



USE OF BIBLICAL ALLUSIONS IN "SONG OF SOLOMON" BY TONI MORRISON

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ABSTRACT

Toni Morrison presents a view of internalized racism, which is the result of blacks who have come to view themselves through white eyes. Also highlighted are the white supremacist attitudes of both blacks and whites. Morrison gives her characters biblical names in order to align them with well-known figures. As a result, many of the characters in Song of Solomon carry with them not only their own personal history as described in the novel, but also the history of a biblical namesake. In the novel, names describe characters' personalities and behavior. Circe, for instance, shares her name with an enchantress in Homer's Odyssey who provides Odysseus with crucial help for his voyage homeward. Almost all of the characters in Song of Solomon are black. The few white characters represent violence and wrongdoing. The healing power of song is a common theme in African-American culture where it allows people to share experiences.

KEYWORDS

violence, supremacist, temporal boundaries, identity.

This paper aims at analyzing Song of Solomon written by Toni Morrison to show the author's Afro-American feminist tendency. Song of Solomon is a masterpiece that pays close attention to the fate of American black woman. The author mainly use Afro-American feminist criticism as a way to show her own thoughts and black people's song that Solomon wants to fly as the main rhyme to depict a free world for the female black, and analyses and combines the main female images in this novel with the theory closely.

An examination of the manner appears in which Toni Morrison's novels address the impact of gender, race and class on identity. Morrison offers a view of internalized racism in her work, which is the result of blacks who have come to view themselves through white eyes. Also explored are the white supremacist attitudes of both whites and blacks, and the effect these racist views have on black identity. In addition to this, the color hierarchy presented in novels of Toni Morrison is discussed: the privileges afforded blacks and whites with lighter skin. Utilizing the ideas of writers such as Debra Dickerson and bell hooks, an exploration of the black community is highlighted. Further, some of the causes behind the aggressive, at times violent, behavior of black men toward their families, and the domination of black children by their mothers is analyzed. The issue of class is also a theme Toni Morrison addresses, as some of her financially secure black characters, adopting the attitudes of their oppressors, view themselves superior to poorer blacks. While some of her characters rise above the classist, sexist, racist environment they inhabit and embrace their African heritage, others, like Pecola Breedlove, are ultimately ruined by it.

Song of Solomon's title refers to the biblical book of the same name, giving special importance that the novel addresses age-old themes. The biblical book reveals a conversation between two lovers, King Solomon and his beautiful, black Shulamite bride. Similarly, Morrison's novel is a celebration of the achievement of earthly love. Morrison gives her characters biblical names in order to align them with well-known figures. As a result, many of the characters in Song of Solomon carry with them not only their own personal history as described in the novel, but also the history of a biblical namesake. By giving her characters the names of biblical figures, Morrison compares them to epic heroes whose experience transcends cultural and temporal boundaries. For example, the biblical Hagar is Sarah's handmaiden, who bears Sarah's husband Abraham a son and is then banished from his sight. Similarly,

Morrison's Hagar is used by Milkman, who enjoys her offerings. The resemblance of both Hagar's experiences suggests that women will be misused.

In Song of Solomon, names depict the effects of both liberation and oppression. Before Milkman uncovers his grandfather's real name, he is known as Macon Dead, the same name that white oppressors gave his grandfather. When Milkman finds out his grandfather's real name he starts to feel proud of himself and his family. The fact that Milkman's nickname describes him better than his recorded name shows that written names are often unreliable. For this reason, they are often replaced by names from the oral tradition. For example, Dr. Foster's street is officially labeled Mains Avenue. But after his death, it is commonly known as "Not Doctor Street." Although the official name is correct, the popular name is more descriptive.

In the novel, names describe characters' behavior and personalities. Circe, for instance, shares her name with an enchantress in Homer's Odyssey who provides Odysseus with crucial help for his voyage homeward. Likewise, Morrison's Circe directs Milkman toward his ancestral home and allows him to bridge a gap in his family history. Another instance is Guitar's last name, Bains, which is a homonym for "banes," or sources of distress. His name suggests both the oppression he has suffered and his profession as an assassin. Finally, Pilate's name is a homonym for "pilot." She guides Milkman along his journey to spiritual redemption.

In Song of Solomon, singing is a means of maintaining a link to a forgotten family history. In a community where most of the past generations were illiterate, songs rather than history books tell the story of the past. Songs record details about Milkman's heritage and cause Milkman to research his family history. Pilate's songs about Sugarman, for instance, encourage Milkman's quest to Virginia. Similarly, the songs Milkman hears about Solomon and Ryna inform him of the mysterious fate of his ancestors, and keep him on the path to self-discovery.

Milkman is not the only character who is guided by song. Other members of the Dead family use songs and singing to heal themselves emotionally and spiritually. When Macon Jr. is depressed, for example, he secretly listens to Pilate's songs under her windows. Similarly, after Hagar dies, both Pilate and Reba cope with their grief by singing a mighty rendition of a

gospel tune. The healing power of song is a common theme in African-American culture, where it brings people together and allows people to share experiences.

Most of the characters in *Song of Solomon* are black. The some white characters represent wrongdoing and violence. After Guitar's father is cut in half during a sawmill accident, for instance, the mill's white foreman offers the family almost no sympathy or financial support. Likewise, Circe's wealthy white employers, the Butlers, are murderers. When they take Macon Dead I's land, they end his children's innocence. Even white animals carry negative connotations. A white bull causes Freddie's mother to go into labor and die. The bull's interference with Freddie's birth represents white people's devastating interference with the African-American world. Likewise, the white peacock that causes Guitar and Milkman to become infatuated with the pursuit of wealth represents the corrupting influence of greed.

First Corinthians and Lena make artificial roses that represent the stifling life of the upper class and the oppression of women. The roses do not bring in much money; the true purpose of the activity is to provide a mindless distraction from their boredom. First Corinthians and Lena perform their task without any enthusiasm, motivated by habit rather than conviction. In literary works, living roses often symbolize love. The artificial roses symbolize the absence of love in Macon Jr.'s household. Unlike living plants, the artificial flowers convey only the depression of their makers.

Gold represents Macon Jr.'s obsessive pursuit of wealth. Gold is utterly irresistible to men in the novel, who violate their principles in order to get it. For instance, Milkman robs his aunt, Pilate, because he wants to be independent and wealthy. Likewise, Guitar's desire for gold motivates his attempted murder of Milkman. Finally, Macon Jr. spends a lifetime pursuing gold without any bigger goal beyond accumulation.

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