

The Society and the Heroine: Toni Morrison's *Sula*

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Though we can recognize several abiding concerns in Toni Morrison's novels, she is also an author of an ever-enlarging vision. In *The Bluest Eye*, her first novel, for example, the black community forms a background against which a deeply personal tragedy is enacted. We are constantly aware of its presence and its misguided obsession with Anglo-American Ideal Beauty is indirectly responsible for the suffering and the eventual madness of the child protagonist Pecola. Yet she is too young to understand the complicated causes of her ruin and consequently she cannot make any gesture of protest toward the uncaring community. In contrast, Morrison's second novel *Sula* depicts a rebellious individual engaging in a direct clash with her society.

Sula presents a close bond of childhood between its titular heroine and another black girl called Nel and how their adult friendship comes to be terminated. The immediate cause of this rupture is Sula's illicit relationship with Nel's husband Jude who afterwards walks out on Nel and children. But, in reality, the gulf between the two women is always there ever since they reached adulthood. They adopt contrasting ways of life; Nel makes a conventional marriage and conforms to the societal mores. Sula becomes a wanderer through the world and subsequently becomes a rebel in her hometown, Medallion, Ohio. She outrages the community by expelling her aged grandmother to the old folks' home and by sleeping around. The juxtaposition of the two women is as deliberate as it is illuminating; together, they represent conformity and challenge, conservation and exploration. As grownups, they are able to achieve certain perceptions about their community as well as about themselves, even though they may have only limited control over their destiny.

As I have said, Morrison has several distinct preoccupations which she takes up novel after novel. Among them are—tentatively in *The Bluest Eye* and consistently in the other three novels—the nature of personal relationships (familial and male-female) and one's search for a meaningful identity and self-sustaining dignity in a world of growing isolation. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the three major issues raised in *Sula*; the communal influence on the modern black women's sense of self, the problem of intimate relationships, and the theme of self-knowledge.

At the closing scene of the novel, the law-abiding woman Nel, aged 55, has one of the few moments of life in which her former experiences begin to yield their deeper implica-

tions. It is almost 30 years since Jude has left her for Sula (whom Sula soon jilted) and now Sula has been dead for years. Nel reflects on the one central event of her puberty which has slipped out of her mind for quite a long time; the time when Sula unwittingly drowned a little boy named Chicken Little while playing and Nel witnessed the accident. Earlier in the same day, during her visit to Sula's grandmother Eva, the older woman has accused Nel of drowning Chicken Little for spite. The shock the accusation brought forces Nel to probe her mind intensely and it dawns on her that she has not grieved over Jude's absence as she thought but rather that she has been desolated because Sula is lost to her—the one person with whom there was a constant sharing of girlhood experiences and the real wretchedness of her situation, she dimly perceives, is that she has had no woman friend to communicate with for so long a time. Nel's discovery about herself, however, is not likely to mature into a sustained self-scrutiny; she lacks the necessary courage and detachment. She will remain at this incipient stage of self-knowledge and will safely retreat into her role of motherhood. But the readers are required to see beyond. Nel, we understand, does not miss Jude because he never meant much to her; she was a passive listener to the monologues of his own activities. She defines herself wholly in terms of her relationship to her mate and to her children and confuses that role with her genuine identity. When Sula deprived her of this illusion by sleeping with Jude, she had no other framework of reference. Her undoing was complete; she then passed confusion through stupor and ended up with utter wretchedness. Tradition defines what is a wife and what is a mother—and Nel's unreflective acceptance of such communal values incapacitates her to differentiate between the illusion and the reality, and the role and the self. Thus, the last scene rather nicely points to the interrelatedness among the three issues I have already specified; how society sometimes shelters one from one's vital knowledge of oneself and how one's ignorance keeps one from forming a mutually beneficial relationship with another party and ultimately, from a meaningful participation in society. It is not clear, however, whether one's ignorance about oneself forces one to enter into some disastrous relationships or the forming of such relationships keeps one from knowing oneself. Ignorance of this kind works for good ends as well as for evil ends; it protects a person from comprehending the full scope of the damage that has been done to his identity but when a spiritual crisis brings his true condition to the surface, he is utterly shattered without the saving grace of self-knowledge which somehow expiates the situation. At any rate, Nel's plight vividly presents one of Morrison's deepest convictions that caring exclusively for others in the name of love and not minding one's own spiritual health is disastrous for woman.⁽¹⁾

The connection between selfhood and personal relationships in the Morrisonian world is a point I wish to return to later. At this time I would like to consider the nurturing and unnurturing aspects of the bygone Midwestern black community figured in this novel—"neighborhood" as referred to by people who lived there. With the exception of Nel's lower middle-class household, its members are those placed at the bottom of the economical and social scales. They are trapped in the dull rhythms of poverty (rhythms which they

barely perceive). Their great occasions are the numerous gatherings in the local barber shop (which is a male sanctuary) and, for women, there are gossip sessions in the kitchen presided by the mistress of the house. These social meetings provide emotional support during times of hardship and amusement during times of relaxation. There, folks shape communal values, make judgements on local issues, and together articulate their deepest fears and aspirations.

Primarily the "neighborhood" is a society mainly interested in stability for survival. It emphasizes tradition, conformity, and preservation and is deeply antagonistic to activism, exploration and experimentation. Its conservative forces are restrictive and unbending. One symptom of it is the community's idea of propriety of female behavior. Ostensibly it accepts a wide and varied spectrum of people—from the prim color-struck Helene Wright (who is Nel's mother) to the arrogant Eva and the promiscuous Hannah as long as they function as the typical wives, mothers, and daughters. The community prescribes too narrow boundaries on the standard of behaviors and it unhesitatingly declares banishment to those who do not conform. Thus there are always "nuts, whores, and witches" to be despised. The community uses the existence of such pariahs to achieve internal cohesiveness; together communal members stand against the freakishness of these outcast and reaffirm the accepted modes of behavior. The activities of pariahs are highly entertaining to them; and they gossip about them constantly. Still nobody really cares for their well-being. Because of this indifference, such people often come to a bad end.⁽²⁾

The fact that Morrison's exposure of the black community is relentless does not mean that she is negative about its cultural heritage. This heritage, Morrison implies, is not a pathological defense reaction to white oppression. It seeks to triumph over the tyranny of oppression through a survival with strength and dignity. One of Morrison's aims, then, is to celebrate those qualities of resourcefulness and endurance inherent in this culture. One proof of such resourcefulness is evident in the communal attitude toward nature. Folks assume that nature has an order of its own; it seeks to communicate its purposes to the cautious people in various unusual natural phenomena. This conviction gives them a reassuring sense that they do not live in a completely chaotic world after all.

What was taken by outsiders to be slackness, slovenliness or even generosity was in fact a full recognition of the legitimacy of forces other than good ones. They did not believe doctors could heal—for them, none ever had done so. They did not believe death was accidental—life might be, but death was deliberate. They did not believe Nature was ever askew—only inconvenient. Plague and drought were as "natural" as springtime. If milk could curdle, God knows robins could fall. The purpose of evil was to survive it and they determined (without ever knowing they had made up their minds to do it) to survive floods, white people, tuberculosis, famine and ignorance. They knew anger well but not despair, and they didn't stone sinners for the same reason they didn't commit suicide—it was beneath them.⁽³⁾

In view of the overriding importance in her fiction of the past for the present black experiences in America, Morrison naturally emphasizes the misguided direction toward which certain blacks (especially the middle-class blacks) are heading. They believe in the "assimilation philosophy", the theory that the more one looks like whites the better off one is. Worshipping wholeheartedly the white middle-class standard of respectability, they have several hard-and-fast principles in life: own property, stick together within middle-class blacks, keep lightening the skin color through each generation by marrying those fairer than themselves, and keep aloof, whenever possible, from the lower-class blacks. There is a long line of these assimilated women in Morrison's novels beginning from Geraldine in *The Bluest Eye* and reaching its apotheosis with Jadine in *Tar Baby*. Here is Geraldine preaching to her son on the desirability of eliminating negroid features:

Colored people were neat and quiet; niggers were dirty and loud. The line between colored and nigger was not always clear; subtle and telltale signs threatened to erode it, and the watch had to be constant.⁽⁴⁾

The efforts of the entire Geraldine syndrome are irrelevant, Morrison is saying, because the white world would label the fair-skinned and dark-skinned blacks alike as "the colored"; there is nothing they gain from the intraracial hostility. The efforts, moreover, are abortive because they cannot eliminate the past which is a part of themselves. Their sterility is ironically expressed in their spiritless offspring (their parents drive all the initiative and spunk out) who meekly accept the codified living.

All this, however, does not mean Morrison advises the blacks to stop striving for a better living and instead, to bask themselves in the warm light of nostalgia for the good old days. Far from it: she says that all efforts for security and upward mobility are perfectly legitimate. She suggests only that progress should be based on tradition; the individual black should also recognize and rescue the spiritual heritage preserved through slavery into the twentieth century which is a worthy object of racial pride.

Previously in describing Nel's domestic misery, I have referred in passing to the specific nature of the victimization of black women. Morrison's novels are full of abused daughters, wronged wives, and martyred mothers. Partly, their harsh fate originates from their rootedness. Women are usually tied down to their children or to their extended family. Black men, in comparison, enjoy greater mobility. The conflict between man who demands mobility for freedom and woman who needs stability for survival is a recurring theme in the Afro-American literature in general. Men have the option to walk out on their women whenever external circumstances become too oppressive. Thus black women often become the bread-winner and sometimes the sole maintainer of the family structure which threatens to dissolve at any moment. The difficulty in keeping the family unit intact in the black community is closely related to the problem of role-playing. The chief source of the trouble, it seems, is black men's vulnerability and the hostile white

world is not necessarily the only cause; their need to maintain their manliness surpasses everything else in their vision—even the welfare of their dependents. They are in constant need to prove their manhood by relegating their family members to subordinate roles. Macon Dead II, for instance, that self-made black entrepreneur in *Song of Solomon*, is too insecure to be reminded of the mercenary aspect of his business activities by his genteel and impractical family and takes every little act of their self-assertion as a personal insult. Males act out the principle of their dominance by exposing their family to a variety of physical and psychological abuse.

Personal relationships in Morrison's works are seldom mutually beneficial because of their purely exploitative aspects. People, in most cases, only relate in terms of aggression and surrender; one party tramples upon the humanity of another. Women are often the confused and the troubled participants in such relationships. The most grim case in point would be again the Dead family; Ruth and Macon Dead use their son as a means of paying off their sordid scores, he, openly aggressive, and she, in more covert yet nonetheless morbid ways. Their home becomes the ground of a perpetual battle over his allegiance and the son emerges unimpaired mainly because he has his loyal aunt to stand between him and his unscrupulous parents. Jude and Nel's marriage is hardly a more wholesome case though Nel barely comprehends its nature in the absence of hell and brimstone. The passage which depicts Jude reflecting on his impending marriage perfectly makes a point how he is mainly interested in Nel as one who soothes his pride bruised by a humiliating encounter with the white world:

... it was rage, rage and a determination to take on a man's role anyhow that made him press Nel about settling down. He needed some of his appetites filled, some posture of adulthood recognized, but mostly he wanted someone to care about his hurt, to care very deeply. . . Without that someone he was a waiter hanging around a kitchen like a woman. With her he was head of a household pinned to an unsatisfactory job out of necessity. The two of them together would make one Jude.⁽⁵⁾

At its worst, a kind of a vicious circle is set in within the relationship from which there is apparently no release. One such example is Cholly and Pauline Breedlove in *The Bluest Eye*. Here, the couple is tightly locked in a deadly embrace. Pauline needs to be constantly wronged by the dissipated Cholly to keep her above the mere level of functioning in the sordid circumstance which has engulfed her. She bases her sense of worthiness on the self-sacrifice she makes for the survival of the whole family. And religion, in this context, provides her with a respectable means of escape. She rationalizes her hatred of her husband and her neglect of the children in her assumed air of martyrdom and literally exalts in what she views as a spotless Christian virtue. ("Holding Cholly as a model of sin and failure, she bore him like a crown of thorns, and her children like a cross.") Cholly, the tragically earth-bound hero in the characteristically Morrisonian sense,⁽⁶⁾ needs

to project his self-hatred onto his wife and can be temporarily released from his impotence in abusing his wife. The negative function of Christianity in Afro-American experiences is another frequent theme in the black literature. Thus, black men are particularly vulnerable to the philosophy of male supremacy because, Morrison seems to be saying, to be on the pedestal like white people seems to promise power and security which are denied them.

Some comments would be relevant here on the meaning of sexual activities for Sula. Sula grows up to be a woman with penchant for the bold, the imaginative, the original. She is belligerently self-reliant and is determined to assume no traditional role open to black women. Still she does not have the aptitude for any creative career nor is she prepared for any duties or responsibilities arising out of it. Her lifestyle is meant to reveal how reckless an idle, rampant imagination can be. Lacking any serious interests, yet determined to achieve absolute freedom, she allows her whimsical impulse wholly govern her behaviors. After she comes back to settle down in her birthplace, she challenges conventional society by becoming sexually promiscuous. Her sexual activities are deeply unnerving to her community although her mother's similar behavior never was—Hannah was merely a nuisance. Hannah, people knew, only decided to have a noncommittal sexual encounters as entertainment to punctuate her otherwise prosaic life. On the other hand, Sula's sexual appetite seems disturbingly alien because they cannot label it simply "lust". Sula favors sexual activities partly because she can establish ties rather nicely with others through them. But mostly because she can pass judgements on her partners by observing their reaction to the relationship. The majority of them are unsatisfactory and boring for Sula because they view the love relationship as a complete surrender of one person to another, the division between one who protects and one who is sheltered or pampered. This idea is current in Western civilization and its necessary collateral is love as possession, the ultimate goal is marriage, the permanent relationship. That the author regards this view as somehow inimical to the individual integrity is clear. In response Morrison creates the ideal relationship as that between Sula and Ajax. (His heroic name alone is sufficient to imply his emancipated view in the specific Morrisonian sense⁽⁷⁾) It is a relationship between the equals freely entered by mutual consent. Without the role-playing which characterizes Sula's other sexual relationships, this love makes both parties open. The two do not unduly romanticize the relationship and Sula has to be initiated into the experience of racism and sexism (which is the content of her education at the North) before she becomes able to make a realistic appraisal of this most intimate of the bonds. Her maturity in this respect is the necessary prerequisite for her entering into a male-female relationship without illusions:

All . . . cities held the same people, working the same mouths, sweating the same sweat. The men who took her to one or another of those places had merged into one large personality: the same language of love, the same entertainments of love, the same cooling of love. Whenever she introduced her private

thoughts into their rubbings or goings, they hooded their eyes. They taught her nothing but love tricks, shared nothing but worry, gave nothing but money. She had been looking all along for a friend, and it took her a while to discover that a lover was not a comrade and could never be—for a woman.⁽⁸⁾

And here is Ajax and Sula in the first glow of their love:

He did not speak down to her or at her, nor content himself with puerile questions about her life. . . Thinking she was possibly brilliant, like his mother, he seemed to expect brilliance from her, and she delivered. And in all of it, he listened more than he spoke. His clear comfort at being in her presence. . . , his assumption that she was both tough and wise—all of that coupled with a wide generosity of spirit only occasionally erupting into vengeance sustained Sula's interest and enthusiasm.⁽⁹⁾

Ajax is fearless enough not to be intimidated by Sula's personal idiosyncracies. But the relationship with a liberated man is unstable and risky; he will obey any of his numerous and whimsical impulses and he is capable of committing the arbitrary and cruel act of deserting when his all-important freedom is threatened. Ironically, Sula learns the communal law of possession through her involvement with Ajax. She wishes to keep this absorbing relationship always available. And since Ajax is not interested in learning love-as-a-permanent-relationship lesson, he leaves her.

Through this short-lived bond, we see what kind of communication is possible for two people with fully developed self-consciousness. Still it is very doubtful whether self-knowledge delivers a person from the predicament of a deteriorating relationship which he finds himself in. Certainly in some cases, one would make a furious effort to sever such relationship once one disengages oneself from self-deception. Yet the problem does not seem to have solutions if the bond is virtually indissoluble. One's suffering would merely increase by being fully conscious of one's wretched condition. The clash of personalities central in the vicious relationships is a fact of life which continues to happen, though the participants come to a tardy understanding. However, once the vulnerability is recognized and once it is learnt that the soul is subject to impoverishment by unfavorable external circumstances, such knowledge is likely to keep one from entering into similar unwholesome relationships in future.

Thus far, I have tried to elucidate the social themes in *Sula*. Finally, I would like to address myself to the aspect of evaluating the titular heroine who is asked to carry the quest theme of the novel. The one significant difference between the search for identity of a male protagonist and its female version is that the former is dynamic while the latter is static. The quest of Milkman in *Song of Solomon*, we remember, takes him from a Midwestern city through a rural Eastern town and ends up in a Southern village and the geographical breadth he covers symbolizes his growing self-awareness. On the other

hand, Sula's self-scrutiny is mainly conducted within the four walls of her bedroom and acquires depth in place of breadth by the sheer extent that she becomes familiar with every bend and turn in the stream of her consciousness.

Throughout her literary career so far, Morrison chooses to depict her characters in mythical terms; like the great characters in the classical tragedies, they are all given larger-than-life stature and their fall is consequently more lurid than that of the ordinary people. Moreover, they do not render themselves so easily to a rigorous categorization: the heroes appear villainous and the villains heroic. The fathers rape their daughters to communicate paternal love. The grown-up women make love to everything, even to a piece of liver. The mothers burn their sons to death to spare them ignoble life. Consequently some unsympathetic reviewers, accuse Morrison of producing seemingly pathological stereotypes.⁽¹⁰⁾ Such criticism does not take into consideration the legendary or mythical element recognizable in her fiction. Morrison chooses to exaggerate the eccentricities of her characters so that they act out more intensely man's universal guilt in innocence and innocence in guilt. Sula is the most heroic character in this intensely heroic novel. Sula is another Hedda Gabler without Hedda's class-ingrained traits. Like Hedda, Sula is lazy, self-indulgent, and malicious. Surrounded by a society which neither comprehends nor cares for her uncivilized potential, she meets a similar tragic fate. One distinct characteristic of Sula which separates her from the Heddas of the world is her consistent pursuit of self-knowledge.

Sula's pursuit of perfect knowledge begins during her adolescence. Within one day she comes to know what most people do not know even in their maturity; namely, the fact that most people have wrong ideas about others and about themselves. Her mother Hannah, in her characteristically uncaring way, declares that she loves her only child but does not like her, and Sula overhears it. Only Hannah, that supreme self-indulgence incarnated, voices what other mothers cover up. She will minister, she is saying, to her child's physical needs but she will not be involved in Sula in other ways because she, Hannah, is not interested in her daughter as a person. This completes the first step of Sula's learning process. She comes to know that one person, however close in personal relationships, can never become related to another in the true sense. With this realization, she is confronted with man's ultimate solitude in this universe. In the same afternoon, she drowns Chicken Little. Sula, in her childish and confused way, examines her own reaction to the experience and learns, to her dismay, that she does not feel what is supposed to be appropriate for such occasion. She does not feel responsible or guilty for the deed. She does not regret that the situation should be as it is. She minds it only in so far as it affects her unpleasantly. Thus, at this early stage of her life, she is completely deprived of self-deception.

At this point in the novel the quest theme encounters another theme which I have discussed first; the tension between the private, unruly impulse and the required stability of society. People have a public self as well as a private self. Their behavior does not correspond to their inward feelings. It is an outward form dictated by a concern for de-

corum, politeness and decency. Thereafter Sula repudiates all pretensions and hypocrisy of social forms. She pierces through appearances and self-possessedly and un sentimentally stares into the innermost depth of her mind to which most people willingly shut their eyes. And she is determined to be uncompromisingly herself—however unlovely her genuine identity may be, it does not matter. She watches her mother burn to death. She is willing to feel pain as well as to inflict it with the avidity of interest which would be both sadistic and masochistic if it is not what it is—a disinterested quest for knowledge.

She achieves a heroic grandeur in that she is prepared to suffer humiliation, agony, and total loss in order to achieve total vision of herself. Especially after she is struck with a mortal disease, she confronts the purgatory experience of dying courageously and, clear-sighted and rigorous as ever, registers the nature of the experienced pain and anguish at every moment. She is heroic in her consistent refusal to play roles when she knows that little concessions to social forms would provide her with a much needed comfort and company in her time of adversity. Having this strength of mind, she could have become the figure of redemption if she had wished. The community encroaches on one's sense of self. She could have disrupted that destructive process and could have informed the community with a new spirit of exploration. If she had tried, a saving connection might have been established with her hostile environment. In that case, the community would have given her the wonderful sense of security which is the chief merit of being in the middle of the community. Yet none of the above happens. At each opportunity that the community offers a helping hand in the figure of Nel, Sula willfully refuses. Sula never does make a sincere effort to participate in the society. Partly this is due to her psychological conditioning determined by her familial background. She comes from a proud and self-reliant matriarchal family. The Peace women triumphed over their hard fate (Eva's husband left his family penniless and on the verge of starvation and Eve stuck her leg under a train to collect insurance money.) but their self-sufficiency is double-edged; it has long convinced Sula that she can do without any tie with outside world. Sula's grandmother and her mother further confirm this idea through their respective lifestyles. Eva, the First Woman, generates this remarkable family. Her self-sacrifice has given her, she assumes, an unqualified right to play God on her protégés to the extent that she kills her son, a dope addict after his war experience, when he does not live up to what she prescribes to be a worthy manhood. (He may have been content in his blessed delirium; still this fact is irrelevant to Eva; she is more concerned with the pain *she* feels in watching him.) Never once in her life does she regret her deed. Hannah slept around but she was never jealous of her partners—she did not care for anybody else that deeply. She was disinterested because she was uninterested. Together they teach Sula a single lesson—she needs not acknowledge any responsibility toward other people which Sula acts out. Her interest totally centers around the self. She decides not to be interested in a community whose banality she despises. One lesson she fails to learn is the positive aspect of the coercive powers of society. Sula insists that inner reality should always break out for the sake of psychic health. Still society is maintained by necessary lies. They impose res-

straints on individual behavior and thus preserve order. If everybody expresses their inner feelings for the sake of their own psychic health, in utter unconcern for other people's feelings, the result is complete anarchy; the stability of society is achieved at the cost of rigorous curbing of individual impulse.

The black community is always in need of an object of universal hatred to mitigate its sense of victimization. Sula just fits the role. Isolated and loveless, Sula dies alone. Constituted as she is there is literally no place for her in society. In a sense, therefore, her death is a sacrificial death for the sake of community, still contrary to the general expectation her death does not bring about the communal welfare which it is supposed to effect. Following Sula's death, the community itself disintegrates. Something vital has been lacking in its system of values. Sula we now know, should not have been ritually killed as a scapegoat by the community. She should have informed the community with an amount of intelligence which she represented and should have forced it to re-evaluate what it for granted.

Notes

- (1) At one point in her *Song of Solomon*, Morrison puts this argument into the mouth of a male character whose utterance acquires for the time being an authority equal to authorial asides. This man preaches (in vain) to a woman whose possessive passion for the male protagonist is consuming her mind and body that such love will shatter the emerging self of the beloved as well as undo her. Morrison is deeply pessimistic as to whether meaningful relationships are possible at all. She voices her feeling in a recent interview that this civilization has produced very few adult human beings, still less adult lovers:

Love, in the Western notion, is full of possession, distortion, and corruption. It's a slaughter without the blood.

Ed. Claudia Tate, *Black Women Writers at Work* (New York: Continuum, 1983), p. 123.

- (2) A case in point is Pecola in *The Bluest Eye* who is neglected by her mother and is raped by her father. She is eventually driven mad. Unlike Sula who sneers at the disapproving community and thereby has the buoyancy of contempt, this twelve-year-old only passively suffers in complete isolation and claims our greater sympathy. As the passage quoted below suggests, here the edge of Morrison's criticism of the community's complacency is sharp indeed:

[The narrator is Claudia, a spirited friend of Pecola's] All of us—all who knew her—felt so wholesome after we cleaned ourselves on her. We were so beautiful when we stood astride her ugliness. Her simplicity decorated us, her guilt sanctified us, her pain made us glow with health, her awkwardness made us think we had a sense of humor. . . Even her waking dreams we used—to silence our own nightmares. And she let us, and thereby deserved our contempt. We honed our egos on her, padded our characters with her frailty, and yawned in the fantasy of our strength.

Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*, 2nd ed (1970; rpt. New York: Washington Square Press,

1972), p. 159.

- (3) Toni Morrison, *Sula*, 6th ed. (1973; rpt. New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1981), pp. 77-78.
- (4) *The Bluest Eye*, p. 71.
- (5) *Salu*, p. 71.
- (6) In spite of his monstrosity, Cholly adumbrates the Morrisonian liberated male in whom the author places an ultimate faith. And thus far, he is a single example of spiritual bankruptcy in this brotherhood. Those who are included in this group share a physical trait—they are all golden-eyed—and have similarly liberal upbringing which amounts to parental neglect. They are free-spirited and do not suffer from any inferior complex and have confidence in their judgements. At the same time, they are often whimsical and are unable to enter into any lasting relationships. Their narcissism often inadvertently ruin those who get involved with them. Their godlike status, I believe, defines the quality of the crime Cholly has committed; incest is one of the most magnificent among crimes—it used to be a privilege given to the members of the royal family in Greek tragedies.
- (7) See above n. 6.
- (8) *Sula*, p. 104.
- (9) *Sula*, p. 110.
- (10) See, for example, Peter S. Prescott, "Dangerous Witness," rev. of *Sula*, by Toni Morrison, *Newsweek*, 83, 7 Jan. 1974, p. 63, in which *Sula* is dismissed as a "hollow" person with "moral and spiritual entropy."