A Thematic Study of Toni Morrison’s Sula and Beloved

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Abstract— Toni Morrison is an American novelist, editor, teacher, and Professor Emeritus at Princeton University. Morrison won the Pulitzer Prize and the American Book Award in 1988 for Beloved. The success of a novel depends on the depth of the message given by the author. Toni Morrison handled many themes in her works to create deeper meaning as well as dynamic plots such as racial tension, sexism, and discrimination.

I. INTRODUCTION

TONI Morrison is an American novelist, editor, teacher, and Professor Emeritus at Princeton University. Morrison won the Pulitzer Prize and the American Book Award in 1988 for Beloved. The novel was adapted into a film of the same name in 1998. Morrison was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1993. In 1996, the National Endowment for the Humanities selected her for the Jefferson Lecture, the U.S. federal government's highest honor for achievement in the humanities. She was honored with the 1996 National Book Foundation's Medal of Distinguished Contribution to American Letters. In 2016 she received the PEN/Saul Bellow Award for Achievement in American Fiction.

Her prose has the quality of speech; Morrison deliberately strives for this effect, which she calls aural literature. She hears her prose as she writes, and during the revision process she cuts phrasing which sounds literary or written rather than spoken. She rejects critics assertions that her prose is rich; to those who say her prose is poetic, she responds that metaphors are natural in black speech.

Morrison wants readers to participate in her novels, to be involved actively. Readers are encouraged to create the novel with her and to help construct meaning. She uses the model of the black preacher who requires his congregation to speak, to join him in the sermon, to behave in a certain way, to stand up and to weep and to cry and to accede or to change and to modify. She wants readers to say amen. Thus, her writing is meant as a communal experience, a sharing of passion and ideas and responses, with her holding the reader's hand during the experience.

Sula is the principal character in the novel Sula. She is an independent girl. She goes off on her own. She doesn't take care what other people think about her. She can just walk away as per her own norms. She is willing to take on people. Of course, she is ready to encounter with a group of boys. She is the typical creation of Morrison. Sula is always ready to challenge the gender notions. She’s already challenging what we might call gender essentialism. In fact gender essentialisms a particular kind of way and men have to be a particular kind of way.

The novel is about the relationship between community and the individual in part. The relationship between Sula and Nel is the story that people in all probability like best in this book. These very different young women are fast friends. Sula loves the order of Helene’s house, and Nel loves the liveliness of Eva’s house. They obtain what they want from each other. They are not friends since they are alike. They are friends because they're balancing. They give each other a form and figure.

Sula and Ajax are friends. They are people who appreciate each other. One of the things that is frequently unnoticed with Ajax is that his relationship to his mother. His mother was an influential personality in his life. He gains knowledge of the worth of free will and identity from his mother. There are two things with the relationship between Sula and Ajax. One is by glancing at Ajax and uttering when Sula begins constructing this nest for him he desires to get away from it. He couldn’t deal with it. It’s moreover detaining. It’s too preventive. Sula has done is to fall into the trap of conventional gender roles. Sula supposes she needs at that moment is somewhat that is absolutely secure, incredible that is normal. Of course, something like what Nel has.

Eva is the woman who speaks that she has to kill Plum, because what he is attempting to do is come back to her womb. She experiences she has a right to wipe out him, because, in spite of everything, she brought him into the world and saved his life. At this time he has discarded that life. She takes him out of the world. Subsequently, in what might be inferred as a sort of justice, Eva has to sit and watch as Hannah burns up. Because she doesn’t have her leg, which she gave up for her children, she cannot save her daughter.

The effects of racism upon black American life are a major ingredient in all of Morrison's novels, as she explores the differences between the races' humanity and cultural values. Racism, in all its myriad forms, whether blatant or subliminal, is a part of every scene in Sula, with every aspect of the novel expressing some color of racism. Even the laughter of the Bottom is a laughter born of pain—a series of cruel jokes directed against the laughers themselves.

One example of the Bottom's own racism is Helene Wright's concern over her daughter Nel's physical features. Although Helene does not want Nel to be as fair skinned as she is—this so-called advantage can mean trouble in a color-conscious society—she still forces her daughter to pull her nose

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in order to make it narrower. And yet Helene herself is the victim of racism, for having grown up in New Orleans, she knows the dangers of breaking Jim Crow laws, the mandates that segregated white society from black. Returning by train to New Orleans for her grandmother's funeral, Helene grasps immediately that she has accidentally stepped over the line that separates the two races when a white conductor catches her in a Whites Only car.

In a society that separate its healthcare facilities, many of which did not allow blacks to step inside their doors, it is not astonishing that even those individuals whose skin is white but who have racial backgrounds other than Anglo-Saxon are treated better than the Bottom's black residents. One of the key points Morrison makes in this novel is that newcomers-white immigrants-are given favored treatment for unskilled jobs, while blacks, with their long history of living in the valley, are ill-treated—even by the white immigrants, who, ironically, are themselves looked down on by the established white community; unfortunately, one of the ways that they reclaim their self-respect is by harassing blacks.

In *Beloved* the central character is Sethe, who is an escaped slave. Sethe kills her child named Beloved to 'save her'. The book is written so that different people points of view. Toni Morrison presents three types of love relationships, parent-child, brotherly love and sexual relationships. The story takes place during the age of the enslavement of African-Americans for rural labor in plantations. Sethe, the proud and noble protagonist, has suffered a great deal at the hand of schoolteacher. The unfortunate and seemingly inevitable events that occur in her life, fraught with violence and heartache, tug at the reader’s heart-strings. Destruction of identity, another theme of the novel, relates to the violent scenes.

In the second part of Beloved, Sethe takes a stand and expresses her feeling on the violent acts being performed on her. “Nobody will ever get my milk no more except my own children. I never had to give it to nobody else—and the one time I did it was took from me—they held me down and took it. Milk that belonged to my baby” (Morrison 200). Sethe finally comes to terms with her past and vows to never let such a horrendous act happen to her again. Beloved’s reincarnation occurs because Sethe needs to face her dark past head on and free herself from living in shame. It took time, but, Sethe eventually overcomes the odds and begins to live freely and peacefully in her house.

Toni Morrison’s writing style is simple and easy to understand for the common readers. Her writings concentrate on rural Afro-American society and on their culture. She never uses Whites for main character. She additionally contributed to her character choice, themes in her novels and how she views white people. Her father was the main contributor towards her outlook on whites.

**REFERENCES**