

TONI MORRISON AND HER STUDY ON THE TRAUMATIC PAST AND PRESENT OF BLACK SOCIETY IN AMERICA

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ABSTRACT

Toni Morrison is a renowned Afro-American novelist, Editor, Teacher and Professor Emeritus at Princeton University. She was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature in 1993. Toni Morrison was born in Lorain of Ohio. She is the second of four children in a working class, African American family. Her parents have imbibed her good qualities. They instilled in her a sense of heritage and language through telling traditional African-American folk tales. Jane Austen and Leo-Tolstoy were her favorite another. Toni Morrison also achieved several examinations since her school days and later for writing literature. Arriving in America in Chains, the Black was systematically and legally robbed of his humanity. Since the inception of the institution of slavery there, he was subjected to the severity of the norms and conditions of his bondage by white men. The social sanctity of the newly emerged United States had three provisions that denied the black man his humanity. Morrison also highlights the theme of lust and desire in many of her novels. She created sensation by creating incest themes in her novels such as the Bluest Eye and Beloved. The taboo sexuality is investigated to highlight the traumas of the black people who were the victims of oppression because of age old slavery. Though, the sex taboo is not centrally violent and regressive but depicted as examples of redemptive sex acts.

KEYWORDS: *Toni Morrison, Afro-American, Social Sanctity, Bluest Eye, Beloved.*

Introduction

Toni Morrison is a renowned Afro-American novelist, editor, teacher and professor emeritus at Princeton University. She was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature in 1993. Toni Morrison was born in Lorain, Ohio. She is the second of four children in a working class, African American family. Her parents have imbibed her good qualities. They instilled in her a sense of heritage and language through telling traditional African-American folk tales. Jane Austen and Leo-Tolstoy were her favorite another. Toni Morrison also achieved several examinations since her school days and later for writing literature.

In 1949 she enrolled at the historically black Harold University. While teaching there she met Harold Morison, a Jamaican Architect, whom she got married in 1958. But her marriage couldn't prove successful. After the breakup of her marriage. She began to work as an editor in 1965 at Random Houses. She has written short-stories and many novels like The Bluest Eye (1970), Sula (1977), The Song of Solomon (1977), Tar Baby (1981), Beloved (1987), Jazz (1992), Paradise (1988), A Mercy (2008) and many others.

An American Negro has usually been presented in terms of a savage beast, a clown or a docile "Sambo". The full image of a man as projected by great literary art is sadly lacking in the context of a Black. The forces of good and evil, instinct and intellect, passion and spirituality are not pitted in conflict. With this black lack of conflict, what emerges is an over simplified picture. The images of this stereotype have cast its shadow in literature. When the history of the Black in the United States is taken into account, the concept of the stereotype does not appear surprising. This has been treated as a figure of

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moral debate and historical controversy and has therefore been considered more as a formula. Since most Black literature is a result of social environment, it may be necessary to dwell upon this problem within a socio-historical framework. Arriving in America in Chains, the Black was systematically and legally robbed of his humanity. Since the inception of the institution of slavery there, he was subjected to the severity of the norms and conditions of his bondage by white men. The social sanctity of the newly emerged United States had three provisions that denied the black man his humanity.

Firstly, it was provided that foreign slave trade was to continue for two decades after the signing of the constitution. Secondly, the constitution stated that fugitive slaves apprehended in free states were to be returned to their masters. And thirdly, in matters of appointment and taxation, the black man was to be counted as three-fifth of a man. Slavery was thus written into the constitution. With the invention of the cotton in 1794, slavery received a fresh impetus. In such a climate it is hardly surprising that there was no conscious creation of works of art. On the other hand, studies devoted to Black in American literature scarcely existed before the twentieth century, and did not flourish before the nineteen-twenties when the rage for all things black gave impetus to the Negro-Renaissance. Since then, such studies kept pace with the Civil Right movements.

Literature Review

William Alexander (2002), the first book published by a black in the south was *The Hope of Liberty*, which consisted poems about decrying slaves, written by George. Humorists were prominent in the Antebellum like Tennesseean George. He was the creator of the irascible Sut the liveliest comic figure emerged from the American literature before Huckleberry.

Bell Hooks (1999), Bell hooks writes “dare to desire differently, who seeks to look away from the conventional ways of seeing blackness and ourselves, the issue of race and representation is not just a question of critiquing the status the power of the colonizing image. It is only as we collectively change the way we look at ourselves and the world that we can change how we are seen.”

Claudia Tate (2005), Claudia Tate in her essay *Desire and the protocols of Race* throws lights on a new psychoanalysis of the black community. She says: psychoanalysis effects racism and recasts its effects as a personality disorder caused by familial rather than social pathology shifting the blame from the social trauma of chronic racism to pathologizing the black family.

Paul Gray (2010), Paul Gray writes in his article about Toni Morrison that “Nearly everyone, including the author, was startled last week when the Swedish Academy awarded the 1993 Nobel Prize for the literature to the American Novelist Toni Morrison. For one thing, the academy has shown a fondness for spreading the prize around geopolitically and linguistically, because the last two years ago - write in English, this year's winner figured to be one who works in another language. For another, the U.S. authors rumored to be in contention for the prize were Thomas Pynchon and Joyce Carol Oates; Morrison's name did not appear in the speculations.

Objective of the Study

- A study of struggle of African-Americans.
- A study on the thematic concern in Toni Morrison's novel.

Research Methodology & Data Collection

This research work is based on secondary data like Novels, Magazines', News papers, editorials etc. Though Toni Morrison has written many novels but for this research work four novels are analyzed: 1. *The Bluest Eye*, and 2. *Song of Solomon*.

• The Bluest Eye

The Bluest Eye was written by Toni Morrison in 1970. Morrison was teaching at Howard University when she wrote this novel. The strong of the novel takes place in the year 1941. Morrison centers the story on a young African American girl named Pecola. Repeatedly she is called “Ugly” because of her dark complexion. Due to this she develops Inferiority complex. The motives of Toni Morrison behind writing this novel is that she wants to highlight and reminds the reader that “how hurtful racism is” and the dark colored people feel apologetic because of this. The novel did not serve much attention and appreciated when first published and was often reviewed and criticized in popular literacy magazines. However, the attentions the book did receive praised Morrison's skills.

The Bluest Eye has a number of autobiographical elements. The story is portrayed in the town low tide in the town where Morrison grew up. Morrison family also went through hardship and struggled a

lot to make their both ends meet like Mac Tear family in the novel. Like Claudia in the novel Morrison also grew up listening her mother's song and watching her grandfather playing the piano.

- **Song of Solomon**

Song of Solomon is a 1977 novel by American author Toni Morrison. The book won National Books Critics award and was cited by the Swedish Academy in awarding Morrison the 1993 Nobel Prize in Literature like all the other works of Toni Morrison. It is also an example of African American literature along with this its show a great deal of the African American culture and the discrepancy within their society and culture. She highlights racism within the characters of a novel. Racism is the central cause of suffering in the novel. It has a deep impact and damaging at the same time on the community. Slavery makes Solomon to escape towards freedom and end his marriage to Ryna. To begin with, it's important to note that there is almost no white character in Song of Solomon. White racism, directed at black Americans, is a real thing in the novel a deadly monster that affects behave. Morrison is concerned with the way white culture flourished and grass black culture and the way white racism can clause blacks to be racist to other blacks – in other words- how blacks internalize racism.

Findings & Results

Facts and finding are based on the novels read by the researcher. Finding are based on the burning issues presented or highlighted by Toni Morrison in her novels like African-American struggle, slavery, sexism class and gender discrimination, victimization of the blacks by the dominants whites.

- **The Bluest Eye**

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- **Song of Solomon**

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Morrison portrays the theme of racism, sexuality, oppression, and sacrifice in all her novels. The inner conflict between blacks, the conflict between whites and blacks, the bloodshed, Morrison has highlighted the violence in each novel in a peculiar way. She exhibits violence in all its forms. Her first novel The Bluest Eye begins with Pecola's missing and psychological disorder. Her heart is devoid of joy and happiness but guilt, hopelessness and wasteland all around. Not even gardens fronting the lake showed marigolds that year.... It never occurred to us that the earth itself might be unyielding. What is clear now is that of all that hope, fear, lust, love and grief, nothing remains but Pecola and the unyielding earth. She is always left in trauma and agony is always unnamable. The cause of the violence in oppression is always unfound because of the scapegoat system prevalent in the society. Violence is Sula is more terrible and distribution than The Bluest Eyes.

Black ladies had no worth, importance in the society and that is very visibly highlighted by Morrison in her novels. The blacks were treated like cattle and wild animals and had no rights and dignity. Black women last their real self and womanhood. In the white society women were taken as a tool to fulfill their sexual desire their self-dignity and esteem was lost. In Morrison's novel women are highlighted so oppressed and depressed that lead to mental imbalance. They are very much fear-stricken and haunted by the anxiety. In the novels of Toni Morrison the sex components is found within the women protagonist. Morrison has very realistically and effectively depicted the trauma, struggle experienced by African American women in The Bluest Eye and Beloved. Morrison portrayed the traumatic experiences of blacks in The Bluest Eye and beloved using the image of historical myths, images of violence and hatred deeply rooted in the minds of the whites.

Conclusion

After going through the novels thoroughly we get the findings. On the basis of finding the conclusion is emerged. In the research work the hidden things are tried to be uncovered by the researcher. After the whole rearsrch work a short summary is prepared by the researcher. One of the most striking themes in Morrison's novels is racial tension between white and African Americans. The blacks are dominated by the whites, not only this life is miserable and unfortunate. They always have inferiority complex and bear the stigma of being black. Morrison also highlights the bitter sentiments and the aggression felt by the blacks, towards white. Many of the characters of Morrison novels have the belief that the whites of society dominates the system, which can associated to historical happenings of the time period in which the novels take place.

Another common theme that Morrison highlights is on how does society look upon the relationship between men and women, and the difference between theme, or to put it more simply in sexism. Sexism is very apparently highlighted in her novels which was present in the society and the communities in which the characters of their novels reside. In many of Morrison's novels sexuality depicts as an explicit theme and recurring motif. Morrison also highlights the theme of lust and desire in many of her novels. She created sensation by creating incest themes in her novels such as the *Bluest Eye* and *Beloved*. The taboo sexuality is investigated to highlight the traumas of the black people who were the victims of oppression because of age old slavery. Though, the sex taboo is not centrally violent and regressive but depicted as examples of redemptive sex acts. Each character highlights certain type of racial groups. Sexuality is taken as a way to give an outlet to one's sex desire. The females in her novels are sexually oppressed and that lead to psychological disorder.

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