

Review the Literary Critique of Toni Morrison Novels

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Abstract - Toni Morrison, Maya Angelou, Paul Marshall, Alice Walker, and Gloria Naylor were among the American writers who saw writing as a way to break free, a strategy for rebellion, and a creative way to express oneself. She follows in Edward Said's footsteps by exploring how the dominant group manipulates black reality to serve its own agenda; Said revealed orientalism as a Western tactic for moulding and dominating the Orient. Her current projects include an Afro-centric perspective and an African-American poetics. While exploring the intricacies of black women's life in white America, she tries to comprehend the contradiction of her African-American identity. This presentation will examine Toni Morrison's works through the lens of literary criticism.

Keywords - Toni Morrison, Novel, America, Afro-Centric, Poetics

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of cultural nationalism has emerged as a central theme in works of postcolonial literature. Across all literary genres, there is a marked shift in tone and presentation of local reality and Indian sensibility. A common theme in fictional works is the clamour of east-west encounters. The works of Sehgal ('Into Another Dawn'), Bhattacharya ('Music For Mohini'), Rajan ('Too Long in the West'), and Jhabvala ('The Nature of Passion') all deal with somewhat similar topics. So Many Hunger by Bhattacharya and Storm in Chandigarh by Sehgal are two other works that depict the sociopolitical issues in India. The works of the golden trio—R.K. Narayan, Raja Rao, and Mulk Raj Anand—provide a substantial manner for understanding modern Indian reality. Narayan's "The Guide," Rao's "Kanthapura," and Anand's "Untouchable" all show how realistic depictions of such a situation are. In postcolonial Indian English literature, Narayan is seen as a paternal figure. The modern significance of ancient myths, tales, and rituals is addressed.[1]

The Indian spirit is largely maintained in postcolonial Indian English literature. It portrays Indian emotions and thoughts via the medium of words alone, in English. Thus, fresh Indian English idiom is born right now.[2]

Nayantara Sehgal is one of many flourishing female authors whose work contributes to postcolonial literature. Others include Ruth Pravar, Anita Desai, Santha Rama Rao, Attiah Hussain, and Kamala Markandaya. The Indian setting of "Nectar in Sieve"

and "A Handful of Rice" by Markandaya. The enchanting love tale of Mira, an Indian girl, and Richard, a British government officer, is told in Her Inner Fury. [3] Love triumphs over the fear and animosity of war by crossing the border. The spiritual truth of India is explored in her second book, Silence in Desire, which also deals with the gap between matter and spirit, faith and doubt. Another contemporary artist who has achieved success is Nayantara Sehgal, whose work is best understood in the context of postcolonial tradition. [4]

The following works of autobiographical fiction, "Fear Set Free," "Prison," "Chocolate Cake," and "A Time to be Happy," are deserving of widespread praise. 'Cry,' 'The Peacock,' 'Voices in the City,' 'Bye-Bye-Black Bird,' and many other works by Anita Desai pertain to investigations of indigenous sensibilities. Her depictions of Indian life and culture serve as examples of postcolonial perspective. Arundhati Roy also experiences this. In "The God of Small Things," Spivak's colonial rhetoric "the subaltern cannot speak" represents the oppressed and marginalised community that stands with the oppressed masses. Indian fiction written in English captures the essence of several regional literary traditions. It features prominently Indian culture and the Indian mind.[7]

Morrison is a major figure in the literary world today, and she is a pioneering African-American woman author. Her eminence as an artist, a leader in the literary world, and an advocate for Black people have all led to an investigation into her life and work. This kind of astounding acclaim is a trademark of Toni Morrison's literary career and the history of

African-American authors in American literature, as put forth by Trudier Harris, who claims that Morrison has achieved superstardom.[8]

Morrison has created unmistakably Black literature by fusing the goals of the Black Freedom Movement with those of women's liberation. Along with Maya Angelo, Toni Cade Bambara, Paul Marshall, Alice Walker, and Gloria Naylor, she is part of a literary collective that views writing as both a means of emancipation and an artistic expression. The author delves into the topic of white people's distorted perceptions of black reality in seven novels: 'The Bluest Eye,' 'Song of Solomon,' 'Tar Baby,' 'Jazz,' 'Beloved,' 'Sula,' and 'Paradise.' [9]

Morrison, who calls herself a "Black Woman Writer," asserts that she is interested in the evolution, significance, and preservation of the Black community. What She Says in Salman Rushdie's Interview:

"I create novels because I don't know what the term "negro" means. What does it mean to be a Black mother, friend, family member, or child? Tell me what a Black person is. To my mind, there are a great many that shape what it means to be Black. Being an African-American in the present day is characterised by a lot of paradoxes, flux, and fluidity.

In her own words, her works are "archaeological explorations" into African history as seen through the eyes of a Black female. Hence, her works have a woman-to-woman rather than a woman-to-man perspective. Morrison, in contrast to Alice Walker, sheds light on the existence—or lack thereof—of love and beauty among imagined Black women, whereas Walker delves into the craziness, loyalty, and successes of Black women. She shows her heightened awareness of the interplay between gender, class, and race in her books, which creatively depict her worry about the historical circumstances of African American persecution in the United States. Nevertheless, novels differ in how much emphasis they place on these components. Prior to delving into class inconsistencies within race, she conducts an in-depth analysis of gender and racial issues. In each of her books, she uses a different African issue or set of problems to explore potential solutions.

All Black people in the United States, including Black men, Black women, and Black families, should have complete equality in terms of opportunity, identity, significance, and role, and this is the central theme of her works. Young Black men and women, particularly Black college students, might find hope, identity, and direction in these books.[10]

Her brilliance as a writer and artist has earned her praise all around the world, and she is considered a pioneer among modern fiction authors, regardless of her gender or race. In addition to widespread global attention, Morrison has won several degrees, literary prizes, and accolades at home for her unique style of writing. Her extraordinary literary accomplishment is

rooted in her selfless dedication to uncovering the Black women's identity locked in white culture.

From the baby stage of being invisible to the current stage of self-definition and self-assertion, she could trace the evolution of the Black woman's self with ease. "To be able to use the range of one's own voice, to attempt to express the totality of self is a recurring struggle in the tradition of those writers from the nineteenth century to the present," Barbara Christian astutely put it.

Novelists such as Paul Marshall, Alice Walker, Gloria Naylor, and Zora Neal Hurston have made the need to understand one's place in the world a central theme.[11]

The stronger dedication of Black women authors to comprehending "self multiplied in terms of the community, the community multiplied in terms of the world," as Alexis De Veau puts it, is evident.

Toni Morrison, like many other authors of her day, examines the interplay between gender, class, and race. She has dealt with the subjugation of African people in all of her novels. Not only is she recognised as a Black woman writer, but Alice Walker has also referred to her as a "womanist" because of her unwavering dedication to the African subcontinent. Environment, family, community, African-American folklore, Morrison's educational background, early career, and time at Random House are some of the aspects that have influenced Morrison's growth.

She combined her political awareness with an artistic sense as a result of her growing awareness of the character of the African people, their predicament, personalities, crises, and the consequences of these issues, as well as her growing will to assist and resolve them.

Like the multi-faceted characters she creates in her novels, Toni Morrison grew up in a vibrant and complicated milieu. A little Midwestern steel-mill town twenty-five miles west of Cleveland, she came into this world on February 18, 1931, in Lorain, Ohio. Its location was ideal, away from both the clamour of the city and the noise of the nearby roads. This glimpse into Morrison's life as a prominent African-American woman writer was offered by the ambiance of her house.[12]

'To become a writer,' Brenda Flanagan, a Black poetess and novelist originating from Trinidad and Tobago, travelled to the US in 1967. My skin tone was never an issue for me until my trip to the United States,' she adds. Prior to this, I had never considered myself to be a minority. In an event co-hosted by the US Embassy and India's Sahitya Academy, Flanagan made the statement. It is difficult for any writer of substance, much less a

Black writer, to be published in the United States since publishing is a private sector. On top of the gender issues, there are other considerations. "The mental callisthenics you go through when you are being redefined" are the "colour" that she criticised.

She "lived in hiding" in the United States at first, vanishing into a toxic marriage, low-paying maid jobs, parenthood, and an educational gap that she eventually filled with her determination to become a writer.

The nuance and complexity of existence are brought to light in this pastoral setting by Wilfred Samuels and Celenora Hudson Weems. "Stationed eternally on the Hudson River, it gazes out into an endless horizon, seemingly unaware of and unconstrained by the city skyline or the intricate web of a tall bridge in the distance. In Morrison's universe, the pier off the patio seems to function as a runway, providing access to a realm of mystical and magical worlds, as well as a domain of reality, fiction, and imagination.

Morrison's upbringing in Ohio shaped her empathy for the downtrodden masses and, more specifically, for African Americans. Poorness, bigotry, and racism were enough for her when she was a youngster. She was born to George and Ramah, who emigrated from the South in quest of better economic, social, political, and educational prospects. Many lessons about gender, class, and ethnicity that Morrison learned have stayed with her. The idea that "Black people were the humans of the globe" was deeply held by her parents. Morrison was able to survive and thrive in America because to their varied personalities.

A shipyard worker and a stickler, Morrison's father taught her that all Africans were inherently better than Europeans. Her father was prejudiced, she says. The terrible perceptions of adult white people he had as a boy in Georgia led him to believe that he had every right to hate all white people, even though he knew they had no right to hate him. As a result, her father instilled in her a healthy respect for herself. Mother had faith that racial harmony will improve in the years to come. "The genesis of the mysticism and magic that permeates Morrison's fiction" may be traced back to the hair-raising ghost stories recounted by her parents, especially her father. "We were always pleading with him to repeat the stories that terrified us the most," Morrison admits. We had a personal relationship with the otherworldly

The influence of Morrison's grandparents was significant as well. The dark folklore that now infuses her writing was introduced to her by her grandmother, who had the biggest influence on her.[13]

A collection of fifteen short tales written by her between 1950 and 1960, *Gorilla, My Love* (1972) was her debut book. The majority of *Gorilla, My Love*'s narratives are presented from the perspective of the protagonist. The narrator is often a strong-willed, courageous, and compassionate teen girl with a lot of attitude. She was referred to by Bambara as penning energetic prose. Both "Raymond's Run" and "Blues Ain't No Mockin Bird" were part of the set. The Black Nationalist and Civil Rights movements of the 1960s impacted Bambara's work, and she was an active member of several activist and community groups at that time.

Ellison, in particular, influenced her work by bursting the seams of conventional fiction in terms of both context and form, and by fusing together myth and reality, folklore and history. All of these authors had a profound effect on her.

The renowned work of Alex Haley, "Roots," poses a basic challenge to historians. All it boils down to is an unprovable claim, and that's about it. This is due to the fact that the narrative surrounding the abduction and servitude of a young Mandingo man named Kunta Kinteh, who hails from the hamlet of Juffureh on the North Bank of the River Gambia in the African Kingdom of Barra, is a product of the merging of two oral traditions: one belonging to Alex Haley's American ancestors, and the other purportedly discovered in Africa. The historical record does not lend credence to any of these claims. There have been a number of arguments put out that make it harder to take the account at its value. In Africa, the oral tradition was tainted by the need to please. That the people of Juffureh did not have an established tradition of griots or djalis (oral historians), and that the people who worked on the African narrative were well aware of the opportunities it presented. Someone swung the intellectual swivel around and said that the griot wasn't very good, but that djalis are great at providing convincing histories and genealogies when needed. So, a ruler could always get a good one to legitimise his accession.

The clarity and simplicity of her writing appeal to a wide readership. Her fictional work is informed by her essays, which she has authored in several instances. "What the Black woman Thinks about Women's Lib" (1971), "Behind the making of the Black Book" (1974), "City Limits" (1983), "Village Values: Concepts of Neighbourhood in Black Fiction" (1981), "Recitalif" (1983), "Rootedness: The Ancestors as foundation" (1984), "Memory Creation and writing" (1984), "A knowing so Deep" (1985), "The site of Memory" (1987), "Unspeakable Things unspoken" (1989), and a collection of essays that includes "Racing Justice," "En-gendering power," essays by Anita Hill and Clarence Thomas, and "The contribution of social Reality" (1993).[14]

Instinct for narrative, sharp ear for language, attention to human gesture, concentration on the psychological and historical intricacies inside the lines of everyday Black men and women, and fully realised characters are just a few of Morrison's numerous literary talents shown in the aforementioned articles. She says that a writer's job is to be a witness. She feels that the future is inseparably bound up with the past, and her capacity to give testimony is directly related to her sacred-toned conception of prophecy. "I write what I recently began to call village literature, fiction that is really for the village, for the tribe," Morrison asserts. Rural literature for my people, which is not only valid and essential but also gives me access to every person's seat.[15]

She thinks it's important to draw on the wisdom of the past and apply it to the here and now. "I think long and hard about what my novels should do," she says of her writing, which she uses as a means to combat her amnesia. They need to shed light on the muddled responsibilities, point out the irrelevant details of the past, and provide sustenance. She is less concerned with providing an accurate portrayal of historical events and more interested in bringing the thoughts, ideas, and emotions that accompanied them into her work on Black life. Folklore, magic, superstition, story, poetry, song, and myth bring the mundane Black life of daily Midwestern villages to life in Morrison's exotic and fantastical works.[16]

"It (writing) pushes you, makes you think the unthinkable, project yourself into people you even dislike, people I couldn't stay in a room with 20 minutes," she says in an interview with Mel Watkins. It seems like I'm going beneath the waves, but I know I'll be okay.¹³ Her interest in art stems from artists' methods and their ability to reduce abstract ideas to familiar shapes. By using words, she hopes to get from seeing to hearing. She proudly identifies as a "Black woman writer," drawing on her extensive background in Black folk culture. She celebrates the life-affirming attributes of Black culture, including its creativity despite oppression, its ancient knowledge, and its humanity, and she validates Black culture as a whole as a cultural nationalist.[17]

Some commentators have referred to Morrison as the "D.H. Lawrence of the Black psyche" because of her talent for making personal experiences seem universal and peculiarities seem inevitable. Her books show that she is very aware of the interplay between gender, class, and race, and that she is worried about the historical circumstances that ignited the national fight of African people against tyranny and exploitation. All of her books include these three aspects, although the ones she emphasises most change from book to book.[18]

Her first book, "The Bluest Eye," focuses on the enslavement of Africans and how racism contributed to it. In light of the current political and social climate, "Sula" focuses on the subjugation of women, while "Song of Solomon" highlights the need of discovering

one's own identity. While "Beloved" focuses on a solution—collective class struggle—"Tar Baby" shows how class tensions separate Africans. With its emphasis on female camaraderie, "Jazz" promotes gender equality. Never before has an African-American author chosen to explore such weighty topics as racial inequality, gender oppression, identity crisis, class conflict, and class exploitation.[19]

Toni Morrison felt compelled to rebel against the unfairness of the system that kept African-Americans at a disadvantage. She then voiced her disapproval by depicting the social and political ills in a realistic light, rather than by blatantly displaying anti-social sentiments.[20]

CONCLUSION

Toni Morrison is of the opinion that it is of utmost significance to take pride in one's own culture and colour. It is possible that black people will be conditioned to hate themselves if they are not taught to take pride in their ancestral beliefs. This might result in suicide attempts such to the one that Pecola made. She argues that black people are also attractive, and she confronts the subject of how white people have conditioned the brains of the people to loathe their own black skin via ads, school textbooks, and societal ideals. She demonstrates that the notion of beauty is not just based on the colour of the skin since she does this.

As a woman, she inspires other women to be courageous and to band together in order to combat the double prejudice that is directed against them during this time. She encourages women to form bonds with one another and encourages them to resist being repressed by any power, whether it be political, social, or economic. Her persistent goal was to inspire women to become active participants in the struggle against racism, sexism, and capitalism, rather than the passive objects they were used to being. Not only did she work hard to restore the lost dignity of black women, but she also worked hard to restore the dignity of all black women and all black people who had been exploited in the time past.

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