CLCV 224 Paper 2

Through the development of the literature of twentieth-century African American writers, classical tradition has always been inconspicuous, yet non-negligible factor. African American writers during the twentieth century prefer to use classical traditions from Greek Mythology and justify the behaviors of their characters by conceptualizing these classical traditions. The influence of classical tradition is evident in different works.

In Native Son, by Robin Wright, Bigger Thomas made conducts a crime against a white woman. However, Robin does not try to defend his protagonist. Instead, Robin states at Bigger’s mouth that Bigger is innocent, and the difference between black and white makes black people feel uncomfortable as they have always been suppressed by white people. The deficiency of human rights, personal security, and social status from inhumane slavery make black people have the mindset that white people owe them naturally. Accordingly, we can view this as another reason that black characters would not feel regret after conducting unspeakable acts. Still, we could see this as a respect to the patriarchal society of Greek Mythology. Greek gods also don’t take responsibility after they conduct sexual crimes against others.

We could also find another example that has been influenced by the classical traditions with the writer who justifies her unspeakable acts in the context by conceptualizing Greek Mythology. In the Beloved by Toni Morrison, Margaret Garner is a pathetic slave from Kentucky. Margaret kills her child because she does not want her child to be enslaved. Although the story demonstrates an unfavorable behavior of a mother killing her child, the story conveys a malformation maternal love which also echoes the title during a miserable time. Being a mother but killing her child is not acceptable within a normal society. However, it becomes reasonable when black people are treated like inferior citizens, or even worse. All the mother, Margaret, wants to do is save her children from the suppression of white people. This story is also coincident with the story of Medea who also kills her siblings to obtain love.

No matter what behaviors have been conducted, and what kinds of the method these African American writers try to elaborate and justify their works. There is one thing in common African American people suffered from suppression from white people during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. All these literature works indicate the unfairness of society, and a strong willingness to improve the situation.

References

Wright, R. N. (2005). *Native Son*. HarperCollins.

Morrison, T. (2007). *Beloved*. Vintage Classics.