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**A Bakhtinian Study of the Representation of Madness in Toni Morrison's *Paradise***

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**Abstract**

Concerning Toni Morrison's "Paradise," this paper seeks to accept the idea that insanity might be depicted in black literature. The research article analyses this novel by examining madness and other pertinent topics and by connecting concepts from Bakhtinian theory, particularly the mad chronotope, to the creative process—the protagonist in the second section of the narrative struggles with schizophrenia for a significant period. This article focuses on how to represent madness and the genre of black literature to explain how madness is portrayed in modern black literature.

**Keywords:** madness, chronotope, Bakhtinian theory, schizophrenia, black literature

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Due to its origins in the slave narrative, black literature is marked by controversy. It is created by authors from the African Diaspora and addresses issues central to the black experience, such as racism, social inequality, and injustice. Black British, African American, and African Caribbean works of literature are part of the African Diaspora and claim kinship to these experiences. This convergence is far from complete; culture plays a role as the underlying framework within which identity, place, and social context contribute to defining each experience so that the African American experience or, to be more precise, the African Caribbean experience cannot fully explain what the Black British have experienced due to cultural differences. Because of this, the works of literature of the African Diaspora are termed after the parallels and distinctions between them, which become apparent when trying to draw generalizations merely based on relationships.

The introduction of the mad chronotope is the focus of this investigation of the realm of representations of psychosis in black literature. The article examines the chronotope in Bakhtinian theory and how it might be used to the issue of insanity. The chronotope is described by Bakhtin as

"the intrinsic connectivity of temporal and spatial relations that are artistically articulated in literature" in *The Dialogic Imagination* (Holquist 1981: 84). Bakhtin believed that the novel's representation of time and space made the inseparability between time and space that is articulated in Einstein's Theory of Relativity seemingly tangible. And despite Bakhtin's rather hazy interpretation of this "intrinsic connectedness," it is possible to create a description of how time and space interact in the portrayal of the mad character by identifying time gaps in the text, textual parallels between madness and sanity, mad language, as well as what the researcher perceives as the "carving out" of the mad character—the way the mad character is represented in the text in terms of qualities. As a result, the study's novelty comes from a Bakhtinian theory of time and space that offers a different perspective on the insane character through language and aspects of literary theory. The depiction of madness in black literature provides a platform for scholarly debate on madness and refutes the idea that depicting insanity pathologizes black people. Discourse refers to a protracted exchange of views on a particular subject.

This extended communication can only be realized to a certain extent since

madness does not experience reality as it is; instead, it distorts reality to create its truth. This reality is weakened by its shaky foundations and, as a result, does not behave as a dialogue ought to. Because of the fascination with how it appears in black literature and its importance as a counterpoint to the sanity of reality and truth, madness is a good topic of study.

Reading works of black literature with the theme of madness reveals that, for the most part, none of the characters discusses the pathology of the disease. The illness is not treated by any medical intervention, leaving the characters in a "mad bubble" in which their perception of the outside world is manipulated to name the peculiar nature of their situation. This alternate nature has a voice of its own, a distinct style of speaking, and a different way of enunciating difference that is in line with an alternative vision of things, just as the alternate nature of the literature itself. This gives the literature a questioning perspective from which to investigate the alternative. Because black literature has its alternate past, the Bakhtinian idea of the chronotope is a useful theoretical tool. Bakhtin, a Russian philosopher who disagreed with the traditional Formalist view of literary theory, developed ideas distinct from Western European and Anglo-American philosophy in their source and ideas. The theory, which relies on time-space congruence, has significant ties to historical time and place, making it an appealing idea to apply to black literature. This can be viewed as an alternative to Western concepts in studying black literature, which can occasionally be contentious. From an African Diaspora perspective, time in literature is considered to operate cyclically rather than in the purely Western linear form. Therefore, the African-influenced view replenishes itself in a way that considers growth, death, and re-growth, to put it simply. In contrast, the Western perspective registers progress in linear, progressive time. Given that the majority of the diasporic populations are based in

the west, this point in time is by no means unaffected by western influence.

As a result, time, which makes up the majority of the chronotope, can be interpreted as a crucial component of the study of literature and, in this case, the investigation of madness in literature. Moments of madness are arbitrary and random, but in their randomness, there is a sense that there is a beginning and an end, which then continues to replenish itself with the character's continuous ideas. This is the simplest way to express how the cyclical concept of time affects moments of madness. The usage of the chronotope in this study relies heavily on this relationship between time and lunacy since it assumes a sequence of psychological occurrences and shows how those events progress from reality to illusion. Regarding the symbolic significance of the chronotope, this study takes Bakhtin's theory very literally.

"Time becomes tangible and observable; Making narrative events concrete is the chronotope makes them resemble flesh and draws blood into its veins. When an event is shared, it becomes information; one can provide accurate locational information. And the time it happened. The event does not, however, become well-known [obraz]. The chronotope is exactly what it is, which forms the basis for the manifestation events' capacity for representation. And I'm grateful for that. because of the phenomenal rise in density and concreteness of time within clearly defined geographic boundaries." (1981:250 Holquist)

This means that literature about lunacy or otherness can be studied in the context of literature since it operates within the temporal and physical boundaries established by the chronotope. This ensures that time and space have clearly defined areas of study that could be centred on the character's insanity. This, in turn, gives structure and plot a dramatic meaning, demonstrating the value of both place and time.

Numerous characters in the selected text, Toni Morrison's *Paradise* (1998), are insane and exist in two

communities—one that tolerates madness and the other that does not. The distinctive environments of these communities have chronotopic value because, despite their distinctions, they are closer to one another than one might anticipate. Morrison has a literary history of writing about madness in her texts, and her work was chosen because of the normalizing quality of the treatment of madness. How those around them treat the mad protagonists suggests a move away from pathologizing people and the community from which they come to recognize the dialectic between sanity and madness, as depicted by Morrison and other African American writers.

Most of the characters are experiencing hallucinations and a break from reality (primarily auditory hallucinations). Because the characters' minds are fractured, their knowledge of reality is diminished by the delusions (Lyttle 1986: 11). This departure from reality plays a significant role in the novel in question's structure and plot. As such, it is crucial to understand the justification for the notion of lunacy in this situation. The characters' actions affect the plot and structure because, in this case, madness is the point at which reality is conquered by delusional fiction. This impact can be seen in the characters' interactions with others and how the characters' disconnection from reality links to the reader's disconnection from reality. Delusion and the hallucinatory are thus metaphors for lunacy, and they have an impact on the novel's characters and plot.

The definition of madness provides insight into how the novel's protagonists' symptoms are presented. In Morrison's *Paradise*, Mavis experiences a psyche rupture and disorder after losing her infants, which is depicted as being in conflict with reality. As a result, the figure is displayed in a specific aesthetic way that considers the features of crazy.

In *Paradise*, fifteen families—or fourteen, if one believes another telling of the tale—settled in a small, self-sufficient black hamlet with a population of 360 in western Oklahoma. A large house that

was once a smuggler's hideout and a convent are located 17 miles from the town and eventually houses five women: Consolata, who was brought to the convent by the first Mother Superior, who passes away at the start of the book; Mavis; Gigi (Grace); Seneca; and Pallas. These women have tumultuous histories to share and depend on the convent's peace and obscurity to give them time. The novel's title also implies that Ruby and the Convent are not distinct locations but that the town's utopian idealism adheres to myth-making patterns that are ultimately unsolvable. It is possible to conclude that elements of madness, in its ontological sense of abstraction and as a pathological insight for the reader, feature on several levels that myth-making and mere phantasms (in the town's spiritual founder) cannot function within because of this irreconcilability and the nature of self-sufficiency. Therefore, it is reasonable to consider the spiritual and mythological dimensions of lunacy apart from their conventional counterparts.

This moment of rupture, which is not always solely psychotic, is marked by the relevance of space (setting, site, contestation), time, location, and (dis)order in the mad chronotype's analysis of the connected psychotic planes of thought and application of their meaning in the narrative. What is meant by the "crazy chronotope" reorders the fixed concepts of relative sequentiality inside the abstraction of space and time to reflect mental dysfunction and discontinuities in reported events as unreliable narration characteristics. Even while time and space are typically not divided inside the chronotopic moment, it is apparent from the denominations used in each setting that they generally overlap.

Mavis Albright leaves her twin babies in her husband's car for a brief period on a hot day near the beginning of the book, and they die from suffocation. The chapter titles are all women's names, and Mavis' chapter begins with her being surrounded by her surviving children while she answers questions from a

reporter. When the character leaves the house one dawn, she thinks Sal and the other children have laid traps for her because she feels frightened around her kids, especially Sal. She informs Birdie Goodroe that her kids are trying to kill her as she arrives at her mother's house in the stolen Cadillac.

What did they do when they "tried how?"

"They were laughing and looking at me, and Sal had a razor."

You are keeping an eye on me at all times.

"What used Sal's razor for?"

She was staring at me while holding it close to her plate.

They were all."

Neither woman brought it up again after Birdie informed them not to; Mavis She could only stay provided she never mentioned that. Once again" Morrison (Morrison, 1998: 32)

When evaluated by a sane but misinformed mind, the mad chronotope, which in this context manifests as paranoia and repetition, depicts the overwhelming essence of schizophrenia. The fact that Mavis recounts this incident to her mother and, it's possible to infer, subconsciously reviews events at various locations throughout her subsequent travels across America creates a chronotopic moment distinct from her time spent at home with her husband and kids but consistent with a disputed sense of reality.

A week before her actual trip to the convent, Mavis explains to her mother the "imagined" events that have a place. A family where the legitimacy of mother-and-father and daughter-and-nurturer roles is crucial. This is the home she is trying to flee. Birdie Goodroe is unable to react to Mavis' feelings of guilt and shame, which aggravates her severe paranoia. Instead of thinking about the bereaved, Birdie Goodroe is pragmatically concerned about the wellbeing of the live children and Mavis' job as a nurturer and caretaker. Mavis, who is now acutely aware of her emotions, jumps from one contentious location—which houses her frequently intoxicated, sexually libidinous husband and dependent children—to

another: her mother's austere simplicity in a setting of purported nurture, the open road with all its dysfunctional travellers therein; the convent; and the inherent conflict of personalities within a multi-person household. In this case, the narrative sequentially exhumes her initial psychotic state despite giving each subsequent site prolonged moments of lucidity that would seem to contradict it.

The way they developed and altered was astounding. They might not raise their heads as they leave, but they were already toddlers when we first heard them in the mansion at the age of two. They were laughing, and she could tell precisely. Additionally, they knew their growth based on how well they blended with the other children running around the rooms. When they were six and a half and reached school age, Mavis was forced to consider age-appropriate birthday presents for Christmas (1998: 258)

The convent shows some of the confrontational qualities Bakhtin refers to concerning the Rabelaisian carnival and includes another voice within itself (Lechte 1990: 106); this suggests a comment within a comment, an utterance within an utterance — multilayered reasonings. Instead of being an oversimplistic contested site like her mother's house, where conversations are forcibly closed. Even though it is not fully accommodated, the repeating of past occurrences and their eventual linkage into a new way of seeing has a place in this location.

In Mavis' case, despite her alienation from her living children and the death of the twins, which she still hears and imagines, her social function as a mother continues to exist for her and at least one of the other women (Consolata) as something natural. It might be argued that, in a supportive atmosphere, accepting a psychotic's speech by another person can prolong the psychotic episode and safely postpone reality. Over six years, Mavis is permitted to act on her delusion. As indicated, this period includes her providing a complete account of the twins' deaths.

### Conclusion

Mavis's illness is put on hold by the narrative temporality created by the fact that her insane chronotopic moment unfolds in great detail throughout two sections and at both ends of the book, with the second section being a partial repetition of the first. Because of this, the decision to postpone showing Mavis' illness is more than just a plot device; it also implies that such a delay allows for alterity in the form of suppressed crazy, "allowed" spirituality, and utopian idealism.

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