

CULTURAL CONFLICTS IN TONI MORRISON'S TAR BABY

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ABSTRACT

The present paper aims to show the cultural conflicts in Toni Morrison novel Tar Baby. Toni Morrison fourth novel, Tar Baby gives voice to African-American identity further which is left unspoken till now in her previous novels. Tar Baby also raises up issues like previous novels such as race, gender and class and placed them in a contemporary context next to the previous time and place. It also shows all the conflicts which have come out after the colonization between the colonizer and the colonized. The main fact that is highlighted in the novel that this time the protagonist is not any black character but a white and the novel is set up outside the boundaries of U.S.A in a Caribbean Island inside the home of a retired American person. The geographical boundaries have been highlighted and plays a much important role as Morrison tries to include those Island natives cultures which also a part of American-African heritage.

Keywords : Identity crisis, Multiculturalism, Racial discrimination, Cultural clashes, Hybridity, Alienation, Displacement, Gender discrimination, Poverty.

Introduction

In Tar Baby, the main theme focuses in the novel is the class struggle between the rich and poor, between ruling and struggling class. Morrison highlighted that it is very tragic to see the effects of colonization on the minds of African-American people where they blindly follow every rule and embraces all the ideals of the white society like people was made to be felt that she is not beautiful because she did not match the beauty standards of the white society and it made her to hate herself so much that at the end she losses herself, not physically but mentally also.

Here in the novel, we see Jadine who thinks that she is an Euro-American and tries to follow the values and customs of the white's tradition. Morrison shows that the true African-American is not whites but African-American themselves. In her very childhood she losses her mother and father and is raised by her aunt and uncle where she lost the connection between both the whites and the blacks. She just want that world which is full of glamour and glitter and considers her aunt as backward.

"Jadine, a girl has to be a daughter first, she has to learn that and if she never learns she has to be a daughter. She can never learn how to be a woman. I mean a real woman, a woman good enough for a child, good enough for a man, good enough ever for the respect of other woman". (Toni Morrison, 1981, Tar Baby, pg. 283)

But she does not agree to what she said and objects immediately against it, "these are other ways to be a woman, Nandine" Jadine went on "your way is one, I guess it is but it's not my way. I don't want to be ..like you...I don't want to be that kind of woman". (Toni Morrison, Tar Baby, 1981, pg. 284)"

Morrison also adds another story inside the novel which is

of the Ant kingdom. The story serves as an important message which highlighted that neither dreaming nor security is attainable for women. The novel brings together many oppositions such as high and low, North and South and uses various mythical images to show the social authority and stereotypes. The novelist highlights how women have been considered as an inferior by the male's and they were constantly been criticized and use for only sexual favors and men do not even recognize them as an individual person.

Jadine as a protagonist associated with many images such as wife and mother but no role makes her satisfied and the constraints of being a woman in every role makes her so much frustrated though she tries a different options available to women. Some conflicts have also been shown by Morrison where we see the nature and civilization conflict in the novel.

Some characters have the characteristics of nature or some have of culture characters like son, there these, Gideon and the wild horseman all embody the relationship and features of nature which demonstrate the importance of the place of origin and they have faith in the past things where they believe that no action can be divergent from the past, everything going in the present is linked to it on the other hand, Jadine and all of her companion and friends shows the importance of civilization they put much effort on the necessity of education and European culture. They appreciate freedom from their roots, cultures and history one character shows the blind characteristics of both of them which is Sydney who places a lot importance to family and also believes in the importance of education. Morrison shows that alignment of nature with the black characters whereas the white shows the alignment with civilization.

At first Jadine chooses the side of nature and money to rural Florida where she met son and reject the material trappings of civilization but at the end she adorns the Europe and its culture and returns back to Europe whereas son chooses between the nature and civilization but it is not clear to the readers what he finally chooses as he cannot favour one and rejects out the other either completely. Racism and sexism plays an important role which highlighted the conditions of African-American, where blacks were considered to be slave irrespective of their gender. Racism after makes the lives of black people unbearable as it highlighted the standards of white man society where they were ill treated.

Morrison tries to suggest another meaning of Tar baby; "I found that there is a tar baby in American mythology I started thinking about her". At one time a tar put was a holy place at last important because tar was used to build things... It held things together. For, the tar baby goes come to mean the black women who can hold things together. (Thomas, Leclair, *The language must not sweet*, 1981, pg. 122)."

Class struggle is dominant as we can analyze this novel from this point of view. A character named Valerian street, is highlighting the materialistic and Capitalistic society. He is a one who understands that money is everything and runs after money by making his labor work explicatively and took their land. He shows inhumanity towards African American and shows no sympathy to them. He even criticizes Gideon and There are for taking couple of apples.

He took control of other's people lives and uses his money in order to showcase and impress others, just like he buys expensive dresses for Margaret and bears Jadine's College expenses. His name is kept after a name of a pinkish or white flowers plant which acts as a sedative and due to this reason he spends asleep almost all his life.

Blacks often tries to imitate their white masters as they feel it is a privileged to be like them such as Valerian, Sydney, Ondine and Jadine imitate everything such as behavioral patterns, language, dress etc. Sydney proudly feels that she does not belongs to African culture;

"I am a Phil-A-Delphia Negro mentioned in the book at the same name. My people owned drugstores and taught school white yours were still cutting their faces open so as to, be able to tell one of you from the other". (Tone, Morrison, *Tar Baby*, 1981, pg164)"

Through the character of Jadine and Morrison highlights the intricacies of the African culture and she considers herself as Europeanized. African who inherits every quality of the white values and imitate all those pattern of dress, language, association and ideology and who neglects that is belongs to Africans-American norm and heritage. Jadine feels insecure in revealing the African-American values and feels ashamed of it. By ignoring her culture she is actually ignoring her true self and she tries to inherit all the white

self. She receives those education which tries brainwashed her own history and culture and she is trained to absorbed all capitalist values and considers son as primitive, uncultured and uncivilized initially. But after coming in touch with son, she is able to recall the guilt and tries to make herself recall all the fascination she had after fall in love with the blackness she remembers the scene when she saw an African woman in a Canary yellow dress spit on her in disgust in a Paris street;

"The skin like tar against the canary yellow dress? The women walked down the aisle as though her many-colored sandals were pressing gold tracks on the floor.

Jadine followed her profile, then her back as she passed the store window the window turned her head Sharply around the left and looked right at Jadine. Turned those eyes too beautiful for eyelashes on Jadine and with a small parting on her lips, shot an arrow of saliva between her teeth down to the pavement and the hearts below". (Toni, Morrison, *Tar Baby*, 1981, pg42-43)".

Jadine is hateful for this thought in her mind and she is feel guilty to look at her like that Barbara Christian also mentions the use of yellow dress woman presented by Toni Morrison;

"That Morrison uses the image of the African woman in yellow dress as a symbol for the authenticity that jaded Jadine lacks. It is this woman's inner strength, beauty and pride manifested in the defiant stance of her body that haunts Jadine's dream and throws her into such a state of confusion-cultural confusion". (Christian, Barbara, *Trajectories of the self Definition*; pg 244, 1985)".

After this incident Jadine realizes that she has been stopped from inheriting and accepting her African culture because of her acceptance of western values which basically denied her from exploring her own potential in her culture and her own history. She wanted to explore herself by going on an island with her family and relatives in order to think of our confusion and sort it out. After accepting her relationship with son she came to know about the authenticity of blackness as son represents the blacks world and in his company she find her own culture and tradition with pride and she moves away from her whiteness. She tries to employ all the world of poverty, isolation and ignorance. And on the island she came to realization in accepting and started feeling pride in African-American culture. Son tries to comfort her with all her tensions and confusions that she was facing in all her life. Once she walked inside the forest where she wanted to get out of swamp but mud covers her from her waist down, all she was all covered in blackness which in short reflects upon the two community that she is stuck into one of her part is covered in white and the other half is in white. Jadine got so much involved with western culture, she finds it difficult to get mingled into her own African-American culture. In Elope, Jadine realize it for the first

time and she reflects;

"No man had made her feel that naked that unclothed. Leerers, lovers, doctors, artists-none of them had made her feel exposed. More than exposed; obscure". (Toni, Morrison, *Tar Baby*, 1981, pg255)"

Various cultures, genders and economic backgrounds and languages represented by Morrison to make her characters in a conflicting shadow and to draw the attention to the various parts that comprise her narrative. When Jadine meets Son, he wishes to have a steadily realm in which she is in yellow house with white doors, shows his wish to impose his own views upon her; In many ways, they (Jade and Son) going on a path of colonialism in which one tries to dominate and other in turn must be passive and exploited. Jadine not only tries to take the role of rescued individual but also tries to convert Son to her religion as well. By trying to adopt the language culture, values and other postures of gratitude, Jadine shows the features of a colonized master where she tries to attempt to rescue and thus colonize Son but Son reject those world which jade and valerian exist and signifying the impossibility of compromise between exploiter and the exploited.

Jade and Son have a conflicting relationship when they come in New York city where the conflict begins when son sees an infertile landscape with crying black girls, their pimp like men and woman but Son Does not enjoy the things which Jade usually enjoys in the city, he starts criticizing the city's effects on jade.

"The mocking voice, the superior managerial, administrative and clerk in a fucking loan office tone she took. Gatekeeper, advance bitch, house bitch, welfare office torpedo, corporate cunt, Tar baby side of the road whore trap who called a black man old enough to be her father "Yardman" and who couldn't give a shit who he himself was and only wanted his name to file away in her restoring brain so she could remember it when the cops came to fill out the report". (Toni, Morrison, *Tar Baby*, Pg 220, 1981)"

Jadine return to parries at the end and son's return to isle des chevaliers seen as problematic at the end. Although son choose the there world which has been offered. In contrast to affirmative journey of son, Jadine has been negatively seen as a runaway in search for safety.

"There were no shelters anyway, it was adolescent to think that there were every orphan knew that and knew also that mothers however beautiful were not fair. No matter what you did, the Diaspora mothers with pumping breasts would impugn your character. And an African woman with a single glance from eyes that had burned away their own lashes could discredit your elements (Toni, Morrison, *Tar*

Baby, 1981, Pg 290)"

As Morrison in her several interviews highlight that Jadine at the end know something which she was unaware before. She got to open the doors of safety with the entanglement with son, though she closes it herself and rejects those dream but in doing so, she just revision herself son, like Jadine struggling to find door to free him from his confusion yet his inability to fit into Jadine vision shows that he sees her values as a corrupting one.

The mysterious final scene describe how There are stopped Son to meet Jadine and urges him instead of doing that to join the mythical blind horseman. The last line of the novel highlights that son entangles himself with the myth and each individual perspective in the novel is limited and tar baby immerse into several theme to make a complex vision that renders stereotypes. Morrison endeavored to highlight the influence of the western ideology and culture on young black people, And also the clash against the black ideology with the white ideology Morrison makes returned to Jadine makes readers thinks that Jadine at last winds the battle as she just stayed loyal and faithful to her white ideology and culture.

Through the characters Morrison tries to show the division between colors and show how the oppressio0n that one person is subjected to can destroy not only that person's life but the life of generations.

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