



BODHI

International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Science

An online, Peer reviewed, Refereed and Quarterly Journal

Vol : 1

No : 4

July 2017

ISSN : 2456-5571



**CENTRE FOR RESOURCE, RESEARCH &
PUBLICATION SERVICES (CRRPS)**

www.crrps.in | www.bodhijournals.com

THEMATIC CONCERNS IN TONI MORRISON NOVELS

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to study the thematic concerns in the novels of Toni Morrison – The Bluest Eye, Sula, the Song of Solomon, Tar Baby and Beloved. Morrison has dealt with the themes of violence, oppression and sacrifice in all her novels. The conflict between the black and the white communities, the victimization of the blacks by the dominant whites, the violence and bloodshed within the black communities have been presented nowhere so effectively in the entire American fiction. Though all her works are suffused with violence, Morrison has dealt with violence in each novel in a unique way.

There is so much similarity between the positions of the untouchables in India and of the position of the Blacks in America and that the study of the latter is not only natural but necessary..... I was very much interested to read that the Blacks of America have filed a position to the le No....

In 1946, Ambedkar, in his letter to W.E.B. Dubois an era in which it emerges. Novel is the most powerful literary weapon to cull out the subtlety and the emotional content of what all happened in the era sidelining in historical pet which may or not be true to the core, learning more often towards 'cognitive dissonance' highly favourable for the dominant one that goes on subjugating the lesser mortals in their perception.

African American Literature is literature written by, about, and sometimes specifically for African Americans the genre, that sprouted as the autobiographies of ex-slaves in America, laying the irrevocable foundation of an African – American literary tradition, sprinkling unique glimpse into the souls of slows since the period of Middle passage passing through Antebellum south era, the earlier autobiographies were first person witnesses published between 1760 and 1780, to the will to be known and the will to write among a people, the Black often set apart and defined out of the

human family of letters by the most cruel white Racism in the Southern settlements of 17th century can casian settles.

The literary spark that started as Block I narratives to navigate the ocean of Racial prejudice has bloomed into fiery Black artistic Renaissance, not to be muffled by any racist subjugation and discrimination, engulfing the whole world in its glory and magnificence.

Toni's works deals with glimpse into what is human society and the definition of a perfect human being who enjoys a freedom which allow him to live his own life, while lettering others also do enjoy their lives when such freedom is denied to one society by a subjugation of one stronger one the hazardous happenings are miserable and deplorable. Such deplorable conditions of Black Americans, exposed to the outside world, about the cruel slavery through the writings of slaves is unsurpassed historical feat of earlier African American ex slaves. Out of the numerous literary experts of Black Americans, thousands of them, both men and women stand aloft. At one stage, so many. He made another above have proved their mettle on the literary plane. Surpassing the Black male authors. Among them, Toni Morrison gets introduced as the first Nobel laureate of Black community in her five novels

taken into an elaborate research work and appreciation. They are chronologically given as *The Bluest Eye* (1970), *Sula* (1973), *Song of Solomon* (1977), *Beloved* (1987) and *Jazz* (1992). Toni Morrison was born in Loraine, Ohio to Ramah and George Wofford the Southern Migrants themselves who played a great role in inculcating in her daughter Choe Anthey Wofford later known as Toni Morrison, a traditional knowledge of Black tradition along with a love hate affinity for South Hore land of Black Americans afushing her to play a vital role in bringing Black literature into the Mainstream of American Literary arena. Her novels are repertoires of memories happy or sorrowful of its characters migrated from the south in search of new pastures in the Northern promised cities. Southern landscape assumes a panromical scenario in them remembrances and most of the earlier black migrants evince a kind of homesickness towards of antebellum south.

Morrison never impart any moralistic compulsion upon her Black people to follow any particular mode and code. They have their own choice to follow either Africentrism or Anglocentrism is purely a matter of choice for the migrants. Hence, the characters like Eva Peace, Pilate Dead and Baby suggs who have lived at some points in their lives, even after migration in a new geographical region. They are always southerners to the Core. Alternately those like Macen Dead, Cholly and Pauline Breed love lose that cultural inheritance learning in the south and fall prey to the malignant influence of an alien culture.

The success of a novel depends on the depth and quality of the messages that the author implies. Toni Morrison uses many themes in her works to create deeper meaning as well as dynamic plots. Aside from the many individual themes that apply to specific novels, Morrison also runs similar themes through several of her works. By taking a closer look at some of these shared themes—such as racial tension, sexism, and lustful desire—it will be evident Morrison's extreme dedication to creating an overall message for the reader to discover.

One of the most obvious themes in Morrison's novels is the idea (and constant presence) of racial tension between whites and African Americans. Morrison presents -two-angry-heads-have-racial-confrontation thorough spectrum of perspectives of African Americans by bluntly voicing the opinions many characters of race. For example, she comments on the social position of blacks in *Song of Solomon* through Macon Dead: "He knew as a Negro he wasn't going to get a big slice of pie" (*Song of Solomon* 63). Many of the characters in Morrison's novels have this same attitude that the whites of society dominate the system, which may also link to historical happenings of the time periods in which the novels take place. In addition to feelings of inferiority, Morrison also suggests a general, bitter sentiment felt by blacks toward whites. These feelings arise from stereotypes and prejudices, and an example can be seen in *The Bluest Eye* when young Cholly Breedlove is disrupted from his first sexual encounter by two men: "There was no mistake about their being white could smell it" (*The Bluest Eye* 147), which proves the reputation Cholly had learned about whites. Another way racial discrimination was weaved into Morrison's novels was through concrete examples of segregation, such as in *Jazz* where there were groups formed for "Colored Boy Scouts" (*Jazz* 58) and where "there were no high schools in [the] district a colored girl could attend" (*Jazz* 6). Obviously, racial discrimination is an issue of great importance to this author; thus she incorporates this theme into many of her writings.

Another common theme Morrison uses is society's view on the difference between men and women, or, to put it more simply, sexism. She openly displays the sexism present in the communities in which the characters of her novels reside. For instance, in *Song of Solomon*, shortly after Pilate threatens Reba's lover by stabbing him, Milkman comments to Hagar about Pilate's strength. It is then that Hagar responds, images "We are weak" (*Song of Solomon* 95), referring to the entire population (with few exceptions such as Pilate.) Even

Pilate herself admitted that “Women are foolish, ya know” (94), which reflects the attitudes and views of the society in which these characters live. In another of Morrison’s works, *The Bluest Eye*, the females regard the opposite sex with a different reputation: “Some men just dogs” (*The Bluest Eye* 13). Similarly, in *Jazz*, some of the women, such as one who speaks to Violet, claim that “Men wear you down to a sharp piece of gristle if you let them” (*Jazz* 14), further proving that women are “weak” and can be easily persuaded. Morrison purposely includes this theme of sexism to point out the unnecessary assumptions made by society and the effects these generalizations have on the community and its members.

Morrison also includes the theme of lust and desire in many of her novels. This presence of temptation implies an even deeper theme of giving in to pleasures. It appears in *Song of Solomon* when Milkman’s car suddenly breaks down in front of Solomon’s General Store in Shalimar, Virginia. Milkman walks outside, observes the women there, and decides that “He wanted one of them bad” (*Song of Solomon* 263), which clearly implies a craving that he desires to fulfill. Another example of this same sexual desire surfaces in *The Bluest Eye* when Polly Breedlove is fifteen and still exploring her sexuality: “Fantasies about men and love and touching were drawing her mind and hands away from her work” (*The Bluest Eye* 113), and this passage even goes as far as implying distraction from typical daily tasks because she is so intent upon her “fantasies.”

lust11Violet in *Jazz* also experiences this feeling of desire when she longs for her husband: “By and by longing became heavier than sex: a panting, unmanageable craving” (*Jazz* 108), which shows her extreme devotion to getting what she wants. While some of this described desire may be completely healthy, this same desire also has a negative consequence in Morrison’s works as well. The intense sexual desire experienced by many of her characters leads to abuse of some sort, mainly sexual. Examples include Milkman (pursuing Sweet) in *Song of Solomon*, Cholly and Soaphead from *The Bluest Eye*, and Joe Trace from *Jazz*. The presence of lust and desire appears many times in Morrison’s novels to present the cultural aspects of the characters and to inflict emotion upon the readers.

While numerous themes can be found woven deep into each of Morrison’s novels, some of the most prevalent are racism, sexism, and desire. She effectively ties her themes into the plots of her stories so that the reader can actually obtain an overall message that teaches a lesson or makes a comment about society. Undoubtedly, the themes in Morrison’s works can connect and relate to more people lives than she probably ever intended, and that is what makes her literature strong.

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