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# **Stylistic Analysis of Toni Morrison's *Beloved***

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**Abstract**---This paper examines the stylistic analysis of Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (2004) using the analytic model developed by Leech and Short (1981) as the major approach. The researcher is aiming to identify the principal stylistic devices used by Morrison in her famous novel *Beloved*. The unique style of Morrison reflects the way readers respond to the novel. Morrison's language in this novel is not only a tool of communication but it is also a means of information. Morrison focuses on the interconnectivity between language and identity because there is a relationship between the spoken words and how they are comprehended.

**Keywords**---stylistic, analysis, Morrison, *Beloved*.

## **1- Introduction:**

Stylistics studies the figurative expression, the choice of words, and sentence patterns by the author of the novel, which helps Morrison to express her ideas and thoughts vividly. Because of her distinctive and unique style the writer won numerous awards from Nobel to Pulitzer, among others. Toni Morrison's typical and different style makes readers more comprehensible of Morrison's ideas and thoughts. Morrison various stylistic devices help readers understand the novel clearly. Syntax mixed with the stream of consciousness method of narration, point of view, and the use of figurative language is some examples of the stylistic devices she uses in *Beloved*. Morrison returns the American novel to its unique narrative style, which stems from the writings of Faulkner and the writers of the American South.

She criticized poverty to her past, and considered it more cruel and brutal than racism, she still felt distressed while noting that everyone looks at her as a black maid when she goes to a luxury market. Her story began with the novel since she was a young woman who told her grandmother dreams that disturb her at night, And in the evening she was sharing her sister's game of imagining fairy tales.

### **1.2 Objectives of the Study**

The aim of this paper is to analyze Morrison's *Beloved* focusing on her choice of words and figurative language to convey her themes.

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The purpose of linguistic analysis is to dismantle the linguistic phenomenon into its primary elements that comprise it... The methods of linguistic analysis vary according to the diversity of the linguistic level to which the linguistic phenomenon belongs to be analyzed to the audio, analytical, grammatical or morphological level, so the analysis of the phenomenon that belongs to the morphological level, for example, differs on the analysis of the phenomenon that belongs to one of the other linguistic levels such as the semantic and structural level.

### **1.3 Scope and Limitation:**

This paper studies stylistic analysis of Morrison's *Beloved*. The researcher will focus on the passages which are stylistically representative.

### **1.4 Significance of the Study:**

This paper helps those who are interested in reading Afro -American novels in general and Morrison in particular and who want to know more about the stylistics of Morrison's *Beloved*, which enhances the construction of meaning.

### **1.5 Methodology:**

The actual approach of this paper is the literary stylistic analysis. Morrison's *Beloved* is the primary source for the researcher who chooses stylistic analysis to combine linguistic description with critical explanation. Therefore, this approach is carefully followed to help control how the reader comprehend thoroughly Morrison's intentions.

### **1.6 Definitions of Style:**

Chapman (1973, p.11) defines style as the regular adoption of a register by a number of people in a definite frequent condition. On the other hand, Abrams (1981) states that style is "a manner of linguistic expression in prose or verse." He adds that style is analyzed in terms of sentence patterns; choice of words; syntax or figurative language. Therefore style of any literary text means the writers' ability to convey his/ her thoughts through words. Style for Leech and Short (1981:52) is the domain of the language use (e.g. what words the writer chooses to use in certain text and in certain situations. In other words, the writer chooses the way language is used in order to communicate with readers.

Cuddon (1991) also defines the term style as the characteristics manner of expression in prose or verse; how a particular writer says things .It means the writers' use of words, sentence patterns, points of view, illusion and other linguistic devices. Berhanu (2009,p. 38) demonstrates that "style refers to the process of selection and combination involved in writing a fictional work. That means, it denotes 10 the writer's choice of words (diction) and the way such choices are arranged in sentences and longer units of discourse". Furthermore, Coyle & et.al (1993, p. 1084) points outs that style is the way a particular literary text studies and analyzed depending on language devices. It is the examination of linguistic literary text.

## 2. Stylistics

Short (1996,p. 1), defines stylistics as the relationship between the literary text and language. Stylistics combines both literature and linguistics together. But stylistics can also mean either linguistics or literary criticism. Stylistics could be seen and better defined as the linguistic analysis of any literary text, explaining the relation between language and artistic function. The writer who uses certain style in one text is not necessarily using the same style in his/ her other literary text. In other words, each literary text may have its certain linguistic features and choices which help readers to better analyze and understand the text. It does not mean style is a mere ornament but it conveys significant particulars of meaning and evolution, which tell more about the writer; his/her essential attitudes, his/her presuppositions, and the writer's relation to his readers.

## 3-Morrison's *Beloved*

Tony Morrison was born in 1931 in the town of Lorraine, Ohio, in the United States, and her family immigrated to it from the south, where her father was working in agriculture after the family had lost life there. Her father firmly believed that it was impossible to coexist between whites and blacks in harmony and harmony, and this belief was of course born from many generations of coexistence between whites and blacks.

Due to her linguistic competence, literary skill, and steel desire to communicate the voice of blacks to American and international society, Tony Morrison was able to raise the world's attention to this marginalized group in American society. Blacks depicted a lot of realism, depth and sympathy. The whites took everything that they had and all that they dreamed of. Since Morrison published her first book entitled (*The Bluest Eye*) 1970 and she has been trying persistently to illuminate neglected stages of American history. America, from which Morrison writes, is a country that enslaves others, thus excluding itself. The Blacks in all Morrison's novels are certain that death may be better than their future. Morrison's *Beloved* is a novel that has been translated into several languages, including Arabic, French, Spanish, German and Italian. She addressed the issue of slavery in the nineteenth century through the character Margaret Garner who killed her daughter from her flesh and blood in order to save her from slavery. This novel caused an uproar and controversy at first because of its failure to win the National Book Award and the National Critics Award, so a number of writers protested this, crowning the Pulitzer Prize for fiction and the American Book Award.

***Beloved*** is a critical story about slavery and racism during the nineteenth century, and immediately after the publication of the novel, many school boards and writers in the United States objected to the violence and sexual references offered by the book.

## Discussion

Not only language is a means of communication but also it is also a tool which combines what is real and what is .In Morrison's ***Beloved*** language links the past

with the present to defy powerlessness and find identity. Language of the black people is different from that of the white people. The language of the black people is characterized by puns, double meanings, taunts that are particular to the Black race as a defense mechanism. Foucault emphasizes that language may be "raw and primitive, as a simple, material form of writing". He adds that it could be "commentary" above the text, or what is hidden beneath the text (2002, p.47). In ***Beloved*** the repetitions, puns and illusion are, according to Barry, "the mechanisms which make manifest the content of the unconscious" (2017, p.114).

Morrison effectively depicts the devastated lives of Sethe, her family, other slaves in the neighborhood, and the black community through a distinctive style. Morrison uses fragmentations. She tells the story of her protagonist Sethe through past and present passages which she combines in different ways. The readers juxtapose these different passages to form the complete picture. Sethe is one of those who escaped from racism in the South of America, and after 28 days a group of men attended to bring her and her children back under the "Slavery Act". The owners had the right to track fugitives out of the country's borders, which prompted Sethe to prefer to slaughter her two-year-old girl rather than allow them to take her back to Sweet Home (slave farms) she fled from. Years later, the ghost of her daughter, who was called "Beloved," chased the conscience of "Sethe" at her home on Blueston in Cincinnati - Ohio.

She faced all kinds of torture because she was slave; therefore, she decides to save her sons from the troubles she went through by freeing them from slavery. Since death is the only thing that gives freedom to her sons therefore she kills her daughter to protect her from slavery. All the characters refuse her as a killer. They can't understand that it is the love of her child that motivates her to commit the murder. She does not want her daughter to suffer as she had suffered. This killed baby girl, who is "already crawling", gives freedom to the family. This baby motivates Sethe to run away from the slave owner: "[Sethe] couldn't let her nor any of them live under the schoolteacher. That was out." (Morrison, 2004, p. 192) Sethe does not want her children to be treated like animals like other slaves were under the white man's control. Sethe escapes physically from her house to be free but this physical escape does not make her mentally free because her past chases her and she faces the horror of her actions wherever she goes. She believes that "freeing [herself] was one thing; claiming ownership of that freed self was another" (Morrison, 2004, p. 95).

After killing her daughter the ghost of her daughter haunts her, which makes her life even more miserable. She comments: "Anything dead coming back to life hurts" (Morrison, 2004, p.35). But the idea that suffering gives her freedom creeps into her mind: "Good for you. More it hurt more better it is. Can't nothing heal without pain, you know" (Morrison, 2004, p.78). She suffers lonely. She is isolated even when she is in her house. Sethe says about her house: "It wasn't sweet and it sure wasn't home ... But it's where we were ... All together. Comes back whether we want it or not" (Morrison, 2004, p.14). The house Sethe lives in is treated like a character, it has a name and identity. Lacan states that describing the house with these qualities is condensation, where several things might be compressed into one symbol (Barry, 2017, p.114) Rushdy, on the other hand argues that giving the house a name Sethe is linking the unconscious with

reality and she is claiming autonomy in the face of slavery" by giving names to those anonymous people called slaves"(Rushdy, 1992, p. 569)  
face of slavery,

Sethe uses language as identity maker:"She believed that must be why she remembered so little before Sweet Home except singing and dancing and how crowded it was. What Nan told her she had forgotten, along with the language she told it in. the same language ma'am spoke, and which would never come back. But the message – that was and had been there all along." (Morrison, 2004, p.74) She even feels as a strange in her own house with her mother, who is not a fit company for her. She has served her time in prison; and she thinks people will forgive her but things do not happen as she expected because her community still look at her as a murderer. She is still expelled and everybody turns their backs on her after 18 years in prison. Even her children refuse to forgive her. Sethe continually lives with her recollections and "feels bad" (Morrison, 2004, p.8). Sethe is relieved when: "[Sethe] even looked straight at the shed [where the daughter was killed], smiling, smiling at the things she would not have to remember now. Thinking, she ain't even mad with me. Not a bit." (Morrison, 2004, p.214) Morrison's prose gives the readers the opportunity to interpret the text trying to find the significant images that Morrison intends to create.

In an episode when Morrison refers to Sethe's stolen milk she intentionally enhances the connection between the mother and her daughter through nursing stressing what could happen when this connection is broken. Sethe 's connection with her children is shown when she runs away from her house to be live together with her children. This union is strengthened by nursing: "She enclosed her left nipple with the two fingers of her right hand and the child opened her mouth. They hit home together" (Morrison, 2004, p.87). Sethe was deprived of her mother's milk when she sucked from another woman whose job was nursing children. (Morrison, 2004, p.57).

The baby's death is the sacrifice that gives Sethe and the rest of her family their liberation. The slave owner is afraid that seethe runs crazy; therefore, he does not want any of them in his house. On a figurative level the interpretation could be that she is sacrificed to save her people. Generally, the language of Morrison is simple not figurative. Morrison's simple words and sentences are easily understood. Morrison's dialogues and monologues are very descriptive and with plain words that could create a vivid image in the readers' mind.

Morrison uses a stream of consciousness which is a useful technique in capturing the messed up thoughts of the protagonist. When Sethe thinks of her baby her thoughts are muddled and she begin to behave strangely. Everything is messed up. In part two, when Sethe is the narrator, the readers follow Sethe 's thoughts while she moves from her memory of killing her baby, to the reason she gets mad when her milk is stolen, to her frantic desire that her daughter will understand why she killed her.

Stream of consciousness is obvious in the following paragraph when Morrison uses passages without punctuation. Readers are able to fully comprehend' what Sethe is thinking about. This is why this technique is an effective device the writer

uses to reflect her protagonist's ideas and thoughts. Sethe thinks that people would forget Beloved with the passage of time: "They forgot her like a bad dream... those that saw her on the porch deliberately forgot her... It took longer for those who had ... fallen in love with her... in the end, they forgot her too."(Morrison, 2004, p 274) Beloved, she thinks, is but a bad dream and soon she will be forgotten.

Morrison's point of view is also analyzed. The narrator in the first part of the novel seems to be someone who is not part of the action. Morrison effectively changes the narrator in certain chapters to help control how the reader feels and responds. Double-meaning is another linguistic device Morrison is using in her text. She says one word which signifies another thing.

Morrison's *Beloved* is not a story told in chronological order. There are passages told in the past and passages told in the present. Flashbacks are often used to refer to events that took place in the past life of Sethe. Sometimes readers do not realize that they are still reading the past life of Sethe. Past and present is strangely mixed. Morrison does not tell everything herself but she leaves some space for the readers to guess and connect episodes together to create an organized story. The juxtaposition of past with present serves to reinforce the idea that the past is alive in the present, and by giving us fragments to work with Morrison melds the entire story into one inseparable piece to be gazed at. In forcing the reader to put back the pieces, Morrison forces him also to think about them and consider the worth of each. From a stylistic perspective, Morrison's artistry in this regard is nothing short of breathtaking. Morrison used to play with words and phrases and fill in the blanks with different stories. She confronts the repressive language that confines knowledge, whether it is the mysterious and reckless media language, whether the malicious language represented by the absence of a law of ethics, or the language designed to disperse minorities and conceal its racist plundering within a literary payload that must be rejected, changed, and exposed. Morrison emphasized that language cannot die if a person deals with it with calmness and reason. Morrison believes that language can be brutal, which leads to human slavery but it also can lead to human liberation.

In Morrison's *Beloved* all the characters are alienated since they are aware of their racial identity which leads them to escape physically, thinking that they will escape reality. Sethe is alienated physically and emotionally; she is alienated from her husband, children, society and most of all from herself. Her husband left her when they escaped from Sweet Home and her daughter became physically away from her when she killed her to escape slavery and when her two sons became afraid, they left her and thus she became alienated from society. Moreover her daughter, Denver, found refuge in the boxwood bushes in hope of feeling safe and secure. She suffered because of her mother's decision and has always been alone. Children don't dare to be with her since their house is haunted by the spirit of Beloved. The parallelism is used mainly to show two equivalent sentence structures. The characters in *Beloved* smile when they feel sad, and they expect to die. Sethe says that if she had not killed her daughter, she would have died, and this is what she cannot tolerate. They live in the dark, because it is hard to live during the day under the supervision of whites.

Morrison's linking poetic language with stream of consciousness style is magnificent. Strict narrative, she realizes, is not enough to capture the feelings of a people, and she attempts to attract the reader's attention in some of the most well-known passages of modern literature.

Finally, Morrison's use of Biblical allusions and vague symbolism creates an atmosphere riddled with force and drama. *Beloved* is meant to be more than a story—it is a history, and it is a life. Morrison writes for blacks, and she does not have to apologize or feel limited, because she does not write about the whites. Although there are white personalities in her novels, but she does not play the role of a white critic when she begins writing.

### **Conclusion**

Morrison does not write to criticize racism but rather to change the language into a language that does not devalue and offend people. She wants to fill the void with the voice of black women, which is the boldest in terms of expressing herself and directing her writing, because she did not separate from her roots to satisfy the dominant powers, and did not give up her identity in search of another identity. In Morrison's *Beloved*, we discover that there are philosophical and humanitarian justifications for Sethe killing her daughter. Sethe had two options: either to kill her daughter or to accept that the girl lives in slavery. Such difficult choices are an essential component of great artistic narrative. Morrison's interest in such contemporary crises has made her novels, in addition to being a fine art, a social, psychological, and economic history of the problem of blacks and their alike who are victimized in America.

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