Studies in Linguistics and Literature

Studies in Linguistics and Literature

Studies in Linguistics and Literature(SLL) is an international open-access journal published by Scholink. The journal aims to provide a high-level platform for scholars and researchers all over the world to share latest findings and views in the field of applied science.

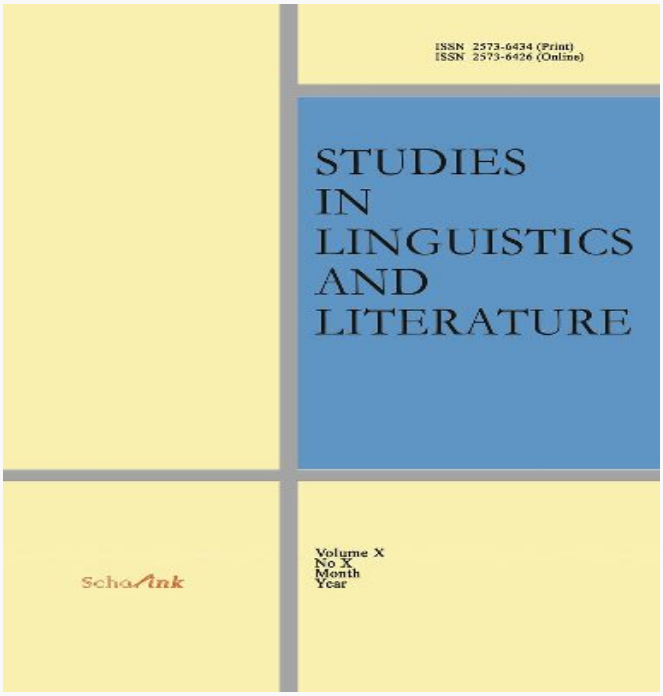
We would welcome scholars and researchers engaging in the related field to submit your manuscripts which are complete unpublished and original works and not under review in any other journals to Studies in Linguistics and Literature. Both of online submission and E-mail submission (sll@scholink.org) are acceptable.

Open access: *Studies in L*
reader "without financial, le
from gaining access to the

Peer review: *Studies in Lir*
review is the evaluation of
the producers of the work (

The journal includes, but is not limited to the following fields:

- Theoretical Linguistics
- Applied Linguistics
- Descriptive Linguistics
- Sociolinguistics
- Psycholinguistics
- Comparative Linguistics
- Computational Linguistics
- Discourse Analysis
- African Literature
- American Literature
- Canadian Literature
- Caribbean Literature
- Chinese Literature
- English Literature
- French Literature
- German Literature
- Greek and Roman Literature
- Irish Literature
- Italian Literature
- Jewish Literature
- Latin American Literature
- Russian Literature
- Spanish Literature
- Arabic Literature



The journal is indexed with:

- Base Research
- CNKI Scholar
- CrossRef
- Google Scholar
- LOCKSS
- PKP Open Archives Harvester
- Scientific Indexing Service (SIS)
- Yahoo
- WANGFANGDATA
- WorldCat

OPEN JOURNAL SYSTEMS

Journal Help

USER

Username
Password
Remember me
Login

NOTIFICATIONS

- View
- Subscribe

LANGUAGE

Select Language
English
Submit

JOURNAL CONTENT

Search
Search Scope
All
Search

Browse

- By Issue
- By Author
- By Title
- Other Journals

FONT SIZE

INFORMATION

- For Readers
- For Authors
- For

Studies in Linguistics and Literature

Editorial Team

Editor

Alison Tompkins, SCHOLINK INC., United States

Editorial Board Members

Ahmed Mehdaoui, Ibn khaldoun University of Tiaret, Algeria
Dr. Ali Mohammad Fazilatfar, Yazd University, Iran, Islamic Republic of
Dr. Alireza Karbalaei, Farhangian University,Iran, Iran, Islamic Republic of
Dr Amaka Catherine Ezeife, Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nigeria
Amir Al-Azab, Qatar University, Qatar
Mr. Md. Amir Hossain, IBAIS University, Bangladesh
Arman Toni, Mazandaran University, Iran, Islamic Republic of
A Selvalakshmi, Sri Sarada College for Women (Autonomous), India
Mr B A Essam, Ain Shams University, Egypt
Professor Bachir Bouhania, The University of Adrar, Algeria
Dr. Bahram Moghaddas, Khazar Institute of Higher Education, Iran, Islamic Republic of
Dr BALAMURUGAN KUNCHITHAPATHAM, PNDICHERRY CENTRAL UNIVERSITY, India
Behrouz Jamalvandi, Ilam Farhangyan University, Iran, Islamic Republic of
Dr. Dan Jiao, Henan University of Technology, China
Deepa Mysore Srikant, Naseema Institute of Speech and Hearing, India
Devrim Hol, Pamukkale University, Turkey
Elena Barcena, Universidad Nacional de Educacion a Distancia (UNED), Spain
Dr Fariza Puteh-Behak, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia, Malaysia
Dr. Febisola Olowolayemo Bright, Aminu Saleh College of Education Azare Bauchi State Nigeria, Nigeria
Dr Graeme John Davis, University of Buckingham, United Kingdom
Hassan Moradi, Ministry of Education, Iran
Dr. Hossein Aliakbari Harehdasht, Persian Gulf University, Iran, Islamic Republic of
Dr. James Pfrehm, Ithaca College, United States
Dr Jariah Mohd Jan, University of Malaya, Malaysia
Junhai Zhao, Yunnan Minzu University, China
Dr. Kamelia Talebian Sedehi, La Sapienza university of Rome, Italy
Kaori Mori Want, Konan Women's University, Japan
Luqman Rababah, Jadara University, Jordan, Jordan
Prof. Majeed U Jadwe, University of Anbar, Iraq
Dr Mandana Yousefi Hokmabad, Islamic Azad University, Iran, Islamic Republic of
Assistant Professor Dr Mansour Amini, UCSI University, Malaysia
Ms Mehwish Noor, University of Gujrat, Pakistan
Milena Levunlieva, South-West University, Bulgaria
Dr. Mohammad Abdollahi-Guilani, Buein Zahra Technical University, Iran, Islamic Republic of
Dr Mohammad Amin Mozaheb, Imam Sadiq University, Iran, Islamic Republic of
Mohammed Amine Dib, University of Mascara, Algeria
Mohammad Hamad Al-khresheh, University of Tabuk, Jordan
Dr Mojde Yaqubi, Islamic Azad University of Hamedan, Iran, Islamic Republic of

OPEN JOURNAL SYSTEMS

Journal Help

USER
Username
Password
Remember me
Login

NOTIFICATIONS
- View
- Subscribe

LANGUAGE
Select Language
English
Submit

JOURNAL CONTENT
Search
Search Scope
All
Search

Browse
- By Issue
- By Author
- By Title
- Other Journals

FONT SIZE

INFORMATION
- For Readers
- For Authors
- For

Dr Momtazur Rahman, International University of Business Agriculture and Technology, Bangladesh
Nageswari Raja, VIT University, India
Dr. Norma Nawaf Alzayed, Middle East University, Jordan
Dr Pushpanathan Thiruvengadam, SCSVMV University, India
Dr RAJASEKARAN V, VIT University Chennai Campus, India
Dr Ravi Bhushan Sharma, Bhagat Phool Singh Women University, India
Dr. Reza Rezvani, Yasouj University, Iran, Islamic Republic of
Riccardo Moratto, TNUA, Taiwan, Province of China
Sadeq Al Yaari, Zagreb University, Croatia
Dr. Sakthi Kumaar J, Periyar University Constituent College of Arts and Science, India
Salhi Ben Ahmed Lotfi, University of Gafsa, Tunisia
Dr Sam Erevbenagie Usadolo, Durban University of Technology, South Africa
Sepideh Mirzaee, Mashhad Azad University, Iran, Islamic Republic of
Seyyed Hassan Mirahmadi, Islamic Azad University, Iran, Islamic Republic of
DR Shadi Neimneh, Hashemite University, Jordan
Assoc.Prof.Dr. Solehah Yaacob, International Islamic University Malaysia, Malaysia
Sultan Samah A Almjlad, Northern Borders University, Arar, Saudi Arabia
Sundarsingh Joseph, Karunya University, India
Dr Thomas William Stovicek, Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center, United States
Yasir Jasim, University Putra Malaysia, Malaysia
Dr. Yi-Wen Huang, University of New Mexico-Gallup, United States
Dr. Yousef Awad, University of Jordan, Jordan

Librarians

Copyright © SCHOLINK INC. ISSN 2573-6434 (Print) ISSN 2573-6426 (Online)

Studies in Linguistics and Literature

Vol 5, No 3 (2021)

Studies in Linguistics and Literature Vol. 5, No. 3, 2021, Online Version First

Table of Contents

Articles

African Community Life Pattern in some Novels by Toni Morrison and Zora Neale Hurston PDF p1
Ferdinand Kpohoué

Copyright © SCHOLINK INC. ISSN 2573-6434 (Print) ISSN 2573-6426 (Online)

Studies in Linguistics and Literature
ISSN 2573-6434 (Print) ISSN 2573-6426 (Online)
Vol. 5, No. 3, 2021
www.scholink.org/ojs/index.php/sll

Original Paper

African Community Life Pattern in some Novels by Toni Morrison and Zora Neale Hurston

Ferdinand Kpohoué[1*]

[1] Faculty of Letters, Languages, Arts and Communication, University of Abomey-Calavi, Abomey-Calavi, Republic of Bénin

[*] Ferdinand Kpohoué, Faculty of Letters, Languages, Arts and Communication, University of Abomey-Calavi, Abomey-Calavi, Republic of Bénin

Received: June 29, 2021 Accepted: July 14, 2021 Online Published: July 22, 2021

doi:10.22158/sll.v5n3p1 URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/sll.v5n3p1

Abstract

The objective in this paper is to investigate the preservation of the community life that characterizes African people in the novels of Toni Morrison and Zora Neale Hurston.

As a matter of fact, in all of Morrison's novels, the black community is, from one perspective, largely defined by the dominant white society and its standards. The Bluest Eye takes place in Morrison's home town of Lorain, Ohio. In the novel, the black community of Lorain is separated from the upper-class white community, also known as Lake Shore Park, a place where blacks are not permitted. The setting for Sula is a small town in Ohio, located on a hillside known as "Bottom". In Song of Solomon, the reader is absorbed into the black community, an entity unto itself, but yet never far removed from the white world. In Their Eyes Were Watching God, actions take place in Eatonville in Florida.

The study has revealed that there exists a strong solidarity in the different communities in the novels selected for this study. Like African communities in Africa, gossips, tradition and other features appear in the novels of Toni Morrison and Zora Neale Hurston to make them different from the white communities that boarder them in America. These writers from the African diaspora work to preserve their original communities in their novels.

Keywords

black, community, Africans, Americans, traditions

1. Introduction

In the African traditional family, the community is the custodian of the individual; hence the individual has to go where the community goes. In light of this statement, a popular African proverb to express the

African sense of community says "Go the way that many people go; if you go alone, you will have reason to lament" (Thumi & Horsfield, 2004). This implies that the African idea of security and its value depended on personal identification with and within the community. In the traditional family, harmony was rated as the most important value for all family members (Shizha & Charema, 2008). In light of the above view, Foster, Makufa, Drew and Kralovec (1997) maintain that, traditional life was characterized by brotherhood, a sense of belonging to a large family and by groups rather than individuals. In this community, people share a range of values, a way of life, identify with the group and its practices and recognize each other as members of that group. Ancestors play important roles in the community. Rules, regulations, taboos, spiritual myth, symbolism, song and story, Solidarity, etc. form the daily realities of the members of the community. Blacks in the Americas had worked to reconstruct the same community life. There, blacks were identified as inferior creatures used as a means of production in the southern plantations especially and in the Caribbean. Even after emancipation they were still segregated and lynched at will by the white Americans. In this environment and according to their common cultural background, blacks in America live in groups or communities as they used to do in Africa in order to share social values and individual experiences. Toni Morrison and Zora Neale Hurston have written fiction to describe the black community in America as a way to value its merits. The two female black American writers, through their individual talents, have focused this group in order to shed light on their way of life.

This study aims at using the fictions of Toni Morrison and Zora Neale Hurston to see how the black community works in America. Historicism and Marxism are used here to explain facts and aspects depicted by Toni Morrison and Zora Neale Hurston.

The analysis of Toni Morrison and Zora Neale Hurston's fictions has revealed that though Zora Neale Hurston and Toni Morrison did not have the opportunity to live these realities of the African life, they have recreated them in their novels. In fact, they are members of the black community living in America among the whites who believe to belong to the superior race. Though influenced by the white environment, the black community does exist with its features in the novels of Zora Neale Hurston and Toni Morrison. Some of these features such as gossips, solidarity and marriage are selected to illustrate the very African values that survive the oppressed and segregated black communities in the Americas.

2. Gossips

Gossips are idle talks or rumors, especially about the personal or private affairs of others. Michael Shermer, in *The Science of Good and Evil: Why People Cheat, Gossip, Care, Share, and Follow the Golden Rule,* has provided the etymology and the evolution of the word in the following terms:

> The etymology of the word gossip, in fact, is enlightening. The root stem is "godsib", or "god" and "sib", and means "akin or related". Its early use, as traced through the Oxford English Dictionary, included "one who has contracted spiritual affinity with

> another", "a godfather or godmother", "a sponsor", and "applied to a woman's female friends invited to be present at a birth" (where they would gossip). (In one of its earliest uses in 1386, for example, Chaucer wrote: "A womman may in no lasse synne assemblen with hire godsib, than with hire owene flesshly brother".) The word then mutated into talk surrounding those who are akin or related to us, and eventually to "one who delights in idle talk", as we employ it today (Shermer, p. 50).

Gossip, explains Michael Shermer, is expressed in particular contexts. It is used to address a category of subjects in society:

> Not surprisingly, we are especially interested in gossiping about the activities of others that most affect our inclusive fitness, that is, our reproductive success, the reproductive success of our relatives, and the reciprocation of those around us. Normal gossip is about relatives, close friends, and those in our immediate sphere of influence in the community, plus members of the community or society that are high ranking or have high social status. It is here where we find our favorite subjects of gossip—sex, generosity, cheating, aggression, violence, social status and standings, births and deaths, political and religious commitments, physical and psychological health, and the various nuances of human relations, particularly friendships and alliances. Gossip is the stuff of which not only soap operas but also grand operas are made. (Shermer, pp. 50-51)

In *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, Zora has created a community living in Eatonville, Florida that has experienced gossips with Janie. In fact, Janie has come back to Eatonville after the burial of her husband:

> Seeing the woman as she was made them remember the envy they had stored up from other times. So they chewed up the back parts of their minds and swallowed with relish. They made burning statements with questions, and killing tools out of laughs. It was mass cruelty. A mood come alive. Words walking without masters; walking altogether like harmony in a song.
>
> "What she doin' coming back here in dem overhalls? Can't she find no dress to put on?—Where's dat blue satin dress she left here in?—Where all dat money her husband took and died and left her?—What dat ole forty year ole 'oman doin' wid her hair swingin' down her back lak some young gal?—Where she left dat young lad of a boy she went off here wid?—Thought she was going to marry?—Where he left her?—What he done wid all her money?—Betcha he off wid some gal so young she ain't even got no hairs—why she don't stay in her class?—"(Zora, p. 2)

A few weeks after Tea Cake's death, Janie Crawford returns to Eatonville because she cannot bear to remain in the Everglades, where she is surrounded by memories of her beloved Tea Cake. When she

returns to her hometown of Eatonville after nearly two years absence, her neighbors are curious to know where she has been and what has happened to her. They wonder why she is returning in dirty overalls when she left in bridal satin. However, it is noticeable through the above citation the use of gossip because people are sitting together to laugh. In fact, the front porch of Joe Starks' crossroads store is the gathering place for many of the men and women of Eatonville. There they sit or lean against the railing, sipping soft drinks, eating cheese and soda crackers, talking, and talking. When their day's work is over, that's one way to pass the time. The porch sitters at the store are most likely to be men. The women usually gather on the porch of someone's home, maybe Pheoby Watson's, to gossip. Their excuse to be on the store porch may be to play checkers or to watch a game of checkers being played. The real reason, of course, is to talk and tease.

After the picnic, Tea Cake and Janie become the topic of scandalous gossip. The town doesn't approve of the revered mayor's widow dating a poor, younger man. Sam Watson convinces Pheoby to talk to Janie so that she doesn't end up like Ms. Tyler, an old widow who was cheated by a younger man. Pheoby tells Janie about the gossip going on in the community about her new lover. Pheoby has gone to her to inform her about the matter in order to convince her to change her attitude:

> Janie acted glad to see her and after a while Pheoby broached her with, "Janie, everybody's talkin' 'bout how dat Tea Cake is draggin' you round tuh places you ain't used tuh. Baseball games and huntin' and fishin'. He don't know you'se useter uh more high time crowd than dat. You always did class off" (Zora, p. 112).

Janie is not ready to drop her new and lovely companion. She has even informed Phoeby about her intention to sell out the store in order to be able to go with Tea Cake for wedding. For the community gossipers, it is too soon and inappropriate to cooperate with such a poor and younger lad after the death of her high ranked husband. But loving eyes see things differently.

In African community it is a daily activity or entertainment. They gossip not because they hate Janie, but it is a system set up to get information and be able to understand what is going on in the community. The communication system in the community is based on orality.

The same system of gossip can be read in another novel written by Toni Morrison. In fact, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* was published in 1937 whereas *Sula* was published in 1973 however they are similar in the shaping of the black community. Gossip is present both in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and *Sula*. Sula, the main character of *Sula* has been victim of gossips at the Bottom. First, she has been criticized when she has come from college after ten year absence. The way she is dressed is the subject of gossip of the bottom gossipers:

> When the word got out about Eva being put in Sunnydale, the people in the Bottom shook their heads and said Sula was a roach. Later, when they saw how she took Jude, then ditched him for others, and heard how he bought a bus ticket to Detroit (where he bought but never mailed birthday cards to his sons), they forgot all about Hannah's

> easy ways (or their own) and said she was a bitch (Sula, p. 112).

The townspeople begin to gossip nastily about Sula when they discover that she has sent Eva to a nursing home. She is said to be a roach which is but a large black or brown insect that lives in dirty houses, especially if they are warm and there is food to eat. Gossips go like this: people are ready to say what is true and what is untrue for destruction purpose. Sula is said to be a bitch because she has slept with her best friend's husband. In the black community everyone knows everybody and the mouth to mouth communication system works to enhance solidarity and friendship among dwellers. While physically in the community, Sula refuses to adhere to the norms and conventionality of its members, such as marriage and childbirth. She has the white man's manner that is why she has decided to get rid of Eva Peace because she is old. In African context and following the Bottom pattern, Eva should be taken care of at home by her kin. For that, Sula has been attributed all the sins of Israel. She is even accused of not assisting her mother Hannah when she catches fire. For the community members, Sula's behaviors are strange and incomprehensible. At the Bottom, Sula is seen as evil. Her lack of falseness, coupled with the independence of her character is in direct contrast with the community's sense of pettiness and dependence and is what causes them to hate her and see her as an outsider. She has gone further in her misconduct expressed in the following terms:

> But it was the men who gave her the final label, who fingerprinted her for all time. They were the ones who said she was guilty of the unforgivable thing—the thing for which there was no understanding, no excuse, and no compassion. The route from which there was no way back, the dirt that could not ever be washed away. They said that Sula slept with white men. It may not have been true, but it certainly could have been. She was obviously capable of it. In any case, all minds were closed to her when that word was passed around. It made the old women draw their lips together; made small children look away from her in shame; made young men fantasize elaborate torture for her—just to get the saliva back in their mouths when they saw her (Sula, p. 112).

No need to check the trueness of the fact because Sula is said to be capable of it. Old women, small children, young men, all the different categories of the community are involved. No sin can be more dangerous than hers at the Bottom. She is even believed to be the cause of all the havocs at the Bottom. Disasters after her death in the Bottom have convinced people to understand that she is not the evil of the community.

3. Solidarity

Solidarity is one of the most important aspects of the black community life. It is a system in which each individual vouches for the community and the community vouches for each individual. Individualism, in such a system leads to alienation, destruction. It is a pillar that stabilizes the community in terms of

its survival and prosperity. Nobody owns anything for himself alone, everyone depends on everybody. Consequently, it yields a social harmony and stability that cement the development of the individuals and the community itself. People can be as poor as a church mouse and leave on the prevailing solidarity of the community. When Janie has come back to Eatonville, "Pheoby hurried on off with a covered bowl in her hands (Zora, p. 4) towards the house of the new comer. The objective is to offer food to welcome her. This is typically African solidarity. She reaches Janie's house saying: "Ah knowed you'd be hongry. No time to be huntin' stove wood after dark. Mah mulatto rice ain't so good dis time. Not enough bacon grease, but Ah reckon it'll kill hungry (Zora, p. 5). Actually Janie is hungry. As long as she is living with people in the community, there always exists someone somewhere to cover her needs even if it is limited to some levels. Toni Morrison has worked to highlight the virtue of solidarity in *Sula*.

The black community in the Bottom survives because solidarity is effective among the dwellers. So many cases can illustrate this aspect but just a few of them are selected to illustrate the presence and role of solidarity in this community. Eva Peace, Sula's grandmother, has offered her house to people she does not even know their where they have come from. Some may qualify it as a sense of generosity, but it is just a way to comply with the norm of her community. She is "The creator and sovereign of this enormous house with the four sickle pear trees in the front yard and the single elm in the back yard was Eva Peace, who sat in a wagon on the third floor directing the lives of her children, friends, strays, and a constant stream of boarders" (Sula, p. 30). The most surprising case is related to the Deweys. Three little boys who are adopted by Eva Peace. The boys are not blood relations, but because of their common name, they come to resemble each other so closely that people can no longer tell them apart. The Deweys stop growing at the height of four feet, and are dependent upon Eva and, later, Sula Peace for their subsistence.

Another salient example related to Eva Peace, Sula's matriarchal, amputee grandmother, concerns the moment she has left the Bottom for months before coming back with only one leg. Before going, "she left all of her children with Mrs. Suggs, saying she would be back the next day. Eighteen months later she swept down from a wagon with two crutches, a new black pocketbook, and one leg" (Sula, p. 34).

In fact, when Eva's husband (BoyBoy) abandons her in the dead of winter, leaving her destitute with three children to feed, Eva has no choice but to take profit of the opportunity to make money with insurance. Nobody is entirely sure what has happened to her leg, but it is clear that the loss of that leg is what enables her to survive financially and raise her children to adulthood. But what is surprising here is her attitude: she has promised Mrs. Suggs to come back the next day. Finally she has come back eighteen months later; however Mrs. Suggs has not blamed her for that. Through solidarity, nobody can complain in the Bottom community about the fact that Eva's three children have been taken cared about by the Suggs. It is not possible to starve to death in a community where solidarity is the omnipresent. Purposely Toni Morrison has created some instances of solidarity throughout her novels. In *Beloved*,

for instance, solidarity determines the survival and balance of individuals in the community.

Beloved demonstrates the extent to which individuals need the support of their communities in order to survive. Sethe first begins to develop her sense of self during her twenty-eight days of freedom, when she becomes a part of the Cincinnati community. Similarly, Denver discovers herself and grows up when she leaves 124 and becomes a part of society. Paul D and his fellow prison inmates in Georgia prove able to escape only by working together. They are literally chained to one another, and Paul D recalls that if one lost, all lost. Lastly, it is the community that saves Sethe from mistakenly killing Mr. Bodwin and casting the shadow of another sin across her and her family's life.

Cincinnati's black community plays a pivotal role in the events of 124. At the end of the novel, the black community gathers at 124 to collectively exorcise Beloved. By driving Beloved away, the community secures Sethe's, and its own, release from the past.

4. Marriage

Like many social terminologies, marriage is an essentially contentious concept. Marriage and the idea of marriage are universal but there is no one generally acceptable definition of marriage. *Wikipedia Encyclopedia* defines marriage/ wedlock/matrimony as:

…a socially or ritually recognized union or legal contract between spouses that establishes rights and obligations between them and their children, and between them and their in-laws.

The import of this definition is that where there are no children, there is no marriage. The origin of marriage can be traced back to the Middle English, *mariage* which was also a derivative of Old French *marier* which means to marry. *Marier* is also derived from a Latin word *maritare*, meaning, to be provided with a wife or husband. In the black community, marriage has other meanings. According to Mbiti (1969, p. 133):

> For African peoples, marriage is the focus of existence. It is the point where all the members of a given community meet: the departed, the living and those yet unborn. All the dimensions of time meet here and the whole drama of history is repeated, renewed and revitalized. Marriage is a drama in which everyone becomes an actor or actress and not just a spectator.

Canon Kenyan born John Samuel Mbiti, an Anglican priest, has provided the very definition of marriage in context of a black community. Marriage is the concern of the whole community. Toni Morrison has immortalized these aspects of the African realities in *Sula*.

As a matter of fact, the community establishes the acceptable attitudes and conventions for the citizens of the Bottom. Nel Wright and Sula are contrasts in their relationship to this community. Nel assimilates, defining herself according to community standards. In fact, she has married Jude Greene simply because her mother like her to comply with the community and avoid her mother's past. In New Orleans, Nel meets her grandmother and is shocked to find out that she has been a prostitute; she

realizes that her mother's search for prim and proper behavior is her effort to wipe out her past. As a result of the trip to New Orleans, Nel determines that she will be different than her mother; she will not live her life running from the past and seeking respectability and conformity above all. In fact, Jude marries Nel out of rage at his inability to secure a job building the New River Road. He is determined to take on what he perceives to be the role of a man in society at all costs. He also wants somebody to care about his hurt. Jude leaves the Bottom for Detroit after Nel catches him and Sula Peace having sex. In their union, love is not the most important because motivations are not the same. Sula, however, rejects the community and defines herself against it. Her grandmother (Eva Peace) is very preoccupied with the position of Sula. As soon she comes back after ten years absence, Eva questions her: "When you gone to get married? You need to have some babies. It'll settle you" (Sula, 92). Sula does not hide her intention. The following dialogue is illustrative:

> Sula: "I don't want to make somebody else. I want to make myself".
>
> Eva: "Selfish. Ain't no woman got no business floatin' around without no man". "You did". "Not by choice". "Mamma did". "Not by choice, I said. It ain't right for you to want to stay off by yourself. You need... I'm tell you what you need" (*Sula*, 92).

According to Eva, Sula has no choice; she should comply with the requirements of the black community at the Bottom. Selfish is she if she decides to live alone without a husband. In such a community ruled by solidarity, selfishness is a criminal behavior penalized by its dwellers. Sula has become a pariah, the scapegoat of all the havocs of the community. Eva is an elder in the Bottom and have but to advise younger people and particularly her granddaughter Sula. Eva is living without a husband but the people living in that community know that her husband (Boy) has abandoned her with their three children. Sula's choice to live unmarried in the community marriage is a must is a risk, a self damnation. Her presence in the community is a type of incongruity people are ready to get rid of. That is why it is mentioned on page 150 that: "The death of Sula Peace was the best news folks up in the Bottom had had since the promise of work at the tunnel" (Sula, p. 150). People are happy simply because they do not think the way Sula thinks. The dialogue with Nel on her hospital bed summarizes Sula's mentality:

> "Dying. Just like me. But the difference is they dying like a stump. Me, I'm going down like one of those redwoods. I sure did live in this world".
>
> "Really? What have you got to show for it?"
>
> "Show? To who? Girl, I got my mind. And what goes on in it. Which is to say, I got me". "Lonely, ain't it?"
>
> "Yes. But my lonely is mine. Now your lonely is somebody else's. Made by somebody else and handed to you. Ain't that something? A secondhand lonely" (Sula, p. 143).

Sula's philosophy is based on her own freedom without any restriction coming from the norms of her community. On this ground, Sula is totally different from Nel who believes in the values of her social group. Sula has never regretted her position in her community and still confirms on her death bead. Toni Morrison has made her disappear from the novel to show the Bottom dwellers that they a wrong to think Sula is the devil of her community. After her death the new tunnel contractors begin to hire Negro workers, and there is a new old folks' home being built where Eva will go to live. The joy and relief, however, are short-lived. Fall brings a terrible freeze. Everyone is stuck inside, and many are unable to go to work. As a result, poverty increases. People begin to grow sick, and not many workers are hired for the tunnel after all. The townspeople begin to fight with one another. No one cares for his or her grandparents any longer. As usual, on January 3, Shadrack appears for his annual Suicide Day celebration. People join and soon the small parade becomes a large procession, with nearly everyone from The Bottom joining in. Something happens and the procession turns toward the white part of town, down the River Road toward the tunnel. The angry, frustrated mob begins to riot; they smash things and break things and tear the construction site apart. Then they make their way into the tunnel. Loose rock begins to fall, water gushes in, and masses of people from The Bottom are killed, including Tar Baby, the Deweys, and a few of Ajax's brothers. Morrison has then opened the era of revolution in the black community. However, the black community's realities related to marriage is not particular to Toni Morrison alone. Zora Neale Hurston has described another experience in the black community of Eatonville, Florida.

As a matter of fact, Nanny, like Eva, is Janie's grandmother who has raised her. Nanny's aspiration as an old woman of Eatonville, is to work for her granddaughter to be married according to the rules of the community. Nanny is a formerly enslaved woman who had been sexually exploited by her white owner, Nanny took on the responsibility for Janie's rearing after Janie's mother Leafy disappeared. Nanny is, above all, practical and wants her granddaughter to have a good, easy life. When she realizes that teenage Janie is experiencing her sexual awakening, she quickly marries her off to a much older man of property. Nanny sees in the marriage the potential for Janie to have both the protection and the respectability that neither she nor her disgraced daughter enjoyed. Nanny's limited perception of Janie's options is based on her own circumscribed life experiences and her internalization of dominant ideas about what constitutes proper womanhood.

Logan Killicks is the much older man of property who becomes Janie's first husband. He is shrewd enough to acquire the attractive teenager but has no idea how to keep Janie, the romantic dreamer and natural woman. One dimensional Logan is practical, hardworking, and has no sense of romance; his pedestrian attitude toward Janie leaves her cold, their predictable and staid relationship representing just the opposite of the possibilities she saw in the Horizon. Reading her disinterest as ingratitude, Logan's response is to attempt to make Janie work alongside him. In fact, Janie has no choice; she does not need to love Logan. For Nanny, "she would love Logan after they were married. She could see no

way for it to come about, but Nanny and the old folks had said it, so it must be so. Husbands and wives always loved each other, and that was what marriage meant" (Zora, p. 21). The husband here is a simple protector for his wife. In fact, Nanny has suffered sexual exploitation under slavery and Janie's mother has been raped in freedom. Very soon, Janie should be with a husband to be protected. Nobody in Eatonville disagrees with the practice. People there know the rules of the community. But Janie is not happy with Logan because she is not loved. She has decided to live with the ambitious, pompous, and chauvinistic Joe (Jody) Starks who come down the road one day and, reminding Janie of the Horizon, eventually convinces her to leave Logan. He becomes Janie's prosperous second husband and the first mayor of Eatonville, Florida. Joe's plans for Janie are almost the opposite of Logan's: he wants to put her on a pedestal. Neither Joe nor Logan considers that Janie's desires might run counter to their plans for her life. Thus, Janie's second marriage deteriorates as Janie's voice and desire are subjugated to Joe's. Janie nevertheless grows in self-knowledge and bides her time. After some twenty years of marriage, Joe Starks dies believing that Janie has used conjure to fix him. Tea Cake, an itinerant laborer whose real name is Vergible Woods, becomes Janie's third husband. Human and therefore flawed, Tea Cake is nevertheless in touch with his natural and organic self and thus becomes the soul mate Janie has been seeking. Rather than attempt to shape her according to his vision, Tea Cake embraces and appreciates her as she is. With Tea Cake's entrance, the pear blossom that signifies her sexual awakening returns; her relationship with Tea Cake fulfills the promise of real marriage. Bitten by a rabid dog while trying to save Janie's life, he gradually loses his sanity. In madness, he tries to kill Janie, but she kills him in self-defense. The environment of Eatonville is hostile to such a freedom and romance Janie and Tea Cake have undertaken to experience, that is why Zora has killed Tea Cake with her pen. Janie has come back to Eatonville in order to learn the forgotten rules of her community and be able to follow them instead of thinking about love in marriage like a white man.

Janie has come back alone to comply with the prescriptions of her community, Tea Cake dies to stop the spread of this odd behavior based on freedom. Sula died because Morrison wants to preserve the black community of the Bottom. Sula's selfish and free mind cannot prosper in her society where everything is regulated by customs, beliefs, and rites.

5. Conclusion

Lorain, the Bottom, Eatonville or other, they are the black communities created by Toni Morrison and Zora Neale Hurston in their fictions to single out the particular features of the people and their ways of life that characterized them. Community life, customs, rites, common beliefs, solidarity, marriage, gossips, songs, tradition, etc. work together to shape the life pattern in vogue in the community of blacks in America. Neither the slaver's whip nor the lyncher's rope nor the bayonet could kill the black beliefs and the African ways of life. No individual can escape the oral prescriptions of the community. Janie has refused to comply with Nanny, her grandmother's philosophy to marriage with Logan

Killicks; she has run for true love but she has failed. She is subject to gossips when she has come back as a widow. Sula has chosen to live differently in the Bottom by refusing to get married. She is attributed all the evils of the community and her death has been celebrated as a good relief by the members of her community. Her death is a symbol: a person with revolutionary opinions can never survive the pressure of the community. Her death is seen by the dwellers as the end of evils of the Bottom.

Blacks in America are not simply noticeable by their skin complexion; they have preserved their cultures and traditions the way they are practiced in Africa. Though time and circumstances have eroded some aspects, Africa is visible in the fictions of Toni Morrison and Zora Neale Hurston. Blacks living in America are in connection with their origins through the writings of the two female African American writers.

References

Hurston, Z. N. (1937). *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Rocky River, Oh: Center for Learning.

Hurston, Z. N. (2008). *Mules and Men*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc.

Hurston, Z. N., & Meisenhelder, S. E. (2013). *Hitting a Straight Lick with a Crooked Stick_ Race and Gender in the Work of Zora Neale Hurston*. USA: University of Alabama Press.

Jones, S. L. (2002). *Rereading the Harlem renaissance: Race, class, and gender in the fiction of Jessie*.

Kanu, G. A. (2010). The Indispensability of the Basic Social Values in African Tradition: A philosophical Appraisal. *African Health Sciences Journal*, *7*(5), 125-138. https://doi.org/10.4314/og.v7i1.57930

Laxalt, R. (1957). *Sweet Promised Land*. New York, Harper & Brothers Publishers.

Lukács, G. (1955). *The Historical Novel*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Mbiti, J. S. (1969). *African Religions and Philosophy*. London, Heinemann Pub.

Miller, J. (1993). *The Makings of America: The United States and the World, volume I: to 1865*. Lexington: D.C. Health and Company.

Miller, J. C. (1959). *Origins of the American Revolution*. USA: Stanford University Press.

Morrison, T. (1970). *The Bluest Eye*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Morrison, T. (1973). *Sula*. New York: Vintage Books, a division of Random House, Inc.

Morrison, T. (1977). *Song of Solomon*. New York: Plume, Penguin books.

Morrison, T. (1987). *Beloved*. New York: Plume, Penguin book.

Morrison, T. (1993). *Jazz*. 1992, New York: Plume, Penguin books.

Morrison, T. (1997). *Tar Baby*. London: Vintage.

Morrison, T. (2004). *Love*. New York: Vintage Books.

Morrison, T. (2008). *A Mercy*. New York: Random House.

Nash, B. G. (1999). *American Odyssey, The United States in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Glencoe

McGraw-Hill Company.

Page, P. (1995). *Dangerous Freedom: Fusion and Fragmentation in Toni Morrison's Novels*. Jackson.

Patrick, J., & Berkin, C. (1984). *History of the American Nation*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.

Samuels, D., Samuels, W., & Clenora, H. W. (1984). *Toni Morrison*. Boston: Twayne Trans. Kieffer Catherine. Paris: Editions Caribéennes.

Scheidel, W. (2010). *"Slavery in the Roman economy"*. Princeton: Stanford Working Papers in Classics. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1663556

Zinn, H. (1980). *A People's History of the United States*. New York, Harper & Row, Publishers.