original text: "La socialité [...] fait allusion à un contexte socio-historique reconnaissable à la lecture du roman".

⁶ A legal case that led the Supreme Court to adopt the controversial "separated but equal" doctrine.

pivotal episode of Blacks' lives in American history. In the novel, the chapter entitled "Children's Day" is framed around those issues of color line and black codes. Indeed, this chapter deals with a free admittance party for all the children in Stanton. However, colored children were expelled out of the park as we can apprehend in the following passage:

There were crowds of children under the bright red and white wooden shelter at the park entrance. They were lining up at the gate – laughing, merry, clean little white children, pushing and yelling and giggling amiably. Sandy let Willie-Mae go first and he got in the line behind her. [...] They were almost to the entrance now. ...There were just two boys in front of them. ... Willie-Mae held out her black little hand clutching the coupons. They moved forward. The man looked down. "Sorry," he said. "This party's for white kids" (L. Hughes, 1969, p.195).

The expulsion of the black children as reported in this passage is a relevant evidence of black codes and racial restrictions initiated by Jim Crow laws. The recurrence of those racially restrictive acts against colored people and against Blacks in particular led to the adoption of a wide range of actions to transcend racial barriers.

At this level, Hughes endows some of his characters with specific assets which facilitate their intergration into the white community. The first example is perceptible with Buster, "a small ivory-white Negro child with straight golden hair" (L. Hughes, 1969, p.16) known throughout the novel as Sandy's playmate. To know more about this character who transcends racial barriers, we need to delve into onomastic theory.

Indeed, as a branch of literary creation, onomastic focuses on naming characters. At the theoretical level, it provides a thorough analysis of characters' names for a better understanding of their origins and scopes in a book. All this testifies the standpoint of Paul Leslie and James Skipper who think that "names are not just arbitrary symbols ; they signify status, achievement, privilege, and meaningful social organization. They may communicate ethnicity, social status, and social prestige all understood as meaningful within social contexts" (P. Leslie and J. Skipper, 1990, p.273). This statement quite fits our analysis if taken on the American social context of the XXth century characterized by racial issues.

To move further in the analysis, "Buster", the name under consideration is worth seeing on the etymological aspect. In fact, in *The Longman Dictionary of contemporary English*, the second reference to the word *buster* is "something that ends a situation or stop an activity" (2007, p. 201).

With regard to this etymological apprehension, we can affirm that Hughes deliberately named that character in so far as he is perceived by the reader as an extraordinary character whose actions in the fictional framework go beyond the color line making it impossible for

white folks to recognize his belonging to black community due to his complexion. Thus, Buster is a symbol that transcends racial barriers for unlike the other children who were expelled out of the park, he had access to the party without being stopped by the security guard as we can see in the following passage: “Buster went in all right. Said Sadie. I seen him. But they didn’ t know he was colored, I guess. When I went up to the gate the man said : Whoa! Where you going’ ?’ just like I was a horse” (L. Hughes, 1969, p. 196-197). In the scene under consideration, Sadie who is also a colored child is giving vent because of his rejection by the white man. However, he affirms that Buster entered the place without being identified as a colored boy.

This scene is pregnant with meaning in that social context dominated by racial exclusion because unlike Clare Kendry who simulates to be a white woman to escape discrimination in Nella Larsen’ s *Passing* (1929), Buster was born with his whitelike physical appearances which allow him to go beyond the Color Line. In a nutshell, he is an enigmatic character who symbolizes this reality in African-Americans’ efforts to have access to a better living condition. We also understand this reality as another evidence of the *sociality* which, according to Duchet, “alludes to a socio-historical context recognizable by reading the novel” (K. Djiman, 2010, p.32).

Moreover, Tempy, another protagonist symbolizes the transcendence of the Color Line for she lives within the white community in Stanton. Unlike the first character, namely Buster whose whitelike physical appearances allowed him to escape the color restrictions, Tempy is a sophisticated Black woman who acquired knowledge from Mrs. Barr-Grant and through autodidactic learning which granted her the respect from white folks:

Tempy, when she married, had owned houses too, one of which had been willed her by Mrs. Barr-Grant, for whom she had worked for years as personal maid. She had acquired her job while yet in high school, and Mrs. Barr-Grant, who travelled a great deal in the interest of women suffrage and prohibition, had taken Tempy east with her. [...] In truth Tempy did worship her mistress, for the colored girl found that by following Mrs. Barr-Grant’ s early directions she had become an expert housekeeper ; by imitating her manner of speech she had acquired a precise flow of language ; and by reading her books she had become interested in things that most Negro girls never thought about (L. Hughes, 1969, p.238).

Hughes also makes use of Tempy’ s experience as a symbol for freedom acquisition by means of education. Throughout the novel, she outspokenly expresses her disagreement with other Blacks who prefer living on odd jobs instead of modelling themselves after African-American

scholars for the acquisition of their dignity when facing white folks. We quite understand her involvement in her nephew Sandy' s education by urging him to read:

Thus Sandy spent much of his first year with Tempy deep in novels too mature for a fourteen-year-old boy. But Tempy was very proud of her studious young nephew. She began to decide that she had made no mistake in keeping him with her, and when he entered the high school, she bought him his first long-trouser suit as a spur towards further application (L. Hughes, 1969, pp.245-246).

From this passage, we comprehend Tempy' s commitment to help Sandy acquire a good education. Another example is worth mentioning because it speaks volume in the same vein, namely Tempy' s encouragement for Sandy to model himself after W.E.B Du Bois, an African-American Scholar who plays a pivotal role in the emergence of Blacks' academic education. Hughes portrays this fact in his work to show his agreement with that commitment: "Du Bois was a doctor of philosophy and had studied in Europe! . . . That' s what Negroes needed to do, get smart, study books, go to Europe. Don' t talk to me about Washington, Tempy fumed. Take Du Bois for your model, not some white folks' nigger" (L. Hughes, pp. 244-245).

All these above mentioned intellectual attitudes of Tempy make her a particular protagonist in the novel. In other words, she is an exceptional character who symbolizes real freedom acquisition for African-Americans. She has been able to cross the Color Line not by using illegal means, but rather the intellectual tools which allowed her to be a rich and respectable Black woman. She is also a symbol of success for both black and white communities.

Conclusion

In this article we pondered over racial issues in American society during the XXth century as reported by Langston Hughes in *Not Without Laughter*. Within this framework, one goal has been the guiding point: to portray the symbolism which the author uses to exhibit the struggle against racial barriers. To achieve that goal, three main axes have been necessary: First, the presentation of symbolism as a tool for literary creation, then the presentation of the social context and finally, the identification of symbolic features related to the struggle of Blacks in order to overcome racial barriers. With the first point, our reflection was focused on the way symbolism is used in literary creation. Not only did it allow us to discover that symbolism is a tool for showing heroism, but also a means for expressing hardships.

In the second axis, we laid emphasis on the social context for a better apprehension of a certain number of laws in the American society during the XXth century. At this level, we identified some exclusion-based social rules such as “racially restrictive covenants” which, according to Nancy Welsh, were tools for the white community to expel out colored people. An overview of the setting also permitted us to understand that the fictional town of Stanton used as the setting of the novel is, in fact, a copy of the real town of Stanton in the state of Kansas.

As for the last part, it permitted to identify the symbolic features related to racial barriers and at this very point, we made use of the social contrast through the setting (the unsafe area where Blacks struggle to survive and the safe environment where White folks live peacefully). In addition, the outcomes of the Color Line have allowed us to identify some means used by Black folks in order to escape racial injustices. Among those means, Langston Hughes emphasizes education as the best way to escape racial discrimination in American society. Throughout this work, we made use of sociocriticism as perceived by Claude Duchet in order to show the sociality at the core of the novel, which means the way it reflects American society at the XXth century.

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