

DISCOURSE OF FEMININE SENSIBILITY IN SELECT NOVELS OF TONI MORRISON'S BLUEST EYE, SULA AND BELOVED

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Abstract:

Toni Morrison has shed light on the experience of black women for generations, as have numerous other African American female writers. Black women have used literature to highlight the ugly aspects of slavery, the whiteness of Jim Crow America, and the achievements of the feminist movements. Black female authors, including novelists, poets, journalists, playwrights, essayists, social commentators, and feminist theorists, have developed extraordinary strategies for educating, enlightening, and inspiring readers of all ages and races. The *Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, and *Beloved* by Toni Morrison highlight how contradictory ideals of goodness are imposed on three specific black women by white culture, black culture, and history. Readers are inspired and guided by the black female characters' struggles to come up with a potential response. Morrison's novels are frequently seen as portraying something cherished, lost, and familiar. Professional and personal development is facilitated by her capacity to write for black women and about black women in a progressive and practical manner. Morrison's sensitivity of the black female voice is best demonstrated in the books *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, and *Beloved*. This Study explores the discourse of Feminine Sensibility in select Novels of Toni Morrison. Morrison transforms the reader's perspective to provide space for genuine empathy, a literary moment that encourages consideration and reflection.

The preference of whiteness over blackness has long been a predetermining of the moral goodness of black women. The representation of black women in art, literature, and music has been skewed by historical assumptions of their moral weakness. Black women's formative experiences in American culture are intended to be depicted in Morrison's novels. Through the use of dehumanizing experiences, primarily those related to slavery, rape, and alienation, the story of such experiences aims to raise readers' psychological awareness. African American female protagonists who fail in their fight against the dual tyranny of race and gender are highlighted in *Sula*, *The Bluest Eye*, and *Beloved*. The women fail to succeed in becoming excellent black women, just like the majority of black women in a patriarchal culture. Morrison gives opposing characters a moral interpretation for their shortcomings. For instance, Claudia, who recounts Pecola's rape as an eyewitness in *The Bluest Eye*, carries moral authority.

The exiled character *Sula*, after whom the novel takes its name, passes away without

achieving moral virtue, while Nel, Sula's customary friend, experiences a happier conclusion. Finally, Denver, her survivor child, is able to create a positive future based on her goodness, unlike Sethe, the young adult runaway slave in *Beloved*, who experiences despair and is unable to achieve goodness. Morrison claims that kindness always prevails; therefore my goal is to evaluate what is admirable about Claudia, Nel, and Denver. Due to their racially and gendered culture, black women of all ages in *Beloved* and *Sula* struggle to live up to a basic standard of virtue.

Sethe's maternal instincts are evident in this part. This instance reveals the significant impact of parenthood on women as she is adamant about raising her children. Sethe seems to just care about getting milk to her child because it is her instinct as a mother. Her desire to demonstrate close links to her family promotes parenting as a virtue. Additionally, the social construction of goodness in relation to beauty and whiteness enslaves black women: "*Pecola turned to find the front door and saw Jesus looking down at her with sad and unsurprised eyes, his brown hair parted in the middle, the gay paper flowers twisted around his face*" (Morrison 92-93). This paragraph illustrates Pecola's sense of being undervalued and apprehensive about her very existence.

Black women find it difficult to uphold cultural norms of purity since whiteness in history and the media obscures the culture's image of virtue. In order to challenge cultural influences, Morrison uses the emotional support of her black female characters to mobilize them. Emotional support is a proactive interaction with authority. Despite being separated by time and location, Claudia, Nel, and Sethe come together to oppose authority with ferocity. For instance, Claudia describes her struggle with the pervasive white consumerism and ideals of beauty that enter her black existence; Nel freely chooses a conformist lifestyle in order to escape disaster and turmoil; and, lastly, Sethe forgoes parenthood in order to free her daughter from slavery.

Morrison focuses emphasis to the psychological harm that concealing does to black writers and readers. Morrison disputes the existence of whiteness in her writing through her fragmented storytelling technique. Sula, Pecola, and Sethe are the three primary characters who are given the most textual attention in her works. Morrison uses language to explore the history of African Americans; her books portray real people with psychological and aesthetic elements which demonstrate how language and power interact.

Morrison transforms the unseen into the apparent, for example, through the characters of Sethe, the wounded and battered slave mother, and Sula, the "*dangerous female*" who is "*outlawed, unpoliced, uncontained and uncontainable*" (156). In addition, the ghost component of *Beloved* seems to be an attempt to lessen the impact of reality, particularly the heritage of slavery. Morrison urges readers to accept a larger perspective on goodness in these entirely opposed people. Although black women find it difficult to settle in, their tenacity is recognized. Morrison battled critics a single novel at a time as she upended a literary world that was predominately ruled by white men. In 1973, Sara Blackburn, a *New York Times* writer and critic, reviewed *Sula*: "*in spite of its richness and its thorough originality, one continually feels its narrowness. ... Toni Morrison is far too talented to remain only a marvelous recorder of the*

black side of provincial American life” (Blackburn 1973).

Morrison's work continues to empower young black women by associating goodness to emotional support, freedom, and narrative. She did this by proving her excellence with *Sula*, *Bluest Eye*, and *Beloved*, among other works. Toni Morrison is the best negotiator and the strongest voice of reason. Morrison constructs black female characters and addresses issues of racial discrimination, misogyny, neglect, abuse, and institutional oppression with consistently potent language, illuminating the formative experiences of black women in modern American culture. *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, and *Beloved* by Toni Morrison highlight the ambiguous standards that white culture, patriarchal conventions, and history place on black women. Morrison's black female characters, which face tremendous pressure, make an effort to improve their situation by assuming responsibility for the cultural expectations that women will ultimately achieve righteousness.

Basically, the burden of white aesthetics brought rise to the black aesthetic movement, which inspired African Americans to express their beauty through literature, music, poetry, and visual arts. Morrison's emphasis on black people, black culture, and the black community also fits with the black pride movement of the 1970s. Morrison starts a discussion about black aesthetics by highlighting the tragic reality of black girls who are subjected to the idea of white beauty in *The Bluest Eye*. Morrison immediately challenges the prevailing white culture that is forced on black people in the first few pages of the novel. Pecola craves for the white notion of beauty to be accepted in mainstream culture because white aesthetics is so prevalent in literature and school reading material. In addition, Pecola blames her ugly appearance on being black; she frequently looks in the mirror “*trying to discover the secret of ugliness, the ugliness that made her ignored or despised at school, by teachers and classmates alike*” (Morrison 45). Dr. Clark's study of black aesthetics is in line with Claudia's concerns about her surroundings and herself. Morrison employs Claudia to convey the implicit message of black morality. She seeks to understand the significance of race, fashion, and the moralization of beauty at its core.

Sula was released in 1973, at the height of the Vietnam War. *Sula*, like *The Bluest Eye*, explores the corrupting factors that cause black society to break the relationship between black women. It also reveals the oppressive effects of white culture on black people. *Sula* Peace and Nel Wright, the two female characters, are binary opposites who strive for kindness despite being directly pressured by both the black patriarchal society and the deceitful white community. *Sula* and Nel are raised on the “Bottom,” a hillside. Morrison refers to the “Bottom”'s mocking as a “nigger joke.” A slave who had been promised freedom and a plot of bottom land was duped using the land, symbolizing the repressive white hegemony over the black population.

While the black community is compelled to dwell on the edge or border of the white society, the white community elevates itself in the fertile and rich valley. Morrison illustrates life at the Bottom from a third-person perspective while also providing a thorough understanding of the black community in *Medallion* through the actions of *Sula* and Nel. Women are typically more prone to conforming than men are in most communities, making them the guardians of social norms. Similar to how language is passed down from mothers to daughters, so are social

customs. Women speak and act in ways that represent the norms' ideals and societal aspirations. Social norms, which are generally white people in power in any society, are unwritten and formalized to their advantage.

Nel, the amiable wife, and Sula, the "whore," are two examples Morrison uses in *Sula* to highlight social norms and the effects of nonconformity. Morrison essentially calls attention to unfavorable preconceptions that have historically been utilized to cast doubt on the virtue of African American women. For instance, ten-year-old Nel has a significant coming-of-age experience as a result of being humiliated in front of others.

The presumptions of female goodness associated with parenthood are exposed by Sethe's reflective moment. The reader is given historical history on black women through her effort to respond to her child in vain. Although Sethe still has a mother instinct, the institution of slavery has robbed her of it. Her steadfastness in nursing her children demonstrates her goodness. She is primarily concerned with getting milk to her child. She is demonstrating her attachment to her kids as well. Sethe's "rough choice" casts a shadow over her thoughts and makes her wonder if she was a clad mother—one who loved her kids so much she would sacrifice anything to keep them from experiencing physical and psychological persecution.

As Sethe, Nel, and Claudia, three of Morrison's black female protagonists, work to overcome their restrictive society through knowledge, she gives them emotional support. Each work demonstrates how politics and social structure influence everything, including the setting and living arrangements. Sula embodies the agony of black life in white culture: victim, punchline, and inferior other. The land was hilly, the farmer informed the slave "*the bottom of heaven*" (Morrison 5). Unfortunately, the slave had no knowledge of better, so he accepted the land. There is a search for social and gender identity in both Sula and Nel. Morrison explains Sula "*had clung to Nel as the closest thing to both another and a self, only to discover that she and Nel was not only one and the same thing*" (55). Nel is drawn to Sula because she is aware of the limitations placed on black women by both their community and outside society. Finally, the Beloved slave context demonstrates that black mothers were not allowed to form bonds with their children since they were considered property. However, as a result of this, Sethe views being a mother as the most significant aspect of her identity and goes above and beyond to fulfill her duty.

Morrison's characters by how emotionally committed they are at the conclusion. For instance, Morrison only depicts Nel grieving the loss of her friend in the final scene of *Sula*; the focus is placed on their friendship rather than her husband betrayal of his family, and Nel finally reveals her repressed feelings for Sula "*'We was girls together,' she said as though explaining something. 'O Lord, Sula,' she cried, 'girl, girl, girlgirlgirl.' It was a fine cry--loud and long--but it had no bottom and it had no top, just circles and circles of sorrow*" (Morrison 162). Sethe swears she will never abandon her kids ever more. Despite power structures, black women manage to create a unique work based on their own best interests through knowledge and emotional support.

Morrison reimagines the black female identity in a fluid, brand-new realm, allowing black women their own space to see goodness beyond physical or emotional death in a culture that is dominated by whiteness. Morrison gives up surface for depth and accessory for independence in her heartbreaking epilogues. Tragic events cause an immediate reaction of grief and a peculiar sense of duty to seek advancement. Sula, Pecola, and Sethe represent goodness at its best: bravery, resiliency, and hope in the face of serious social dangers like gender inequality, rape, and slavery.

Morrison uses language and voice to transcend past and the future to subtly convey the goodness of black women in storytelling. Since the dawn of time, people have connected with one another by relaying narratives. *“Morrison’s...very particular goal: to offer readers stories about blacks, women, and other marginalized characters which hadn’t been told before”* (Als 2019). One’s willingness to create narratives, experience other black women’s genuine emotions, and hear their stories is what makes them good. This study examines how Toni Morrison uses the concept of feminine sensibility in some of her novels. Morrison shifts the reader’s viewpoint in order to create room for true empathy, a literary moment that promotes thought and reflection.

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