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Artículos

Black Female Masculinity in Toni Morrison's Sula

Masculinidad femenina negra en Sula de Toni Morrison

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Resumen:

Este artículo retrata la masculinidad femenina y la posición de las mujeres negras en la Sula de Toni Morrison (1973). Las mujeres en esta novela reconstruyen su identidad a través de la rebelión de las normas y tradiciones sociales. En su resistencia, actúan más como hombres que como mujeres, trabajan para crear su propia identidad a través del rechazo de los roles de género convencionales que desempeñan las mujeres en la comunidad. Las mujeres de Morrison contradicen los estereotipos de las mujeres negras en la ficción afroamericana. Este artículo registra la suerte de las mujeres negras en diferentes entornos matriarcales dentro de la sociedad negra.

Palabras clave: Individualidad, rebelión, feminismo negro, discriminación..

Abstract:

This paper portrays female masculinity and the position of black women in Toni Morrison's Sula (1973). Women in this novel reconstruct their selfhood through rebelling on social norms and traditions. In their resistance, they act more like men than women. They work to create their selfhood and identity through rejection of the conventional gender roles, which women play in the community. Morrison's women contradict the stereotypes of black women in African American fiction. This paper records the fortunes of black women in different matriarchal environments inside black society.

Keywords: Selfhood, rebellion, black feminism, discrimination..

HERMENEUTICS OF BLACK FEMALE MASCULINITY IN TONI MORRISON'S SULA

The black women in Morrison's Sula (1973) are different from submissive and easy- controlled black women who are oppressed by the black community in general and the white males in particular. Morrison's Sula focuses on the individuality of the black woman. Sula, the central figure of the novel, is a black woman who suffers at hands of whites and blacks. She rejects the traditional norms ascribed to women in society. Therefore; Morrison attempts to show the individuality of an African-American woman struggling for identity.

L. Devika Rani observes that Sula is different from other controlled black women in her society in that she "challenges the social norms that deny a woman her individual rights" (p.90) She is presented as a very daring and adventurous character who plainly defies the restrictions imposed on her individuality and breaks all links of blood and human relationships in her search to confirm her selfhood. K. Sumana points out that:

> Sula opens up new literally and critical option not only for the study of the text by African-American women but for African-American literary study more generally. The novel certainly helps to set a new agenda for black women's social and narrative possibilities. (p.67).

She revolted against whatever is societal and restricted, therefore; she loses her social liberation. She intends to assert her identity by rebelling on her community. Sula works very hard to escape all the traditionalism related to women. Gillespie and Kubitschek observe that this novel "offers a view of female

psychological development that defies traditional male-centred interpretations of female development and calls out for an expansion of the woman-centred paradigm" (p.13).

Sula gains her strength from defying all conventional values and beliefs in her community. In order to see the different aspects of the world, Sula has to be different and unconventional. She is different in the sense that she is true to herself. She refuses to be blindly obedient and submissive to the needs of her community. Morrison says:

> I always thought of Sula as quintessentially black, metaphysically black, if you will, which is not melanin and certainly not unquestioning fidelity to the tribe. She is new world black and new world woman extracting choice from choicelessness, responding inventively to found things. (Morrison, 1989, p. 34)

She does not care if people look at her as an outsider. She uses men as she likes. After she has sex with them, she disregards them and continues her life normally. She rejects the stereotypical roles assigned to black women. Men are afraid of her evil and they describe her as a devil. Morrison comments:

> Their conviction of Sula's evil changed them in accountable yet mysterious ways. Once the source of their personal misfortune was identified, they had left to protect and love one another. They began to cherish their husbands and wives, protect their children, repair their homes and in general band together against the devil in their midst. (p.117).

By rejecting Sula people in her community unite together against her evil doings. She unifies her community by objectifying its danger. People in her society do not hastate to label her evil even though they know quite well that evil are part of human nature. By treating her grandmother violently, other women in her community start treating their children differently with love and compassion for fear of being treated like Sula's grandmother. Morrison stats:

> It was like getting the use of an eye back, having a cataract removed. Her old friend had come home.
> ...Talking to Sula had always been a conversation with herself.... Sula never competed; she simply helped others define themselves. Other people seemed to turn their volume on ... when Sula was in the room (p.95).

For her, if women do not revolt against the injustice and oppression they would be like dead living things. Her family dislikes her because of the unlimited freedom she has. She is the kind of woman who affirms her place strongly in her society and gains the power of her invented freedom. Women at her time are living brutally and dreadfully waiting for their final doom. Without enough strength, she will not be able to break the wall of the convention. She has no desire for material things and she does not want to have a privileged place in her society. The only thing she desires is to be a woman who can guide other oppressed black women and help them to resist and challenge the social domination of oppressive male rule. Revolting on their traditions and values symbolizes the black woman's search for self- affirmation in the patriarchal society. There are many examples of discrimination and racism in the novel. One example is describing the place the blacks are living in as the Bottoms.

This description shows the lack of sympathy and concern of the white people towards the blacks: "The nigger got the hilly land, where planting was backbreaking, where the soil slid down and washed away the seeds and where the wind lingered all through the winter." (Morrison's Sula, p. 5) Sula's rebellious nature appears when she encourages her best friend, Nel, to assert and affirm her freedom and identity. She lives according to her principles refusing anyone controlling her wishes. She tells Nel: "I got my mind. And what goes on in it." (Morrison's Sula, p. 43) Sula wants to affirm her selfhood apart from society. She inherits her courage and rebellious nature from her grandmother, Eva, who is the most important and influential person in the family, and she survives alone when she is deserted by her husband. Eva is a complex individual who is forced to work so hard to save her children:

> After five years of a sad and disgruntled marriage BoyBoy took of. During the time they were together he was very much preoccupied with other women and not home much. He did whatever he could that he liked, and he liked womanizing best, drinking second, and abusing Eva third (Morrison's Sula, p.32).

She refuses to surrender, and she thinks that life continues with and without the existence of men. She decides to survive to save her children from starvation and death. Eva's matriarchal personality makes people respect her. She is a tough woman who bears the responsibility alone when her husband deserted her. She enjoys independence and freedom other women do not have. She is not responsible for emasculating her husband who left the house deserting his wife and children. In fact, she is unduly blamed and stereotyped for something outside her sphere of influence. Eva's rebellious nature is not the reason behind her husband abandoning the family but he is a self-interested man who does not have the courage to bear the responsibility of taking care of his family. Eva is an independent woman who gains strength from her tough experiences in the absence of the male member.Eva takes on a man's role and found a way out of the patriarchal and chauvinistic system that denied her the means of taking proper care of her family. People talk that Eva intentionally placed her leg on the railway track to assert the insurance money to assist her children from painful starvation. Eva stands as an example of how African American woman survives despite repression, prejudice or limitations in life and still tolerate suffering and pain.

Eva loves her family to the point that makes her ready to sacrifice anything and everything for them. When Eva sees that her son, Plum , sinks into addiction and is unable to save him from sinking further she takes a dramatic decision to relieve him from his addiction by killing him. She burns him in his sleep. Eva explains that she could not tolerate seeing her son behaving like an infant again due to the drug addiction: "I done everything I could to make him leave me and go on and live and be a man but he couldn't and I had to keep him out so I just thought of a way he could die like a man not all scrunched up inside my womb, but like a man" (Morrison's Sula, p.72). Out of love, she saves him from his misery. She thinks that death is better than addiction .

What makes Eva stronger is her hatred for her irresponsible husband. It is this hatred that keeps her alive. She is not emotionally and mentally sad after his sudden departure. However, Eva's prejudice towards her husband does not prevent her from having sex with other men: "Those Peace women loved all men. It was man love that Eva bequeathed to her daughters. Probably, people said, because there were no men in the house, no men to run it. But actually, that was not true. He Peace women simply loved maleness, for its own sake". (Morrison, Sula 41).Despite her being an old and crippled lady, she is also having many sexual relationships with men visiting her house. Morrison describes her as having "a regular flock of gentleman callers" (Morrison's Sula, p.41). She does not make love to them, but she has a great deal of fun in their company. Men liked to be with her because she makes them feel more proud of themselves and she strengthened their ego, which opposes the belief concerning matriarchs' behaviour towards men. Andrea O'Reilly points out that Eva Peace "resists the patriarchal script of motherhood that demands women to mother children in a nuclear family in which the mother is subservient/ inferior to the husband" (Morrison's Sula, p. 81). She raises her children by herself, but not out of choice. A woman choosing to be alone is improper for Eva.

Hannah, on the other hand, is a negligent mother who will sleep with any man, regardless of her neighbours' or friends' feelings. Hannah teaches Sula to regard sex as "pleasant and frequent, but otherwise unremarkable" (Morrison's Sula, p. 40). Many of Hannah's qualities emerge in Sula as an adult. Perhaps this is a commentary on the legacy that mothers pass onto their daughters. Hanna also rebels on the traditional norms and principles in the society because she does not have any emotional engagement. Ever since her husband died Hanna never indulge in a real relationship with a man. In fact, "She would fuck practically anything." (Morrison's Sula, p.43). She was disliked by other good women in town. Morrison says:

> Hannah exasperated the women in the town – the "good" women...the whores, who were hard put to find trade among black men anyway and who resented Hannah's generosity.....because Hannah seemed too unlike them, having no passion attached to her relationships and being wholly incapable of jealousy (Morrison's Sula, p. 44.(.

Hannah's sexual relationships are physical. She is not selfless. She thinks of herself as a woman when she leads the men of the Bottom to her bed. Her relationships are best described as: "sweet, low and guileless... nobody, but nobody could say 'Hey sugar' like Hannah" (Morrison's Sula, pp. 42-43) Sula has bequeathed

Hanna's self -interest and Eva's courage and their love of men outside the concept of marriage. She is aggressive with her mother because she hears her confessing to one of his friends:" I love her but I just don't like her. That's the difference" (Morrison's Sula, p.57) Sula learns self- indulgence from her mother. As a child, Sula sees many men coming to the house to sleep with her mother. Sula refuses the idea of marriage. Morrison says:

> Marriage, apparently, had changed all that, but having no intimate knowledge of marriage, having lived in a house with women who thought all men available, and selected from among them with a care only for their tastes, she [Sula] was ill prepared for the possessiveness of the one person she felt close to (Morrison's Sula, p.119).

Sula finds that keeping only one, man is a ridiculous idea. McDowell argues that Sula becomes a "sexually desiring subject rather than as an object of male desire" (p.82) In her discussion with Nel who tells her why she cannot keep only one man with her, Sula answers: "Is that what I'm supposed to do? Spend my life keeping a man? They ain't worth more than me. And besides, I never loved any man because he was worth it. Worth didn't have nothing to do with it." She adds: "My mind did. That's all." (Morrison's Sula, p.143-144).

Morrison says:

> Sula was distinctly different. Eva's arrogance and Hannah's self-indulgence merged in her and, with a twist that was all her own imagination, she lived out her days exploring her own thoughts and emotions, giving them full reign, feeling no obligation to please anybody unless their pleasure pleased her (Morrison's Sula, p.118(.

Although Sula inherited fearlessness, arrogance, self-indulgence and independence from her mother and grandmother, she is still different from them. Tough situations teach her never to surrender, and she must invent her own ways to survive in a tough and inconsiderate society. Sula is not guided by anyone in her family. Patricia Hill Collins points out that all African American mothers attempt to save their daughters and teach them to love themselves for whom they really are in order to survive in the patriarchal society. Collins adds: "African-American mothers try to protect their daughters from the dangers that lie ahead by offering them a sense of their own unique self-worth" (p.127). This sense of care and protection does not exist in Sula because Hanna does not care to encourage Sula to develop a self –worth. She is greatly disappointed to see black women oppressed and ill-treated by both black men and white community. She does not like to see them victimized and controlled just because they are black and she is angry that these women do not even struggle to free themselves from the tie of oppression. She refuses the roles of mothers and wives because these stereotypical roles do not make women happy. She negotiates with her friend Nel:" Every man I ever knew left his children."(Morrison's Sula, p.143).

She realizes that married life causes women from fatal suffering. She looks upon conventions and traditions as barriers to self-discovery. Different from other black women Sula makes her own decision to live on her values and beliefs. She does not depend on anyone to guide her or teach her how to live her life. As Morrison writes: "The first experience taught her there was no other that you could count on; the second that there was no self to count on either". (Morrison's Sula, p.118-119(

Lister observes: "Sula embodies self-determination by refusing to observe social codes and conventions. Despite the changes that occur during the novel's time span, Sula remains at odds with her context, untouched by those cultural forces which gain prominence as the century progresses. (p.31)Sula is irritated because women accept their inferiority, and they are so week to fight for their rights. Therefore she does not like to be like those week and inferior women. She even dislikes them because they are passive. She is amused when something wrong happens to them, therefore; she was called the demon. When her mother is burnt she stands aside looking at her without offering any help. People said that she was so shocked and paralyzed that she did not know how to help her mother. But her grandmother contradicts them saying: "

Sula had watched Hannah burn not because she was paralyzed, but because she was interested" (Morrison's Sula, p.78). When Sula is very sick she confesses to Nel:"I never meant anything. I stood there watching her burn and was thrilled. I wanted her to keep on jerking like that, to keep on dancing" (Morrison's Sula, p.147(

Sula thinks her inability to feel sad is part of her success and strength. When Eva asks her to think of marriage she refuses because she thinks marriage strips her of her freedom. She does not intend to cling to the old stereotypes. She is determined: "I don't want to make somebody else. I want to make myself." (Morrison's Sula, p.92). Marriage, Sula thinks, gives freedom to men and strips women of their identity. She does not intend to be controlled by men under the concept of marriage. She is determined to enjoy her freedom, and she does whatever she likes without being led by anyone. Nel reproaches her: "You can't do it all. You a woman and a coloured woman at that. You can't act like a man" (Morrison's Sula, p.142). All the women in her family are victims of her rebelliousness. Nel associates Sula liberation with a kind of masculinity.

Stepto remarks:

> She [Sula] is a masculine character [. . .]. She will do the kind of things that normally only men do, which is why she's so strange. She really behaves like a man. She picks up a man, drops a man, the same way a man picks up a woman, drops a woman. And that's her thing. She's masculine in that sense. She's adventuresome, she trusts herself, she's not scared (p. 27).

Sula forgets her womanly role and embodies the role of a man in forming an emancipated woman and this is what Morrison regards as irrational thought of Sula. She treats these women violently when they cling to their stereotypical roles. Morrison observes: "And like any artist with no art form, she became dangerous" (Morrison's Sula, p. 26). Eva who used to be the controller in her house loses her freedom confronting Sula who sends her to the elderly house. Eva is no longer the controller in her house. When freedom is lost Eve has no decision of her own. Morrison points out:

> Her once beautiful leg had no stocking and the foot was in a slipper. Nel wanted to cry—not for Eva's milk-dull eyes or her floppy lips, but for the once proud foot accustomed for over a half century to a fine well-laced shoe, now stuffed gracelessly into a pink terrycloth slipper (Morrison's Sula, p.199).

Violence becomes the tool through which she defies the stereotypical roles assigned for black women. Another example of violence she uses against the boys who try to make fun of her. Morrison says:

> Holding the knife in her right hand, she pulled the slate toward her and pressed her left forefinger down hard on its edge. Her aim was determined but inaccurate. She slashes off only the tip of her finger. The four boys stared openmouthed at the wound and a scrap of flesh (Morrison's Sula, p.54).

She cuts her finger to terrify the boys who annoyed her. She threatens the boys by saying "If I can do that to myself, what you suppose I'll do to you" (Morrison's Sula, pp.54-55). In doing this, Sula determines to tell the boys that she is not afraid of them and remind them of what they will get back if they do anything harmful to her

She kills a boy because he makes fun of her. Killing this boy makes her fearless and more confident. From this situation, Sula has learned that violence is useful for her in crisis. Her success in preventing herself from being insulted by using violence confirms Sula of her strong power. Barbara Rigney argues, is also a "murderer", as is exemplified by her participation in Chicken Little's drowning and her passive pleasure in watching her mother burn. Moreover, Eva's sacrifice of her leg for insurance money parallels Sula's self-mutilation (p.64).

Nel is Sula's best friend. Nel represents the other half of Sula.Nel and Sula seek comfort in each other's company for they share the common link of being young, black and female in a world that is commonly geared to meet the designs of white men. Despite having a different background both are close friends because "they found in each other's eyes the intimacy they were looking for". (Morrison's Sula, p.52) Bloom remarks that both Nel and Sula "search for themselves in an alien world- white and male."(p.32). Sula wishes Nel behave differently from other conventional women. Nel appears as a traditional and conventional lady and

lives with limited self-expression of these gender-identified roles. After marriage she solidifies into her wifely role, becoming one of the women who had "folded themselves into starched coffins" (Morrison's Sula, p. 122). Stien describes Sula and Nel as: "two selves, the 'monstrous', passionate, sexual woman, and the 'good', rational, controlled woman" (p.127). Morrison describes: "Because each had discovered years before they were neither white nor male and all freedom and triumph was forbidden to them they had set about creating something else to be". (Morrison's Sula, p. 52) Barbara Smith writes that their friendship is "the necessary bonding that has always taken place between Black women for the barest survival. Together the two girls can find the courage to create themselves". (p.168) although they share a strong bond, they are different fromeach other. Sula is passionate and Nel is a traditionalist. Nel accepts slavery to racism and Sula turns into a liberated woman. Sula denies the traditional role of a woman. She refuses the sex, race and class definitions of the society. Sula not only refuses the role assigned to her by her society, but she also steps outside the caste of woman, beyond any class or definition, she insists on making herself. Morrison compares these two women: "Nel seemed stronger and more consistent than Sula, who could hardly be counted on to sustain any emotion for more than three minutes" (Morrison's Sula, p.53).Nel's obedience and Sula's stubbornness are constantly linked. Sula does not have but Nel who always stands on her side and listens to her and she is always there when Sula needs her. But Sula betrays Nel intentionally when she sleeps with her husband. This act of betrayal is described by Morrison:

> Sula had clung to Nel as the closest thing to both another and a self, only to discover that she had no thought at all of causing Nel pain when she bedded down with Jude. They had always shared the affection of other people: compared how a boy kissed, what line he used with one and then the other. "She adds:" Marriage apparently, had changed all that but having had no intimate knowledge of marriage, having lived in a house with women who thought all men available and selected from among them with a care only for their tastes, she was ill prepared for the possessiveness of the one person she felt close to (Morrison's Sula, p.119).

Her justification for betraying her best friend is that she is supposed to share everything with Nel because she is her best friend. This justification is not accepted by Nel. Sula does not think of her action as an act of betrayal. She supposes Nel to be more angry with her husband for betraying her and for being an untrustworthy man. She cannot understand Nel's pain when her husband's reality is revealed. Morrison says: "It had surprised her a little and saddened her a good deal when Nel behaved the way the others would have" (Morrison's Sula, 120)Sula is senseless therefore she does not apologize to Nel for betraying her and she does not realize the harmful thing she does to her best friend. "Sula's independence and freedom do not permit her to feel shame herself" (Morrison's Sula, p.197) Nel refuses Sula's action because she is a traditional woman who does not have a personal identity but she intends to maintain her social identity.Sula succeeds in creating her personal identity not caring about losing her social identity because she is a liberated woman whose stubbornness and inflexibility places her at odds with the culturally rich black society. Nel is like Sula in her rebellion on her mother who controls Nel's life. Nel dislikes her mother control and she struggles to set herself free. When her mother goes to New Orleans to visit her grandmother she unintentionally sits in the white people's section. She is reproached by a white man who humiliates her. Helene feels humiliated, apologizes for her oversight and smiles at the conductor "like a street pup" (Morrison's Sula, p.21).

Nel is pleased to see people hate her mother and are not under her control. Morrison says :"She [Nel] felt both pleased and ashamed to sense that these men, unlike her father, who worshipped his graceful, beautiful wife, were bubbling with a hatred for her mother" (Morrison's Sula, p. 22) When Nel sees her mother's weakness she determines to be herself. She decides that she will not be led by her mother again. She whispers to herself: "I'm me. I'm not their daughter. I'm not Nel. I#m me. Me". (Morrison's Sula, p.28).Rebelling on her mother is important for Nel to create her identity. She wants to enjoy life outside her mother's domination. This rebellion brings her close to Sula who rebels on her family and her society. Nel likes the way Sula lives her life. They both, according to Beaulieu, find a sense of belonging in their friendship with each other. Beaulieu claims: "When women deny their mothers in Morrison's novels, as they often do, the result is a loss of self

or center"(p.116). Their attraction to one another and their rebelling on their families is describes as Lucille Fultz calls "the handicap of being born black" which comes from the "reality of being alternately attacked, ignored, then singled out for some cruel and undeserved punishment"(p.47). When they are not given the care they deserve from their families they learn how to protect themselves and overcome the experience of being singled out.Although they are different they need one another because as M.L. Montgomery observes, they "experience a profound sense of alienation in a patriarchal world which evolvesno terms for their existence". (p.132) After Sula's death Nel realizes that she has lost everything. She runs to her grave calling her name: "Oh Lord Sula, girl, girl, girl, girl, girl." (Morrison's Sula, p.174) Nel realizes that she did not lose her husband because of Sula but, in fact, she lost a best friend to gain social acceptance. Nel says:

> All that time, all that time, I thought I was missing Jude.' And the loss pressed down on her chest and came up into her throat. 'We was girls together,' she said as though explaining something.... It was a fine cry —loud and long— but it had no bottom and it had no top, just circles and circles of sorrow (p.174).

Sula does not have a good reputation in hr community. She sleeps with all the husbands in the city without considering these sexual relationships as real. Eva rebukes her for the irrational practices of prostitution in return of misleading herself "You sold your life for twenty-three dollars a month" (Morrison's Sula, p. 93). Nigro claims that Sula's death is significant for her community because "the community's role of defining itself through acceptance and disapproval of one of its members' shifts. No longer is the she-devil the focus of their collective energies" (Marie Nigro. 1998, p.731.(

Sula discovers men through her mother who sometimes takes them to her bedroom, where her daughter also sleeps. Sula as a child sees her mother goes out with men and comes back home happy. Hanna teaches Sula that sex is "pleasant and frequent, but otherwise unremarkable" (Morrison's Sula, p.41). She is indulging in these sexual relationships only for pleasure. She dislikes marriage. Simone de Beauvoir asserts in her book, The Second Sex, that "the whole marriage is today a surviving relic of dead ways of life and the situation of the wife is more ungrateful" De Beauvoir means that marriage is unappreciative because women do not have the same rights that men have. (p.479).Grewal, on the other hand, observes her "expression of sexuality is unencumbered by marital laws and expectations."(p.48). Sula 's sexuality is not like Nel's in that it is, as McDowell points out, "not attached to anything outside herself or expressed within the institution of marriage that legitimates it for women [. . .]. Rather it is in the realm of sensory experience and in the service of the self- exploration that leads to self-intimacy"(p.156). Bhasker notes that Sula's "status as a woman without a man and a woman without children simply does not translate into a life that the Bottom understands"(p.33).As Bernard W. Bell has clearly noted the social consequences after Sula's return to Medallion for her irrational emancipation saying that:

> Sula represents the actual and imagined force of evil in the black community. When she put her grandmother in a home, they called her a roach; and when she took Jude from Nel and slept with white men, they called her a bitch. The folks of the Bottom, true to their culture, also remembered the "weighty evidence" of Gothic events that proved that Sula was evil (p.275(.

The only time she behaves conventionally is when she is attracted to Ajax who admires her peculiarity and rebelliousness. This is the first time Sula is attached to a sense of possessiveness. Morrison points out:

> Sula began to discover what possession was. Not love, perhaps, but possession or at least the desire for it. ..... she actually wondered if Ajax would come by that day. Then there was an afternoon when she stood before the mirror finger-tracing the laugh lines around her mouth and trying to decide whether she was good-looking or not (Morrison's Sula, p.131).

Sula begins to lose her power when Ajax flirts her. This is the first time Sula feels she needs a man. What Ajax has done for Sula makes her clumsily fall into the trap of stereotypes that most women in the Bottom cling to. Sula fails to realize that what Ajax loves in her is her rebellious nature and peculiarity. Ajax feels happy when he meets Sula and that "he had never met an interesting woman in his life," besides his mother, of course

(Morrison's Sula, p.126). But she begins to behave and dress like conventional women. She changesherself for Ajax who does not welcome this change. He admires her stubbornness and rebelliousness. Therefore, when Ajax senses Sula's change, seeing she behaves like other women he knows, he decides to leave her behind, which really surprises Sula who begins to lose her trust again of all men on this earth. Sula experiences man's departure and is unhappy about this end. His departure makes her empty. Sula's life becomes unhappy and she starts to spend more time at her house and, as a result, falls gravely ill. For Sula, there is no one deserves her trust. She transgresses the rational boundaries of self-liberation that she does not consider the surroundings, staring only for her emancipation at the expense of anyone but not herself, and this made her irrational woman. Bhasker argues that "Despite any real or perceived Limitations imposed by her family, her community, or the era in which she is depicted, Sula does not put any limits upon herself" (p.23(.

K. Sumana argues that Sula's emancipation has a negative effect on her. She claims that:

> Selfish quest for individual fulfillment only leads some Africans to see themselves in isolation from the community that has shaped, protected and nurtured them ... She [Sula] does not seem to realize... that individual fulfillment is dialectically related to group fulfillment and that the former is conditioned by the latter (pp.77-78).

orrison's black women are well articulated by Stegeman (1974, cited in Frank 1987), who claims:

> The New Woman represents a theory of personhood where the individual exists as an independent entity rather than in her kinship relations, where she has a responsibility to realize her potential for happiness rather than to accept her role, ...and where she must reason about her own values rather than fit into a stereotyped tradition (p. 17).

Lal claims that Morrison has probed "a way to offer her people an insight and sense of recovered self so dignified and glowing that no worldly pain could dull the final light."(p. 9) Black women are often thought of lacking sexual attractiveness or they are seen as women unable to have intimate relationships with men.They are devalued in their societies. But Morrison portrays her black women as being able to survive without the help of men by assuming the masculine role.

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