

A Womanist Reading of Toni Morrison's Paradise and The Bluest Eye

LINDA JUMAI MUSTAPHA

Abstract

This paper studies Womanism in Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and *Paradise* from the view point of Alice Walker. The article examines major characters' ways of developing strong identities in the face of sexism and racism. In addition, it shows that black female characters who identify themselves as responsive individuals manage to cope with their problems and eventually survive oppression. In contrast, those who defy Walker's womanist ideals end up being disillusioned.

Introduction

Toni Morrison's novels discuss race, sex/sexuality, and gender identity as sources of uncertainty and struggle for both men and women in their communities. Morrison situates herself within the African American community and its tradition of resisting discrediting views of the dominant society rather than align herself with the Black feminist model of critical inquiry (64). Morrison's assertion implies that for an African American woman writer, it is more important to create literature for educating the African American community about the importance of a harmonious relationship between men and women. By including men and women in her works, she believes both sexes develop properly when they agree to work together for the benefit of their communities. In this paper, Morrison's denouncement of the stereotypical view of black women living without culture, identity and a standard of living is examined through the use of the womanist theory.

But what is Womanism all about? According to Phillips Layli, Womanism is a social change perspective rooted in Black women's (and other women of colour) everyday experiences and everyday methods of problemsolving

in everyday spaces, extended to the problem of ending all forms of oppression for all people, restoring the balance between people and the environment/nature, and reconciling human life with the spiritual dimension (xx). The theory was formulated after feminism failed to resolve the problems faced by Black women and other women of colour. Although the theory has been defined in various ways, the core of the theory, however, is that it is based on everyday experiences of marginalized black women and women of colour.

While Delores Williams associates the theory with traditions formed within the African-American community (xiv), Clenora Hudson-Weems explains her concept of womanism as focusing on the communal living of women (which is inclusive of men) rather than encouraging individualism. Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi denounces gender inequality as the source of black oppression and asserts that womanism is a means of resolving the question of how to equally share power among the races of the world and also the sexes (63).

Even though womanism is accepted as a theory that discusses the daily experiences of women and how best they can go about solving these problems, several forms of the womanist concepts have evolved. These forms are: Black feminism or Africana Womanism by Hudson-Weems, Motherism developed by Catherine Acholonu, and Stiwanism which was postulated by Ogundipe Leslie. But all these forms of the womanist theory discuss only one of the four tenets which Walker postulates in her theory. Therefore, this paper adopts Walker's theory of womanism to analyse how African-American women can equally share responsibilities without denouncing their cultural heritage.

Theoretical Framework

In the 1970's African American women and other black women "broke silence" by talking about the low representation of women in dominant discourses and as a result of this action, black and coloured women all over the world began to be involved in challenging the stereotypical view of women being totally dependent on men. The term "Womanism" was first used by Alice Walker in 1984 and it draws its tenets mostly from feminist theology and black theology but it is primarily based on the diverse experiences of black women. Experiences such as slavery, segregation during the first half of the twentieth century and recent and continuing struggles against racism, gender roles stereotyping and poverty are issues the womanist theory try to address.

Though Walker is the first to have coined the term womanism, there are other variants. One of these variant of the womanist theory is Africana Womanism by Hudson-Weems which she defines as:

...an ideology created and designed for all women of African descent. It is grounded in African culture, and therefore, it necessarily focuses on the unique experiences, struggles, needs, and desires of Africana women. . . . The primary goal of Africana women, then, is to create their own criteria for assessing their realities, both in thought and in action. (24, 54)

Hudson-Weems sees feminism as a theory totally incapable of solving black women's problems in a racist environment. She suggests that the implications of slavery and colour prejudices as well as gender biases cannot be solved through the feminist theory which according to her, addresses issues beneficial to white women. To Hudson-Weems therefore, African Womanism see race and class based oppression as more important issues to address than gender based oppression.

Another variant of the womanist theory is Motherism, an African alternative to the female model of motherhood. Catherine Obianuju Acholonu was the first to posit that women (and men) are first mothers by taking care of their communities, preserving relationships, not being arrogant individuals and particularly, women and men are to avoid the urge to be all knowing and selfrighteous. The Motherist, according to Acholonu, is the man or the woman who believes in the survival of the Mother Earth as a unit. Furthermore, she writes about Motherism:

The weapon of Motherism is love, tolerance, service and mutual cooperation of the sexesThe motherist writer... is not a sexist. The motherist male writer or artist does not create his work from a patriarchal, masculinist, dominatory perspective. He does not present himself arrogant, all knowing, self-righteous before his muse. (15)

Stiwanism is also a type of womanist theory propounded by Molara Ogundipe Leslie with the aim of trying to strike a balance between the sexes. An acronym meaning "Social Transformation Including Women", Stiwanism tries to understand the complexities of the transformation of the society influenced by women activities in the society. According to Ogundipe, women's identity cannot be understood properly within a "dichotomous" framework that neglects all the possible statuses women could acquire within a cultural context, apart from being

a wife in a marriage. Contrary to feminism, stiwanism discourages binary opposition and instead seeks actively, masculine collaboration as a means of social transformation (198).

Although the various types of the womanist ideologies stated above vary slightly from one another, it is apt to note that most womanist theorists agree that the goal of a womanist should be to promote the issues affecting not just black women, but black men and other groups that have been subjected to discrimination.

Alice Walker's Model of Womanism

Formulated in the 1970's in reaction to the marginalization of coloured women in the framework of feminist critical theory and politics, womanism takes into cognizance the experiences of black women, black culture, black myths, spiritual life and morality. Womanism is based on the desire to take up gender issues without turning against men which to a larger extent feminism does not address. To Walker, a womanist is:

A woman who loves other women, sexually and/or non-sexually. Appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility... and women's strength. Sometimes loves individual men, sexually and/or non-sexually. Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. Not a separatist, except periodically, for health... Loves herself. Regardless. (XI-XII)

The focus of the theory is not on gender inequality, but race and class based oppression. Delores Williams agrees with this when she says:

"...Womanism...stands against all oppression on the basis of race, gender, class, sexual preferences and physical abilities" (xiv).

Furthermore, Nikol G. Alexander-Floyd states that the womanist ideology according to Walker, insists on the survival of the black race through the complementary application of male and female roles (149). Heinrich Böll agrees with men and women existing in harmony as the embodiment of human survival. To him, the woman is at the centre of life: manager of the home, neighbourhood relations, family, love, meals and religion. The womanist, even a man, should profile himself as a humanist. Selfish interests must be put aside.

To Gonzagas and Orjinta, "... Womanism is holistic, and in this sense it stands for the liberation and welfare of women and the holistic liberation of the

whole of the African and coloured people on the African continent and in the Diaspora: woman, man and child” (83). From their definition of the term, Orjinta and Gonzagas then suggest the following as the basic tenets of the theory: The womanist ideal woman is the woman that knows who she is: the adult, mature, responsible, open-minded and child bearing mother. She is a honest and capable wife or partner. Womanism believes in dialogue. Problem solving should be a two way affair where both genders do not engage in discussions that are biased (93). This argument is also corroborated by Mary Kolawole when she states that dialogue is very important to the African woman and that the African belief system is strongly based on communal discussions rather than depend on individual ideology (36-37). She also goes on to say that solving problems arising from the past, the present and the future is strictly based on the collective accommodation of communal suggestions rather than accept ideas without proper validation. Orjinta and Gonzagas further declare that the Womanist ideology is deeply influenced by the characteristics of African cultural togetherness rather than individualism which is preached more by feminist ideologists (93). Women are the embodiment of their environment irrespective of their race. That is, Womanism desires the reconciliation of all people to their spirituality, relationships with each other as well as their relationship with nature. Women in this theory are categorised as wilful and capable not subservient and inferior.

In the light of the above, becoming a Womanist does not necessarily mean that one must become a woman. A Womanist should be a humanist, loving all races, all genders and all cultures. According to critics, Walker’s postulation of the Womanist Theory is a bold step towards ending sexism, the oppression of women and racism. As an ever evolving theory, according to Katie Geneva Cannon, Womanism is a theory that gives voice to the oppressed (men/women) thereby empowering them with humanistic tools to alter and transform their destinies(136) . Hence to the womanist, the need to be “a man” or “a woman” comes second to being a human who dialogues, co-operates with his/her peers and proffer solutions to societal conflicts without gender or racial prejudices.

This research sees Walker’s model of Womanism as a theory that meets the demand of the black woman irrespective of age and nationality. The twentyfirst century black woman is not confine to being mothers, wives and care givers, they are now more involve in communal responsibilities which redefines their identities. Feminism as a mother theory of Womanism, gives voice to the

woman as an individual but the woman cannot live in isolation especially the African woman or African-American woman as well as other women of colour. Therefore, this paper agrees with Walker's Womanist ideals and particularly sees an African woman's identity as an adjunct of her African cultural heritage of communal love.

Literature Review of Toni Morrison's Novels

According to Vida de Voss, "Morrison's work has been an ongoing commitment to redefine (African American) personhood with the intention of ultimately producing a new consciousness regarding race." (1) To other critics, Morrison works do not advocate specific courses of action, but motivate people to take responsibility of their actions. For example David Ron (192) in his analysis of *Paradise*, argues that: "*Paradise* challenges us to re-evaluate how we view each other's humanity." (192) Again, Kohzadi, Hamedreza; Azizmohammadi, Fatemeh; Afrougheh, Shahram and Viangxiao Zhen all applied womanism to their analysis of Morrison's work and are of the view that "...the survival of black women in a white racist society greatly depends upon their emphasis on loving their own race, culture, and loving themselves..." (5)

According to Christina D'Imperio, Morrison novels are largely focused on "depicting the daily struggles of African-American women"(1-2) thus they emphasize that Morrison writings: "...conveys a conflict between inward and outward lives and the difficulty of maintaining individuality within a larger community." Raynor and Butler (175-183) go on to explain how Morrison aims to deconstruct the stereotypes of black female characters by portraying them as "comfortable with their bodies and sexuality". (175-183) An example of this is how the prostitutes in *The Bluest Eye*, despite being regarded among the lowest of the low in the community, are in the novel portrayed as confident and strong characters.

The duo of Anju and Sharma and Amanda Putnam all examine the theme of violence in Morrison's works and they believe that the "violence in her works are a direct manifestation of economic oppression" but this view of violence although an act of rebellion, however helps in redirecting powerlessness and transform the female characters in Morrison's novels to dominant independent entities. Also, Penal Mary (101) having analyzed *Paradise* via feminism, declares that "Morrison never intended the characters to represent black experience, white

experience or female experience, rather Morrison centralizes the experiences of each of the women characters and examines how women can proceed from a place of ruin, destruction, and death.” (101)

In conclusion, having discussed scholarly works on Morrison’s novels, this essay shows that the realization of the importance of women in the society is what has given rise to more literatures on women. Even though this work understudies Morrison among, we believe that her works feature many arguments on black women’s struggles to overcome racist and sexist stereotypical identities hence this research’s application of the womanist theory. The Concept of Togetherness in *Paradise* and *The Bluest Eye*

In *Paradise*, Ruby town has no crime and every bad behaviour among the young is firmly dealt with by the community. A tired house wife can go out at night without second thoughts because she knows that the streets are safe as a result of community watch: if a family’s crop is ruined or burned, the neighbours make up the loss by providing food for the family hence making sure that no one goes hungry (8). Even the responsibility of taking care of a child is a communal act that is a feature of African togetherness and every woman in Ruby town is obliged to do so: “And if a light shone from a house up a ways and the cry of a colicky baby caught her attention,...The two of them might take turns massaging the infant stomach, rocking, or trying to get a little soda down.” (9). This cultural togetherness however is disrupted when a set of women decide to live 17 miles away from Eight-Rock and totally separated from the men of Ruby town. They break the rules of Ruby town and instigate malicious suspicion from the men of Ruby town by refusing communal control. The men therefore could not accept the fact that: “They (the convent women) don’t need men and they don’t need God” (276). The fact that the convent women “chose themselves for company...” is seen as an affront to the protection and control offered by the male folk.

In *The Bluest Eye*, to put one’s family “outdoors” is considered inhuman. The culture of togetherness starts from a typical African American nuclear family. A father and his wife are expected to “save, scratched, and pile away what they could” (18) in-order to buy a befitting house for raising a family. But when a father is irresponsible, the rules of togetherness are not observed and a broken home is the result of not bringing up the children in the norms of the society:

Cholly Breedlove, then, a renting black, having put his family outdoors, had catapulted himself beyond the reaches of human consideration. He had joined the animals; indeed, an old dog, a snake, a ratty nigger. Mrs.

Breedlove was staying with the woman she worked for; the boy Sammy, was with some other family; and Pecola was to stay with us. Cholly was in jail. (18).

The womanist theory sees individualism as a concept mostly favoured by feminism and a phenomenon which discourages healthy growth of children, Layli Maparyan. Ideally, the African culture expects the father and mother to work together in providing for the family. While the father tries to meet the financial needs of the house as well as ensure that the children grow up observing the norms of the society, the mother cleans the home, cook, nurture the children and offers unconditional love to all while being acknowledged by her husband and other relatives. But in the Breedloves' home this order is broken. Cholly Breedlove refuses to do his fatherly duty by not attending to both the financial and psychological needs of the family. He is always drunk and sometimes so drunk that his wife and son beats him up: "Sammy, who had watched in silence...suddenly began to hit his father about the head with both fists...Mrs. Breedlove...ran tippy-toe to Cholly...and struck him two blows..." (44). Since Cholly would not meet all the needs of his family members, Mrs Breedlove "took on the full responsibility and recognition of breadwinner..." (126) without being appreciated for her efforts. Because she was not appreciated, Mrs. Breedlove taught her children fear which destroyed all hope of togetherness and unity in the family: "Into her son she beat a loud desire to run away, and into her daughter she beat a fear of growing up, fear of other people and fear of life" (128).

The African Culture of Dialogue in *The Bluest Eye* and *Paradise*

Kolawole (36) believes that dialogue is entrenched in the "African belief system". (36) So, to a womanist, when a man seeks dialogue over violence with his female counterpart, he is a true and virtuous African man. In Morrison's *Paradise*, Morgan reconciles himself with his past life of disappointing a woman by discussing his guilt with Reverend Misner. Raised with the conception that to be a man is to be firm and silent Deacon Morgan: "...never consulted with or taken into confidence any man. All of his intimate conversations had been wordless ones with his brother... He spoke to his wife in the opaque manner he thought appropriate." (301)

From the statement above, Morrison hints at dialogue being a means of bonding with both men and women in a society and with constant discussions of societal problems, the community's unity is strengthened. But Deacon has a change of heart and confesses his mistreatment of Consolata. The wrong Deacon commits, he compares to becoming; "... what the Old Fathers cursed: the kind of man who set himself up to judge, rout and even destroy the needy, the defenseless, the different" (302). From his statement, Deacon reveals Ruby's Black men as emotionally crippled figures and have lost the African culture of dialoguing with their women. Misner, therefore, summarises the violent actions of Ruby men as "lack of words [. . .] Lack of forgiveness. Lack of love" (303). These three "lacks" is then the ultimate cause of the failure of black patriarchy to effectively challenge the racist and sexist bias of a Western code of masculinity. To Morrison therefore, the acts of dialogue, forgiveness, and love are the keys for a satisfying nurturing of men, and by extension, the entire community.

In *The Bluest Eye*, The coloured boy, Louis Junior loved and enjoyed bullying girls rather than expressing his loneliness. To him, making girls (especially white girls) scream and run is very easy but trying to bond with the boys in the community is cumbersome "...Junior used to long to play with the black boys...He wanted to sit with them on curb stones and compare the sharpness of jack knives..."(87). In Junior's wish to be knit with his fellow men folk, we can infer that Morrison agrees with the Womanist concept of "Universal [list]" love of humans whether it is a man or a woman. For a man to develop properly in a society, there is the need for constant companionship/relationship with the opposite sex as well as same sex. Junior feels emasculated by his mother who lists and adheres to white racist tenets. Because he could not talk to his mother about being lonely from not playing with fellow black boys, he transfers his anger onto his mother's pet cat. He constantly bullies the cat and asserts his power over black ugly Pecola thus exerting his masculinity.

Furthermore, the Womanist concept of inclusion of black men/black boys in the lives of women to solve societal problems takes precedence in *The Bluest Eye*. When Frieda is sexually assaulted by Henry, Mr. and Mrs. Mac Teer are infuriated. Mr. Mac Teer hits Henry with the cycle and even shoots at him and Mrs. Mac Teer beats Henry with a broom (100). Because Frieda talks about the molestation to her mother, she is quickly saved from being raped by a pervert. The result of discussing the problem at hand is that both parents agree to deal violently

with Mr. Henry. Also, Claudia's father, a Vulcan loves his women greatly. Due to years of slavery and racism, Mr. Mac Teer is expected to be an irresponsible father like Cholly Breedlove - a behaviour accepted as normal in African American communities. But the man (Frieda's father) takes pride in providing for the family as well as protecting his women.

Womanist Identity in *The Bluest Eye* and *Paradise*

In *The Bluest Eye*, Black women are excluded from a universe of love and tenderness because the men in their lives refuse to help them develop strong, independent identities. Without love and encouragement from the dominant male figure in their lives, some of these women suffer identity crisis and some end up psychologically scarred for life. But Karen Baker Fletcher says: "the womanist in everyday life strove to maintain her identity as a communal asset and not an individualistic entity". (162) So, Pauline's loneliness is as a result of the rejection of the communal beauty of black women and she is subsumed by the images of white beautiful women in films. These images corrode her dignity as a black woman and at the same time shatters her contentment. The happiest time in Pauline's life is a psychological transformation to the beautiful Jean Harlow in the films she eagerly watches: "The onliest time I be happy seem like was when I was in the picture show...I fixed my hair up like I'd seen hers [Jean] on a magazine." (123) Pauline, like Pecola, is absorbed in trying to be who they can never be (that is to be like white women) but since they could not achieve this physical transformation, they end up being impaired psychologically, hence Pecola's madness.

Violence, oppression and depression most often occur in black families as a result of lack of identity but the black women who know themselves and appreciate their skin colour do not lose their African identities, instead they build themselves to reputable women and in the process they try to avoid violent confrontations. Such a woman/girl is Claudia who with the knowing of herself, overcomes oppression and depression with a personal resolve to love her Africanness irrespective of other people's negative views against her uniqueness. She therefore revolts against white ideals of motherhood and beauty and dismembers every white doll given to her:

I was physically revolted by [...] round moronic eyes, and pancake face, and orange worms hair...I had only one desire: to dismember it [...] to

discover the dearness, to find the beauty, the desirability that had escaped me,...all the world has agreed that a blue-eyed, yellow haired, pinkskinned doll was what every girl child treasured. (20)

Likewise, the three prostitutes (Marie, China and Poland) who live above

Breedlove's apartment do not hate themselves for being black and ugly. In *The Bluest Eye*, ugliness and beauty go beyond one's physical appearance. Ugliness is defined through one's race, socio-economic class, educational background and actions. For choosing to be prostitutes these women are at the bottom of the social status and also not having any educational background, they are ostracized and label "ugly bad women". But Marie, China and Poland show love to Pecola and treat her well while everyone else hates her: "With Pecola they were as free as they were with each other" (57). As prostitutes, these women (Maries, China and Poland) know the pains of rejection and because they accept who they are, they are able to confidently relate with Claudia, Frieda and Pecola.

Walker's concept of self-knowledge, helping one another, irrespective of gender, as well as abhorring all the tenets of racism is also a paramount issue in *Paradise*. The old fathers, knowing they are freed men survive the humiliation of being poor, black and even rejected by their own kind: "Turned away by rich Chocktaw and poor whites, chased by dogs, jeered at by camp prostitutes...they were nevertheless unprepared for the aggressive discouragement they received from Negro towns..." (13). Most importantly, the Old Fathers' true test of their identities and achievement is the fact that they never stopped fending for their women and families hence their wives and daughters never worked in a white man's kitchen; "a place where their women are raped". This self-knowledge directly instigates the non-acceptance of the white man's standard of beauty (which is stained by adultery). The people of Ruby town therefore decide to preserve their "...untampered (217)" blue-black skin colour. The discovery of self, makes the Old Fathers to fight for themselves and also for their women and children. But the zeal to protect the "needy" and "the defenceless" is not observed by later generations.

Culture and Religion in *The Bluest Eye* and *Paradise*

The Womanist, according to Walker appreciates herself, her culture, her womanly attitude and emotions. Phillips points out that the love of artistic expression, nature, people, life and spiritualist activities is paramount to the survival of

African women. This we see in *The Bluest Eye* when Pauline's refuses to leave her husband as advised by her white boss. To Pauline it is unethical in the African tradition to be estranged from her husband despite marital problems.

Pauline is undeterred to leave her drunk husband and accepts all his shortcomings: "...He ain't no good to me. But just the same, I think I'd best stay on." (121).

Even though she is frustrated by her inability to keep up to the white man's standard of beauty she realizes her over indulgence in the white man's conception of beauty. This realization makes her accept her natural African features "...I let my hair go back, plaited it up, and settled down to just being ugly." (123).

According to the white standard of beauty, being black and not having blonde straight hairs and blue eyes is considered ugly. Pecola's inability to achieve the desired standard of beauty consumes her whole being to such a state that she is psychological scarred for life. She ends up disoriented and eventually goes mad. To avoid over indulgence in the white man's standard of living, African American women should re-discover themselves, and this rediscovery can be in the form of engaging in spiritual or religious activities that take the mind from the self to helping others live and grow positively. This rediscovery of self, moves Pauline towards becoming a true African woman. She takes over the responsibility of the house, returns to her church, provides a more spacious accommodation, became more virtuous than the women around her and gratified herself in "simpler things". Her new found religion made her "...hoped God would help her keep the children from the sins of the father" (126).

Similarly in *Paradise*, Morrison also highlighted the importance of culture and religion as building blocks to sustaining the love of all humans irrespective of race, gender and class. In Ruby town, the culture of incestuous marriages is condoned. Marriages of close siblings are not frowned at and "taking over wives" from dead brothers is a culture which is forcefully entrenched in Ruby town. This collective, shameful and humiliating culture is called "Disallowing" and is explained thus: "Unadulterated 8-rock blood held its magic as long as it resided in Ruby" (217). The enforcement of the culture of "Diallowing" is to discourage racial intermarriages as a measure to counteract white racist ideology of colour segregation. This practice over the years becomes corrosive as the people of Ruby town internalized racism and colour-caste hierarchy which results to a breakdown of the peace of the land. The long years of generational adherence to upholding their old fathers' demand to not "judge, rout and even destroy the needy, the

defenseless, the different..." (302) is shattered and the community's unity is broken.

Conclusion

This paper has examined Morrison's works through the Womanist Theory as a means of explaining the limitations of feminism, patriarchy, gender biases and all forms of oppression of the poor and needy. In both works we find that the issues of low self-esteem, violence, drinking, poverty, abuse, incest, pedophilia and shame, which can all be linked, in one way or another, to oppression is explicitly featured in *Paradise* as well as *The Bluest Eye*. This further deteriorates to the oppression of a whole race by the white society. The humiliation of full grown black women and men indirectly affects their children as they also suffer different kinds of oppression and lack of love from their parents. But with the discovery of their identities, the role of women as mothers, daughters, sisters and friends to one another affirms African-American women's culture of togetherness, a theme which the womanist theory believes is one of the keys to societal peace. These African-American women as sisters and friends encourage the love of humanity and the right to exist. They also exhibit more the concept of self-naming (discovering identities) and the joys of collective living, while some women experience security and self-confidence by loving and helping their peers in their daily activities. In all their efforts to remain united, they nurture collective consciousness in order to establish strong independent identities.

Finally, it is the view of this paper that Morrison preaches the coexistence of men and women in a harmonious relationship for the proliferation of economic stability. This according to this research can be achieved by discouraging the subjection of people through the propagation of preconceived standards of living, beauty and cultural norms that are detrimental to attaining a healthy society. For instance, racism, poverty and indefinite identities contributes to the chaotic life of an average black American family whose lives are model unashamedly to the white man's way of life. Eventually, the white stereotypical conception of beauty used to dominate their mind, results to the fragmentation of African American identities in such ways that they are psychologically scarred for life. For instance Pecola's tenacious desire to have blue eyes in *The Bluest Eye*, and the zeal to preserve their blue-black colour by the men of Ruby town in *Paradise*, destroys the African American culture of loving all humans irrespective of racial, gender

and class differences. It is thus the view of this paper that Morrison denounces racists' precepts, gender discrimination and class stratification; she therefore calls for African-Americans to appreciate their cultural heritage as well as refuse being subjugated by the white man's standard of living.

Works Cited

Alexander-Floyd and G. Nikol. *Gender, Race, and Nationalism in Contemporary Black Politics*. Gordonsville: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. Print.

Alexander-Floyd and Evelyn M. Simien. "Revisiting „What's in a Name: Exploring the Contours of Africana Womanist Thought." *Frontiers: Gender Watch* 27.1 (2006): 69. Print.

Aloysius, Gonzagas and Ikechukwu Orjinta. *Womanism as a Method of Literary Text Interpretation: A Study of Emergent Women's Images under Religious Structures in Selected Works of Heinrich Böll*. Nsukka: University of Nigeria P, 2013.

Blackmon Janiece L. "I Am Because We Are: Africana Womanism as a Vehicle of Empowerment and Influence". Thesis. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. 2008. Print.

Böll, Heinrich. *Was soll aus dem Jungen bloß werden? Irgendwann mit Büchern*. München, 1933. Print.

----- *Frauen vor Flusslandschaft*. Köln: Kippenheuer & Witsch, 2007. Print.

Cannon, Katie Geneva. *Katie's Cannon: Womanism and the Soul of the Black Community*. New York: Continuum, 1995. Print.

Collins, Patricia Hill. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment: Perception on Gender*. London: Harper Collins, 1980. Print.

-----, "What's in a Name? Womanism, Black Feminism and Beyond." *Black Scholar* 26.1 (1996): 9-17. Print.

David, Ron. *Toni Morrison Explained*. New York: Random House, 2000. Print.

Davis, Cynthia. "Self, Society, and Myth in Toni Morrison's Fiction". Harold Bloom Ed. *Modern Critical Views: Toni Morrison*. New York: Chelsea House, 1990. Print.

De Voss, Vida. *"The Identity Challenge in Toni Morrison's 'Paradise'". An unpublished Graduate Thesis and Dissertations*. Iowa State University. 2010. Print.

D'Imperio, Christina. *"The Pain, Hunger, and Birth of Epiphany in the Novels of Toni Morrison."* An unpublished Ph.D thesis in English literature. University of Edinburgh, 2011.

Hamedreza, Kohzadi et al. "A Study of Black Feminism and Womanism in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* from the Viewpoint of Alice Walker." *International Journal of Academic Research* 3.2 (2011):1307. Print.

Hooks, Bell. *Feminist Theory from Margin to Centre*. Boston: Southend, 1984. Print.

Hudson-Weems, Clenora. *Africana Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves*. 3rd ed. Troy, MI: Bedford, 1993. Print.

---. *Africana Womanist Literary Theory*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World, 2004. Print.

Kolawole, Modupe. *Womanism and African Consciousness*, Trenton: African World, 1997. Print.

Layli, Phillips. *The Womanist Reader*. New York: Fortress. 2013. Print.

Maparyan, Layli Phillips, ed. *The Womanist Reader*. New York: Fortress. 2013. Print.

Morrison, Toni. *The Bluest Eye*. New York: Vintage Books, 1970.

---. *Paradise*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997. Print.

Obianuju Acholonu, Catherine. *Motherism: The Afrocentric Alternative to Feminism*. Owerri: Afa, 1995.

Ogunyemi, Chikwenye Okonjo. *The Dynamics of the Contemporary Black Female Novel in English*. Chicago: U of Chicago P. 1985. Print.

Orjinta, Ikechukwu. *Liberation and Nigeria, Theology of Liberation from the Nigerian Perspective*, Enugu: Snaap, 1998.

---. *Women in World Religions and Literatures*. Münster: Imprintverlag, 2008. Print.

Penal, Mary. "Expanding the Parameters of Feminism: Self-healing in Toni Morrison's *Paradise*." *Explorations in Contemporary Feminist Literature*. New York: Cambridge, 2002. 101. Print.

Peterson, Nancy J. "Introduction: On Incendiary Art, The Moral Imagination, and Toni Morrison." *Modern Fiction Studies* 52. 2. (2006): 261-269. Print.

Raynor, Deidre J. and Butler Johnnella E. "Morrison and the Critical Community." *The Cambridge Companion to Toni Morrison*. Eds. Justine Tally. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007. 175-183. Print.

Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas. *Deeper Shades of Purple: Womanism in Religion and Society*. New York: UP, 2006. Print.

Viangxiaozen. "A Womanist Reading of Toni Morrison's *Quest of Myth-Song of Solomon*." An Unpublished thesis. 2010.

Walker, Alice. *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens: Womanist Prose*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1983. Print.

Weever, de Jacqueline. *Mythmaking and Metaphor in Black Women's Fiction*. New York: St. Martin's, 1991. Print.

Williams, Delores. *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist Godtalk*. New York: Orbis 9, 1995. Print.

Wilfred D. Samuels and Clenora Hudson Weems. *The Damaging Look: The Search for Authentic Existence in Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye*. New York: Twayne, 1990. Print.