

# Rational and Irrational Emancipation of Women in Community: A Critical Analysis of Toni Morrison's Sula

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## المخلص

تعد توني مورسون (١٨ فبراير، ١٩٣١) من ابرز الروائيات الامريكيات من اصل افريقي والتي سعت بكل الوسائل لتحقيق تحرر المرأة. تعد مورسون واحدة من اهم مناصري النسوية واكثرهم شهرة وذلك من خلال رواياتها المتضمنة اصداء التحرر. يسلط البحث الضوء على عقلانية قرارات المرأة ومواقفها في بحثها عن التحرر وبصورة خاصة لشخصيتي سولا ونيل. يهدف البحث اولا الى مناقشة اهمية عقلانية المرأة في مجتمعها وثانيا الى تجنب انحرافات المرأة التي قد تمحو مكانتها وتقلل من فرصها للتحرر. يدور البحث حول الالتزام العقلاني والاخلاقي ل(نيل) والذي يعزز تحررها الاجتماعي ويحلل كذلك لا عقلانية (سولا) الذي يؤدي الى تحرر عابرومشين وذلك لما يتضمنه من معايير تتنافى مع مبادئ وقيم المجتمع.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** العقلانية، اللاعقلانية، تحرر المرأة، المجتمع، الهوية، النسوية، العادات

## Abstract

Toni Morrison (February 18, 1931) is the most prominent African-American novelist who strives in all means of liberation to achieve woman's emancipation. She is one of the main twentieth century advocates of feminism and best known for her novels of emancipation echoes. The research sheds light on the rationality of woman's attitudes and decisions with a particular reference to the characters of Sula and Nel. It firstly aims at discussing the significance of woman's rationality in her community and secondly to avoid the aberrations that may devastate her status and reduce her chances of independence. It revolves around Nel and her rational and moral commitment which maintains her social emancipation. The research also analyzes the irrationality of Sula that produces only disgraceful and transient emancipation for its inconsistency with the values and principles of community.

**Keywords:** Rationality, Irrationality, Emancipation, Community, Identity, Womanhood, Norms

## Introduction

Toni Morrison is the winner of the 1993 Nobel Prize for literature and she has also received Pulitzer Prize, National and American Book Award. Morrison is the author of eleven novels and the most recent published one is entitled *God Help the Child*. 'The Bluest Eye,' 'Sula,' 'Song of Solomon,' and 'Beloved' are among her best-known novels. In Toni Morrison's *Sula* (1973), rationality and irrationality are the two predominant aspects of emancipation process of African American women in relation to their community. Each aspect has profoundly affected the life of women with a particular reference to Sula Peace and Nel Wright. Morrison tends to be not only a novelist but also a reformist for how an African American Woman could avoid being an impetuous paradigm for emancipation. Hence, woman's autonomy is the preoccupation of Morrison, not only in *Sula* but in most of her novels. Furthermore, she has emphasised the vital need for black female sapience in her endeavours for self-exploration.

Toni Morrison's *Sula* has given expression to the many shades of Sula's irrational behaviours. It is written in accordance with the emergence of women liberation movement, maintaining the questions of social conventions and reasonable emancipation. It is set in a paradoxical place for blacks called Bottom at the top place near Ohio and above the white community of Medallion. The novel explores what it should for a woman to be rational in her community and what it should not in her emancipation.

Morrison narrates the story of two different family background girls, Sula and Nel, with different personal moral attitudes for their emancipation. The concept of emancipation, which is the trademark of Morrison's canon, forms an integral part of Toni Morrison's fiction in portraying African American woman in her community. In *Sula*, the irrational issues of emancipation are interwoven altogether with the rejection of conventions and norms of the community. However, the research and in the light of reason examines the conceptions of love and morality and to consider the social boundaries in search for emancipation.

## **Sula and Nel: Rational and Irrational Emancipation**

In Toni Morrison's *Sula*, it is known that Nel becomes a slave to racism and sexism while Sula strives and becomes an emancipated woman. But in this research, the meaning of emancipation is going to be interpreted in new detours that it is ironically discussed in terms of rational and irrational emancipation. In *Sula*, the issues of emancipation along with the norms of the community are demonstrated in the light of reason. Sula becomes the embodiment of the African American woman who emancipates at the expense of disciplines and values of her community and consequently dies socially and lonely. According to Sebastian Gardner that irrationality is when "behaviour would be irrational in so far as it departs from the set of rules which define rationality" (Introduction, 3). Gardener discussed that factors of rational mind are combined to the clear thoughts, desires and memories that Sula denies during her search of emancipation. Furthermore, Gardner stressed the importance of people and their attitudes in forming a rational mind (59). But Sula disregards whatever is concerned with mental attributes and dispatches from her people in her efforts of liberation.

Bhasker A. Shukla attributes Sula's irrational emancipation to her monopolisation of decision and the lack of foundation and structurelessness that later affect her thought and action "Sula is marked, both literally and figuratively, by her singularity of thought and action"(23). She unthinkingly decides to leave her hometown, Medallion, for a decade during which she irrationally achieves her emancipation. It is from Sula's leaving Medallion that the extent of her irrationality made manifest and during which Nel could emancipate socially with her community. Sula inconsiderately decides to find herself with the white community regardless of all the disdains the Whites bear against Blacks."Though Sula always poses a very different and independent self to the society yet she is no more than a subdued and semi-human being in the opinion of the coloured-dominated society" (Bala, 66). Sula's autonomy, therefore, could not find a definition and finally returns home as an irrational emancipated woman. The community does not support Sula's

emancipation for it has been blotched with irrational views against the followed social norms. Morrison implies a message to those dissidents who oppose their communal tenets that emancipation cannot be authenticated alone but only in a relation with a group i.e. community. In the words of Karen Stein as reflected in K. Sumana's *The Novels of Toni Morrison*, "Sula struggles to carve out a niche for herself as a woman, unmindful of the fact the free development of each is conditioned by the free development of all. In other words, individuality is rewarding only if it is achieved within the context of the community well-being" (78).

On the account of her sociality and the love of her community, Sula irrationally emancipates. She has been different and ambivalent in her personal relationships with her family and community. "Sula embodies self-determination by refusing to observe social codes and conventions... Despite the changes that occur during the novel's timespan, Sula remains at odds with her context, untouched by those cultural forces which gain prominence as the century progresses" (Lister, 31). This ironical demeanor of a normal human being and after series of thoughtless acts against herself and people makes her perceived as evil, a pariah, and a misfortune in the sight of her community. As Bernard W. Bell has clearly noted the social consequences after Sula's return to Medallion for her irrational emancipation saying that:

"Sula represents the actual and imagined force of evil in the black community. When she put her grandmother in a home, they called her a roach; and when she took Jude from Nel and slept with white men, they called her a bitch. The folks of the Bottom, true to their culture, also remembered the "weighty evidence" of Gothic events that proved that Sula was evil: the talk about her watching her mother burn, the plague of robins that announced her return to Medallion, the accidental injury of Teapot and death of Mr. Finley, and the ominous birthmark over her eye" (275).

Sula, upon her return, does not find her self-realization as much as a transient identity, valid only when she deserts her black folks and becomes in the lap of a Whiteman. Sula's identity is oddly

elusive and cannot be applied but only in sexual practices and here lies the irrationality and weakness of her liberation. John N. Duvall asserts that Sula's emancipation is only "found in sexual activity. Yet Sula's experience of discovering authenticity through sex creates simultaneously the desire to try to find that identity again, a dynamic that suggests that her "cutting edge" identity is never fully present and that is only constituted in the act of seeking itself. (59). Eva rebukes her for the irrational practices of prostitution in return of misleading herself "You sold your life for twenty-three dollars a month" (Sula, 93). The protagonist Sula immensely turns to a mindless girl revolting against whatever is societal and disciplined and accordingly loses her social emancipation. She naively strives to confirm all her transient beliefs she had learned and practised during her irrational emancipation. Consequently, Sula's sobriety, if there was some, devastated more by the outcomes of her irrational ten years independence. This can be clearly seen by Sula's rejection of Eva's advice to stable and have babies "When you get to get married? You need to have some babies. It'll settle you" (Sula, 92). Here Eva speaks to her granddaughter, but as if she addresses the whole community of Bottom, particularly women, to incarnate the rational bond of marriage, for settlement. This project is completely rejected by Sula who seeks after informalities rather than stability. Kavita Arya emphasises that Sula "rejects the traditional norms of feminine respectability like family, marriage, children, grand parental care, sexual mores and the concept of steady job. She hates to see a woman only as a wife, mother and daughter"(42).

Bhasker notes that Sula's "status as a woman without a man and a woman without children simply does not translate into a life that the Bottom understands" (33). Although Morrison rejects the notion of woman's need for a marriage or a man like Nel's marriage to Jude which distorts her selfhood, still, according to Kavita Arya, "a woman is incomplete and powerless without a man" (50). Generally, the husband is the man who supports his wife's emancipation by protecting her from the social vices and the control of genetic freaks that might be emerged in her singularity like Sula.

In a way or another, man is available and vibrant participant in the life of a woman that even the words 'woman' 'and' 'emancipation' cannot be built without (man). This may be what Eva means in her actuation for Sula to get married and have a husband and some babies to gain her social emancipation since "her oppression as a woman is the result of oppressive economic system, not men" (Mbalia, 43). Therefore, Eva declaims Sula that "It ain't right for you to want to stay off of yourself" (Sula, 92). However, Sula does not agree with what her community imposes of traditional notions under the pretext of being only a woman. "Her [Sula's] entire life represents a rejection of traditional notions of feminine responsibility. Sula refuses to see women as only wives and mothers" (Sumana, 74).

Therefore, the unreasoned thought of the mindless Sula towards whatever is concerned with the settlement is the focal point of Sula's impetuosity in search for her emancipation. Sula vehemently refused to take the role of a social woman that, in her opinion, incompatible with the idea of emancipation "being a wife and a mother are not pre-requisites for selfhood" (Shukla, 34). Sula, blindly, considers the marriage (man). as a failed project that one may take on. To Sula, according to John N. Duvall, whatever is concerned with men "are extremely marginal... In all the description of Sula's heterosexual activity, what is apparent is that she finds men's sexuality unpleasant and their unwanted presence after the act is something to block out" (59). In this framework, Sula irrationally attempts to emancipate from masculine hegemony and enslaves herself by providing men with the pleasure that they look for. Generally and in the context of being moral, rational, and emancipated woman especially with her equality with man, Mary Wollstonecraft states that:

"If women are really capable of acting like rational creatures, let them not be treated like slaves, or like lower animals who depend on the reason of man when they associate with him. Instead, develop their minds, give them the salutary, sublime curb of principle, and let them attain conscious dignity by feeling that they depend only on God. Teach them in

common with man to submit to necessity, instead of trying to make them more pleasing by giving a sex to morals" (24).

Sula does not expect to be an exceptional and apart of her mother and grandmother's marital experience. In addition, she does not take in the account the circumstances that formed such unsuccessful marriages. During her attempt of emancipation, Sula feels no commitment in depending or please none but only herself "I got my mind. And what goes on in it. Which is to say, I got me" (Sula, 143). In terms of emancipation, She blindly thinks that a marriage is to make a man's identity rather than a woman's declaring that "I don't want to make somebody else. I want to make myself" (Sula, 92).

Sula thoughtlessly causes the hurt for herself when she opposes the wedding thought and the docility after husband's orders. Perhaps, it is in her genes that Sula feels that marriage is simply a negative attitude. This abnormal thinking towards marriage is thus inherited from her mother, Hannah, and grandmother, Eva, who both experienced negative marriages. Unlike Sula, Nel shaped her valuable and survival independence when she emancipated according to the customs and traditions of her community. Robert Stepto writes that "Nel knows and believes in all the laws of that [Medallion] community. She is the community. She believes in its values. Sula does not. She does not believe in any of those laws and breaks them all. Or ignores them" (14). Sula's convince of a marriage project is unreasonably formulated that "She wanted to be the bridesmaid. No other" (Sula, 84). Contrastively, Nel's rational independence, regardless of her final rejection of patriarchy, rests only when she got married from Jude that formed her social identity "Nel does not and cannot see anything singular about herself. She recognises her individuality only when it is mirrored through someone other than herself" (Sumana, 76). Though Devika Rani articulated that a "marriage provides only an illusion for Nel" (74), still is the only basis on which the rationality of her social emancipation can be built. Nel's partial emancipation is thus discovered first in her marriage that grants her the "Bottom's accepted role of woman as a wife"(Rani,

73) and later completely emancipated after Sula's death in her realising of feminine unity as Elizabeth Ann Beaulieu explains:

"It is some time after Sula's death that Nel is able to reclaim the self that she had been, and she does this by recollecting what she had shared with Sula before marriage molded her into society's expectations of the Black wife and mother. At the end, Nel is able to redeem herself by acknowledging that she wasn't always the good one; what made her "good" was her and Sula together. Thus, their woman's bond reunites their spirits, transcending death" (16).

Upon her return and out of her rationality, Sula, once more, decides to acknowledge her role as a woman but this time not against social control but Nel. One aspect of Sula's irrationality is made apparent when she irrationally believes that she can share Jude, Nel's husband, who subsequently abandons Nel as an outcome of Sula's betrayal. She follows her irrational desire when she decides to have an affair with Jude, uninterested of Nel's grief and the social fundamentals of her community either. Here, it is implausible that she comes across all the affectionate and intimate friendship with Nel unless she has lost her rational thinking. "She has clung to Nel as the closest thing to both an other and a self, only to discover that she and Nel were not one and the same thing. She had no thought at all of causing Nel pain when she bedded down with Jude" (Sula, 119).

The irrationality of Sula to assert her identity broadens more upon meeting Nel's husband, Jude, who complies with her temptations. Sula confesses with her irrationality as she tells Nel before her death that Jude was only a filling for a free space in her mind "there was this space in front of me, behind me, in my head, some space. And Jude filled it up" (Sula, 144). The rationale of sleeping with Jude "illustrates both her contempt for the town's value system and her method of organising her life" (Russell, 46). Sula does not think to what Nel might turn to be in taking her husband away from her and when a stable family gets disintegrated. Sula's egotism is depicted by Morrison as one of the irrational aspects to assert her individuality, abandoning the need for her



people and not aware of the consequences "Sula's concern is not with consequences, but with personal satisfaction" (Russell, 46). In discussing of the social disintegrative of individualism, Dr. K. Sumana commented on Sula's negative effect in her selfish emancipation saying;

"selfish quest for individual fulfillment only leads some Africans to see themselves in isolation from the community that has shaped, protected and nurtured them ... She [Sula] does not seem to realize ... that individual fulfillment is dialectically related to group fulfillment and that the former is conditioned by the latter "(77, 78).

Another aspect of irrational emancipation can be also illustrated when Nel blames Sula's ingratitude and thoughtless demeanour in betraying her best friend "But what about me? What about me? Why you didn't think about me? Didn't I count? I never hurt you? What did you take him for if you didn't love him and why didn't you think about me? And then I was good to you. Sula, why don't that matter?"(Sula, 144). Sula's betrayal for Nel is out of her conscious control because she is led not by her mind but by her irrational quest for her identity. Devika Rani argues that "Sula innocently believed that Nel would likewise accept her sexual affair with Jude" (77). What can be pointed on the contrary of what Devika described as 'innocently' should, in my opinion, be 'irrationally' instead,for her indifference and egotism. She transgresses the rational boundaries of self-liberation that she does not consider the surroundings, staring only for her emancipation at the expense of anyone but not herself, and this made her irrational woman. Bhasker argues that "Despite any real or perceived limitations imposed by her family, her community, or the era in which she is depicted, Sula does not put any limits upon herself"(23).

Morrison portrayed Sula's stagnant thinking when she compared her with the Eva's Dewey (Though adults but still thinking like children) and how Sula couldn't understand theadvice and the moral lessons, as Nel attests "Talking to her about right or wrong was like talking to the deweys" (Sula, 145). Sula's mind

obviously individualistic because she does not mind hurting others for the sake to ensure her independence. She feels emancipation at the time that all the folks of the Bottom neighbourhood disdain and regard her as a shameful woman "Sula's independence and freedom do not permit her to feel shame herself" (Gillespie, 197). She beautifies herself for the sake of obtaining anything in love. Moreover, she is naturally a materialistic woman since she is always indifferent to spiritual and communal values and more concerned with physicalities, not mentalities. Kavita Arya writes that "She [Sula] becomes possessive and starts to make herself physically beautiful but not mentally" (46). Morrison plainly expounds Sula's inhuman side in Nel's reproach for her betrayal with Jude:

"And you didn't love me enough to leave him alone. To let him love me. You had to take him away"

"What you mean take him away? I didn't kill him" (Sula, 145)

In this passage, one can easily discern Sula's incompatibility with Nel's sentiments and her adherence only with physical aspects. Sula's controversial identity is, therefore, interpreted as an irrational one for her engagement with concrete objects. In other words, Sula essentially deals with the externals of people and careless for their internal senses. Lately, Sula realised her superficiality with Nel, who was Sula's 'other I', and how she was such an ungrateful companion "how much I have cost her and never remember the days when we were two throats and one eye and we had no price" (Sula, 147).

On Sula's return, the focus on rationality and irrationality can be easily floated up on the surface of conversations, as the one between Sula and Nel. Sula speaks mindlessly, blundering with her impetuous individuality and oblivion of all moral and social concerns of her community. The conversation turns to Eva's deterioration and how Sula's imprudence towards her is morally rejected. "She [Sula] refuses to conform to the traditional expectations of women, such as caretaking, and places her grandmother in a home rather than nursing the woman herself. Sula

is a woman out-of-sync with the time in which she lives" (Gillespie, 195) Also, Sula's irrational journey along with her arrogance at the time of her sickness, has made Nel wedged herself in a conversation about the manner in which Sula emancipates. Here, both Sula and Nel confront the visions of female moral limitations and then reconcile and emancipate "Morrison's exploration of the female voice struggling toward maturity and authenticity climaxes in Sula and Nel's discussion at Sula's death-bed" (Powel, 86).

In her attempt for being existent, Sula vainly starts to expect to gain the love of people to reassert her identity, at least, as a human being and not of being emancipated even. This depressed feeling of being neglected as a consequence of her irrationality defines at her health deterioration "Oh, they will love me all right. It will take time, but they will love me" (Sula, 145). Sula's irrationality in accordance with her meaningless existence structured her useless personality that she discovers lately. She portrays herself as an inanimate and senseless woman for missing the sapience in her endeavours after her womanly identity. On her death bed, Sula again reaps her harvest of being irrational when she makes an access to her internal thoughts imagining herself as anything "That's the same Sun I looked at when I was twelve, the same pear trees. If I live a hundred years my urine will flow the same way, my armpits and breath will smell the same. My hair will grow from the same holes. I didn't mean anything. I never meant anything" (Sula, 147). However, Sula lost her communal belonging as an outcome of her irrational repercussions of her emancipation. Eventually, Sula dies as she had lived: pariah and recluse as a price for her irrational emancipation and the antagonism she has had for her community mores. "Sula lives according to her own design and, for that independence, dies early and alone" (Shukla, 40). However, admitting that Sula "challenges the social norms that deny a woman her individual rights" (Rani, 90), does not exculpate Sula from her irrational decisions and behaviours in achieving her emancipation, especially that "Sula had an odd way of looking at things" (Sula, 104). Danielle Russell also observed that "Sula has constantly been

at odds with her community" (96) in her irrational rebellion for emancipation.

Nel, in her mingled personality with Sula's concerns, is supposedly unable to define herself. She could alone decide to fulfil her social individuality while Sula is still misled by her irrational ambitions. Morrison writes about Nel's private preference to figure out her feminine entity without Sula's companionship "Greater than her friendship was this new feeling of being needed by someone who saw her singly" (Sula, 84). Nel initially fails to express her own emancipation as long as she accompanies the irrational Sula. Later, Nel gains her belated emancipation upon two phases; first, when she defines herself as a wife experiencing a rational behaviour in her traditional community. The second phase is when she realises the importance of female bonding in Sula's death as murmuring 'girl, girl, girl'. This recognition of Sula's worth is to explain the necessity of emancipation and further the community's increased consciousness to reborn.

The reverse of Sula's thought is, therefore, Nel's reasonable self-realisation who is socially emancipated for her social and tolerant individuality. In spite of the betrayal of Sula in taking Jude from her, Nel's rationality takes place again in the novel. The realisation of Nel and her proper reasoning make her visit Sula in her illness and take care of her that no one asks about her but only Nel "I heard you was sick, anything I can do for you" (Sula, 138). Nel's sympathy with Sula's situation as a sick woman is a tangible evidence for Nel's sapience and her clear intentions. A harmonious reconciliation of the mind and the body as a prerequisite for woman's rational emancipation is to be found only in the woman who keeps pace with the reasonable norms of life and here Nel is the model for that. While Nel represents the mind who judges and decides, Sula is the body that acts and reacts. Sula, unlike Nel, is always in need for her mind and consequently, to reason. Sebastian Gardner asserts that "Parts emerge, through conceptual analysis, from the definition of irrationality as intentional behaviour that runs contrary to reason (59)". Contrastively, Nel acts in many occasions, as the mind for administrating Sula's goodness and feasible

decisions that Sula needs as a step towards refining her unstable identity:

"All I know is I'm scared. And there is no place else for me to go. We all that's left, Eva and me. I guess I should have stayed gone. I didn't know what else to do. May be I should have talked to you about it first. You always had better sense than me. Wherever I was scared before, you knew just what to do" (Sula, 101).

It is eminently clear that Sula here is completely misled with the notorious identity she had obtained during her irrational ten years travel. She usually resorted to Nel in all her faults, careless of the results that might be as long as Nel is the adviser. From the very beginning of the novel, Nel uses her mind to overcome problems while Sula uses her body. She loses her existence as a human being and sustains herself in terms of her body not mind. In their confrontation with the hunkies, for instance, Sula unthinkingly cuts her own fingertip as a way of defence "not as an expression of female solidarity but motivated by a need to help forge a self" (Rani, 72-73). Here, the rational Nel refused to agree with this precipitancy and the violent act of Sula who "earned not Nel's gratitude but her digest" (Sula, 141). Morrison admits Sula's irrationality and her mental disturbances in taking rush decisions:

"Sula, like always, was incapable of making any but the most trivial decisions. When it came to matters of grave importance, she behaved emotionally and irresponsibly and left it to others to straighten out. And when fear struck her, she did unbelievable things. Like that time with her finger. Whatever those hunkies did, it wouldn't have been as bad as what she did to herself. But Sula was so scared she had mutilated herself, to protect herself" (Sula, 101).

In Toni Morrison's *Sula*, it is very notable that things are contrastively portrayed whether in places or characters. The reverse of Sula's deviated thinking is that of Nel's who is constantly conservative and moderate in her social patterns. Sula emancipated only when she diverged from the norms of her morality while Nel who "Deprived of the sexual and biological life assigned to

her"(Rani, 74). finds refuge in her chastity and therefore emancipated rationally. Mary Wollstonecraft remarks that "if women are rational creatures they should be urged to acquire virtues that they can call their own" (35). Mary also argues that "Women considered not only as moral, but rational creatures, ought to endeavour to acquire human virtues" (26). Morrison thus portrays the irrational woman as a symbol for teaching us moral lessons that Nel Wright incarnates and Sula Peace lacks in her search for emancipation. Bhasker A. Shukla says that "Morrison establishes a tone that encourages the reader to view Sula as a parable"(25). Furthermore, Morrison clarified that following a feasible thinking and avoiding aberrations is the only way to figure out social identity, not personal, so as in the case of Nel. K. Sumanan observes that "Nel assumes the traditional role the community prescribes, and retains her social identity, though her personal identity is non-existent. Sula, by contrast, is a free spirited woman whose determination to define herself places her at odds with the culturally rich black community"(69). In this context, it can be mentioned that Sula forgets her womanly role and embodies the role of a man in forming an emancipated woman and this is what Morrison regards as irrational thought of Sula. This is clear when Nel blames Sula for her past behaviours in identifying herself in a manly manner of life "You can't act like a man. You can't be walking around all independent-like, doing whatever you like, talking what you want, leaving what you don't" (Sula, 142).

Nel is getting exasperated with what Sula has made herself, pointing out the aberrations that she has adopted in her emancipation. However, both Sula and Nel are in a conflict of being emancipated and each draws inspiration from another for further rational exploration of a self "their meeting was fortunate, for it let them use each other to grow on"(Sula, 52). Eventually, neither of whom is complete and each encompasses an identity, a transient (individual) for Sula and a permanent (social) for Nel. In this framework, Nel, on the one hand, identifies herself in terms of rationality and in accordance with social and familial norms of her community. Sula, on the other, is an iconoclast, attacks cherished

beliefs and institution of her community. She persistently advocates the sovereignty of women but all her efforts are in vain since she detaches from her community and from whatever is meaningful and rational. Shail Bala observes that Sula "behaves like an outsider who is not committed to play the role which may be called meaningful, purposeful and fruitful" (63). Thus, she could even compromise neither with herself nor with her community's regulations so swayed between irrationality and her endeavours to attain her emancipation.

Although Sula's irrational acts threaten the moral principles of community, the people of Medallion "see in Sula someone against whom they can unite"(Sumana, 77). Sula's emancipation is eventually remarked by "an overt renunciation of the communal identity" notes Danielle Russell, but also "becomes a rallying point for the village"(155). It is worth mentioning that the irrationality of Sula gives the people of Medallion not only a shame but also liberation for their constraints and vices."Sula, upon her return to the Bottom, comes to constitute the identity of the rest of the community. The community quickly learns to define its virtue by Sula's difference, which it reads as a malign supernatural force" (Duvall, 55). While it is true that Sula's struggle for emancipation is full of irrational attitudes, It is also true that this emancipation is not devoid of positive effect not for Sula but for her community "the consequences of Sula's thoughtless, often cruel, acts against her people, have both negative and positive effects" (Mbalia, 46). The people of Medallion start to love and protect each other, combined together against the devil that Sula stands for. This effect that Sula endowed to her community is involuntarily involved as a positive consequence of her irrational emancipation. "Sula's negative position functions as a catalyst. A transformation of the personal interactions of the group is directly related to their judgment of the self-ostracized individual's behaviour—their "goodness" is contingent on her wickedness... Rather than sustaining Sula, the community seems to be sustained by her. (Russell, 155). Eventually, neither Sula nor Nel has achieved full emancipation and

that Morrison once again presents *Sula* as a complement for *The Bluest Eye* in a hapless lot of African American Woman.

In short, *Sula* is neither rational in her decisions nor balanced in her feelings while Nel, although becomes a victim, could aptly base her life on reason. *Sula's* irrational emancipation frightens her community which consequently abandons her in life and death. In contrast, Nel's rational emancipation is pleasantly received as a sapient woman for her incarnating the social patterns of her community. Nel, on the one hand, managed her decisions rationally taking in consideration both surroundings and traditions of her community, Medallion people. *Sula*, on the other, acts irrationally diverting from the communal laws that govern reality to a misleading world filled with illusions and transient joys.



## Conclusion

In Toni Morrison's *Sula* (1973), the consequences of emancipation are sometimes positive and at other times negative so in accordance with the community values which followed that emancipation. The deeper analysis of *Sula* manifests the fact that the novel is more related to irrationalities than to rationalities. Morrison concentrated more on depicting irrationality in order to explore the traditional social roles of African American women and consequently to pave the way for a safer identity achievement. *Sula* uses community to articulate her irrational experiences while Nel defines herself according to her community tenets. As far as emancipation is concerned, Morrison calls out for sobriety in search for emancipation showing up *Sula* as a representative of irrational African American woman and Nel as the rational one.

Toni Morrison's *Sula* is intentionally written as a social novel and it can also be interpreted as a reformatory book for the black woman's straightness. However, a thoughtless and an irrational emancipated woman is often cruel to the self and community. *Sula* struggles to death not only because of her physical sickness but also by her psychological one which is highly related with her irrational emancipation. She unthinkingly lives and thoughtlessly forms her uncontrollable identity. Toni Morrison says that there should be a tax for the misbehaving and the untraditional quest for the self. Because of her irrationality, *Sula* lives in isolation and becomes the ominous woman and finally dies as a pariah, neglected by her community and acquaintances. Thus, Morrison metaphorically used *Sula* as a tool for reformation and as a personification for the irrational emancipation. The research is, therefore, of social impact and that community does not make an alliance with dissidents.

In *Sula*, Toni Morrison suggests what might happen if a woman transgresses the traditional and moral boundaries of her community. As a result, Morrison gives an evidence for the superiority of rationality over irrationality when Nel, though on the account of her individual freedom, proved her permanent social identity, and *Sula* is finally alone after losing her fragile emancipation. Toni Morrison thus criticises the irrational self-

realization of African American woman and encourages their respectable and honourable emancipation that keeps pace with morals and community norms. It can be said that none of the characters, mothers and daughters, could articulate a full emancipation but only partial, either social or personal. Sula and her mother, Hannah, are the irrational characters while rationality is limited to the conventional Nel and somewhat to Eva, Sula's grandmother. It is certain that Toni Morrison seems to warn those women who are striving to fulfil their communal emancipation not to follow Sula's example, but the social conventions like the rational Nel. Eventually, Sula is apparently perceived as the local incarnation of evil and internally as a source of unity. Though the folk people of Medallion despise Sula who, in turn, antagonises their values, can neither live without community nor emancipate away of it

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