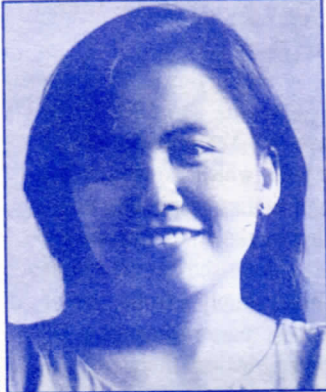


## PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

### SULA by Toni Morrison

A personal reflection by *Elvie Colobong*,  
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*Elvie Colobong*

Among the different characters and their stories in *Sula*, I like best the story of Sula and that of her grandmother, Eva.

Sula is strong and aggressive, the kind of woman who does what she thinks is right and what she feels will make her happy. She never cares what others might say or think of her but is determined to get what she wants in life no matter what the consequences.

She is a woman capable of loving and caring, free of ambition, with no affection for money, property or things, no greed and no desire to command attention or compliments. But her mother's remarks of not liking her sent her away and made her different. Sula never gave herself the chance to understand other people and for them to do the same to her. She let hatred rule her life, she didn't fight it.

Life is precious and beautiful, especially when shared with others. Whenever I experience failure or frustrations, I always say to myself that there are better things ahead of me, even

if it does not always work that way. I am not a religious person who goes to mass every Sunday or attends the holy days of obligations but I still believe that there is someone up there who is watching and guiding us.

For various reasons, people in her community believed that Sula was evil and the cause of their misfortunes. First, because when Sula returned after being absent for 10 years (she was away in college), she was accompanied by a plague of robins, which for them was a sign of bad luck. Second, her return reminded them of her watching her mother burn to death. Third, they believed that she slept with white men and this for them is an unforgivable thing—the thing for which there was no understanding, no excuses. It's 'dirt' that cannot be washed away. For them, all unions between white men and black women are rape and for a black woman to be willing is literally unthinkable. There were other things, such as a man choking to death when he saw her, and a big sty affecting a woman's eye after seeing her. So, they laid broomsticks across their doors at night and sprinkled salt on porch steps.

Sula ignored all these and the people did nothing to harm her. They felt that evil must be avoided and precautions taken to protect themselves and they let it run its course. But what's interesting is that this negative side of her brought changes in the community. The peoples conviction of Sula's evil changed them in many ways.

They protected and loved one another and their children, began to cherish their husbands and wives, repaired their homes and in general banded together against the 'devil' in their midst, the changes were shortlived, lasting only up to Sula's death, but she never acknowledged any of this.

Eva's character as a woman and a mother is both admirable and frightening. She is *admirable* for raising her children alone and devoting her whole life to them because this is not easy to do, she sacrificed a lot and never even had the time to show her children how much she loved them. When she had the opportunity, her daughter didn't have the chance to know or feel it. It happened when she tried to save her daughter from burning by throwing herself out of the window hoping to fall on her daughter and put out the fire that was consuming her, but she fell 12 feet away from her, her daughter died.

She is also admirable for her ability to control her emotions. When her husband, who left her for another woman, dropped by she was very civil to him until he left. The natural reaction in this kind of situation would be to shout at the person, harm him physically or even kill him. I have tried so many times to control my temper/ anger/ emotions but not once have I succeeded. I can't do it that's why I admire people who can.

She is *frightening* for her ability to kill her drug addicted son by burning him. It's frightening because if she can do it to her son whom she loved very much, how much more to other people. As a mother, I can imagine and feel the pain it



caused her. Before she did it, she held him closely and rocked him like a baby. As a mother, I understand her motive in killing her son—to save him from further destruction but I believe that we have no right to take the life of any person whoever she/he is.

All the other women in the story have stereotyped roles except for Hannah, Sula's mother but her character seems unrealistic to me. She is described as a woman who refused to live without the attentions of a man and she had a steady sequence of lovers. But since there was no place in their crowded house for private and spontaneous lovemaking, Hannah would take the man down to the cellar, into the pantry and stand up against the shelves filled with canned goods. She could break up a marriage before it could even become one, she would make love to the new groom and wash his wife's dishes all in an afternoon. All she wanted was some touching everyday and she made no demands, Hannah's life taught Sula that men are always available. Sula is an interesting character but I wouldn't dream of living her life. 