

## Manifestation of Pessimism in Toni Morrison's Select Works: Beloved, The Bluest Eye and Jazz

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### Abstract

Toni Morrison's works are elevated voice of Afro-American culture. As Afro-American has been bearing the burden of past history, slavery, race, gender and identity crisis issues in society, Toni Morrison herself forced to speak about them in their works. She herself is the part of historic past events like racism and identity crisis issues and that's why her mind is more into the pain which they suffered. Toni Morrison is more focused on pessimism to show the reality and harsh truth of society, which reflected through her characters. No doubt Toni Morrison was loud to raise the problematic issues strongly but her appeal to wove her characters is tend to their circumstances, how they tortured and suffered through their whole life and it continues generation to generation. The clear aim of Morrison is to make aware

today's generation about Afro-American society its history about the injustice. So that they can be aware of their rights and able to fight for own.

Keywords: - Afro-American, Pessimism, Slavery, Traumatic Past, Race, Gender, Identity.

## Introduction

Toni Morrison is also known as Chloe Anthony Wofford. Toni Morrison is the famous novelist and professor of America. Morrison's works are praised for the harsh social reality and truth. She was honored with various awards such as Nobel Prize in Literature in 1993, Pulitzer Prize for *Beloved* in 1988. And she also won National Book Critics Circle Award for *Song of Soloman* 1977. Toni Morrison was very intelligent since her childhood as her precocity detected in very early age and she was the only black child in her class who could read and write. Morrison fearlessly wrote about the harsh truth and how it affects the innocent people. Most of her stories are subjected to slavery and racial discrimination.

Most of Morrison's stories are bond with the past characters also, narrator shifts the story to past events which resulted and connected to the present scenario. Identity crisis is mainly found in her characters. Her characters are stuck in past events psychologically which affected the present. Painful past of slavery passes generation to generation in Africa America and the new generation also subconsciously victim of the slavery. Lack of knowledge and education is the reason of their trauma but racial and class discrimination is the pillar of injustice. White Americans called themselves superior and this impacted inferiority complex on black Afro Americans. A clear picture of beauty is white color and beauty standard set according to pale white skin and blue eyes. Morrison was a keen observer of society very well portrayed the picture of black reality through her pen. She portrays her characters pessimistically but her message is very strong for society. Morrison is successful to gain and

connect readers and feel the pain of painful past. Her target is to make weak characters who are victim of social evil like racial discrimination, slavery, identity crisis etc.

Her most famous work *Beloved* is inspired by the real life incident of Margaret Garner a former enslaved woman. Sethe the protagonist of novel *Beloved* killed her daughter Beloved to actually save her from slavery. She was tortured and haunted so badly that she forced to kill her daughter and send her in heaven that is the only safe place for her. The action had taken by Sethe is emotionless at the same time bombarded with more than mother daughter emotions. A mother who is always savior of her children murdered her own child because she herself faced so many things which she never wanted same for her daughter. Sethe as a slave was tolerate physical, mental, psychological and emotional abuse. That she was at the stage where the thought comes to killed her own little one. The Insane action taken by Sethe was to save her from the harsh world. Morrison very successfully connects the readers with the agony of Sethe as a mother. At the same time Morrison mold it with the horror sequence. Symbolic haunted house 124 which was rumored as a ghost home when Beloved arrived as a ghost. Beloved came back and questions her mother about her action. And Sethe as a mother tried best to take care and pamper returned daughter after knowing that she was ghost. Out of guilt a mother is fully devoted to her daughter so that she can understand her that she actually safe her. Denver the elder daughter of beloved worried about her mother and noticed that Sethe actually behaves like child while Denver acts like mother. Morrison explains mother daughter relationship, complexity, slavery and identity issues in *Beloved*. Sethe was well known that she was unable to fight with social evil that forced her to take this horrified action. Like Morrison's first novel *The Bluest Eye* is depicts the trauma faced by afro-Americans in term of race and class. Morrison depicts in the novel that how cruelly set social order scrunch the psyche of 9 years old Pecola, protagonist of the novel. Afro-American society has set beauty standard of pale white color and blue eyes. Racial discrimination is the main theme of the novel. Pecola

with her black color tone and simple eyes doesn't fit in the beauty standard of society considered as an ugly girl and subjected to mockery by her school friends and neighbors. Not only rejected by outside but also in her family she was continually facing fighting her parents, her mother being harsh on her and Pecola raped by her own father while he was drunken. Each and every incident of Pecola's life is pessimistic. The only hope and optimism symbol was marigold flower planted by the narrator Claudia and Freda but it dies as Pecola's child also didn't survive. Pessimism created loop in Pecola's life and she survived continuous events and rejection at the end it resulted Pecola's insanity. Lack of self-esteem social rejection and obsession for Blue Eyes are the focus of novel. Morrison states Pecola's longingness for blue eyes-

Each night, without fail, she prayed for blue eyes. Fervently, for a year she had prayed. Although somewhat discouraged, she was not without hope. To have something as wonderful as that happen would take a long, long time.

(Morrison p.35)

Society is harsh as Morrison depicted but family is there to make strong enough to fight but Pecola's parents are themselves victim of social injustice so that they couldn't act right. In this novel Morrison makes Pecola as a helpless girl continuous victim of society but Pecola's story is much thought provoking that reader feels the pain of Pecola and deny the injustice happening with normal human sentiments. Morrison's main intention is to appeal the problem and how it affects the human psyche. Morrison as a writer wrote every single word with the emotion as she herself was present in the story. And her every issue is highlighted which she wanted to cover she did her part very well. Morrison novel differently appeal her readers as a psychological level. Her most of the work explains the torture denial and rejection of post colonial Afro American society. Her novel *Jazz* is about a childless couple who trapped in love triangle between Joe, Violet and Dorcas an eighteen years old girl. Their life shifts when Joe

cheated Violet and one day Joe shoot Dorcas after seeing her dancing with someone else. Violet triggered so badly when she knew it she went to Dorcas's funeral to killed her dead body with knife. Then story went to the past with some more characters and story continues with the merging past and present characters. Morrison gave readers attention to helpless Violet and her life after found herself cheated she triggered psychologically and doing inhuman acts to attack dead body. Again a pessimistic approach is clearly shown. As a childless woman Violet was living very depressive life her only hope to live the life is Joe. But her only hope cheated her that she couldn't accept and took wrong action.

### Conclusion

Morrison's protagonist Sethe, Pecola and Violet's action towards their life and circumstance are pessimistic it doesn't give any optimism in readers mind but suspense continues in search of any hope and pleasure for protagonist but Morrison was clear that she wanted to highlight problem and it is mandatory to first understand problem so that one can find the answer. Morrison is clear with her question to ask about Identity crisis, racial discrimination, continual rejection and set beauty standard. And she wanted her readers feel free to seek answers. Morrison novel are pessimistic but it leaves readers to think and aware of the social equality and what kind of society they want to live in. The picture and scenario which Morrison takes her readers that was definitely not the ideal society that is clear here. Morrison story definitely continuous with pessimistic approach but it aware the generation to how to become optimistic and live with fullest in every area and circumstances of society. Morrison is much concerned with the life of Negros and their development in society. Once she said in interview with Salman Rushdie:

I am not sure what that word "Negro" means, which is why I write books.

What is black child/women/friend/mother? What is black person? It seems to me that there are so many that inform blackness. One of the modern qualities

of being an Afro-American is the flux, is the fluidity, the contradiction. (“An interview with Toni Morrison” 39)

Morrison focuses on the problem in *Beloved*, *The Bluest Eye* and *Jazz* to directly attack on the racism, discrimination and injustice suffering by black community. Black community not only suffered physical abuse and torture but more then they traumatize by their psychological pain. Because of the tremendous pain their psyche has resulted loss of human sentiment, decision making or causing their wrong action towards problem.

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