



DEPICTION OF FEMINISM IN TONI MORRISON'S SELECTED WORKS

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ABSTRACT

A woman with a pen is a hazardous thing, since not only does the act of writing provide her more insight into her own thoughts and feelings, but it also gives her the kind of independence and privacy that she would otherwise have little access to. Women's writing has evolved from its origins in diaries that chronicled their everyday lives or significant events to its present-day focus on fantasy and mythology. Poetry was a form that many of them found that not only gave them a safe space to voice their most private longings and apprehensions, but also enabled them to imagine alternative realities in which they had more sway and control..

Keywords: - Women, Black, Feminism, Novels, Literature

I. INTRODUCTION

When discussing works by African Americans, the name Toni Morrison always comes up. She is a social reform advocate, a Nobel laureate, and a writer whose primary themes center on the experiences of black women in society. This article will analyze three of Toni Morrison's novels—The Bluest Eyes (1970), Sula (1974), and Beloved (1987)—to determine how women react to their respective societies. Feminist theory and evaluation will make up the first chapter. Where we may learn about the history of feminism, whether or not it addresses the experiences of black women, and whether or not it is exclusive to white women. Toni Morrison's "Perceptions of Dominant Ideology in Her Fictions" and the literature of black women in general will also be discussed in this chapter.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Nurhayati, Ari. (2019). White domination in America can make white ideology of beauty spread and influence the African-American society. Toni Morrison's novels, The Bluest Eye and God Help the Child, depict the influence. This study attempts to uncover the intersecting oppression of race and gender in the novels and to explain how African-American women cope with the

oppression. This study is descriptive qualitative research. The data sources are Morrison's novels *The Bluest Eye* and *God Help the Child*. The study has two findings. Firstly, African-American society experiences oppression as an impact of the white beauty hegemony. The most disadvantageous oppression is the internalization of white beauty values. Holding such values makes African-American women feel inferior and hate their own physical characteristics that are far from the white ideal of beauty. Meanwhile, African-American women who have darker skin colors experience the hardest oppression because they also become the victims of oppression committed by some circles of African-American society, which tend to consider them unequal. It reflects the complexity of oppression experienced by African-American women. Secondly, self-consciousness is the main factor of attempts to release them from the oppression. Without self-consciousness, African-American women can be trapped in values that deteriorate their self-pride of identity.

Rabbani, Golam. (2019) Toni Morrison, the African American Nobel laureate author, explores the realities where African American women face multiple discriminations in her novel *Jazz* (1992). This article, following the qualitative method on the bibliographic study, examines the discriminations entailing race, class, and gender and presents Harlem as a discriminatory space in the novel. *Jazz* narrates the struggles of African American women who settled in Harlem in the early twentieth-century. Haunted by the memories of slavery, the female African American characters in the novel find themselves subjugated in the society dominated by white Americans and also experience oppression within their black community. Harlem, denoted as "the City" in the novel, identifies itself as the relational space where black women experience the intersecting subjugation and alienation from their race, class, and gender positions.

Pattnaik, Minushree&Sarangi, Dr. Itishri. (2018) The writing is a brief introduction to the fictional works of Nobel Laureate Toni Morrison who is popularly classified as "the black woman writer". It includes Morrison's achievement as a teacher, writer, and editor in a biased society. The paper portrays Morrison's fictional work that uncovers the three-hundred-year-old unfairness existing in the American society in the form of segregation, racial and sexual oppression. It includes Morrison's perspective in overcoming social and political prejudice existing in the society because of color discrimination. Morrison novels are thought-provoking more about the black people and the black world where the writer tries to touch the psyche of her black character. The writings can be viewed from different perspectives as they are convincing with imagery, foreshadowing, flashbacks, myth, inner monologues and authentic dialect. Though Morrison doesn't believe in matriarchy or patriarchy the fictions are limited to female protagonists except for *Song of Solomon*. Morrison believes that the black female is doubly subjugated first from the outside world because of racism and inside own community because of patriarchy. The novels illuminate the complexity the Afro-Americans goes through in the path to living a normal life and be a part of the American Dream of success. The eleven fictional novels of Morrison mirror the nude truth of the American society and reflect the racial and sexual malevolence the black men and women underwent as a whole.

Ahmed, Hashim& Abbas, Ahmed. (2017) The writings of women are generally held to be considerably different from those of men in many ways. This is not something new. What is more interesting is that contemporary female writers differ not only from men, but also from their same sex writers in having new types of heroines. These new heroines are not pretty, as we used to read about in the Victorian novel and, they are interested in matters that are different from those of previous heroines. Morrison and her contemporaries are searching for new spaces in the personalities of the twentieth century human beings. Not surprisingly though, they establish the fiction that has the strongest right to claim it was speaking from a doubly repressed but real tradition by several important black women writers who played so big role in the development of the American novel. Actually, after the Harlem renaissance, new black female writers, pioneered by Zora N. Hurston, Alice Walker, and Toni Morrison, have attempted to probe new dimensions in the human soul and psyche to expose their motivations, struggles and opportunities;and to get rid of the rigid traditions imposed by their black society and the American society as a whole.

Mahameed, Mohammed &Karim, Majed. (2017) The question of alienation has always been a pervasive theme in the history of modern thought, and it occupies a considerable place in contemporary work. Literature in general, and fiction in particular, raise this issue to reveal its influence on human beings and communities. Novelists have been trying to unravel its complexities and concomitant consequences. The paper aims to explore the experience of alienation through depicting the issue not as a purely racial reality, or something restricted to the colour of the skin or gender of the victim. It is rather presented as a distressing state which cripples the victims and makes them susceptible captives of the dominant forces. In the selected novels, Toni Morrison has delved deep into the experience of alienation through her male and female characters, showing the different forms of this experience. The present research investigates Morrison's portrayal of the issue from an African-American prospect. References will be made to novels such as *Tar Baby*, *Sula*, *The Bluest Eye*, *Song of Solomon*, and *Beloved*.

Soleimani, Zeinab&Zarrinjooee, Bahman. (2014) This paper deals with Toni Morrison's (1931) *Home* (2012) in relation to theories determined by Homi K. Bhabha (1949). Because Toni Morrison is an African-American novelist in the context of white writing community, defining and constructing a new identity for the characters is implicitly understood in her fictions through analyzing elements such as class, gender, race and poverty which influence her character's identity in male-dominated societies or by colonial powers. Moreover, this paper sheds more light on the concepts like "liminal", "ambivalent", and "hybrid identity" of the colonized people reconstructed in a "Third Space of Enunciation" or "in-between" spaces based on Bhabha's definition of colonial discourse and identity.

The idea of "unhomeliness" popularized by Bhabha indeed concerns being separated from home that affects migrants' identities, especially the Blacks who wander in this novel. Finally, by considering the characters' conditions, it can be concluded that the imperial power is indifferent to the future of the Blacks and endangers their lives by forcing them to be engaged in wars, doing

medical and eugenic experiments on black women in order to rescue the rich, whereas through infertility of the black women marginalizes them. In other words, the homeless and wandering characters are haunted until they are far from their homes or uprooted and they cannot achieve the stability of their identity. On the contrary, by homecoming they will reconstruct their identity and acquire their authenticity again because for them returning home means stability of identity.

Alrajeh, Farah. (2008) Farah Alrajeh's Master's research utilises theories of identity and psychoanalysis as it explores notions of gender identity in the context of crafting a self within a marginalized racial minority in three novels by Toni Morrison: *The Bluest Eye* (1970), *Sula* (1973), and *Tar Baby* (1981). The research explores how these novels are excavations of human identity uncovering and exposing the essential components of the human soul in their time of pain and rejection. These novels explore the political climate in the US and address the oppression and injustices committed against black people and their identity in America, emphasizing a cultural awareness and celebration of ethnic diversity. Pecola Breedlove, in *The Bluest Eye*, is an impoverished young African American girl raised in the physical, sexual and emotional abuse of her parents' turbulent household in Lorain, Ohio. Her frustration of not meeting the criteria defined by white aesthetic standards of physical attractiveness. Reinforce her self-perceived ugliness and destroyed her life. Sula's story illustrates the aggressive and devastating effects of rejection on an African American female growing up in the black community of Medallion in the 1920s.

The rejection of the black society Sula experienced has nurtured a strong sense of feminine identity and independence in this woman. She is treated as an outcast because of her refusal to conform to the anticipated norms of her society. Jadine and Son's love affair in *Tar Baby* shows Morrison's focus on the issue of blackness, the black identity, and the importance of cherishing the black culture and roots.

The struggle of Jadine and Son to come to terms with issues of home and identity reveals the pain, struggle, and compromises confronting Black Americans seeking to live and love with integrity in the United States. Finally, the research shows how the inability of male and female characters to form a sense of identity in Morrison's novels is tied to the cultural trauma they experience which makes it impossible to shape a sense of self and identity in a society governed by racism and hatred.

III. ANALYSIS OF FEMINIST THEORY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF BLACK WOMEN

K. K. Ruthven writes in his book *Feminist Literary Theory's* piece "Feminist Literary Studies" that, "the term 'feminism' requires some clarification." In 1872, French writer Alexander Dumas, the younger, used the word "feminism" to describe the developing movement for women's rights in his booklet 'L' Homme-femme. The movement eventually blossomed into a global cultural shift toward granting women full legal, economic, political, social, and cultural rights on par with men.

The male perspective on the human experience has always been the default. Women had a tough time adjusting to the male-dominated culture. Due to the cumulatively prejudiced and titled portrayal of males in society, women's voices were silenced and never given the same weight as men's. Men have dominated the narrative of human history. The woman's voice is quite faint. K. K. Ruthven provides some background on the issue by noting that women all the way from Christine de Pisan to Mary Wollstonecraft, Simon de Beauvoir to Jane Austen and beyond, have had to demand and struggle for their rights in androcentric society. Western women began the feminist movement to demand equal rights in all spheres of society, including the political, legal, moral, and cultural ones. Feminism is the ideology that sets women apart from being treated like doormats. It's a women-led, women-led, and women-led campaign against toxic masculinity.

He has also argued that feminism may be traced back to the time of the French Revolution in the late eighteenth century, but that the first English feminist, Mary Astell, wrote feminist works about a century before that. The time of the French Revolution was marked by a growing consciousness of social inequality as well as a yearning for a radical reorganization of society. Just because you're smart doesn't mean you're smarter than everyone else, especially if you're just as stupid as they are. The economic success of the new bourgeois resulted in the employment of servants to undertake household tasks, which contributed to the growth of feminism in Europe throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Feminism continued to be a protest movement throughout the nineteenth century for the advancement of women's rights.

IV. THE WOMEN'S ISSUES IN FEMINISM:

Documents and manifestos of the feminist movement as a political cause, feminist literature and literary criticism are inextricably intertwined. One of the first fields to face gender discrimination head-on is literature, thanks to the aforementioned writers who bemoaned the constraints society placed on their ability to express themselves creatively. These narratives could not help but allude to the political and historical forces that established existing power structures and eventually gave rise to the feminist political agenda. The definition of feminism is a topic that must be addressed in any in-depth examination of the movement. It cannot be denied that widespread media coverage has helped to popularize this movement, but that this attention has also given rise to competing visions of what it hopes to accomplish. The current emphasis on human rights, championed and defended by numerous organizations, particularly in the West, has transformed freedom and equality into a catchphrase, frequently used without comprehending what it truly entails. On the other hand, feminism seems to have become a hot topic in pop culture, where it has taken on new connotations.

Nonetheless, feminism continues to confront a violent resistance that perceives it as a hostile organization that seeks to corrupt the social structure by eliminating or disfiguring the ideals of marriage, family, heterosexuality, childbearing, etc. despite the huge numbers of followers, feminism still faces a fierce opposition.

V. FEMINISM AND BLACK NATIONALISM IN MORRISON'S NOVELS

Morrison's heroines are often young women who struggle with the ghosts of their oppressors, both in the physical world and in their minds, and who are abandoned by the black community and other black women due to their scorn for the black parody of white culture. They defy social norms and reject traditional gender roles because they feel they limit their potential. They are unafraid to state that marriage, children, and motherhood are not necessary for fulfillment in life. Morrison's female protagonists create all-female families by inviting their moms, grandmothers, and sisters to live with them. Morrison does not show any hostility against males, but instead minimizes their presence in favor of the struggles that occur inside women's groups. Her heroines are restrained not by men but by the judgment and wrath of other women. She talks on the oppressive forces on women, such as jealousy, possessiveness, pride, and the stress on Christian Puritanism. The idealized image of a black housewife is held in even higher esteem than that of a white housewife. Black women, like Pauline Breedlove from *The Bluest Eye*, were admired for their obedience and hard work as househelp in the households of rich white people.

VI. CONCLUSION

Morrison explicitly states she is writing for black women. She says being a black woman has given her unique experiences that she cannot ignore while writing. Though she doesn't have any ill will against white women, she shares the view of many other black female writers that white feminists have ignored the needs of black women in their classic feminism. She reflects on being a female writer and says, "I am valuable as a writer because I am a woman, because women, it seems to me, have some special knowledge about certain things." (McKey, quoted in Peach, 2000: p. Morrison does, in fact, focus extensively in her books on the unique expertise and agency that women possess. Her protagonists learn about the world and themselves via their interactions with the mythical powers of nature and their own primal desires. And that's not even getting into the specifics of what it's like to be a female author.

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