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Between Reflux and Signage of a Reconstructive: The Character's Relationship to a Crisis in Alice Walker's *Meridian* (1976)

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Abstract

In a critical assessment of *Meridian* by Alice Malsenior Walker, published in 1976, I conduct an analysis which endgame is to point out the forceful ideas and the means the characters display in order to overcome the evil nature of the crises they have to face in society. In this novel produced by an African-american female writer, we reconsider the actions propulsed by resilient attitudes from the characters in a joint effort, whatsoever the crisis they face or how it resurfaces, the natural means they are endowed with and display to prevail over every single hardship. In a sociocritical and semiotical analyses, we conduct a study by drawing parallels between colour bar and Covid-19. We sort out how the characters in *Meridian* in joint efforts battle their plight to overcome the problems and solve the crisis. The final goal of the study is to inspire from these characters blueprint for solving crisis to remedy the problems born out of the Covid-19 pandemic. Another purpose of this study is to help prove that literature can have its say in the process for remedying a sanitary crisis.

Key-words: Covid-19, crisis, deconstructive, malaise, reconstructive,

Résumé

Dans une évaluation critique de *Meridian* par Alice Malsenior Walker, publiée en 1976, je mène une analyse dont l'objectif est de souligner les idées fortes et les moyens dont les personnages font preuve pour surmonter la nature maléfique des crises auxquelles ils doivent faire face dans la société. Dans ce roman écrit par une écrivaine afro-américaine, nous reconsidérons les actions propulsées par les attitudes résilientes des personnages dans un effort commun, quelle que soit la crise à laquelle ils sont confrontés ou comment elle refait surface, les moyens naturels dont ils sont dotés pour surmonter chaque épreuve. Dans une analyse sociocritique et sémiotique, nous menons une étude en établissant des parallèles entre la barre de couleur et le Covid-19. Nous déterminons comment les personnages de *Meridian* luttent ensemble contre leur sort pour surmonter les problèmes et résoudre la crise. L'objectif final de l'étude est de s'inspirer de ces personnages du plan directeur pour résoudre les crises afin de remédier aux problèmes nés de la pandémie de Covid-19. L'un des objectifs de cette étude est d'aider à prouver que la littérature peut avoir son mot à dire dans le processus de résolution d'une crise sanitaire.

Mots-clés : Covid-19, crise, déconstructif, mal-être, reconstructif.

Introduction

Crises ranging from discrimination, epidemics, and pandemics have always disrupted the course of human lives. These crises may have various forms, can resurface anytime and they have several faces. When a crisis ends and resurfaces, the characters, all the same, will end their reconstruction even though they appear affected regarding signs on their bodies and their faces. This is tantamount to saying a character is to be resilient and determined facing a crisis so that he does not back down, but he has to 'subdue it'. The context of crisis that arise from Covid-19 and discriminatory laws prove the needs for reconstructive actions both personally and collectively. Critical situations stemming from crises are perceived in Alice Walker's *Meridian* (1976), where characters weave their actions, words and efforts to melt into solutions. They have to issue sustainable plans against the crises, then rethink solutions for them to be able at last, in the short or long run to curb further societal crises.

The model of literary standards can help create a modus operandi to pave the way for offers and solutions to critical situations sparked by Covid-19. The writing of Alice Walker in *Meridian* becomes a blueprint and hints for mankind to neutralize the effects of crises. We are therefore eager to know: How are characters in *Meridian* coping to face crises? What are the photo-reflexive means they are endowed with? How do the characters make use of their wherewithal? How are racial bar and Covid-19 intertwined? Is literature relevant for solving a sanitary issue? Merging into *Meridian*, and reading it as a book which can help solve societal crises can raise curiosity on the part of the reader. For the researcher, this can be an interesting issue intended to set a blueprint for solving crises. Solving societal crises is aimed at assuaging some citizens' lust for power and domination over others. Moving deep into the characters' minds, words and actions is at the basis for the reconstitution and the reconstruction of the world, leaning on literature and its contribution for cleansing evil out.

In this research paper, I present the question of an efficient resolutionism of the quackmire suggested by the outbreak of Covid-19 by drawing on the way the characters in *Meridian* weave their efforts. Gerri Bates, in an article published in the *International Journal of Academic Research*, argues that *Meridian*, under its current shape, if keeping its original form can be stickered one of the best ever and second to none problem solving pattern. The purpose of this research paper is to enrich and enlarge the scope of literature as an alternative to remedy situations where medical care and drugs have failed to bestow satisfactions. Another endgame for this paper is to show clearly that crises from Covid-19 and racial discrimination are similar. In a semiotic study and a sociocritical analysis I will first show how deconstructed the characters are. I will then expose and reveal what the characters do, how they organize and shape a new web for facing the crises. We will finally write about what they do and say to wriggle out of their hardships.

I-FROM FRAGMENTATION TO BIDS FOR RECONSTRUCTION

1-Fragmented characters.

The crisis caused by the effects of racial discrimination is similar to that caused by Covid-19 because the two situations pose the same assumptions. The diegetic plot in *Meridian*, exposes us to a deconstructed world where the characters have difficulty opening up to each other and

speaking to each other. The first pages of the work reveal a macabre landscape where even the noise of vehicles is not perceived and lifeless insects litter the ground without the narration revealing the cause of this 'genocide'. The other important sign of the crisis is that no one dares to respond to Meridian when she tries to ask for information and tries to inquire about the situation prevailing in the city. Everything seems to suggest that there is an Omerta that is imposed on the characters. There is a ban on talking about the crisis that is shaking the city. The people Meridian talks to have no desire to denounce the evil acts of police brutality, the bans on blacks frequenting public places. On the American soil, they are not recognized as full citizens who are entitled to the same treatment as whites.

When some dare to reveal actions that go against the interests of black populations, they will act to materialize their ideas. Meridian, herself admits that she does not enjoy the trust of her own community because of the fact that some Blacks have ganged up against the interest of other blacks. When some blacks often dare to speak to her, she does not openly perceive what they insinuate or she does not hear the words they pronounce. It's almost obvious that some characters want to tell Meridian that she doesn't fully appreciate the crisis and should ostracize herself. These characters are not only in crisis but are also rejected. They say they have no rights, no privileges and no recognition. They are therefore not identifiable because they have lost all reference points with society. As Meridian puts it:

Seeing their face would not betray their says. They don't even dare have a glance at me. Owing to a variety of reasons, they cannot speak. What they nurture will not come out their mind. Their wills are constrained and contained in their hope, they have rights but they will not claim for fear of reprisal. They will do what it takes to heal their trauma but someone has to help them out of their lot where they seem to have lost their words, their identities and their zest. They are scattered and have lost this sense of togetherness and live instead as a spare parts community. (*Meridian*, p. 24)

These words of the main character of the work submitted for our study reveal a deconstructed universe to be mended. In that universe, the characters seem not to live the normal course of things. They are faceless and rightsless characters who live a lack and a malaise. This situation of malaise and demand or cries is undeniably the same experienced by ordinary mortals because of the Covid-19 crisis. Sanitary measures, also known as health measures that impose the quarantine of people suffering from the Covid-19 disease, rhyme with the words of the main character Meridian, who asserts that her people seem not to live the normal course of things. Just like people suffering from Covid-19, are ostracized and thrown into quarantine, Blacks at the time of segregation, were also ostracized and prohibited from melting with other people. It sounds like the color of their skin was a contagious disease which could be spread and take the lives of white people. They therefore did not have the rights to attend public places and are compelled to seclusion.

Covid-19 and discrimination are proving to be crisis-making elements in so far as Covid-19 requires the wearing of masks when we know that masks tend to prevent us from breathing normally and which is all the more suffocating as some people break the law not to put it on. Racial discrimination is proving to be a very cumbersome and important factor because it prevents part of the drowning community from expressing itself. Police brutality and intimidation are likely to gag characters likely to launch a challenge to white authority and rise up for their rights. George Floyd, an American-american who was protesting against color bar paid the price, when he died following long minutes of suffocation, Liz Sawyer an American journalist reporting for CCN declared : “*George Floyd showed no signs of life from time EMS arrived, fire department report says*”, [Star Tribune](#) August 28, 2020. This was due to his grounding, knee on his blow, by Derek Chauvin, police officer, in Minneapolis, Minnesota on May 25, 2020. George Floyd's incessant calls "I can't breathe" due to the manifestation of racism are related to the suffocation of the living when he is forced to wear a mask in order to access public places. The segregated Floyd's words "I can't breathe" matches the suffocating sick people wearing the face-mask and not being able to breathe.

Through this title, it is a binarity that is evoked. The fragmentation of the characters is a necessary step towards their reconstruction. The quest for reconstruction is a prerequisite, a driving force and a motive for a character in tatters to redefine himself in the face of a pandemic like Covid-19. Going from a fragmented character to a reconstructed character implies that Meridian wants to change their status and acquires the means to do so. While the other characters are silenced, Meridian will have to fight to recover some of the rights denied to them.

As a feminist author, Walker combines sexual, racial, cultural, regionalist and economic considerations with her philosophy. His writing requires his readers to be aware of her ideals in order to change the attitude of the others, regardless of their ideologies. Her work refers to the inequalities generated by racism coupled with an acceptance of women and an understanding of the choices available to them.

Another important point remains the link that Walker establishes between struggle and change. It is a point of research that motivates the explanation given to the difficulties experienced by African-Americans. Such difficulties sometimes lead to growth. For there to be growth and change, the legacies of the struggle will have to be born by all, after it has been valiantly fought.

This stage of development marks Meridian's transition to her "third life," drawing from her second life the main lesson that she has only one thing to tackle: to ensure full control of his emotions and feelings. It is during her second life that she will undergo profound changes that will prepare her for her third life:

I have not procrastinated enough to heed the real endgame I have to pursuit. Coming in the north to change my lot was first hand but I have earned more than money. I have discovered love and discovered deep inside me that I was able to feel positive things my family could benefit from better than money. I turn back to my family with pride and we will blossom together (*Meridian*, p. 204).

Meridian returns to her family, tried but transformed. She is now a "gentlewoman", a woman of greatness of mind who strives to make amends for his past mistakes with the help of his granddaughter Ruth. She has now found peace and tranquility within her community. She learns many great lessons from her interaction with Truman who helps as guide. Meridian understands that she should not appropriate this hatred born of the controversial and tense relationship with the white man, for fear of subjecting it to her family members who have suffered enough; especially to her granddaughter who has nothing to do with the grandfather's past. She clearly figures out that she has mend fences between her family members but also mend the plights of the people under her guidance.

2- Baffled characters mending their plights

Meridian has strong links to her family and her community. Her ability to face insults and critics from the other characters provide a sense of greatness and superiority. The way she sorts out her problems and faces hardships conveys a great deal of intelligence. She has acquired a strong experience out of her problem solving activities. She has then always reached her objectives:

I shall confess, I have not eyed such intelligence amongst the black community for ages. Meridian is patient and reaches her target with zeal and zest she only has the secret. She has words just enough to trail thousands of people amongst every community behind her. She is not rude, not making fuss, but she can persuade with her second to none intelligence (*Meridian*, p. 195)

At this stage, Meridian can be compared to Ulysses, this hero of Greek mythology. He is endowed with malice and intelligence. The hero of intelligence is Ulysses. He is said to be industrious, cunning, with a gentle and persuasive word. It was he who encouraged the Achaeans to build tents, in order to prepare for them before going into battle; this, in spite of the immediate assault that Achilles would like furious and impatient. Ulysses anticipates and explains that warriors will have more strength after a good meal. It is also Odysseus who suggests the idea of the Trojan horse, the cunning that ensures the final victory of the Achaeans. Jean Pierre Vernant sums up this intelligence in the *Métis*. This *Metis* is a ruse and an anticipation.

Jean Pierre Vernant, in his analysis of the *Métis* among the Greeks, recalls that *Métis* is first and foremost a divinity: it is the first wife of Zeus, who ends up devouring her to appropriate her qualities of intelligence. He incorporates this twisted cunning and the consequence is the birth of Athena who comes directly out of her skull all armed with bronze, sparkling and ready for battle: it is the warrior intelligence, that of the strategist who knows how to anticipate the movements of combat.

This quality of anticipation is noteworthy. It also refers to the etymology of the mythological name of Prometheus: the one who understands what is going to happen and positions himself to make the most of it. Unlike his brother Epimetheus, he is able to foresee and advise. He is endowed with intelligence and anticipation.

The ability to anticipate makes it possible to seize the *Kairos*: the opportune moment to act. Choosing the right time makes it possible to take effective action. We anticipate what will

happen and we seize the opportunity, when the time comes. We grasp what is going to happen to grasp what is happening. We must foresee: the future belongs to those who see it coming and take in passing what is spreading before their eyes. It is an attentive and not wait-and-see wait.

The value of intelligence therefore remains primary in relation to the value of strength. Thus, Homer describes how the hero "killed him, by trickery and not by force". A sharp arrow, skillfully detached, from afar and safely, is worth less than a sharp sword blow in close combat. The intelligent hero prefers the bow while the strong hero prefers the sword. Meridian, in this regard, will not rely on Truman's derogatory remarks that want to push her to act quickly against the discriminatory practices of an enemy who is not mentioned by name in the work. He says: "the more we spend our time waiting, the more we waste our chances to prevail" (*Meridian*, p.56). But she will retort: "Time, not the one psychological used into marking our birth or death, but the time propulsing us in the back. Let us wait, for we will win" (*Meridian*, p. 129).

Meridian, as the anthroponym of its name indicates, is not hasty to decision-making and action. The modus operandi that determines her gesture commands the respect of the other characters even if they do not often approve of her way of thinking and acting. This divergence in the way of operating, however, pushes the other characters to deny the hero his qualities and thus position him as a negation. There is therefore a need to assess characters' interactions for them to better battle the crises they endure.

II- ASSESSMENT OF CHARACTERS' LIVES INTERTWINED WITH PERMANENT CRISES.

As a civil rights activist and protagonist within the diegetic plot, Meridian is subjected, on the part of the narrator, to a point that reveals the negation of a life and an existence. She is presented as thin and light. Thin, that is to say what is the opposite of size. Size refers to roundness. The roundness is itself a symbol of health, vitality, energy and therefore life. Roundness is equated with circularity. Circularity is indicative of what is moving. It is a sign of the presence of life and energy.

She is light and says she doesn't have the mass that someone her age would have. Perhaps she doubts her ability to tackle the problem of her time? It would also mean that she is not able to stand on her legs and that she could be tossed around by any external or even internal force. Meridian is therefore vulnerable; She almost does not exist because she is not able to stand on her legs and therefore unable to undertake anything. She is almost worthless and bathed in inaction. Inaction of which it is satisfied and to which it devotes itself. She is at this point a motionless character. It cannot move if it is not pushed. She becomes a flattened character, stripped of her time and space who needs to be activated before she engages in action.

1- Characters being stripped of their times and spaces by sanitary and racial crises

There is no space-time. The relationship to events is diffuse. There is no grip on time. There is no official beginning or continuation: the timelessness and anonymity of the ages constitute a new world. The characters are determined on the one hand through the Walkerian narrative, and

the American history on the other hand by means of the construction, reconstruction of the characters Meridian. The Sacred Serpent gardener has these words for Meridian:

Know not where we are, not where we are from and not where we are going. Meridian just calls us by our names, our first names and second names could have given us hints. Maybe she conceals them to keep us stranded here. We can't stay here till we turn old. We need to go someday and maybe come back later. Our friends have papers in their back and ensigns on their garments. Just those simple things to help us reorient (Meridian, p. 189).

Some of the characters are not in the know of their past. They have no past because they do not know it and therefore cannot disclose it to the reader. The reader does not know much about the plot, and characters' lives. The narrative says of Meridian that she is an orphan, she is broken, and disoriented. The reader has no indication set aside the age of some of the characters. The narrative is, moreover, dependent on the mnemonic activity of the sometimes fragmentary narrations. Time is therefore as elusive, moving, chaotic as the story of the characters. Non-history leads to a systematic return to time, a tendency to return to the moment when history escapes, without the possibility of moving forward since the empty role is not filled. Yet this reconquest of history is not the easiest element to access in the Walkerian novel, at least in the works submitted to our study.

The first feeling is that of a world without landmarks, whether historical or temporal. The past is the cradle of collective memory, of the collective unconscious, which leads to a difficulty to exist. However, the characters do not know their past in full. Therefore, the difficulty to say and to exist is then real. In this, the Walkerian novel construction is close to the uncertainty principle of quantum mechanics. This theory forces us to rethink the idea of the continuous and predictable trajectory. In Walkerian novels, the reader cannot determine place and time with certainty. The characters seem to have romantic characteristics with this exception. The reader cannot determine their environment imbued with suffocation, profusion, uncertainty, fragmented and patched history as suggested by *Meridian* writing. This novel is not part of a linear evolution where the course of events must be reconstructed by the reader calling for ultra-attention. The major constituent element becomes discontinuity, rupture, temporal entanglement and events. Cantic mechanics not only challenges the idea of a predictable and continuous trajectory but also assumes an element of discontinuity.

If the identity of characters develops chaotically through multiple places and diverse relationships, it is to translate this search for a cradle of identity. The characters are looking for essential landmarks. Self-awareness, like the consciousness of the other, passes in part through an awareness of the environment and time. Without a place of reference, characters remain wandering; this creates an instability of characters and an essential void. To bring out identity is to bring together "these disjointed selves (consciousness)". This is what Meridian hopes: "search and find my folks is my concern. Whatever they are and whatever that may cost. Seem one part of myself is lost as long as I am not re-united with them: folks, food and land" (*Meridian*, p. 74)

The characters do not develop particular attachments or clear landmarks. These characters are both victims of the non-possession of their story, but also of a non-time and a non-space, which prevents them from structuring themselves as traditional romantic characters. They are nevertheless romantic characters in their own right even if they are blurred.

When characters are aware of the place where they live and possess it, they better understand their world. A romantic character is composed, structured thanks to its author. The novelist finds his own reflection in his work, he discovers the metaphors of his image and tries to unravel the mysteries whose presence in him freaks him out and makes his destiny perfectly opaque. Telling one's truth then takes on a new meaning. Françoise Lioure has this more interesting statement:

Cela consiste à découvrir, dans le miroir offert par les personnages, ce qui était jusque-là hors de portée de la conscience et à déchiffrer le message inouï que le romancier, tel Orphée, aura rapporté des abysses souterrains où il sera descendu, toute une conception du roman en découle, où les personnages, ces doubles virtuels mènent le jeu¹.

Walkerian writing establishes in "these virtual doubles" a kind of historical unconscious: they remain suspended between worlds that do not belong to them and to which they hardly belong. Lioure intervenes for this purpose and affirms: "the self that speaks, finally, always has a problem of identity, a congenital deficiency of identity". What about when a character's past has itself created an identity problem by denying its existence?

The reader finds this elusive aspect, this opacity in these characters who seem to wander with the winds, rarely, partially, in reflection or analysis, impulsive like the segregated system which causes frustration and trauma which is dependent among the Blacks, Meridian voices her mind: "Baffled by things, I was on the verge of taking my own life. Something she was not entitled to but I am raised from my aches to have things fixed on my own" (*Meridian*, p. 195). This type of character often gives the impression of being in a bubble: without a past, he cannot build the future. This is probably the reason why their psychology seems poorly developed. The character is not just a thematic role, from an ideological point of view. Walker inscribes his characters more in a fact than in a reflection, an analysis, in a determined and determining being. This is also reminiscent of the characters of Camus or Sartre. Their characters do not evolve alone, they depend on each other.

Meridian will recover from her crisis and her series of failures thanks to the support she receives from Truman. she finds her bearings, reorientes her life and makes a new identity thanks to her interaction with other characters, notwithstanding the long distance that separates them. This necessary need for each other leads to a correlation between characters united by a collective

¹ Françoise Lioure. "Construction et déconstruction du personnage dans la forme narrative du XXème siècle," *Presse de la faculté des lettres et sciences humaines de Clairmont Ferrand*, 1993, 41.

consciousness. Recovering from the crisis, reuniting with time and space is first step for paving the way to a quest for a lost identity and psychology.

2-The characters' quests for their identity and psychology

Some characters in the novels under study do not have names. The reader does not know their date of birth, or even their approximate age. He has no idea where they came from. These characters disappear and reappear as images of characters without a reason for being, dispossessed of their origin, orphans. The ellipse makes it possible to become aware of the chaotic construction, which is a consequence directly related to an identity problem. Just like racial discrimination would strip blacks of their identity, Covid-19 would also force people into wearing face masks hiding therefore a part of the face and not being therefore able to identify someone you already know. Bans for shaking hands and staying one metre away from friends to greet them are also disrupting secular social measures consisting in touching our beloved friends and families. Although disrupted and baffled, there is a strong need to reinvent and reaffirm new ways of living and adapt to the new social contexts. The author deliberately omits to give information about the characters and does not specify how much time has elapsed between two appearances of a character. This participates, at the same time, in the feeling of an uncertain temporality of the novels for the reader but also in an uncertain perception of time for the characters.

Anonymity places the characters in an archetypal situation, isolating them, stripping them of their identity and entity. Their history makes them undefinable and undefined. And a fragmented narrative makes them all the more elusive. The character is then a kind of model for the other characters: he has no existence of his own.

Walkerian writing plays with the opacity of the characters, they are but are not, the narration gives the characters a name. The characters exist but they know nothing of their origin. The novels are full of passing secondary characters who make the narrative and narrative bubble even more. This writing could aim to destabilize the reader. It seems, however, that the presence of personalities and historical facts allows a real anchoring of the Walkerian universe. It is a reality made up of both well-known and unknown characters. The construction of complex and chaotic Walkerian characters, their universe of reference and their identity issues are representative of American society, at least that's what this mixture of fiction and reality can suggest to the reader.

Instability leads to a form of opacity that has consequences on the psychological construction of the characters. The narrative itself contributes to this opacity. Walker writing now plays with real identities, nicknames and invented names. Reality mixes with fiction as if to put it better, like American culture, populated by reality, imagination, and history just as we are comparing racial discrimination to Covid-19 in this research paper. Each character retains its mystery, its multifaceted character; nothing is given. The reader thinks he is grasping the character and already he plunges back into a more opaque and confusing mystery. This form of storytelling aggravates the feeling of uncertainty and incompleteness. The characters of Walkerian novels are not made to be highlighted: intermittency, evanescence and darkness suit them better. This also protects them but it also restores what they are.

The wandering of the characters in *Meridian*, mirrors the narrative form; which takes many detours. The narrative breaks are the mirror of these characters who are looking for each other. The reader is at the intersection of narrative and characters. These characters oscillate between construction and psychological deconstruction. The opacity observed when it comes to evoking the origin and identity of the characters has visible consequences for them. As a result, psychological and psychiatric points of view are recurrent in Walker, the author.

The construction of identity is at the crossroads of several concepts and theories. If it feeds on social representations and generates others, it builds many relationships to be defined on the one hand and compared with otherness on the other. The construction of identity evolves both thanks, against and through the other. To build a social identity within a group, the character must set up processes of integration, comparison, or even challenge with other groups according to a relationship of dominated dominants.

Temporality for groups as for individuals is experienced in a particular way. Each expresses the need for a filiation in the past, historical roots, and a possibility to project itself as a group into the future. This constitutes a temporal dimension, an important component of identities and identity claims (re-appropriation of their history). Whether activated by internal determinants (feeling of being bad) or external (questioning, questioning, rejection), the implementation of an identity strategy always aims at the very existence of the character, the recognition in the eyes of others of a space of his own.

III- IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION AND REDEFINITION OF HEROIC CHARACTERS

The construction of the character in the corpus reveals the societal evolution of these characters who are determined by social and political representations. Their construction occupies an important place in terms of the roles that are distributed to them in an injunction to be oneself. In *Meridian*, the characters Truman Held and Margaret develop in opposition but are in a permanent collaboration. Their qualities necessarily remain opposed and fixed. The role of each or everyone is designated from childhood. Margaret and Truman can only recognize in this a good part of their lives.

The characters stand out similarly in a different universe from the others. The eldest position of Celie's character leads to her function as a housewife and supporter. This, however, keeps her in a role as a woman confined to domestic chores, and she is characterized by gentleness and reason. Meridian, by her intellectual faculties, establishes herself in difference and responds to the condition of genius, maintaining only her opposition to family expectations. She seeks to train as a "modern woman". Finally, Meridian refuses the role set since childhood. They must flee imposed attributions and reinvent themselves in order to conceive themselves in a different way.

The opposition between Margaret and Truman is determined from birth by their parents who had already, long before the birth of their children, expressed the desire to take them to the upper stages: "soon as you give birth, all of them will be taken to full responsibilities (*Meridian*, p. 95)

Meridian will leave the family home. The conditions are now in place to begin her mission: that of going around the feuding black and white communities. This departure already leads to a hiatus effect between the characters Truman and Margaret who find themselves separated. This separation later reveals a reconstruction based on a very informative communication between Meridian and the rest of the communities. This interaction, it should be said, is unintentionally caused by the Meridian. Margaret and Truman cannot adopt a similar behavior, but must instead distinguish themselves from each other. Meridian is one step ahead of the others. She is too ambitious and bold enough. Margaret concedes to Meridian the role of a capable and a leader. she receives the status of the intelligent and initiative-minded girl. She will have shown him how capable she is of resisting oppression. She puts up heroic resistance and leaves Mr. Truman's home. The latter also recognizes her exceptional heroic qualities. She has the strength, the intelligence to find the means and energy to find a way and a solution just like a medical doctor striving to heal her patient and curb a pandemic. In the middle of puberty, the absence of the father allows Meridian to rebuild herself on the physical level.

Meridian is looking for friendship and charm, while the Whites develop aggression and violence. She identifies with her father. Father characteristics are based on male violence.

The characteristics and role of the father based on male violence that do not shake Nettie make him the person best listened to by him: "Your sister Meridian is not narrow-minded as you are, she is smart in her words which always prove to be true" (*Meridian*, p. 152). Meridian wants to be fulfilled by her condition and her image as a chosen child, she grants herself the same attributes, not because the difficult situations decided so, but because she decided to tear them up, build herself and make her way. Pa refuses to grant the same prerogatives to Celie because they can only be granted to one character: Nettie. It is a major focal point and receives many hues, because as Philippe Hamon says in Poetics of the story, the character who "receives the most vivid emotional hue, is called the hero".

Nettie defines herself by the quality of the father, not because he decided for her, but because she took the initiative to free herself from any desire for subjugation. The other characters only her determination to begin her transformation. The process is irreversible, we can only realize it through this metonymy: "Meridian will keep her haircuts" (*Meridian*, p. 172). It is obviously the hair that changes, but beyond that, it is the behavior and physiognomy that evolve.

The characters work during the day and chores for long hours under the weight of the scorching sun. They perform tasks that many people of his age cannot accomplish in the space of a day. Barn sweats, cries and sings to the rhythm of the large drops falling from his face. He works not only to be paid but also for recognition. He works during the day but entertains himself at night. The sweat he loses during the day is compensated by the many sips of alcohol he swallows every evening. One liquid is absorbed to compensate for another that is lost during the day. The desire for compensation is inherent in the reconstruction of the heroic character Grange. The hero wants to make up for what he loses, no matter how. Compensation is synonymous with circularity. Circularity is a symbol of life and productivity. Grange's heroic quest was productive and his white employers recognized him as a good agrarian technician as his harvests were huge and of good

quality. At least at this level he manages to do what the white man thought impossible for a black man to accomplish.

He is poor and has a large family. He is a farmer but is married to a teacher. The narration says of Grange that he is complexed at times. His wife does not rudely him but in a patriarchal society, it is not good for the woman to be more educated than her husband. Grange is therefore a character disunited, fragmented and in crisis. Because his wife is rich in spirit, Grange must also be rich in something he sets out to look for: the material. The balancing principle thus becomes a norm in the Walkerian narrative. The heroic character wants to possess what the other already has. Grange decides to leave the South to go to the North. The symbolism here designates a character who makes the courageous decision to leave his land, his family, his possessions (even if he does not boast of having enough). Heroic desire does not make him lose sight of the fact that he lives in a society where man is master and he has always worked to keep things that way.

Truman wants then to be on top. He leaves his wife in the South to go up to the North. The North, following the indication of the compass needle, is upwards. Barn therefore takes height. He wants to restore esteem and dignity, qualities that the hero needs in the accomplishment of his action. He associates dignity and height (which he takes) with material wealth for rehabilitation, lest he fall free from the top of his pedestal. Grange's heroic quest is therefore conducted from within (this quest is also a struggle to rise above his wife) as well as from the outside (he aims at racial exoticism and the white man's recognition of qualities not inherent in a particular race).

The narration reveals that Truman indulges in alcohol at parties organized with friends before going into the arms of Morpheus. Morpheus is the god of Greek mythology who presides over the management and distribution of sleep doses in his tribe. The god of sleep, Morpheus is a prophetic dream deity and has the vocation to put mortals to sleep. Sleep is considered by neurologists and brain function specialists as half a death except that the heart continues to beat and blood is still circulating in the body. Grange is swept away by sleep and finds himself in the arms of Morpheus. Grange is no longer a character in crisis because he will have managed to be recognized by his white employers that he is up to the tasks assigned to him. He is no longer a character who throws a tantrum; But he fails in his quest to solve the problem of race and struggles to rise higher than his wife. The frustration that stems from his inability to do better than his wife Margaret leads him to inflict psychological violence on her that pushes her to suicide. He returned to the South with empty pockets and was eventually shot dead by the police.

Conclusion

Alice Walker's novel, *Meridian*, is one of her best known for the peculiar way the characters in general and Meridian especially strives to pull out of a deep hole where they have been pushed by the cliché stemming from the racial discrimination. They are constantly ostracized, biased, silenced, stripped of their rights and identities. They are fragmented, put into pieces and forced to bow aside. Just like Covid-19 will compel people into putting face masks to the point of not being able to identify a person. The face mask will snuff the characters' voices when they speak, creating then an impossibility or a hardship to make their voices audible. Although shielding us

from Covid-19, the face mask will make people suffocate to the point of even begging for the removal of the face mask. Color bar has proved this to be true when being discriminated, in their direct tussle with police brutality, black people were suffocated, at the image of George Floyd whose neck was blocked by Police agent Dereck Chauvin for long minutes despite his yearning for breath and asking for mercy, leading to his death. As restaurants, swimming pools, schools, universities and other public sites were discriminated against black people at the behest of Jim Crow laws, Covid-19 barring measures would also be considered liberty-threatening since they are aimed at impeding people from assembling, sharing hopes, ideas and experience.

Owing to the trauma due to evident and violent discriminatory practices, blacks were forced into staying home and be in quarantine. Covid-19 will also have that forceful effect on people's daily lives. It will not only have a traumatic effect on the American people but also on the rest of the world population. However, as people around the world have mobilized their human, intellectual and scientific resources, in *Meridian*, the characters, with at their forefront Meridian have weaved efforts and strategic practices to help curb the long lasting racial discriminatory effects by voicing their disgust for this lackluster institution. As a spokesperson for her community, she rather suggests institutions and ideals which bind all races together. She had to display her pedagogical skills to teach and have the other characters know how to face and curb discrimination based on skin colors. Meridian even succeeded in turning some of the white supremacists into potential humane persons. These former supremacists will from now on vow to federate human races, no longer seeing race as a factor of superiority but as an enriching diversity.

This study has given the opportunity to figure out the extent to which literature can be a response a societal and sanitary crises, especially *Meridian* as a novel can help shape a viable and a sustainable response to solving an emerging sanitary and multifacets crisis like Covid-19. When reading between the lines of this literary masterpiece, we can inspire from it and reconstruct a deconstructed world with wherewithal's and solutions in the aftermath of what could be stickered the deadliest world pandemic of the early twentieth century.

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