



POWER AND RESISTANCE IN TONI MORRISON'S *SULA* AND *PARADISE*: A FOUCAULDIAN STUDY

Rafia Sharminⁱ

Lecturer (Adjunct Faculty),
Department of English,
Chittagong Independent University,
Bangladesh

Abstract:

Michel Foucault's notions of power and resistance are evocative as one attempt to explain the hitherto unexplained meaning of women's subjugation and resistance as represented in the patriarchal society in Toni Morrison's *Sula* and *Paradise*. The patriarchal agents in these novels enforce white beauty standards, dictate women's roles and behaviors, emphasize marriage and motherhood, and use sexual exploitation to control women. Research has shown that both novels have received widespread critical attention, exploring themes including the politics of maternal violence, counter-memory, biopower, internal racism, and colonialism. However, a comparative study of *Sula* and *Paradise* through Foucault's concepts of disciplinary power and constant surveillance may reveal the subtle ways power operates in patriarchal societies, and by analyzing the female characters' resistance strategies, the study may uncover how women challenge and resist patriarchal norms. Employing the textual analysis method and Foucault's ideas of power and resistance, this research aims to determine how the women of Morrison's *Sula* and *Paradise* suffer oppression due to patriarchal disciplinary power and constant surveillance in their community, which ultimately triggers their resistance.

Keywords: Michel Foucault, power, resistance, Toni Morrison

1. Introduction

Toni Morrison, the first African-American woman to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature, blends socio-politico-economic concerns of contemporary society in her novels dealing with racism, gender discrimination, class exploitation, the role of the state, justice, democracy, freedom, power, and resistance (Beaulieu, 2003; Lister, 2009; Mbalia, 2004; Tally, 2007; Zamalin et al., 2020). All her novels, from *The Bluest Eye* to *God Help the Child*, are sagas of inhuman suffering. After graduating from Howard University with a degree in English literature in 1953, Morrison experienced frustration with the

ⁱ Correspondence: email rafia_sharmin@ciu.edu.bd, rafiasharmin.cu@gmail.com

curriculum, which predominantly focused on the works of white English and American writers and failed to represent the stories of black women (Kramer, 2013). She yearned to read stories that reflected the experiences of women of color who looked like her. In her own words, during an interview with Mavis Nicholson in 1988, she comments on her first novel, *The Bluest Eye*: "It was a book I wanted to read, and I could not find it anywhere. So, I began to write it" (ThamesTv, 2019, 0:10; Prestia, 2019, Interview with Mavis Nicholson, 1988, para. 2). Her novels depict the sufferings of black women, who are double marginalized as black and women in white patriarchal society, but Morrison presents them as winners and capable of resisting those oppressions. In another interview with Charlie Rose, she asserts that the characters of her novels "are always winners—even if they drop dead" (Intellect, 2019b, 14:49). However, intriguing the process of this marginalization may seem, it will be worthwhile to analyze a handful of her works in light of Foucault's theories to gain better insight.

Michel Foucault's notions of disciplinary power, the Panopticon, and constant surveillance provide thought-provoking perspectives to explain Morrison's *Sula* and *Paradise*. Through constant surveillance, disciplinary power produces submissive individuals to fulfill the desires of authority (Foucault, 1977). Power and resistance are interconnected, and the oppressive power system catalyzes resistance (Foucault, 1979/1998). The females in *Sula* and *Paradise* suffer extreme exploitation in their communities. Despite their bodies being docile and the target of disciplinary power, they resist this power to emancipate themselves from subjugation.

Some researchers examine *Sula* and *Paradise* from a Foucauldian viewpoint. From Foucault's biopolitical views, Santori (2012) examines *Sula* to explore the politics of maternal violence, biopower, and race. Applying Foucault's view of the body as the bearer of pleasure and desire, Ni (2015) studies the same novel to illustrate that Christianized folks in the Bottom interpret Sula's social dissidence and sexual emancipation as evil and treat her as a threat to the social order. Motalebzadeh and Ghassab (2014) also study it to illustrate the effects of color on the marginalization of different characters in the novel concerning Foucauldian theories of the Panopticon, resistance, and power. Guided by Foucault's view of power and using the New Historicism theory, Mirungu (2007) examines *Paradise* to analyze the power relations between Ruby and the convent. Hilfrich (2006) uses Foucault's power theory to explain counter-memory politics in *Paradise*. To explore internal colonialism in the same novel, She (2020) also applies the power theory of Foucault to argue that black people entrap themselves in internal racism and colonialism. Farshid and Sokhanvar (2010) suggest that examining Morrison's novels through Foucauldian ideas would be rewarding.

Although previous researchers examine *Sula* and *Paradise* separately using Foucault's ideas of the Panopticon, power, biopower, and resistance, no one has comparatively studied these novels using Foucault's views of power and resistance. This study comparatively examines these novels through a textual analysis method in light of Foucault's notions of disciplinary power and resistance to explore the sufferings of African-American women due to disciplinary power and constant surveillance in their patriarchal community that ultimately trigger their resistance.

2. Methodology

The textual analysis method is indispensable to social sciences, humanities, literary studies, and cultural criticism research (Belsey, 2013; Caulfield, 2019; Smith, 2017). This research method examines and interprets written, spoken, or visual texts to uncover deeper meanings by closely analyzing a text's content, language, structure, and context to gain insights and make interpretations about its message, social implications, or cultural significance. In Belsey's opinion, "*There is no such thing as 'pure' reading: interpretation always involves extra-textual knowledge*" (Belsey, 2013, p. 163). Following Belsey's viewpoint, this research aims to study *Sula* and *Paradise* comparatively by applying Foucault's ideas of power and resistance to highlight the complexities of power dynamics and the strategies employed by marginalized individuals to challenge and subvert these systems.

3. Power's Intended Target: The Body

Foucault's notion of disciplinary power differs from traditional power structures by emphasizing its presence throughout society, regardless of hierarchical positions, through surveillance as a control mechanism. According to Foucault, "*Discipline ... is a type of power, a modality for its exercise, comprising a whole set of instruments, techniques, procedures, levels of application, targets*" (Foucault, 1977, p. 215). Discipline requires a mechanism that acts through observation to induce the effects of power. Foucault employs Jeremy Bentham's concept of the Panopticon—an inmate detention facility with guards living in a central tower and maintaining constant surveillance over all inmates to regulate their behavior—to highlight the disciplinary power system. This permanent visibility is unverifiable, as one would never know whether anyone is watching. Thus, using the idea of the Panopticon, disciplinary power controls how people behave inside the social structure and creates docile bodies or political puppets.

Feminist literature often uses Foucault's idea of docile bodies or political puppets formed by disciplinary mechanisms to understand women's oppression and surveillance, emphasizing how different institutional contexts and the imposition of social norms can shape these bodies. Foucault explains that the docile body is "*something that can be made; out of a formless clay, an inapt body, the machine required can be constructed*" (Foucault, 1977, p. 135). The additional terms he uses to define this body suggest that it is unformed and eager to be shaped: it can be "*manipulated, shaped, and trained, which obeys, responds*" (Foucault, 1977, p. 136). He emphasizes a variety of institutions, including prisons, the military, schools, medical, and even family, as he discusses the contexts in which docile bodies are disciplined. Through disciplinary partitioning, or the binary classification of society's members as insane or sane, dangerous or harmless, and normal or abnormal, disciplinary power is implied over the insane, dangerous, and aberrant members of society through appropriate training to assure their docility.

Bartky (1988), Bordo (1989), and Deveaux (1994) argue that feminist literature adopts Foucault's docile bodies paradigm for disciplinary power, offered by the model

of the Panopticon, to parallel the change from overt displays of women's oppression to more subtle means of control through constant surveillance. They contend that femininity is a social construct of patriarchal power, and female bodies follow the codes of normalization, such as ideal body shape through dieting, beautification by cosmetics, and a range of gestures, postures, and movements dictated by patriarchal power. In contrast with dark-skinned women, the Hollywood movie screen and media promote the ideal beauty standard for women—white skin; long, stringy hair, preferably blond; keen nose; thin lips; and light eyes, preferably blue—to confirm their docility. Hence, dark-skinned women attempt to improve their appearance by mimicking the media's beauty standard but fail. As in *Sula*, Helene imitates a magazine model's outfit to make her look elegant. However, her attempt to look beautiful proves a complete failure before the white conductor, who subjugates and disciplines her through gaze and not by physical punishment (Motalebzadeh & Ghassab, 2014). Facing the white gaze, she seems like a prisoner in a Panopticon and "*wanted to make certain that no man ever looked at her that way*" (Morrison, 1973/2016, p. 22). This memory of the trip with Helene causes Nel to feel acute distress. She confronts this and, like *The Bluest Eye's* Pecola, internalizes the "*cloak of ugliness*" (Morrison, 1970/2019, p. 37) while pleading with Jesus to transform her into something magnificent, "*I want to be ... wonderful*" (Morrison, 1973/2016, p. 29). In essence, white gazes are a form of punishment for black people, especially for black women. White people's gaze furthers the docility of black people to the point where light-skinned blacks torment dark-skinned blacks to imitate whites. The nine families established a city named Haven in *Paradise* after being expelled from "Fairly, Oklahoma," a city for middle-class light-skinned blacks. Fairly's leaders abandon the nine families due to their awful dark skin color (Morrison, 1998/1999, p. 188). To fulfill their nefarious desires more subtly, the disciplinary power of white patriarchal society injects intra-racism and intra-classism between light-skinned and dark-skinned black people and between dark-skinned men and women.

Through the binary opposing characteristics of women as pure and fallen or good and evil, the patriarchal society in *Sula* and *Paradise* applies disciplinary power over women to normalize their condition according to their wishes. The patriarchs utilize Coventry Patmore's idea of the perfect woman. According to Patmore,

*"Man must be pleased; but him to please
Is woman's pleasure; down the gulf
Of his condoled necessities
She casts her best, she flings herself."* (Patmore, 1885, p. 73)

Patriarchal power normalizes the idea that the desire to win over men should be a woman's top priority. They must be the perfect wife, mother, sister, or daughter. Women unable to fulfill socially imposed duties end up being the scapegoats of patriarchal dominance, which stigmatizes them as witches, devils, or evil, as in *Sula* and *Paradise*. Morrison admits to Stepto during their talk that, in *Sula*, she predominantly concentrates on "*neighborhoods and communities*" (Morrison & Stepto, 1977, p. 474), which marks *Sula*

as a witch and Nel as a "*warm, conventional woman*" (Morrison & Stepto, 1977, p. 475). Though both Sula and Ajax disregard social conventions by remaining unmarried and practicing sexual anarchy, the community scapegoats Sula as she is a woman. In this regard, Ni (2015) emphasizes that Sula was labeled as a roach, bitch, pariah, or witch by her community for three reasons: first, for her rejection of the strict patriarchal society's gender norms for women; second, for rejecting the gendered stereotype that women should care for the elderly; third, due to her desire to emulate men. Women are deprived of their freedom by patriarchal society's normalization of the idea that marriage is a prerequisite. Violating the patriarchal society's norm for women, Sula prefers to enjoy her freedom by remaining a single woman. She says to Eva, "*I don't want to make somebody else. I want to make myself*" (Morrison, 1973/2016, p. 92).

Contrary to Sula, Eva believes that although men can float without women, no woman has the right to do the same willingly: "*Ain't no woman got no business floatin' around without no man,*" and she marks Sula as selfish for her behavior (Morrison, 1973/2016, p. 92). By sending Eva to a mental asylum and later to Sunnydale Nursing Center during her critical condition, Sula continues to break the gender stereotype that women should care for the elders. Being a colored woman, she cannot lead an undisciplined life, as Nel explains to her: "*You can't do it all. You a woman and a colored woman at that. You can't act like a man*" (Morrison, 1973/2016, p. 142). The remarks made by Eva and Nel serve as a form of disciplinary power for Sula. Eva, Nel, and other women are preoccupied with the patriarchal idea of discipline and the superiority of men to the extent that they are to blame for their submissive and docile status in society.

Similar to Eva, Nel, and other women of *Sula*, in *Paradise*, the comments of the journalist June discipline Mavis, whom she (June) accuses of negligence for the accidental deaths of her (Mavis's) twin infants, Merle and Pearl. The demises of the two infants create such sensations that local journalists take her interviews as though it is a murder, not an accident. They undermine the mother by blaming her for the accident, "*You know. Something to warn them, caution them, about negligence ... So, some good can come out of this awful tragedy*" (Morrison, 1998/1999, p. 22). Unable to bear psychological harassment from her abusive husband, newspaper journalists, plotting children, and an intolerant mother, Mavis runs away from her home to the Convent. She and her husband continue their sexual relationship even though she has no love for him, who uses her as a sex toy to satisfy his desires. Morrison highlights how Frank Albright (Mavis's husband) disrespects her, "*When he pulled her nightgown up, he threw it over her face, and she let that mercy be*" (Morrison, 1998/1999, p. 26). She thinks her daughter Sal endeavors to kill her at her husband's command. However, her mother disregards her. Instead of saving Mavis from her abusive husband, her mother informs him to take her away with him. The patriarchal society's overarching disciplinary power reinforces the docility of Mavis's mother, for which she is unwilling to accept her daughter's statements because the patriarchal society can afford a single man but not a single woman, a widow, or a divorced woman. She is a burden to society, even her parents.

Unlike Mavis, Helene in *Sula* is the epitome of the perfect woman as she follows white patriarchal society's normalizing codes for women, for which people in her

community call her Helen Wright (Right) by refusing to call her Helene. The meaning of the word Helen is "*shining light*" (Milbrand, 2018, para. 1). Having a Creole mother, she is born a mulatto Catholic. She accepts the white's beauty standard and feels pride in her light skin color. Black people in her community respect her. However, she is worried by Nel's complexion because the child did not inherit her beautiful beauty, which was that her skin had dusk in it. She takes good care of her home and likes to manipulate her husband and children. Like Helene—Dovey, and Soane—in *Paradise* think about satisfying their husbands by cooking or pleasing them in bed. Sweetie Fleetwood also devotes all of her attention, effort, and love to her disabled children forgetting about herself. Dovey shares her frustration with Soane by saying, "*He compliments my cooking, then suggests how to improve it next time*" (Morrison, 1998/1999, p. 82). Soane, however, never frets about the same issue since she knows that if her husband is happy in bed, the table will not mean a thing. Fulfilling the patriarchal society's normative rules and becoming the epitome of ideal women, the only purpose in Helene, Dovey, and Soane's life is to make a "*sweet, sweet Home*" (Singer, 2016, 1:12).

People practicing sexual anarchy, male or female, create havoc in society. Therefore, both must get punishment for this. However, the patriarchal society arranges punishment only for females, as in *Sula* and *Paradise*, to ensure women's docility. Sula's mother, Hannah, does not follow patriarchal society's surveillance mechanism for sex and practices free sex with her friends, neighbors, and tenants' husbands. Ironically, Hannah receives unwavering support from males as their sexual patronage and never gets punishment from them (Ni, 2015). They even stand up for her and shield her from their wives' critical remarks. The women despise Hannah, though they never single out their spouses as disloyal. They find it simpler to blame Hannah than their husbands, who bear most blame. In this way, they become ideal women demonizing Hannah as "*a nasty woman*" (Morrison, 1973/2016, p. 44).

However, Sula's fate differs from that of her mother, Hannah. As a child, Sula never gets parental surveillance from Hannah and mimics males: she earns money, refuses to marry, and has free sex with black and white males. She breaks the normalization codes for blacks by having sex with not only black males but also white males, which differentiates her from her mother. The black people of the Bottom consider any sexual relationship between a white man and a black woman rape; thus, the idea of a black woman being consensual is unacceptable. Sula's behavior shocks them as she breaks their codes. The patriarchs who support Hannah despise Sula for breaking their norms by sleeping with white men, "*They were the ones who said she was guilty of the unforgivable thing—the thing for which there was no understanding, no excuse, no compassion*" (Morrison, 1973/2016, p. 112). Being the patriarchs, they decide whom they support and whom they do not. Similar to the patriarchs of *Sula*, in *Paradise*, Elder Morgan decides whether or not to support a whore while two white men shout over her. At first, he feels a connection with the shouting men. However, the situation changes abruptly from sexism to racism as one of the white males punches the black woman in the face. Elder, unable to bear the oppression, resists it by hitting the white man. Elder's defense of a whore leaves Steward unsatisfied, despite his fascination with the event, "*Steward liked*

that story, but it unnerved him to know it was based on the defense of and prayers for a whore" (Morrison, 1998/1999, p. 95).

Rape is another tactic used by patriarchs in *Paradise* as a means of control over the freedom, mobility, and aspirations of all women. Males experience the ultimate test of their masculinity and superiority over women through this violent act of rape, which perpetuates male dominance over women through force (Brownmiller, 1975). In the patriarchal society, no one stands up for the rape victims and punishes the offender. There are several rape cases in *Paradise*. Arnette Fleetwood reveals her sexual molestation and seeks assistance from the Convent women. Instead of seeking help from her family members, she seeks support from the Convent women because she knows her family members will treat her disgracefully for this. Similarly, Pallas Truelove escapes gang rape by a group of men. Taking shelter in the Convent, she recalls a group of men screaming out, "*Here, pussy. Here, pussy. Kitty, kitty, kitty*" (Morrison, 1998/1999, p. 163) as they searched for her in a pond where she was submerged. Likewise, Mavis escapes marital rape from her abusive husband, who objectifies her as "*a life-size Raggedy Ann*" (Morrison, 1998/1999, p. 26) to satisfy his sexual desire. Consolata's situation is also typical of that of many young females. She was presumably left behind in the street garbage after a sexual assault at age eleven. The Convent serves as a haven for all these rape victims, for whom Ruby's men assail it.

According to Foucault, the universal punishments of the law only punish specific, predetermined, and consistently the same individuals to discipline the criminals through disciplinary power, "*the codified power to punish turns into a disciplinary power to observe; at the point where the universal punishments of the law are applied selectively to certain individuals and always the same ones*" (Foucault, 1977, p. 224). Hence through disciplinary categorization of Sula as a dangerous bitch, everyone in the society blames her for all the misdoings in their community—the plague of robins that announces Sula's return, Teapot's fracture, and Mr. Finley's death—though she has no connection with these matters. They mark Sula's passing as a fortunate event since they hold her accountable for their miseries. However, it has been noticed that Morrison, conversely, portrays Sula's return positively, showing how the women of Bottom take on a protective and caring attitude toward their family members following her return, in contrast to how they dealt with the tunnel catastrophe after her death. Like Sula, the inhabitants of Ruby perceive the world through a lens of binary oppositions, distinguishing between good and bad concepts. They distinguish between the good young girls, such as Arnette, and those deemed bad, such as Billie Delia. Additionally, a divide exists between the town of Ruby and the Convent, with blame often placed upon the Convent women for any perceived wrongdoing. For example, a mother's knockdown the stairs by her cold-eyed daughter, the birth of four damaged infants, the daughters' refusal to get out of bed, the brides disappearing on their honeymoons, two brothers shooting out of each other, and so on. Ruby's men murder the Convent women to remove the evils of their society and never get any punishment for doing so, as they are the decision-makers. Thus, females in *Sula* and *Paradise* experience disciplinary power firsthand, which ignites their resistance.

4. Resistance to Disciplinary Power

According to Foucault, power and resistance are intertwined as he states, "*Where there is power, there is resistance*" (Foucault, 1979/1998, p. 95). Furthermore, he argues that an absence of resistance indicates a lack of genuine power relations (Mills, 2005). This notion of resistance resonates with the experiences of Nel and Sula in *Sula* and the Convent women in *Paradise*. Despite their struggles to attain true liberation from oppression, they demonstrate resistance against the disciplinary power imposed upon them.

During her journey to the South, Nel experiences severe humiliation from the white conductor due to her dark skin color. Nevertheless, instead of conforming to the white beauty standard, she chooses to reject it and embrace her true self, as she proclaims, "*I'm me. I'm not their daughter. I'm not Nel. I'm me. Me*" (Morrison, 1973/2016, p. 28). Though she resists white beauty standards, she struggles to fully break free from gender stereotypes imposed on women, which Sula does.

In contrast to everyone else in her community, Sula values her mind above all and disregards disciplinary power to live her life. According to Asmarani (2014), Sula prefers to live in solitary to keep her existential freedom. She does not, however, totally succeed in creating a coherent self; instead, the self of Sula is "*a torn, split one*" (Farshid, 2013, p. 16). Nel and Ajax serve as the other pieces of her fragmented self, and Sula clings to them for support and love while none of them return the love she desires. Following Eva's example of mutilation of her leg as a means of resisting oppression, Sula cuts off the top of her finger to oppose the harassment from four white boys against her and Nel, which is an "*explicit gesture of rebellion*" (Al-Saidi & Alqarni, 2019, p. 1219). She also threatens the boys by saying, "*If I can do that to myself, what you suppose I'll do to you?*" (Morrison, 1973/2016, p. 55). Sula defends Nel from bullies but understands that she never receives Nel's gratitude for her efforts; on the contrary, she receives disgust. According to Lorio (2016), Nel's lack of respect for Sula's work causes her to proclaim independence. In her argument with Nel, she wonders why, if a man of race can enjoy his sexual freedom, a woman of color cannot. She highlights that every male of the Bottom left their children and wife lonely to enjoy liberty. Opposingly, all the colored women in her country are "*dying like a stamp*" (Morrison, 1973/2016, p. 143), following patriarchal prejudices. Disregarding social conventions, Sula wants to get a broader knowledge about herself at the cost of being marked as a pariah by patriarchal notions. She defies patriarchal ideals despite the hatred and rejection she receives from society, standing alone for "*self-determination*" (Lister, 2009, p. 31).

The Convent women in *Paradise*, comparable to Sula, fiercely oppose patriarchal disciplinary authority. According to Ikard (2010), Morrison in *Paradise* highlights the sociopolitical origins of black patriarchal thinking, which come from white patriarchal ideologies. Following the white patriarchal ideologies, black males subjugate women of similar races to establish their manhood. Though maximum women in Ruby fear any attempt from them to resist patriarchal subjugation, in line with Torabi and Ghasemi (2015), it is apparent that the Convent women do not hesitate to adopt new ideas against such discursive formations to establish a utopia. They designate a separate road inside

the Convent that is exclusively for women, "*it was women who walked this road. Only women. Never men*" (Morrison, 1998/1999, p. 270). As for another instance, Mavis, Gigi, and Seneca attend K.D. and Arnette's wedding wearing provocative dresses of their choice, "*looking like go-go girls: pink shorts, skimpy tops, see-through skirts; painted eyes, no lipstick; obviously no underwear, no stockings*" (Morrison, 1998/1999, p. 156). Moreover, Consolata's ability to handle everything—perfectly making the barbecue sauce, arguing with the chickens, and taking care of the garden—reflects the idea of an empowered woman capable of anything, starkly contrasting conventional notions of what women should do.

5. Applying the Panopticon for Orderliness against Oppressive Power Relation

Foucault, in his discussion about the concept of the Panopticon, underlines that the primary goal of the Panopticon is to improve public morality through discipline. Utilizing this concept, people can enhance orderliness and productivity, expand the economy and promote education in society (Foucault, 1977). People can choose whether to use this idea for positive or negative purposes. Unlike Ruby's patriarchs in *Paradise*, Consolata utilizes the concept of the Panopticon to instruct the Convent women to lead a self-dependent free life beneficial for their mental and physical health. According to Torabi and Ghasemi (2015), the Convent women begin to find a purpose in life, hearing Consolata's utterance, "*I call myself Consolata Sosa. If you want to be here you do what I say. Eat how I say. Sleep when I say. And I will teach you what you are hungry for*" (Morrison, 1998/1999, p. 262). Consolata possesses power over the Convent women, although this power is not hierarchical since it is solely related to caregiving (Michael, 2002). She serves the role of gazer for the Convent women who seek her assistance, disciplining them so they might live better lives.

6. Conclusion

Based on the discussion above, it is evident that the patriarchal communities—Bottom and Ruby in *Sula* and *Paradise*, respectively—follow the white's conventional ideology in governing their society, where women are the second sex, the marginalized class, and are obliged to follow patriarchal authority. As Sula and the convent women violate their morals, they label them as evil or witches and punish them in a way that leads the general population to believe they (men) are religious and have "*God at their side*" (Morrison, 1999, p. 18). Although these women end their lives at the hands of the oppressors, they resist such persecution to the best of their ability. During an interview with Charlie Rose about the novel *Paradise*, Morrison claims that some of the incidents in this book emphasize things she experienced in Brazil—men violently attacked some women in a Cathedral, none of whom were black, but taught black girls to become nuns in it. Here she attempts to interrogate the idea of "*how could they do it, how could they do that, how could they put their finger on the trigger and then pull it*" (Intellect, 2019a, 0:53). The men punished the women for defying the standards because they were unable to accept any new ideas that ran counter to their preconceived notions. According to Morrison, such events occurred in

Brazil as well as in other parts of the world. It is possible to interpret her writings as resistance to such repression.

Acknowledgements

The author extends profound gratitude to the following individuals for their invaluable guidance in preparing this research article: Professor Quazi Mostain Billah from the Department of English, University of Chittagong; Dr. M.M. Shariful Karim from the Department of English, Comilla University; Dr. Shah Ahmed, Associate Professor and Dean from the Department of English, Chittagong Independent University; Md. Abdur Rashid, Associate Professor and Head from the Department of English, Bangladesh Army International University of Science and Technology; and Md. Azim Uddin, Assistant Professor from the Department of English, BGC Trust University Bangladesh.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

About the Author

Rafia Sharmin is a Lecturer (Adjunct faculty) at the Department of English, Chittagong Independent University, Bangladesh, and an M.Phil. Fellow in English (literature) at the National University, Bangladesh. Previously she worked as a Lecturer at the Department of English Language and Literature, University of Science and Technology Chittagong, Bangladesh. She has over four years of university-level teaching experience and cherishes a keen interest in literary analysis, explicitly exploring power dynamics, feminism, and resistance in works by renowned authors.

References

- Al-Saidi, A. A. H., & Alqarni, S. M. (2019). The Rebellious, Untamed Mare: Morrison's Heroine Sula. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 10(6), 1217–1224. <https://doi.org/10.17507/jltr.1006.09>
- Asmarani, R. (2014). Sula's Existential Freedom in Toni Morrison's Novel Entitled *Sula*. *ATAVISM*, 17(1), 121-133. <https://doi.org/10.24257/atavisme.v17i1.24.121-133>
- Bartky, S. L. (1988). Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power. In I. Diamond & L. Quinby (Eds.), *Feminism and Foucault: Reflections on Resistance* (pp. 61–86). Northeastern University Press.
- Beaulieu, E. A. (2003). *The Toni Morrison Encyclopedia*. Greenwood Press.
- Belsey, C. (2013). Textual Analysis as Research Method. In G. Griffin (Ed.), *Research Methods for English Studies* (pp. 160–178). Edinburgh University Press.
- Bordo, S. R. (1989). The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity: A Feminist Appropriation of Foucault. In A. M. Jaggar & S. R. Bordo (Eds.), *Gender/Body/Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing* (pp. 13–33). Rutgers University Press.

- Brownmiller, S. (1975). *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape*. Simon and Schuster.
- Caulfield, J. (2019, November 8). *A Quick Guide to Textual Analysis | 3 Common Approaches*. Scribbr. <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/textual-analysis/>
- Deveaux, M. (1994). Feminism and Empowerment: A Critical Reading of Foucault. *Feminist Studies*, 20(2), 223–247. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3178151>
- Farshid, S. (2013). Refutation of the Enlightenment Concept of "Self" in Toni Morrison's "Sula." *The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Cultural Studies*, 7(1), 13–20. <https://doi.org/10.18848/2327-008x/cgp/v07i01/53201>
- Farshid, S., & Sokhanvar, J. (2010). A Foucauldian Reading of Morrison's Novels. *International Journal of Arts and Sciences*, 3(10), 295–311.
- Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Vintage Books.
- Foucault, M. (1998). *The History of Sexuality* (Vol. 1). Penguin Books. (Original work published 1979)
- Hilfrich, C. (2006). Anti-Exodus: Counteremory, Gender, Race, and Everyday Life in Toni Morrison's *Paradise*. *MFS Modern Fiction Studies*, 52(2), 321–349. <https://doi.org/10.1353/mfs.2006.0047>
- Ikard, D. (2010). "Killing the White Girl First": Understanding the Politics of Black Manhood in Toni Morrison's *Paradise*. In S. O. Iyasere & M. W. Iyasere (Eds.), *Critical Insights Toni Morrison* (pp. 257–281). Salem Press.
- Intellect, M. (2019a, August 9). *Toni Morrison Interview on "The Bluest Eye" and "Paradise" (1998)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/eSLbTtMiEzY>
- Intellect, M. (2019b, August 20). *Toni Morrison Interview on "Love" (2003)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cYV2RGI3RHQ&t=910s>
- Kramer, B. (2013). *Toni Morrison: A Biography of a Nobel Prize-Winning Writer*. Enslow Publishers.
- Lister, R. (2009). *Reading Toni Morrison*. Greenwood Press.
- Lorio, C. (2016). We Was Girls Together. *Ellipsis: A Journal of Art, Ideas, and Literature*, 43(Article 2). <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.46428/ejail.43.02>
- Mbalia, D. D. (2004). *Toni Morrison's Developing Class Consciousness*. Susquehanna University Press; Cranbury, Nj.
- Michael, M. C. (2002). Re-Imagining Agency: Toni Morrison's "Paradise." *African American Review*, 36(4), 643. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1512423>
- Milbrand, L. (2018, August 22). *Helen. She Knows*. <https://www.sheknows.com/baby-names/name/helen/>
- Mills, S. (2005). *Michel Foucault*. Routledge.
- Mirungu, F. H. K. (2007). *A Literary Study of Power Relations between Ruby and the Convent in Toni Morrison's Novel, Paradise* [Master's Thesis].
- Morrison, T. (1999). *Paradise*. Vintage. (Original work published 1998)
- Morrison, T. (2016). *Sula*. Vintage. (Original work published 1973)
- Morrison, T. (2019). *The Bluest Eye*. Vintage. (Original work published 1970)
- Morrison, T., & Stepto, R. (1977). "Intimate Things in Place": A Conversation with Toni Morrison. *The Massachusetts Review*, 18(3), 473–489. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25088764>

- Motalebzadeh, N., & Ghassab, A. H. (2014). Power of Color in Toni Morrison's *Sula* A Foucauldian Perspective. *The Iranian EFL Journal*, 10(3), 345.
- Ni, P. (2015). Body as Danger: Gender, Race and Body in Toni Morrison's *Sula*. *Ilha Do Desterro a Journal of English Language, Literatures in English and Cultural Studies*, 68(2), 115. <https://doi.org/10.5007/2175-8026.2015v68n2p115>
- Patmore, C. (1885). *The Angel in the House* (6th ed.). George Bell and Son.
- Prestia, L. (2019, August 17). *The Interviews of Toni Morrison: Beyond the Written Word*. Study Breaks. <https://studybreaks.com/culture/reads/toni-morrison-interviews-death-author/>
- Santori, G. (2012). *Sula* and the Sociologist: Toni Morrison on American Biopower after Civil Rights. *Theory & Event*, 15(1). <https://doi.org/10.1353/tae.2012.0002>
- She, J. (2020). A Power Field: Internal Colonialism in Toni Morrison's *Paradise*. *Academic Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences*, 3(10), 119. <https://doi.org/10.25236/AJHSS.2020.031015>
- Singer, S. M. (2016, November 23). *Home Sweet Home (1823)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OqjifF1Wn-s&feature=youtu.be>
- Smith, J. A. (2017). Textual Analysis. In *The International Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods* (pp. 1–7). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Tally, J. (2007). *The Cambridge Companion to Toni Morrison*. Cambridge University Press.
- ThamesTv. (2019, August 6). *Toni Morrison interview | American Author | Award-winning | Mavis on Four | 1988* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UAqB1SgVaC4>
- Torabi, Z., & Ghasemi, P. (2015). Rebellious and Strong Black Women in *Paradise*. *International Letters of Social and Humanistic Sciences*, 53, 122–132. <https://doi.org/10.18052/www.scipress.com/ilshs.53.122>
- Zamalin, A., Winters, J. R., Olson, A., & Njoya, W. (2020). Toni Morrison and Political Theory. *Contemporary Political Theory*, 19(4), 704–729. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41296-020-00397-2>

Creative Commons licensing terms

Author(s) will retain the copyright of their published articles agreeing that a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0) terms will be applied to their work. Under the terms of this license, no permission is required from the author(s) or publisher for members of the community to copy, distribute, transmit or adapt the article content, providing a proper, prominent and unambiguous attribution to the authors in a manner that makes clear that the materials are being reused under permission of a Creative Commons License. Views, opinions and conclusions expressed in this research article are views, opinions and conclusions of the author(s). Open Access Publishing Group and European Journal of Education Studies shall not be responsible or answerable for any loss, damage or liability caused in relation to/arising out of conflicts of interest, copyright violations and inappropriate or inaccurate use of any kind content related or integrated into the research work. All the published works are meeting the Open Access Publishing requirements and can be freely accessed, shared, modified, distributed and used in educational, commercial and non-commercial purposes under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License \(CC BY 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).