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10/27/02

Great American Authors/English 28

### Morrison's Evil and Good

Morrison acknowledges the presence of good and evil in *Sula*, however her characters cannot be defined as wholly good or evil. Evil and good exist in the world and it is the influence that captures the hearts of people. Though some individuals may appear to be of either origin; everyone has it in them to possess both traits. When pushed to some point, a person can commit both good and evil actions.

To begin with, the Negro people of Medallion City always accepted the concept of evil, "the presence of evil was something to be first recognized, then dealt with, survived, outwitted, triumphed over" (p 118). Morrison creates evil as an occasional event that crops up once in a while. To the Negro community, it is common to life. Sula's return to the community is accompanied by what many see as an evil omen. Her betrayal to Nel and her wanton behavior labels her as a "pariah" (p 122). From Morrison's description, Sula is not truly evil to the core. Her behavior is dictated by her way of thinking, "she was completely free of ambition, with no affection for money, property or things, no greed, no desire to command attention or compliments-no ego" (Morrison 119). Therefore Sula is not an evil person with evil intent. She seeks to fulfill her own needs to the whims of her personality. In a sense, she cannot help the way she is or her behavior. Was she any more evil than the community that exiled her? No one is truly good or evil in Morrison's writing.

For example, Eva's character is a mixture of the good and the bad. By what definition is Eva fit to be described as? Is she good because she was willing to give up a leg for her children or evil because she burned Plum? However, Eva reacted both ways because she loved her children. She was willing to part with her leg because she had children to support yet she murdered Plum because he was already dying inside. She killed Plum to save him. If Sula could be viewed as evil, Nel can be seen as "good". Contrary to that belief, Sula suggest that maybe Nel wasn't the good one, that perhaps it was she that was the good one. Nel contemplates Sula's words towards the end and realizes that she did take joy or stimulation from bringing order to Sula's chaos. In a twisted way, she enjoyed the death of Chicken Little. Was Nel evil because she thought that way? She never did anything cruel, but she took satisfaction in the death of a little boy.

There is good and evil to the world. People are the debris caught in the midst of both forces. Not a single person is truly evil or truly good.