

Inspiration from the classics: Echoing the creativity in the Novels of Gloria Naylor

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Abstract — The creative work of Gloria Naylor's was praised by literary critics for the richness of her language, depth and the variability of her characters. Her themes of wish, survival and individual redemption, has been articulated in a series of novels and essays that won her popular applause. Right from the beginning of her career, Naylor has fashioned a sense of place, a sense of community where people live together. According to Naylor, family and group of people portray her communal history as a black American. Gloria Naylor wrote novels that highlighted the strengths of women and men particularly African-American women, men and the possessiveness on the lives of people due to racism, sexism and survival. She concentrates on the black community, instead of analyzing the effects of discrimination on black people. The creative representation of black women has been marginalized and distorted by the white gender's perspective and the majority of her novels Naylor seems intent upon representing, re-visioning and quite purely expressing the several perspectives of black women.

Index Terms — creativity, discrimination, equality, expedition, marginalized, oppression, revitalized self-validation, sisterhood, sexuality.

1 INTRODUCTION

Gloria Naylor's passion for reading was nurtured by her mother, who remembered her personal experiences with her native Mississippi's segregated public libraries. Unable to borrow books, Alberta Naylor had been enforced to earn money to buy them, so she encouraged Gloria Naylor to visit the libraries in New York City once they were aged enough to write down their names on library cards. Her parent gave her the lessons of self-validation, independence and self-confidence. She became a keen reader and began to write poems and stories when she was a child. Naylor's mother encouraged her to read and gave her a journal to write down her thoughts and took this advice to her mind. This transformed her personality to a great extent. Becoming the missionary of Jehovah's Witness brought her out of her shyness and gave her a basis, a community and a chance to travel. They even encouraged her unique and magnificent power of imagination and clearly believed in her power of writing which truly worked wonders for Naylor in future.

Naylor uses different quad to tell the stories of Afro-American women. Usually, the location of setting of the characters continue in her forthcoming novel and this connection helps the reader to establish a history, a society and a useful sense of stability in a place where a story, however original, can be told and believed. In these years, Naylor witnessed a distinct transformation in her own life and found a new scope in her as a Black woman.

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She even discovered facts about feminism and got revitalized with the African-American literature.

2 LITERARY INHERITANCE

The black women writers of contemporary period – Gloria Naylor, Toni Cade Bambara, Shirley Anne Williams, and Gayl Jones – explored the issues of their challenging position and struggle for liberty in a racial and conventional culture. Their work made an important change in African-American literature. The most representative black female writers of recent period include Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, Gloria Naylor who continue such central themes in African-American women's literary tradition as female friendship, search for and discovery of identity and community, racial oppression and sexual violence, the importance of heritage. These black writers invented a trend of their own. They used Black English for the speech of the black characters in their fiction where they create their own creative skills to bind the novels. It is true to say that contemporary women writers not only continue African-American women's literary tradition but they also enrich this tradition with creative skills thus making it more significant.

3 ECHOING DANTE'S INFERNO: LINDEN HILLS

Linden Hills is the novel of a Black woman's expedition towards granting of political, social or economical power to an individual or group. This expedition gives her

the self-belief and results in self-actualization. Naylor in *Linden Hills* investigates gender relations along with discrimination to examine into African-American uniqueness. By contrast, *Linden Hills* narrates the effects of a place where human value undergoes a complicated evaluation to and firm separation from the white middle class. Naylor uses the formation of Dante's *Inferno* to describe a middle-class society preoccupied with material gain. A set of laws of *Linden Hills* are made by a man. The women in this place do not have names, in truth, the most important female character is only known as 'Luther's wife' until nearly the end of the novel. Naylor's novel is not only an assessment of avarice but also a feminist story of women's unspoken history, as Willa, banished to the vault for producing a light-skinned son, garners power from the sandy testimonies of her predecessors. A world of triumphant Black Americans is portrayed in this novel.

These Black Americans however have obtained a status along to lead their livelihood but in turn they have to surrender their hearts and souls though they are perfect in their workplace. The reason behind the creation of *Linden Hills* is mainly resistance and rebirth. Naylor has made the position that attempting to mount in the ranks of white-dominated society through economic means, outcome in a shallow victory. The first idea of this novel was rooted by her reading of *The Inferno* in a Great Literature course. *Linden Hills* is an African-American middle-class neighbourhood elegant after the encircling geography of Dante's Hell. Two younger poets, outsiders in *Linden Hills* who are looking for employment the week previous to Christmas, find out the obsession and crime of the middle class residents, who have abandon culture and standards for material gain.

4 ECHOING SHAKESPEARE'S TEMPEST: MAMA DAY

Mama Day was Naylor's third and first unchaptered novel. In *Mama Day*, Naylor has combined her desired characters and personality, creating George, the eventual gentleman and lover, Miranda Day, the wisest of conjure women, Cocoa, playful but sound, the young, modern black woman. Naylor develops the idea of spirituality in *Mama Day*, which explores the work of art as individual faith. The women in this novel live on a distant island called Willow Springs, where the remedial powers of Miranda Day and her ancestors are entirely accepted by the island's residents. Willow Springs also provides a breathing space where these women

are quite distant from any white dominant culture. It is set in two different worlds which are associated by a wooden bridge. Naylor's imagination of all black community located on a peaceful island of Willow Springs, existing and prosperous at the same time with an actual mixture of races, modern day New York City has made *Mama Day* a greatly perused novel among Naylor's works.

The story of *Mama Day* develops with important changes. It departs from the world of real situation and fit in myth and magic which becomes the essence of the novel. About her way of writing, different writers have different range of vision that Naylor presents a fresh picture of relationships among women, female friendship, sisterhood, and community. Naylor's rewriting of the sixteenth century works of English rebirth, particularly those of Shakespeare, in her first three novels. Naylor is a talented author at giving world literature an African-American spin. Her works undoubtedly craft the fact-*Mama Day* of Naylor lends a lot from *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare. In this novel, Naylor combines her Southern surroundings with her Northern environment, expressing her warm appreciation of the African American woman and her bias towards the African American man, blending magic and myth with ordinary realism. There is a lot in *Mama Day* which perches on the border of faith, and this is what imparts a noticeably African aroma to a tale placed in America.

5 CONCLUSION

Naylor's great creative sense of decorating her novels is unique. She linked her first story with the second novel is an example of her uniqueness. She normally uses the devices to create a sane connection from the story of one novel to the other. The best example can be taken from *Mama Day* that gives the beginning of George at Bailey's Cafe which is her fourth novel. Gloria Naylor stands as an example of contemporary writers of fiction. Her novels are often inspired by her appreciation of literary masters like William Shakespeare, Dante, Toni Morrison and from her personal life. For example: *Linden Hills* is a version of Dante's *Inferno* and in the similar style *Mama Day* has the influence of *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare plus Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*. She is rightly acknowledged for speaking out the rights of women and other communal issues. Critics have paid less attention to Naylor's representation of race politics in *The Women of Brewster Place* and have honoured Naylor's exploration of feminist concerns in her

representation of the strengths of black sisterhood and her use of dream pattern. Some of the critics have grounded the female powers of Sapphira Wade and Mama Day in their interweaving analysis of words.

Gloria Naylor exhibits her writing skills by creating the number of seven. In her first novel (*The Women of Brewster Place*) and fourth novel (*Bailey's Cafe*) she launches seven women and in her fifth novel *The Men of Brewster Place*, she again exhibits number seven in the face of men. Her novel *The Women of Brewster Place* projecting the seven female characters won hasty fame, so within five years the novel was taken into a movie starring Oprah Winfrey. She brings in new patterns and colours as she adds to the Afro- American Literary writings by her creative skills. Naylor's writings are placed side by side especially with other associated texts, namely the writings of her predecessors and contemporaries. Naylor's works are discussed in this part are the issues of socio-economic defeat of women, women bonding, women's sexuality, the language of women, and the adjustment of female characters in the novels. Naylor is a part of the Afro - American literary custom, particularly that of its women writers. It is obvious to this literary scenario that Naylor's creative skills reflected throughout her novels to exhibit the life of Afro- Americans.

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