

Digital and Literary Representations of Black Feminine Identity in Toni Morrison Studies

Asst. lect. Ayat kadhim ghanim AL-Saleet

Directorate of Education in Dhi Qar / Al-Rifai Education Departm

*Corresponding: : ayat.ghanem@nust.edu.iq

Received date: 2026/6/12

Accepted date: 25/8/2026

Published date: 2026/09/20

Abstract

The present article intends to review two scholarly papers published in CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture that inspect representations of Black feminine identity in the works and cultural reception of Toni Morrison. The focus is on Revelles-Benavente's "How Toni Morrison's Facebook Page Re (con) figures Race and Gender" (2014) and Azumurana's "The Dilemma of Western Education in Aidoo's Changes: A Love Story, Naylor's The Women of Brewster Place, and Morrison's Beloved" (2013); by doing so, the article discusses how Black womanhood is created, conveyed, and reimaged in both digital and literary spaces. The review analyzes Revelles-Benavente's discussion of the undying implication of Morrison's eminence in the present digital culture. It also investigates Azumurana's comparative study of Western education and confirms how education, although often associated with progression and endorsement, can also bring about cultural distancing, identity brawls, and social control. By bringing these studies into dialogue, the article means to stress the close relationship between digital culture, literary criticism, feminism, and Black identity politics.

Keywords:

Black Feminine Identity, Black Womanhood, Digital Space, Social Media.

.



1.Introduction

In the article at hand I review two selected papers on Toni Morrison published by CLCWeb as a peer-reviewed, full-text, and open-access learned journal in the humanities and social sciences. The articles include "How Toni Morrison's Facebook Page Re (con) figures Race and Gender" (2014) by Revelles-Benavente and "The Dilemma of Western Education in Aidoo's *Changes: A Love Story*, Naylor's *The Women of Brewster Place*, and Morrison's *Beloved*" (2013) by Azumurana.

Toni Morrison was an American writer, women's rights activist, and university professor. In 1993, she won the Nobel Prize in Literature, becoming the first black American woman to win the award. As one of the most substantial African American authors of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Morrison has established all-encompassing critical attention across literary studies, feminist criticism, postcolonial studies, and cultural theory. The articles reviewed in this study both prove the diversity of contemporary approaches to Morrison's literary productions and cultural implication, chiefly in relation to race, gender, education, identity, and digital exemplification.

Even though the two selected articles have focused on different methodologies and subject matters, both want to show Morrison's contribution to discussions of Black identity, social power, and cultural transformation. In other words, these two chosen articles stand for two corresponding facets of Black feminine identity because one analyzes Morrison's digital/public identity through Facebook, and the other examines her depiction of identity in literature through *Beloved*. Therefore, together they enable this examination to transfer from Morrison as a cultural/digital character to Morrison as a literary novelist, while also linking race, gender, education, identity, and cultural power.

Revelles-Benavente discusses how Morrison's digital attendance on Facebook renovates ideas of race and gender in online spaces by accentuating the importance of social media in determining contemporary literary and cultural identities. In contrast, Azumurana investigates Morrison's *Beloved* as well as works by Ama Ata Aidoo and Gloria Naylor to scrutinize the tensions and consequences related to Western education in postcolonial and African diasporic circumstances.

By reviewing these articles together, this study seeks to show the interdisciplinary essence of Morrison scholarship, which validates how her works and public image continue to motivate discussions across literary



criticism, feminist theory, cultural studies, and digital humanities. The review also assesses the strengths, weaknesses, theoretical frameworks, and critical contributions of the selected articles with the aim of evaluating their implication within contemporary Morrison studies.

2 .Summary of the Articles

"How Toni Morrison's Facebook Page Re (con) figures Race and Gender" revolves round Morrison's Facebook page and comments on it. Since Morrison opened a Facebook page, she has received lots of comments and established discussions. Now Revelles-Benavente shows how these comments deal with such matters as race and gender. It has been argued that Facebook as an important social networking site provides a space where members as active agents are able to discuss the existing political problems while alluding to the past .

Morrison has chosen a theme for most of her works that she herself has faced throughout her life, which is the issue of racism and gender and racial discrimination. She creates an epic atmosphere to express her beliefs, in which different characters express vivid and brilliant dialogues. We can also see the effect of the struggle for freedom and achieving equality in her personal life. This can be the reason why Revelles-Benavente has decided to work on her Facebook page.

The article claims that social media podiums are not unbiased communication apparatuses; instead, they dynamically affect cultural meanings and public views regarding identity. Moreover, Revelles-Benavente is concerned with how this famous author's online contribution transmutes the association between her works and her readers by producing cooperating systems of communication that are different from traditional literary culture. Through Facebook, Morrison's identity as a Black female novelist becomes openly exchanged through comments, posts, shared images, and audience involvement. Finally, Revelles-Benavente adds that,

It is necessary to go beyond a femaleness-maleness discourse. It is necessary in order to analyze how we construct gender in a context as active and dynamic as social networking sites, a context where concepts are not defined through linguistic determinisms, but embedded in the subtle details of the different discourses. I posit that feminist ought to be about transgressions and visualizing inequalities and this would point at inequality in the form of universalisms while denying at the same time mere pluralism. Morrison individualizes each of her characters with special needs by focusing on the possibility of relating selves in



order to dismantle a patriarchal system and she reminds us that gender—as race—does not crumble into some passive personal inwardness, but transforms history into a material flow. (p. 18)

"The Dilemma of Western Education in Aidoo's *Changes: A Love Story*, Naylor's *The Women of Brewster Place*, and Morrison's *Beloved*" also analyzes the difficulties of Western education with reference to Black Africans and African Americans through the ingenious perspective of three prose fictions written by African and African American women. However, in this review article I am mostly obsessed with *Beloved* by Toni Morrison.

Azumurana believes that the dilemma of Western education as it relates to Africans and African Americans has attracted the attention of researchers from different fields. He refers to the influence of Western education on Black African and African American societies through the exploration of three novels written by female writers. In this article, it is claimed that Western education, while often shown as a path to modernization and growth, also produces cultural skirmishes, mental pressures, and identity predicaments among Black communities that have suffered from colonialism and slavery.

Accordingly, it is stated that in spite of the fact that African Americans have developed a culture different from the typical US American culture, the arrangement of the U.S. educational system does not take into consideration this difference. It is also inspected how the educational systems presented through colonial and Western influence often detach people from their traditional cultures, histories, and collective ethics. The article validates that education can act both as a tool for authorization and as an instrument of societal and cultural dominion. Through the selected novels, Azumurana studies problems such as racial repression, gender discrimination, cultural estrangement, and the fight for self-definition.

In the discussion of Morrison's *Beloved*, the article gives emphasis to the permanent consequences of slavery, historical trauma, and the dominance of Black memory and identity. Azumurana then notes that Morrison condemns prevailing systems of knowledge that downgrade African American experiences while emphasizing the prominence of memory, storytelling, and cultural endurance. He writes that *Beloved*,

acknowledges the horror of slavery and portrays the horrendous treatment and tortuous memories of the slave past while documenting the effect of this history on future generations of African Americans. Relying heavily on Morrison's



insistence that racism is always uppermost in her mind, Morrison's novels have largely been seen by scholars and critics as one that upholds African American culture, while denigrating Euro-American civilization. (p. 12)

3 .Critical Analysis

Beatriz Revelles-Benavente's "How Toni Morrison's Facebook Page Re(con)figures Race and Gender" (2014) is chosen because it is a key interdisciplinary examination of Toni Morrison's contribution to social media and the ways in which race and gender are discussed through digital collaboration. Printed in CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture, the article exceeds conventional attitudes towards Morrison's literary texts by scrutinizing her official Facebook page, facebook.com/Official Toni Morrison Author .

The page contains information about Morrison's books, interviews, conferences, and public activities, along with quotations from her novels that stimulate broad reader responses and debates. The article is mostly substantial as it brings Morrison studies into conversation with cyberculture, feminist theory, and developing digital humanities attitudes, hence demonstrating how literary communication can be transmogrified when writers, texts, and readers correlate in a social-media background.

One of the article's focal assets is its innovation. At a time when academic discussions of social media, literary authorship, and digital identity were still progressing, Revelles-Benavente refers to Facebook not only as a profile-raising podium but as a cultural and revelatory space in which identities and meanings are successively exchanged. Instead of perceiving Morrison's contribution to Facebook as a tool for extending her literary status alone, the study examines the interactions inspired by her posts and the ways in which readers become involved in generating meanings around race and gender. This method is chiefly appreciated for Morrison studies since it extends the discussion of her illustrations of Black identity from the printed literary text to a participatory digital background.

The article's experimental facet is also notable. Revelles-Benavente does not only make hypothetical declarations about Morrison's Facebook contributions; she inspects certain posts and their supplementary debates. One of the most significant examples is Morrison's quotation, "In this country American means white. Everybody else has to hyphenate." At the time of the author's inspection,



the post had received 340 replies and 4,535 likes, with the last comment noted on August 10, 2013 .

Revelles-Benavente has been chiefly preoccupied with the interface surrounding this quotation, such as a debate that produced 115 comments in about one hour. She remarks that although the discussion essentially focused on race, geography, and the meaning of "American," only a small number of contributors responsively referred to the gendered aspect of the statement. In fact, she later records that only eleven of the 340 responses related "American" not only with "white" but also with "male." These instances show how digital audience answers can duplicate, confront, or render undetectable particular dimensions of identity. Another strong point of the article is its interdisciplinary theoretical framework. Revelles-Benavente has mixed feminist theory, cyberculture studies, intersectional thinking, relational theories of identity, and new materialist approaches. Her argument comprises researchers such as Judith Butler, Rosi Braidotti, Sara Ahmed, Alexis Shotwell, Trevor Sangrey, and Karen Barad. Most substantially, the author plainly categorizes Karen Barad's notion of the "apparatus" as the methodological basis of her investigation. Benefitting from Barad, Revelles-Benavente regards Facebook as a powerful device through which boundaries of inclusion and exclusion are ceaselessly created .

The methodological angle of the article is accordingly best comprehended as a qualitative, theoretically informed close reading of digital discourse. Instead of employing quantitative content analysis or a systematic statistical examination of all Facebook activity, Revelles-Benavente chooses significant posts and comments and investigates them through feminist, relational, intersectional, and new materialist concepts. Though, the methodological procedure could have been articulated more plainly. This methodological constraint is imperative for the reason that social-media data are exceedingly fluid. Comments, likes, and interactions may alter over time, while posts can be removed, edited, or restructured by the platform .

As the second article, Azumurana's "The Dilemma of Western Education in Aidoo's *Changes: A Love Story*, Naylor's *The Women of Brewster Place*, and Morrison's *Beloved*" presents a comparative investigation of the cultural and psychological consequences of Western education in African and African American societies through the literature of Ama Ata Aidoo, Gloria Naylor, and Toni Morrison. In fact, Azumurana notes that Western education creates problems whether for African Americans or Black Africans and whether well-



educated or not, since there is a complementary destructive complex for the African and African American characters in the chosen novels.

This statement is located in a greater debate concerning the affiliation between education, race, and cultural power. Benefitting from Parry, Azumurana says that American educational discourse has historically been shaped by "white businessman, white reformers, and white scholars," whereas an African American counter-narrative has stayed ineffectively exemplified (Parry, 1987, pp. 27-58). This issue underpins Azumurana's central declaration that education is not a culturally unbiased establishment but is inspired by the societal position and historical authority of those who adjust its curriculum.

The article is significant thanks to linking literary criticism with more substantial societal and historical problems such as colonialism, slavery, racial coercion, gender discernment, and cultural identity. By reviewing these subjects through the experiences of Black women characters, Azumurana shows how education can be at the same time redemptive and approving .

His assertion also agrees with Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's noteworthy valuation of colonial education, mainly his declaration that Anglocentric literary traditions can stop African students from developing a discrete African cultural identity. Azumurana makes reference to Ngũgĩ's statement that sustained reliance on Anglocentric critical traditions can step by step generate what James Baldwin calls "Black Westerners" (Thiong'o, 2018, pp. 103-109). Thiong'o's proposal to reconfigure English departments along more Afrocentric lines hence presents an important postcolonial framework for Azumurana's comprehension of Western education.

One of the article's primary assets lies in its proportional and interdisciplinary approach due to examining African and African American literary texts together; this is because Azumurana wants to display the collective experiences of cultural dislocation and identity scuffles that are rooted in colonial and racial systems. This juxtaposition develops the study since the readers can differentiate associations between African and diasporic Black experiences. The article efficaciously confirms that Western education often implements canons that demote native customs, histories, and communal identities.

As it was indicated previously, the analysis of *Beloved* is largely substantial as it refers to the long-standing psychological and historical outcomes of slavery and its effect on African American identity. Azumurana proclaims that Morrison condemns leading systems of knowledge that make Black voices silent and



destroy historical memory. The article also examines how trauma, memory, and storytelling function as devices for opposition against cultural subjugation .

The argument is primarily substantial in Azumurana's discussion of Halle. Halle agrees to get educated as he recognizes its real prominence, perceiving that "if you can't count they can cheat you — If you can't read they can beat you" (Morrison, 1987, p. 218). Literacy then enables Halle to acquire his mother Baby Suggs's freedom from slavery; but, his education cannot secure him against racial viciousness. Azumurana (2013) writes that Halle is eventually psychologically distressed after seeing two white men rape Sethe (p. 15). This occurrence is mostly important as it creates the main incongruity of the article: education may give a person knowledge and some chances for opposition, but it cannot by itself dismantle the racial constructions that cause domination.

Another asset of the article is its discussion of Black female novelists and their representation of relegated experiences. Azumurana is chiefly interested in female discernments and displays how female characters resist systems of racial, masculine, and educational suppression. This feminist aspect augments the article and puts it in postcolonial and African diasporic literary criticism.

However, the article is weak in some ways. For instance, the examination at times gets too general about Western education without providing the readers with adequate textual evidence or historical specificity. Some debates would be more influential if preserved by a more detailed clarification of key extracts from the novels. Since the article has chosen three different texts to analyze side by side, the analysis of each text, especially Morrison's *Beloved*, is sometimes not very thorough.

Additionally, the comparative methodology causes a discrepancy in the article. Readers who are mainly interested in Morrison might assume that *Beloved* deserves a more systematic and detailed investigation owing to its narrative sophistication and historical effect. Moreover, the writing style is highly solid and simple to comprehend, chiefly when associated with more overwhelmingly hypothetical cultural studies scholarship. The article emphasizes mostly thematic and conceptual criticism than literary elegance or narrative technique.

In spite of all the mentioned defects, Azumurana's article plays an important part in comparative literature and postcolonial studies due to brilliantly proving that education is not unprejudiced but penetratingly affected by such factors as power, race, culture, and identity. Through its comparative examination of African and



African American women's writing, the article discloses how literature can defy prevailing ideologies and recuperate downgraded histories and opinions.

4 .Personal Evaluation

As stated in this article, Revelles-Benavente's research is an effective and intellectually ambitious contribution to contemporary literary and cultural studies. Her article is mostly appreciated as it regards Toni Morrison not only as a writer but also as a digital cultural figure whose online presence leads to contemporary discussions about race, gender, identity, and representation. The article also proves that social-media platforms such as Facebook can work as important cultural spaces in which literary ideas are disseminated, interpreted, and questioned by readers .

For example, Revelles-Benavente examines Morrison's Facebook post uttering, "In this country American means white. Everybody else has to hyphenate," a citation that had engendered 340 replies and 4,535 likes at the time of her scrutiny (Revelles-Benavente, 2014, p. 13). Instead of considering the quote only as a declaration about racism, Revelles-Benavente analyzes the discussion created by it and unveils how questions of race, nationality, and gender become entwined in the readers' replies.

This outlook is in line with Nancy Van House's proclamation that social-networking sites are major spaces for self-representation and identity creation since technological structures result in demonstrating how operators present themselves and intersect with others (Van House, 2011, pp. 422–429). Van House principally believes that social-networking technologies should be studied not only as communication apparatuses but as sociotechnical environments that influence the formation of identity (2011, pp. 422–423). The prominence of this digital outlook can also be understood through Karen Barad's notion of "intra-action," according to which entities do not exist self-reliantly before their relations but rise through specific material-discursive associations (Barad, 2003, pp. 815–816).

As we know, Toni Morrison, through her life and works, has confronted conventional depictions of Black people, predominantly through her engagement with racism, slavery, memory, and Black womanhood. While racism and slavery may appear to be familiar issues in African American literature, Morrison constantly approaches them through distinct narrative policies and language,



heartening the readers to reassess historical and contemporary racial associations. In fact, Morrison has utilized her literary works as platforms for talking about multifaceted concepts about race, history, gender, and identity .

Revelles-Benavente's discussion of Morrison's Facebook presence extends this literary engagement into a digital background. The citation regarding the meaning of "American," for instance, alters a declaration initially linked with racial classification into a more significant discussion of who is involved in the category of "American" and who remains distinct as an Other (Revelles-Benavente, 2014, pp. 13–14). This is one reason why the invention of Revelles-Benavente's subject matter can be assumed as one of the most valued facets of the study.

Instead of being exclusively obsessed with Morrison's novels, Revelles-Benavente inspects how this famous novelist's Facebook page generates fresh formulas of collaboration between the writer and her readers. This viewpoint widens the scope of Morrison scholarship and represents the increasing prominence of digital humanities in literary studies. An exceedingly noteworthy example in this regard is the author's analysis of the comments responding to the "American means white" quotation. Among the 340 responses, one participator writes, "Means white men. I would like us to all change that. Women are a completely overlooked group." Revelles-Benavente claims that after about one hour there were 115 comments, still most of the discussion continued to concentrate on race and geographical identity rather than gender (2014, p. 14). This instance is efficaciously in line with her claim that gender can become imperceptible even in discussions overtly concerned with racial disparity.

Moreover, Revelles-Benavente's efforts to prove that identity is not static but relational and unceasingly affected through interaction are highly valued. Her exploration of the Facebook discussion is predominantly crucial when another participant writes, "White Christian male heterosexual..... Then everyone else has to....." (Revelles-Benavente, 2014, p. 15). By mentioning this comment, the author discloses that racial identity is not detached from gender, religion, and sexuality. Hence, her allegation is not just a discrepancy between "white" and "non-white" and considers the multifarious classifications through which social subjects are positioned .

This is one of the strongest aspects of the article because it shows that Black feminine identity cannot be adequately understood through race alone. Furthermore, this argument can be meritoriously connected with Stuart Hall's



comprehension of cultural identity as a matter of "becoming" as well as "being." Hall claims that cultural identities are not fixed essences but are ceaselessly rehabilitated through historical, cultural, and political procedures (1990, pp. 225–226).

According to this review article, Azumurana's research paper is exceedingly effective owing to linking education with more striking issues of power, identity, and cultural dislocation in African and African American backgrounds. The comparative structure, which juxtaposes the literature of Ama Ata Aidoo, Gloria Naylor, and Toni Morrison, enables Azumurana to focus on collective experiences of colonial and racial suppression while also demonstrating how Black female novelists analytically react to these conditions.

For example, in his discussion of Naylor's *The Women of Brewster Place*, Azumurana puts emphasis on Kiswana Browne's negation of her mother's orthodox ideals. He declares that Kiswana's decision to live and work among her own people is related with her denunciation to agree inconsiderately with the ideology of Western education that her mother has embraced (Azumurana, 2013, p. 11). This occurrence proficiently demonstrates his claim that Western education can lead to ideological segmentations even in Black families.

The article's concentration on the indecisive essence of Western education is another appreciated point here. Azumurana has not shown it as only negative or useful; instead, he notes how it can act at the same time as a means for emancipation and a device for discrimination. The parts related to *Beloved* are specifically substantial in this respect, as it associates education with historical trauma, slavery, and the attempts for cultural memory. This tension is mostly perceptible in his reading of *Beloved*. Azumurana alludes to Halle's idea that literacy is essential for endurance: "if you can't count they can cheat you—If you can't read they can beat you" (Morrison, 1987, p. 218; cited in Azumurana, 2013, p. 16).

The example initially proposes that education provides a repressed Black person with a significant tool for confrontation since Halle's aptitude to read and count allows him to purchase his mother Baby Suggs's autonomy. However, Azumurana instantaneously accentuates the restriction of this type of authorization: in spite of his education, Halle remains susceptible to racial ferocity and abuse. After observing the assault of his wife Sethe, he goes through a mental failure (Azumurana, 2013, p. 6). This is extremely insightful due to



putting Morrison's novel in a superior discourse of knowledge, power, and identity creation.

Meanwhile, the article sometimes gets too general in its dealing with the texts. Whereas the comparative methodology is an advantage, it would also lead to a dearth of perspicacity in particular parts, mainly those related to *Beloved*. More all-inclusive textual evidence would have maintained the discussion by making some of the proclamations more persuasive.

5 .Conclusion

To put it briefly, Revelles-Benavente's article presents a substantial and inventive debate on the subject of the modern studies on Toni Morrison thanks to examining how digital media changes discussions of race, gender, and literary identity. The researcher has efficiently proved that Morrison's Facebook page is observed not only as a promotional platform, but as a vigorous cultural space where identities are transferred and reconvened through online association. Revelles-Benavente's technique focuses mainly on the everlasting significance of Morrison's status within the present digital culture .

Regardless of being a strong article in many respects like its innovation and academic ingenuity, the article sometimes gets excessively abstract because of relying enormously on theoretical language. More in-depth examples from Morrison's Facebook relations could have made the inspection better. Nonetheless, the article is highly valuable due to its focus on social media podiums' implication in shaping exemplifications of Black womanhood, authorship, and community in the digital epoch .

Correspondingly, Azumurana is obsessed with presenting an imperative and comparative argument of the cultural, psychological, and societal aspects of Western education in African and African American backgrounds. By examining the literature of Ama Ata Aidoo, Gloria Naylor, and Toni Morrison, the article confirms how education, although often associated with progression and endorsement, can also lead to cultural distancing, identity scuffles, and social control.

The concentration on *Beloved* is chiefly prominent due to making an association between slavery, trauma, and historical memory and the matters of knowledge, identity, and power. Azumurana has successfully shown how Morrison dooms systems that suppress Black history and humanity while highlighting the importance of cultural memory and communal solidity.



Although the article is limited due to generalizations and does not always include in-depth textual examination, its interdisciplinary and comparative approach has made it a strong study. Hence, it plays an authoritative part in postcolonial criticism, feminist literary studies, and African diasporic scholarship by demonstrating the multifarious association between education and subjugation within Black historical experiences.

References

1. Azumurana, S. O. (2013). The Dilemma of Western Education in Aidoo's *Changes: A Love Story*, Naylor's *The Women of Brewster Place*, and Morrison's *Beloved*. *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, 15(1), 10-20.
2. Barad, K. (2003). Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 28(3), 801–831.
3. Hall, S. (1990). Cultural Identity and Diaspora. In Jonathan Rutherford (Ed.), *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (pp. 222–237). Lawrence & Wishart.
4. Morison, T. (1987). *Beloved*. Penguin.
5. Parry, B. (1987). Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse. *Oxford Literary Review*, 9(1), 27-58.
6. Revelles-Benavente, B. (2014). How Toni Morrison's Facebook Page Re (con) figures Race and Gender. *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, 16(5), 11-19.
7. Thiong'o, N. W. (2018). On the Abolition of the English Department. *Présence Africaine*, 109-113, (1) 197
8. Van House, N. A. (2011). Feminist HCI Meets Facebook: Performativity and Social Networking Sites. *Interacting with Computers*, 23(5), 422-429.

