

# A Study of Feminism Exploration in Society and Style in Select Novels of Toni Morrison

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**Abstract – In addition to the Euro-Americans' and the Afro-Americans' shared experiences, women have also had experiences and "shared memories" that are exclusively theirs. Consequently, a body of writings emerged decrying the thwarting of the personhood of women in American society. This focus is often referred to as the feminist position. The feminist position is clear: it is an attempt to inspire women to become more aware of them and to find a more inclusive niche in a society that has denied them an expansive place. This position among white American women writers is well documented in the literature. Nevertheless, within this vast body of literature by and about white American women, Afro-American women are all too often simply mentioned in passing. So the discussion of the feminist position in this study will be skewed toward the Afro-American woman, for the criticism reveals that this is the feminist position Toni Morrison is concerned with. That is to say, the experiences of black women in America have been vastly different from those of white women in America. In fact, even white women in America have not acknowledged the full personhood of Afro-American women.**

**Keywords: Women, Feminist Position, Toni Morrison, Society.**

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## INTRODUCTION

The respectable, the desired concept of woman in the society, then, is not only sexist and racist, it is also classist. And because black women were, by nature of their race, conceived of as lower class, they could hardly approximate the norm. They had to work; most could not be ornamental or withdrawn from the world; and, according to the aesthetics of this country, they were not beautiful. But neither was they men. Any aggressiveness or intelligence on their part, qualities necessary for participation in the work world, were construed as unwomanly and tasteless; on the other hand, they were biologically women's, with all the societal restrictions associated with that state.

But there are more lengthy reviews, because the primary goal of criticism is to explain adequately to the novel's readers and potential readers how the novel helps to illuminate problems of the society and of the world. A major purpose of the novel itself is "to relate through the medium of individual adventures the movement of an entire society, of which it is itself only a detail, a significant point; for the totality which we call society, properly understood, consists not only of men but of all sorts of material and cultural objects.

Bakerman even says that the book was a "perfectly crafted novel which is about love." 22 Adam Miller, in

The Black Scholar (March 1978) said that he especially likes Morrison's characters and that the book conveys a "sense of Afro history. " Then there is Barbara Christian, who writes a lengthy article in The Journal of Ethnic Studies (Winter 1980) discussing both the relationships between Morrison's characters and their "community" and their "value system."

Christian concludes that Song of Solomon is a fable that is a lesson about life; read sympathetically, the novel teaches us about the "marvelous resiliency of nature and therefore of human society.

The later scholarly discourses on The Bluest Eye and Sula are published in such publications as Black American Literature Forum, College Language Association Journal, and even Names: Journal of the American Name Society. The earlier two novels are also discussed in two books-- Sturdy Black Bridges (1979), by Roseann Bell, Bettye Parker and Beverly Sheftall, and Black Women Novelists: The Development of a Tradition 1892-1976 by Barbara Christian. The analysis by Barbara is by far more penetrating. In this large volume, Christian devotes an entire chapter to Toni Morrison. Christian entitles her chapter five "The Contemporary Fables of Toni Morrison." In this long chapter, Christian explains how Morrison is writing

in the Afro-American tradition. However, Christian's main focuses in the book is on the Afro-American women-novelistic tradition.

There is also a very significant article published in September of 1980 in *Names: Journal of the American Name Society*. In this article, Karen Stein focuses on an idea that had not received much attention in the earlier criticism of *Sula*. Stein's thesis is that "many of the character's names, like that of Ajax, conjure up heroes of literary tradition;" then Stein goes on to "explore the classical Greek and Biblical allusions which they evoke."<sup>33</sup> Stein discusses Ajax and Helene from the Greeks and Eva and Hannah from the Bible.

First, Morrison's approach to her subject is unique in that her protest, while vigorous, is extremely subtle. There is little or no preaching in *Tar Baby*. Morrison is almost as objective as a writer can be. Secondly, Morrison shows great skill at the art of characterization.

Both Jadine and Son are virtually fully developed characters. Thirdly, Morrison is able to espouse feminist issues without becoming obsessive or arrogant. Fourthly, Morrison is able to use the language with precision. Then, Morrison is able to comment on white society and black society, even when it appears that she is commenting on neither.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Generally, mainstream critics were first captivated by what Morrison could do with the language in *The Bluest Eye* in 1970. The criticism shows that with the publication of each new novel this factor is pointed out again and again. Then, with each new novel, Morrison is able to add and control a larger number of technical and literary elements as well as themes and ideas. By and large, mainstream critics applauded Morrison's efforts. In addition, the criticism says that Morrison is able to make provocative statements about American society and about the human race.

Some feminist critics included in their discussions the Euro American values espoused by Morrison and "shared experiences" of Afro-Americans. But the primary concern of these critics is Morrison's decrying of the thwarting of the personhood of women in American society. Some feminist critics feel that Morrison is concerned basically about black women, while others feel that she is concerned about all women. Without fail, the feminist critics discuss the almost superhuman strength of Morrison's women in their attempts to survive, as well as in their relationships with other women, children and even with men. Basically, the feminist critics respond to the rare, but abundant in Morrison's novels, positive images of women in literature.

Finally, few writers are accorded the enormous success that Toni Morrison enjoys after a relatively

short period of writing. The impressively large amount of criticism and the scholarly nature of the criticism hint at the importance of the books. Several critics feel that Morrison's works will "stand the test of time."<sup>5</sup> The novels present society with messages, concerns and insights that is entertaining and refreshing, yet provocative. However, one must wonder if indeed Morrison's success is due, at least in part, to other factors yet to be discussed in the criticism. Perhaps, as the novels are examined further, this will be determined.

## SOCIETY AND STYLE

As of not long ago black women wound up on the outskirts of the male commanded American culture. They were commanded by the whites as well as by the black guys. Black women battled against their triple abuse by the "racial, sexual and class prejudices".<sup>1</sup> African American writing depicted them as "completely corrupted animals, fiendish maids and improper creatures."<sup>2</sup> They were likewise regarded simply as sex objects. In this manner, their space in American culture was "immaterial, faceless, subservient and without identity".<sup>3</sup> When the black women authors understood that they had minimal shot of joining the standard, they resolved to set up "their rejected mankind and their womanhood".<sup>4</sup> A plenty of black women journalists rose on the American scholarly scene. Through their compositions they tested the "administration of the manly perspective."<sup>5</sup> They battled against their mistreatment through their fiction. The remarkable African American women scholars in this cosmic system incorporate Toni Morrison, Nella Larsen, Ann Petrv, Alice Walker, Gloria Naylor, Maya Angelou, and Claudia Tate.

Toni Morrison is the most advanced African American lady author of the present age who has "accomplished the unimaginable by turning into the principal African-American to win the Nobel Prize in writing in 1993."

Toni Morrison was conceived on February 18, 1931 in the rust-belt town of Lorain, Ohio. Her dad George Wofford was a shipyard welder from Georgia. Her mom Ramah Willis Wofford originated from Alabama.<sup>7</sup> Toni was the second of four kids. Her folks named her "Chloe Anthony Wofford."<sup>8</sup> Her youth was spent in a blended and now and then unfriendly neighborhood of Lorain, Ohio. Woffords "had a Greek family on one side and an Italian family on the other."<sup>9</sup> In their neighborhood everybody was poor, so there was, not one or the other "isolation on class premise", nor "plain racial hostility."<sup>10</sup> In spite of the immense misery, Toni Morrison's adolescence was not commanded by "black reactions to white oppression."<sup>15</sup> despite what might be expected, from her initial youth, she got incredible support for perusing. Subsequently, when she entered the primary review, she was the

main black youngster "who could as of now read." From that point, she stayed studious. In 1949, she demonstrated her magnificence as an understudy when she women", as David Ron appropriately watches, "that could have been the start of the end." However for Morrison it was the start of an excruciating rebirth. As it is stated, "Where there is will, there is a way!" Toni Morrison discovered comfort in this adage.

In 1964 Morrison joined a branch of Irregular House in Syracuse as "a partner editor".<sup>27</sup> Separated from child rearing her children, she committed her nights for composing. She thought that it was energizing and testing. In one of her meetings she stated:

*...writing became a way to be coherent in the world. It became necessary and possible for me to sort out the past, and the selection process, being disciplined and guided, was genuine thinking as opposed to simple response or problem solving. Writing was the only work I did that was for myself and by myself. In the process, one exercises sovereignty in a special way. All sensibilities are engaged, sometimes simultaneously, sometimes sequentially. While I'm writing, all of my experience is vital and useful and possibly important. It may not appear in the work, but it is valuable. Writing gives me what I think dancers have on stage in their relation to gravity and space and time. It is energetic and balanced, fluid and in repose. And there is always the possibility of growth;*

*I could never hit the highest note so I'd never have to stop. Writing has for me everything that good work ought to have, all the 28 criteria.*

From that point, in 1967, Morrison turned into a senior editorial manager Aimlessly House, New York. There she altered numerous books by conspicuous black American writers like Andrew Youthful, Angela Davis, Muhammad Ali and so forth. From 1971 - 1972 she was the partner teacher of English at the State College of New York at Buy. She additionally functioned as a meeting instructor at Yale College in New Shelter, Connecticut from 1976 - 1977. She was given the Albert Schweitzer Seat in the Humanities from 1984 to 1989 at the State College of New York at Albany. In 1987 Morrison was named the Robert F. Goheen Educator in the Gathering of Humanities at Princeton College, Princeton, Aside from this, Morrison effectively partook in the exercises of the associations, for example, the National Gathering on Expressions of the human experience, the Helsinki Watch Advisory group and so on. She was additionally an individual from the Leading body of Trustees of the New York Open Library, and the Director of the New York State Training Division's Board of trustees on Grown-up Illiteracy.

Morrison was respected with about each conceivable written work grant finishing in her being granted the

much desired Nobel Prize for writing. She is the eleventh American, the second American lady (Pearl S. Buck was the first in 1938), and the eighth lady generally speaking, and - most fundamentally - the principal African-American to win the Nobel prize for writing since it was introduced in 1901. Her book *Beloved* was granted the "Pulitzer prize for fiction" in 1988, and the novel *Song of Solomon* won the "National Book Commentators Hover grant" in 1978. She additionally asserted the City School of New York's "Langston Hughes Celebration grant" (1986), "The Elmer Holmes Bobst grant for fiction" (1988), "The Melcher Book Honor" (1988), "The Cutting edge Dialect Relationship of America's Federation Honor" in writing (1989), and "The Chianti Ruffino Antico Fattore Universal Artistic prize" (1990). Morrison additionally won "The National Book Establishment Decoration for recognized commitment to American Letters" (1996), "The Pearl Buck Honor" (1994), "The title of Officer of the request of Expressions and Letters" (Paris, 1994), "Recognized Author Honor" from American Institute of Expressions and Letters (1978), and at the highest point of all the "Nobel prize" for writing in 1993.

Moreover, huge numbers of the Colleges have presented privileged degrees upon Morrison. Among them are Harvard, the College of Pennsylvania, Sarah Lawrence School, Dartmouth, Yale, Georgetown, Columbia College and Black colored University.

Morrison has composed eight books. *The Bluest Eye* (1970), *Sula* (1974), *Song of Solomon* (1977), *Tar Baby* (1981), *Beloved* (1987), *Jazz* (1992), *Paradise* (1998) and most as of late *Love* (2003). Every single one of them is of incredible premium and in the meantime wealthy in variety. One can get a kick out of her extraordinary account method shifting from book to book. The enduring impression is all things considered sensitivity and mankind, which is constantly in light of significant diversion. She has likewise distributed a play, *Dreaming Emmet* in 1986, and a volume of abstract feedback. *Playing Oblivious: Whiteness and the Scholarly Creative ability* (1992),<sup>34</sup> which depended on an address arrangement she conveyed at Howard College. Aside from this, her commitment to the true to life composing is very huge. She has distributed numerous articles and abstract reactions through different magazines and books. A considerable lot of her books have been on the smash hit list for quite a while.

Having had a long and risky voyage, African-American fiction built up its sole reason for "inspiring the black race".<sup>35</sup> *Iola LeRoy or Shadows Elevated* (1892) was the principal black novel composed by Francis E. W. Harper in 18 92.<sup>36</sup> From that point forward the African American

essayists never ceased to think back. A large group of authors added to the improvement of the black writing. The establishment of this composition was no uncertainty "the distress and the strain innate in American slavery".<sup>37</sup> Many black journalists, men or women, offered vent to their agony and aches through their works. Be that as it may, Morrison guarantees a particular place among them. To comprehend her accomplishment completely as a writer, we should peep into the past, and acknowledge African-American abstract convention. This custom can be followed back to Phillis Wheatley, the main black lady who distributed her sonnets in 1870. From that point, a plenty of skilled black scholars developed and set up their "present phase of self-definition and self-assertion".

The women writers like Francis Harper, Jessie Fauset (1884-1961), Nella Larsen (1893-1963) and Ann Petry (1908)<sup>40</sup> were the early types of African American writing. Every one of these authors battled through their compositions for a similar reason. Harper in her *Iola LeRoy* (1892) "argues for the equity for African-Americans". in the meantime she expects to change the negative picture of a Negro in the white personalities. Like-wise, Jessie Fauset in her novel *The Chinaberry Tree* (1931) needs "to adjust the impression most white individuals have about black people". Nella Larsen and Ann Petry excessively preceded with the convention of the black women scholars who needed "to go for the white". Every one of these authors added to the advancement of black writing, particularly, by introducing the black women's pitiable situation. In any case, it can't be denied, as Patrick Bjork recommends, "since nineteenth century, black essayists were composing only to white audiences".

In any case, Zora Neale Hurston was an exemption to this custom. In her novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), "black individuals usually looked for community, personality, and passionate help in their own oral, melodic, and visual articulations and narratives". Hurston truly examined "black old stories and society history". Her composition cleared another route for the black women in African American writing. By the mid-seventies numerous authors came into center. They dug profound into the severe sources, for example, "prejudice, sexism, and classism"<sup>47</sup> in the American culture, and brought them into their compositions.

The other African American women essayists are Alice Walker, Gloria Naylor, Maya Angelou, Claudia Tate, Audre Lorde, Ntozake Shange, Toni Cade Bambara, Margaret Walker, Paul Marshall, Gwendolyn Streams et cetera. Morrison's composition not just shows noteworthy impacts of huge numbers of these scholars, yet she has additionally affected a large number of the contemporary journalists like Toni Cade Bambara, Gayle Jones etc.<sup>48</sup> Like the most black writing "African American folklore"<sup>49</sup> frames the establishment of Morrison's fiction. Besides, as Zora

Neale Hurston, Morrison investigates the wonderful examples of "black society speech".

Nonetheless, this theory is proposed to investigate, and break down the human connections in the books of Toni Morrison.

"Human relationship" is an expression, shaped by the blend of two words "human" and "relationship". The American Legacy Lexicon characterizes "human" as: "1. Of, identifying with, or normal for people: the course of human occasions; mankind. 2. Having or demonstrating those positive parts of nature and character that recognize people from the lower creatures: a demonstration of human thoughtfulness"; and "relationship" is characterized as: "1. The condition or actuality of being connected; association or affiliation. 2. Association by blood or marriage; family relationship.

Oxford Propelled Student's Lexicon clarifies the word 'human' as: "Of or associated with individuals;" and 'relationship' is characterized as: "the manner by which two individuals, gatherings or nations carry on towards each other or manage each other."

Webster's Third New Worldwide Lexicon of the English Dialect characterizes the term 'human relations' as: "the social relations between people particularly while being investigated."

Nonetheless, the significance given in The American Legacy Lexicon for the words 'human' and 'relationship' is material to my point, "Human Connections in the Books of Toni Morrison."

Outstanding amongst other manifestations of man is the connection or connection between mother, father, sister, child, little girl, spouse, wife and in-laws. These relations alongside a few others frame a general public. Society suggests a gathering of individuals keeping up human connections. Subsequently, it is the result of human connections. The starting point and exceptionally character of the general public is firmly identified with the human connections. Race, shading, culture, religion, power, and dialect are a portion of the critical variables, which assume their parts in keeping up or stressing human connections.

Indian sacred texts introduce an all inescapable idea of human relationship.

***“Ayam nijah paro weti ganana laghuchetsam***

***Udarcharitanantu Vasudhaiva kutumbkam”***

Writers demonstrate their interests in imaginative manifestations, support of the characters with legitimate supply of circumstances and end results; yet adjacent to being a masterful maker, as Barbara Christian watches, "Toni Morrison's works are

awesome natural realism".<sup>64</sup> She is a projector of practical black community, and her characters are "as essential as the earth they stand on".<sup>65</sup> She anticipates the truth of bigotry as a typical factor in the lives of all blacks regardless of sex. She isn't occupied with lauding the characters, however giving them inward and external certainties without providing any reason of his or her conduct. The profundities of subjugation set malice streams and harmed the lives of African American individuals. The world moves with an erosion amongst malice and ideals. The world ends up static without any of them. Be that as it may, underhanded is by all accounts an unavoidable piece of the human connections. That is the thing that has been shown through her books. After all it is fundamental for the essentialness of human relations. As Wilbur Scott thinks of, "You can't have indispensable writing in the event that you overlook or evade evil".

Indeed, the vast majority of the African-American essayists manage the topics of subjection, racial isolation, journey for personality, scan for self et cetera. Companionships, blood connections, connections, benevolence, love, sufferings, outrage, desire, and disdain are the components, which prevail one's race, ideology or confidence in keeping up or stressing human connections. I can recognize Toni Morrison from alternate authors of her tribe. She is more worried about the human connections in her books than subjugation or racial isolation or journey for character. This is an endeavor to investigate human connections in the books of Toni Morrison. It is a perspective applicable to the greater part of her books. As far as anyone is concerned there is no work managing this viewpoint. The points and destinations of this examination are to comprehend and break down the diverse parts of human connections, for example, abuse, hardship, estrangement et cetera through the sections.

Morrison manages four noticeable varieties of the topic of human connections in her books. The first is parent-tyke relationship; the second, the connection amongst man and lady; thirdly, the kinship; and fourthly, the connections amongst individual and the general public. Countless have added to the improvement of Morrison's idea. Among them are the social condition, her family foundation, black community, African American legends, her instructive foundation, encounters of early expert life, her encounters as a proofreader Aimlessly House, or more all the writing of extraordinary journalists. The human connections of her characters demonstrate a huge effect of progenitors. There are diverse parts of this effect, financial viewpoints; religio-social angles; and the political perspectives.

## CONCLUSION:

The criticisms of white society in Morrison's previous three novels had merely been implied. For example, no white character is ever presented for scrutiny in *Sula*, but in *Tar Baby* the criticism of whites is direct and bitter. Consequently, some of the Euro-American critics writing in publications such as the *New York Times*, which promote Euro-American values, condemned *Tar Baby* for its direct criticism of those values. This is probably the case with Broyard when he condemns the entire novel as a failure. Like Broyard, John Irving in the *New York Times Book Review* (March 29, 1981) reacted negatively to *Tar Baby*. For Irving, *Tar Baby* suffers from "excessive use of dialogue" and remains "too lyrical. Charles Fishman's article in *Names: Journal of the American Name Society* explores the reasons why Morrison chose the names of characters and places in *Tar Baby*. Fishman finds two important reasons for the naming process used by Morrison. First, it is "a desire to make clear distinctions, to suggest connections or motifs within the text, or layer patterns that extend between texts, and to erect borders--a will toward accuracy and richness." And secondly, many of the names "elevate the narrative to a land of myth." For illustration, Fishman points toward names in the novel such as *L'Arbre de la Croix*, which literally means Tree of the Cross, *Star Konigsgaarten*, which means King's Great Garden, and *Eloe*, which means Elohim or God.

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