

I- Introduction

1.1 African American Women's Desire for Subjectivity in Morrison's *Jazz*

African American women were trapped in slavery and racism, which tied them in a small periphery. They were treated as objects in male dominated white society. African Americans' dreams are the product of the society in which they were exploited physically, mentally and sexually in such a way that they did not know themselves. Sexism and racism are interlocking systems of oppression in the dominant ideology of western culture. Black women must achieve not only the mental state of seeing themselves as subjects but also the social state of being recognized as subjects by dominant cultural discourses.

Regarding the subjectivity of an individual, Soren Kierkegaard, a Danish philosopher, declared that 'truth is subjectivity' and that only by means of inward revelation can man know God. Jean-Paul Sartre, a French Existentialist, tried to come to terms with dialectical Materialism. His *Existentialism and Humanism* (1948) comprises an affirmation of human dignity. In *Encyclopaedia Britannica Deluxe CD-ROM*, he writes, "If I have excluded God, the Father, there must be someone to invent values." Man, who has abandoned God, "must liberate himself by some practical commitment," for only then can he become fully human.

Jazz (1992), Toni Morrison's sixth novel, is a lyrical, multifaceted narrative that explores the Harlem lives and black country roots of a number of African American characters in the years from 1873 to 1926. In *Jazz*, Morrison creates a narrative strategy that combines the movement of music and structure of tragedy; more specifically, she uses the improvisational quality of music to deconstruct the form of tragedy, allowing a reconstruction of identity to emerge that is not determined, but fluid and improvisational.

Jazz begins with sexual desire of Violet because that is the only level of desire she understands. Driven by his sexual desire first to seek out Dorcas and then to kill her “to keep the feeling going”. Joe has created his own jail or personal hell; driven by her sexual desire into the jealous rage that makes her slash the dead girl’s face, Violet has also created her own jail. But Violet and Joe do not stay in their self-created jail because Violet learns of her desire for subjectivity.

Dorcas, on the other hand, seems at first glance a more independent subject than Violet. She doesn’t seem subjected to Joe, as he is the one who rushed to satisfy her demands. She even says, “With Joe I worked the stick of the world, the power in my hand” (191). Dorcas is killed by her ex-lover Joe Trace.

The ironic twist in this first violent scenario is that dominant desire ends up killing Joe as subject, too. It becomes clear that the male subject created by this desire is dependent on having an object and if the object is removed, the subject figuratively, dies. Violet’s rejection of motherhood is also tied to her mother’s death. “The important thing, the biggest thing Violet got out of that”, the text tells us, “was to never never to have children. Whatever happened, no small dark foot would rest on another while a hungry mouth said Mama?” (102). The many miscarriages Violet later suffered was thus “more inconveniences than loss” (107).

There are different desires of different characters in the novel *but* this thesis will be the study of the African American women’s desire for their identity, self and subjectivity as a whole psychologically, physically, and sexually.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Violet, a middle-aged hairdresser begins her obsessive drive to discover all she can about Dorcas: a teenaged white girl and Joe Trace’s lover. She slashes Dorcas’s face and causes the community to call her ‘violent’ instead of Violet. Why? Why did

She irrationally free pet birds that were meant to be caged as if she has let herself instead of birds out of her cage, out of the position the community expects her to fulfill? Having not been mother herself, she continually positions herself in a mothering role. Why? Having been already fifty, why does she desire a baby? From her grandmother's tales of the pampered and worshipped Golden Boy, Violet learns that with whiteness and maleness one is assured love and happiness. Did she get it? Why did Violet want to be white, light and young? Does Violet see herself acting as subject in these scenes governed by dominant ideology?

The problematic issue for the present study is to find out what is 'subjectivity' that African American women desire? Is it their racial dream? What happens for such dream if deferred as told by Langston Hughes? This research has tried to find the answers of these challenging questions.

1.3 Hypothesis

Violet's desire is female desire emerging from the depth of her psyche, a desire for subjectivity different from what African American women have already seen and experienced.

1.4 Review of Literature

In 1987, Toni Morrison achieved a decisive plateau in her career with her fifth novel, *Beloved* (1987), a Pulitzer Prize-winning best seller that solidified her position as the leading African American novelist of her generation. With *Jazz*, on the other hand, Morrison moved her hand in more explorative subject. Its adventurousness and inventiveness are exhilarating, and its many stories, characters, and perspectives are richly imagined and frequently moving. Ultimately, *Jazz* (1992) shows Toni Morrison to be a great African American writer who is not content to let her past successes

becomes formulas for her future works. In 1993, her achievements were recognized with the Nobel Prize in Literature.

Jazz has been observed from different major theoretical outlooks based on psychological, racial, social realism, Derridean, and conflict view of studies. Some critics have observed the novel in the light of conflict between black traditional belief and American reality.

African American women, living in phallus-centric society, desire many things as if their desires are suppressed from the long past. But their desires, partially fulfilled, partially deferred, are the desires, which challenge the male dominated racial society of America. Talking about *Jazz*, Michael Nowlin, a famous American critic states:

. . . And yet whiteness inevitably makes its presence felt in this African American text, most overtly through the figure of the aptly named Golden Gray, the subject of so many stories handed down to Violet from her Grandmother True Bell that he comes to signify both Violet's most violent desire and the lack of underwriting black identity. *Jazz*'s most ambitious lyrical moments arise when the narrative reaches impasses that we must understand as racially motivated and the narrator must confront the extent to which her authorial power is rooted in racialized discourse. (7)

Jazz has been the voice of unspoken desires of Violet, True Bell and Wild who are extremely victimized by racial society. Talking about the theme of the novel *Jazz*, Elizabeth M. Canon says:

Jazz is also the perfect vehicle for suggesting that the object of desire is subjectivity: *Jazz* wouldn't be *Jazz* without the improvisation of

soloists. Specifically, what's most important about jazz soloists is not that they be technically the best but that they find their own flair and style. Berendt tells us that "phrases are created that belong to the player as expressions of artistic personality"(156), while Bastien and Hostager state that 'improvisation is the assumed and expected mode of individual behavior' (151). These characteristics of the jazz soloist resonate with Morrison's own idea of black female subjectivity as something that cannot be specifically and universally defined. She instead suggests that each woman has to discover her own musical flair and style. (3)

Morrison is an African American writer noted for her examination of black experience (particularly black female experience) within the black community. In an interview with Nellie McKay, Morrison explains that the reason of *Jazz* speaks desire is because as McKay put it, it has no "emotional closure" ('Introduction' 1). Morrison explains "Jazz always keeps you on the edge. There is no final chord" ('Interview' 411). She sees this unfulfilled desire, this "quality of hunger and disturbance" as being specifically related to African Americans; it is an ineffable quality . . . that is curiously black ('Interview' 409).

White masters separated black mothers from their children, wives from their husbands, and fathers from their family. Since a child does not get mother- love, he does not know his/her 'self'. Mothering is very essential for the emotional well being of children. Never having been loved by their mothers, the unmothered children never learn how to love themselves and without such self-love, the 'self' or 'subjectivity' of African American is lost and forgotten. Regarding this Andrea O. Reilly, a critic, writes:

Violet's realization is quite multifaceted and requires some fleshing out. Violet recognizes that the stories of the adored blond child produced in her a longing to be white, bright and young. This desire demanded from her a denial of her real, original black female self. The citified Mrs. Trace further displaces the headstrong Violet of Virginia. The recovery of her original self occurs when both the 'tricky little blond child' and the Mrs. Trace 'who wanted to be something else' are exercised from Violet's consciousness. . . . Here, at the conclusion of *Jazz*, Violet finds her original self and learns that she is indeed her 'best thing'. (3)

Past is inevitable to recognize individual self and identity. Black psyche is always haunted by the past, which sometimes, confuses them and works as catalyst to know themselves who they really are. The improvisational quality of jazz music has been very helpful for reconstruction of identity for the Black people of America. In her literary criticism of *Jazz*, Carolyn M. Jones states:

Indeed, *Jazz* itself is a story reconstructed from fragments of memory, gossip and news. Composition, Morrison says, is a process of 'reclamation of self and of history' (Naylor 576). Thus, memory and storytelling are the exercise of an imaginative faculty that helps one to live harmoniously with the self, the human community, and the past. Telling stories, she tells Gloria Naylor, is discovery, 'deep talking' (576) with and about the 'self' and the 'other'. (3)

Like Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952), Morrison depicts the subject of race Consciousness and self-subjectivity. Veronique Lesoine states that:

‘Identity within difference’ actually constituted a survival strategy for the slaves and their descendants in a racist society. It was a means of reclaiming oneself whether one was threatened by self dispossession, as Joe very well knows: ‘I’ (Joe) take of being new seven times before I meet you (Dorcas), but back then, back there if you was or claim to be colored, you had to be new and stay the same every day the sun rose and every night it dropped. And let me tell you, baby, in those days it was more than a state of mind (*Jazz* 135). Joe is the character who knows most what it means to re-invent your-self constantly. (10)

According to the *New Encyclopedia Britannica*, Volume 8, “The central theme of the Morrison’s novel is the black American experience; in an unjust society her character struggle to find out themselves and their cultural identity. Morrison’s use of fantasy, her sinuous poetic style and her rich interweaving of the mythic gave her stories great strength and texture. *Jazz* is a story of violence and passion set in Harlem during the 1920” (8: 339).

While discussing about *Jazz*, critic Caroline Brown says, “*Jazz* is quite literally, the textual negotiation of freedom through the grammar of the erotic. The erotic- sexual hunger, romantic love, dangerous desire. Sensual pleasure drives the narrative. Still it is never about itself alone. Rather, its extravagance is propelled by the narcotic of freedom, the luxury of assorting, the right to choose and shape one’s destiny, and, as Morrison mentions to own one’s own emotion. *Jazz* becomes the process through which its protagonist own their emotion” (2).

Terry L. Andrews writes the commentary on *Jazz* and says, “. . . by the end of the novel, however, Morrison has shown how all the characters are victims, for all are scared by their past often by the racism, dispossession, and violence that are the

heritage of slavery. Most of the characters are thus preoccupied with a search for self that involves working out the complex family patterns that hunt them” (4).

The voice of *Jazz* is to seek the ‘New Negro’ differed from the ‘Old Negro’ in assertiveness and self-confidence, which led New Negro writers to question traditional ‘white’ aesthetic standards, to eschew parochialism and propaganda, and to cultivate personal self-expression, racial pride, and literary experimentation. While writing literary criticism about Jazz, another famous critic Mitchell Angelyn writes:

. . . . Truly a new Negro, Violet attempts to mediate her private rural self with her public urban self, her motherless rural self with her daughterless urban self. . . interrogating the modernist mood, Morrison reveals through the migratory character of Violet that the residual manifestation of African American modernity were culture shock and alienation. (7)

Bell hooks reminds us in black books, “While contemporary writing by black women bring into sharper focus the idea that black female must invent selves the question- what kind of self- usually remains unanswered” (51). Violet struggles with this question.

From these all reviews we come to understand that fragmentation of subjectivity, psychological killing of female identity, schizophrenia, hunting by past memories, racism and Phallocentrism are prevailed in the novel.

1.5 Methodology

This research is based on textual analysis of the novel *Jazz*. However, theoretical and critical terminologies, tools and perspectives are used and developed

to analyze the stated problems. The researcher has studied the views given by various critics on the novel *Jazz*.

In order to prove the hypothesis, the researcher has made detail study of the text as primary source. In addition to this, books from the libraries, resources from the Internet and other secondary information are used to prove the problems stated above.

1.6 Delimitation

This dissertation studies the problematic relation between racial history and present reality in the life of African American people. This research has focused on how desires, if forbidden, destruct ‘self’ and ‘other’. The oral tradition and jazz music will be elaborated in my study. The writer’s biography and her other works are also used to meet the purpose of this study.

Morrison’s *Jazz* has been interpreted by various critics from different perspectives such as: racism, gender, post- modernism, jazz aesthetic, and cultural mourning. Although there are so many criticisms in it, this research has focused on African American Women’s Desire for Subjectivity.

1.7 Significance of the Study

This research reveals a radical dislocation of self or fragmentation in subjectivity of African American women. This research will be one of the guides in understanding the impact of male dominated white ideology in women and their desire for self-identity. It also shows how the African American women are forced to live in a ‘double-edged’ society where they misread their desires through the dominant lens of racial and male dominated ideology.

II Haunting Past: Consequences

2.1 Bitter Experiences: Roots of African American Novels

A slave was considered by law as property, or chattel, and was deprived of most of the rights ordinarily held by free persons. The slave was a species of property; thus he belonged to someone else. In some societies of the United States slaves were considered movable property and in other societies immovable objects as estate. They were objects of the law, not its subjects. The slaves usually had few rights and always fewer than his owner. The slave was deprived of personal liberty and the right to move about geographically as he desired. There were limits to his capacity to make choices of his occupation and even sexual partners.

African American people are kept as slaves in the plantation of white people. They had to work from early morning to late night in houses and plantations. Black mothers had not any right to stay with their children because they were sold as animals in the plantations. Black men were separated from their wife and children and sold to other plantations. Slave women were physically exploited; many of them were raped by white masters; and they were left in the plantation to live meaningless life. Black men and women were the victims of vicious slavery and racism.

Slaves were not allowed to travel with whites in the train and buses. If any black were found in the seat of white person, he would have been whipped, punished, and thrown in the street. Frederick Douglass, a fugitive slave, experienced such situations, which haunts him every time in his life. Douglass tried to counter such restrictive practices of train travel in the way as he had countered the repressive structures of slavery. Frederick Douglass writes, "I refused to move, and they clutched me, head, neck and shoulders. . . . In dragging me out, on this occasion, it must have cost the company twenty-five or thirty dollars, for I tore up seats and all" (*My Bondage and My Freedom* 399-400).

Black people were named 'niggers'. For whites, niggers were useless and unimportant than animals. Even the animals were given proper food, water, and rest but these niggers were below the standard of animals. Whites tried to transform them into a docile Christian and subhuman several times. There were thousands of cases of rapes, lynching, burning, physical torture, mental torture, and cruelty against these African American people. African American people of slavery and racism faced such bitter experiences that haunted them forever. It also left the traces of bitter experiences to the future generation of these slaves. It haunted their mind each and every moment so they are not able to do anything beyond their past experiences.

The African American history is the history of racial discrimination. Morrison writes, "The central characteristics of American literature are individualism, masculinity, the insistence upon innocence coupled to an obsession with figuration of death and hell" (*Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and Literary Imagination* 5).

Slavery existed in a large number of past societies but it was rare among primitive peoples, such as hunter- gatherer societies, because for slavery to flourish, social differentiation or stratification was essential. The best-known slave societies were those of the circum Caribbean world. Slave imports to the islands of the Caribbean began in the early sixteenth century. Bernard W. Bell writes,

This healthful, normal adjustment of Africans their acculturation in the English colonies of North America is generally acknowledged as beginning in 1619 when twenty captives were brought to James town, Virginia, in Dutch man of war and sold as servants. Although the heterogeneous West African ethnic groups, and their acculturation began before reaching North America . . . (6)

Initially the islands often were settled as well by numerous indentured laborers and other Europeans, but after 1645 they came to be inhabited almost exclusively by imported African slaves. Slaves were of various importances in Mesoamerica and on the South American continent. The southern United States became the main center of slaves. Slaves first were brought to Virginia in 1619. Africans were transshipped to North America from the Caribbean in increasing numbers. African slaves replaced English indentured laborers. The historical pattern of contradiction between the ideals of white America and the reality of black America began from this time. “By 1638 slaves were introduced into Massachusetts and in 1641 slavery was given legal sanction in that colony by “Body of Liberties”, statutes prohibiting human bondage unless it be lawful captives taken in just wares and such strangers as willingly sell themselves or are sold to US” (Bell 7).

In 1661 Virginia reinforced the system of slavery by legal statute, imposed a fine for interracial fornication in 1662, banned interracial marriage in 1691, defined slaves explicitly as real estate in 1705, and deprived freed blacks of the right to vote in 1723. According to the Maryland law of 1663, all Negroes or other slaves within the province shall serve *Durant vita*, and all children born of any Negro or other slave, shall be slaves as their fathers were for the terms of their lives. Because many slaves were fathered by whites, the law was soon changed so that the mother’s status determined the children’s subsequent. In eighteenth and nineteenth century, status and jurisprudence concerning everything from literacy to politics institutionalized the racist ideology that blacks, bondsmen, and freedmen alike, were biologically and culturally inferior, possessing no rights that whites were obliged to recognize.

It is stated that, “In the twenty years from 1713 to 1733 fifteen thousand slaves were annually imported into America by the English, of whom from one third to one

half went to the Spanish colonies” (Du Bois 11). South Carolina had the largest and most widely developed slave trade of any of the continent colonies. Next to South Carolina, Virginia had probably the largest slave trade. The first great goal of anti slavery effort in the United States had been, since the revolution, the suppression of the slave trade by national law.

W.E. B. Du Bois writes, “The dozen or more proposition on the question of the disposal of illegally imported Africans may be divided into two chief heads, representing two radically opposed parties: 1. That illegally imported Africans be free, though they might be indentured for a term of years or removed from the country. 2. That such affairs be sold as slaves” (*Suppression of African Slave Trade* 99).

There was a hot debate to the disposal of illegally imported Negroes. On the one side, it began with the “Right of Man”, and descended to a stickling for the descent appearance of the statue book; on the other side, it began with the uplifting of the heathen and descended to a denial of the applicability of moral principles to the question.

The slave trade was prohibited. The Anti Slavery act of 1807 was enforced and it was really accomplished. At the advent of the Lincoln government, the Department of the Interior was charged with the enforcement of the slave trade laws. Most of the Southern states rather tardily passed the necessary supplementary acts disposing of illegally imported Africans. Alabama Mississippi Territory Act of 1815 directed such Negroes to be “Sold by the proper officer of the Court, to the highest bidder, at public auction, for ready money.” While discussing about the slave trade, Mr. Foulter of Connecticut writes, “When I was young, the slave trade was still carried on, by Connecticut shipmasters and merchant adventures, for the supply of southern

ports. This trade was carried by the consent of the Southern States, under the provision of the Federal Constitution. Until 1808, and, after that time clandestinely. There was good deal of conversation on the subject, in private circles. (qtd. in *Suppression of African Slave Trade* 113).

The economic exploitation of early black Americans, together with the political and religious justification for it by the founding fathers and the puritans provides a vivid illustration of the different frames of reference from which black abolitionist novelists like Williams Wells Brown and Martin Delany were to perceive and reconstruct the reality of life in antebellum south. “. . . Many slave narratives and nineteenth century novels like *Clotel*, *Blake*, and *Iola Leroy* reveal a unique blend of extended and nuclear family system whose ruptured yet still vital filial ties prompted countless post bellum freedom to undertake long, arduous searches to reunite their dispersed families”(Bell 11).

It is true that the radical shift in their social arenas from Africa to West Indian and Southern plantations and from sharecropping fields to urban factories and ghettos, resulted in African Americans adapting, adopting or rejecting the material cultural resources of the larger white society which enabled them to develop self-confidence for oppression in literary world by their own way of writing which emerged from the folklore and slave narratives. W.E.B Du Bois was the first to describe the socio psychological experience of black Americans as Double consciousness:

After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teutotan and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son. Born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world- a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through

the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, - an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (*The Soul of the Black Folk* 364)

This double consciousness is the product of the race conflict, social discrimination, gender conflict, and suppression of slavery in America and the conflict of white and black cultures. The only way of ending the African American's striving, according to Du Bois is, "To make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of opportunity closed in his face . . . to be a coworker in the kingdom of culture, to escape both death and isolation to husband and use his best powers and his latent genius"(qtd. in Bell 12). The desires of black Americans are life, liberty, pursuit of happiness, and wholeness- the full development and unity of self and the black community- as a biracial, bicultural people, as Americans of African decent.

Sutton Griggs, a member of the Niagara movement, the forerunner of the predominantly white-founded National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), introduced the term "New Negro" in his first novel *Imperium in Imperio* (1899). The hero of Grigg's novel, *Imperium in Imperio*, leads a militant demonstration against the white administration to dramatize that "the cringing, fawning, shifting, cowardly Negro which slavery left, had disappeared, and a New Negro, self respecting, fearless, and determined in the assertion of his rights was at

hand” (Griggs 62). The economic, political, and cultural tensions within the race, which culminated in the dispute between Du Bois and Booker T. Washington and in the New Negro movement, actually found the way into the early African American novels in many forms.

African American novel refers to any extended prose narrative written by an American of African ancestry that illuminates the experience of black Americans in a formal, imaginatively distinctive manner: thematically, structurally, or stylistically and whose intrinsic linguistic properties do not wholly explain its interpretation, reception, and reputation.

From the beginning, African American novelists revealed the white male domination upon Black women. Black women were the objects of their sexual pleasure and the mulatto born from them was also the victim of harsh slavery. African American novelists use melodrama to serve the dualism of early black novelists’ psychological, social, and aesthetic needs. Bernard W. Bell writes:

. . . But as in the case of *Clotel* and *Althesa*- virtue, when frustrated by man made laws prohibiting interracial marriage could be satisfied by “a marriage sanctioned by heaven”. That both women die before the end of the novel is less important to the plot than their sexual and racial exploitation- Horatio’s infidelity and Henry’s failure to manumit Althesa- by a perverse, unjust society. In contrast, blue eyed, near white Iola survives triumphantly as she repeatedly rejects a persistent aristocratic white suitor and selflessly dedicates her life to family and race. (34)

The main focused subject matter of African American novelists was unfulfilled promise of the nation and the unrelenting desires of black Americans for

political, economic, and cultural self-determination. The double-consciousness of African American novelists produced a corresponding ambivalence towards consciousness of African American novelists and literary traditions of the time. From its very beginning, the African American novels have been concerned with illuminating the meaning of the black American experiences and the complex double consciousness, socialized ambivalence, and double vision which is the special burden and blessing of 'African American identity'. Contributing to their complexity and diversity of the African American society, early African American novelists not only relied on folklores and myths to create novels but also drew on abolitionist literature- especially from William Wells Brown to Ishmael Reed, we note that the main principle of African American novel is the quest for dignity, free people of African ancestry and the fulfillment of individual potentiality by merging a divided, alienated self into truer and better unified literate self, from the low niggers object of male dominated white society to respectful subject of raceless society.

Early African American writers identified themselves as Americans with a special mission they would articulate the spiritual and political ideals of America to inspire and justify the struggle of blacks for the birthright of American citizens. Early black advocates of freedom became students of the long history of human bondage to prosecute their war of words against slavery. David Ricardo, a self educated historian, understood that slavery had long been practiced in African but he charged white Christian slaveholders with greater crimes against humanity and greater hypocrisy in justifying those crimes than any prior slaves system.

2.2 Reconstruction: Socio-Cultural Reflection in Black Writings

In order to stop a great Civil War, to end forty years of bitter controversy and to appease the moral sense of civilization, American history moved to free four million black slaves. The number of Negro reached 4,441,830. The slaves represented everything African, although most of them originated on or near the west coast.

There were the free Negroes: those of the North free in some cases for many generations and voters; and in other cases, fugitives, new come from the south. Negroes voted in Virginia as late as 1723, when the assembly enacted that no free Negro, Mulatto or Indians should thereafter have any vote at the elections of burgess or any election whatsoever. In the earlier history of the south free Negro had the right to vote but in 1761, voting was expressly confined to white men. In Kentucky they voted between 1792 and 1799 and Tennessee allowed free Negroes to vote in her constitution of 1796. W.E.B. Du Bois, in his book, *Black Reconstruction in America* writes:

When the slavery grew to a system and the Cotton Kingdom began to expand into imperial white domination, a free Negro was a contradiction, a threat and a menace. As a thief and a vagabond, he threatened society; but an educated property holder, a successful mechanic or even professional man, he threatened slavery. He contradicted and undermined it. He must not be. He must be suppressed, enslaved, colonized. And nothing so bad could be said about him that did not easily appear as tried to slaveholder. (7)

Reconstruction is a period generally identified as the years between 1865 and 1877 but it began even before the end of civil war when numerous volunteers followed the armies south and established refugee centers and hospitals. It ended in the late 1870s with the withdrawal from the south on federal forces and the passing by

the reunited states of laws designed to limit African Americans socially, politically and economically. With slavery officially outlawed, the white south moved quickly to protect its interest by codifying the very white supremacist ideology that had undergirded the chattel slave system.

The last part of the nineteenth century and first few years of the twentieth century became known in African American history as the “Decades of Disappointment” or as black scholar Rayford Logan termed it, “The Nadir of black experience” (qtd. in Gates and McKay 464).

African American writers published many books that adequately expressed the history, positions, and aspirations of black Americans. Biographies like *Life and Public Service of Martin R. Delany* (1868) by Frances Anne Rollin, *Frederick Douglass* (1899) by Chestnut, and Norris Wright Cuney, *A Tribune of the Black People* (1993) by Maud Cuney Hare were designed for at least two purposes at that time: “That is to show white readers that blacks were capable of contributing to the rebuilding of the nation and to inform, inspire, and instruct other African Americans of the way to a more satisfying future” (Gates and McKay 469).

African American writers wrote literature accessible to all. They wrote realistic, naturalistic, and sentimental fiction. Many African Americans, after witnessing the systematic legalization of racial segregation throughout the south in the 1890s, concluded that self-reliance and racial solidarity were their last hopes for a decent life in the United States. Booker T. Washington’s autobiography, *Up from Slavery* (1901) won praises from prestigious literary magazines for its inspirational tone, its lucidity of style and its constructive contribution to racial problems in the south. Frederick Douglass’s *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* and Booker T. Washington’s *Up from Slavery* explains that- both of their father were white men

and their mother black. Black women and their children fathered by white men were the slaves in most of the plantation. These are the live examples of how black women had been the victims of slavery and racism and how their subjectivity was destroyed by male dominated racial ideology. White men had right of sexual intercourse with slave girls and slave women because they were their property and the child was compelled to be slave. Black women were kept in plantations to produce more and more children by black or white male.

2.3 Black Freedom Struggle and Birth of African American Culture

The term “New Negro Movement”, better known as Harlem Renaissance refers to 1920s, a decade of extra-ordinary creativity in the arts for black Americans and that much of that creativity found its focus in the activities of African American living in New York City, particularly in the district of Harlem. These years are marked as an especially brilliant moment in the history of black America. In drama, poetry, fiction, essays as in music, dance, sculpture, and painting, African American worked with a sense of achievement never before experienced by so many black artists in the long, troubled history of the peoples of African descent in North America.

In 1922, James Weldon Johnson published anthology of verse, *A Book of American Negro Poetry*. In Johnson’s anthology and in Robert Kerlin’s *Negro Poets and Their Poems* (1923) appeared the early work of many of the writers who would dominate the movement, including Countee Cullen and Langston Hughes. “. . . For many of them, the 1920s was a decade of unrivaled optimism and all through the generations of slavery and neo-slavery, black American culture had of necessity emphasized the power of endurance and survival, of love and laughter, as the only

efficacious response to the painful circumstances surrounding their lives” (Gates and McKay 932).

Harlem is initially a site of exile where the psychological condition of the arrivant was traumatic and clouded with uncertainty. They were longing for resting place to release their painful memories, and their pain was doubled as they lacked self-recognition. They were bound to be in a state of what Du Bois calls “Double Vision”(*Souls of the Black Folk* 16).

Authors and editors of the age published books merging racial awareness with a desire for literary and artistic excellence. The text excluded a sense of confidence in the black world emerging from generations of repression in the United States. Books like Jean Toomer’s *Cane* embraced certain principles of modernism and even the avant-garde and yet is saturated with the African American racial feelings offered how nostalgically. Gates and McKay write, “. . . . In this moment, black American artists took stock of the lives and destinies of their people against the backdrop not only of the United States but also of the world” (936).

Feeling of alienation from motherland and frustration of harsh industrial society inspired many transplanted southerners to cling tenaciously to their folk roots. They tried to identify themselves with the folk roots. Some New Negro artist like Langston Hughes and Countee Porter Cullen began their literary career by looking to their motherland (Africa) for the inspiration of their literary work.

The “Negro Renaissance” better known as Harlem Renaissance or the New Negro Movement, was the period of the meteoric rise of such talents as Claude McKay, Jean Toomer, Countee Cullen, Hughes, Bill Robinson, Florence Mills, Josephine Baker Aaron Douglass, Louis Armstrong, Bessie Smith, Duke Ellington; it

was the second birth of African American culture: highlighting black music, dance, and literature.

Langston Hughes (1902-1967), one of the most renowned African American writers of the Harlem Renaissance, published one of his greatest poems, *The Negro Speaks Of Rivers*, in “The Crisis”. The year before 1926, he had published an essay titled *The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain*. In the essay he declared, “We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark skinned selves without fear or shame. We know we are beautiful. And ugly too”(qtd. in *Gates and McKay* 1253). Hughes’ poem *Harlem* (1951) explores about the deferred dreams of African Americans. *Not Without Laughter* (1930) and *Tambourines to Glory* (1958) are the novels of Langston Hughes. His novels strive for the truth of a particular environment and the social rituals of the common folk rather than for the truth of the world. He focused on everyday life of ordinary black folk in his writing.

This “New Negro Movement” emerged with the assimilation of American politics and black culture, which was inevitable for the African American to grab the rights of ‘life, liberty and pursuit of happiness’ as they had expected for long before. There was conflict between different nationalities. Charles Silberman notes:

American politics and American social life are still dominated by the existence of sharply defined ethnic groups . . . The WASP (White Anglo Saxon Protestant), the Irish- Americans, the Italian-Americans, the Jewish-Americans do differ from each other in essential ways. They vote differently, raise their children differently, have different ideas about sex education, gender issued, and women’s status in society. (165)

Black Americans were marginalized groups so they could not represent their exact reality and socio-cultural identity in the literature prevalent before that time. The New Negro novelists were conscious about the ways in which they can uplift their condition in genderized and racial society. The New Negro novelists were mainly second-generation member of the middle class black intelligentsia who placed more emphasis on class than color in their novels. The main intention of these African American artists was to project their vision as honestly as they could: to discover the usable past, to define and explore their culture to express the historical struggle of black Americans to achieve a dynamic synthesis of their individual and collective double consciousness.

Harlem Renaissance begins from 1926. It is from this year that the freedom voices of the Negro were sung and played through jazz music. It is in 1926 that Toni Morrison's *Jazz* was set, in the same year the black literary movement known as the "New Negro Movement" originated.

Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Nellie Y. McKay, in *Norton Anthology of African American Literature*, write:

. Negro's real contribution in the field of arts is well marked from this time. Centuries of the degrading oppression of slavery would be overturned in a decade through the most sublime achievements of the arts. And it was the special time; for the first time black writers were feared as literary lions. In 1926, Langston Hughes published his jazz and blues poems in a volume entitled *The Weary Blues*. It was the fertile time for Negro writers like Countee Cullen and Zora Neile Hurston to launch their boldly experimental magazine, *Fire!!*. . .(54)

These lines clearly explain how Harlem Renaissance played a vital role in black literary movement to raise suppressed voice of African American through the highly academic writings. Toni Morrison also fights with the established norms and values created by male biased society where African American are supposed as minor race and discriminated in literary canon formation. Harlem Renaissance also led a further movement for the freedom of the black people. As a result, a movement known as “The Black Arts Movement” was started in the decade of 1960s.

In 1960, four black college students inaugurated the modern black civil rights sit in movement by occupying seats at a segregated lunch counter in the down town Woolworth’s store of Greensboro, North Carolina. Ezell Blair, Franklin McCain, Joseph McNeill and David Richardson were students of North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University. They taught that such movement was moral and effective means of securing guaranteed constitutional rights for black America. The black freedom struggle of the 1960s was a black arts movement inaugurated to transform the manner in which black people in the United States of America were defined and treated. As a vital sector of the movement, African American writers and artists sought to transform the manner in which African American were portrayed or represented in literature and arts. Their objective was to create works that would be “functional, collective and committing”. The writer Larry Neal described the project as follows:

The Black Arts Movement is radically opposed to any concept of the artist that alienates him from his community. Black Art is the aesthetic and spiritual sister of the Black Power Concept. As such, it envisions an art that speaks directly to the needs and aspirations of Black America The Black Arts and the Black Power Concept both relate

broadly to the Afro-American's desire for self-discrimination and nationhood. Both concepts are nationalistic. (qtd. in Gates and MacKay 1797)

In his classic *The Souls of the Black Folk*, W.E.B. Du Bois speaks of a veil that black Americans are forced to live behind in the United States. What Du Bois means is that black Americans have never been able to enjoy the serenity, choices, opportunities or benefits of 'normal' (read 'white') everyday life in America. From the work of the poet Phillis Wheatley to Rita Dove, African American poetical forms have provided expressive outlets for a people who often could not effort the time and luxury of the great American novel. Critic Don L. Lee writes, "Black poetry was an art of everyday use during the 1960s". African Americans shared a sense of new black world coming into existence in the United States. Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Nellie Y. McKay write:

The treatment of African as a subject in all genres of Black Arts writing is a direct result of the Black Nationalist impulses to construct a myth of origins for Africans in America. A homeland and an imagined common culture are minimal requirements for nationalism. An Africa of both the mind and the imagination was welcomed by the Black Arts and Black Power movements. The geographical Africa of the 1960s was a continent in transition, moving from colonial domination to independence. In 1960s alone, seventeen African States received their independence. (1801)

African American literary history is full of statements longing for Africa, black peoples' struggle for their rights, struggles for their culture and literature, and programs of reform or revolution that will produce an 'African' way of life in the

America. Morrison's fictions are also full with the result of haunting past and search for African American identity. Artists, writers, and scholars like Amiri Baraka, Nikki Giovanni, and Larry Neal actually traveled to Africa, making a journey back to their origins, which became critical for their efforts to frame a new and liberated African American identity.

2.4 Women's Rights Movement: Struggle for Female Image

The civil right and black power movements fired the women's rights movements of the 1960s. "The call to that first Women's Right Convention came about", as feminist Betty Frieda explains, "because the educated women, who had already participated in shaping society as an abolitionist, came face to face with realities of a housewives drudgery and isolation in a small town" (qtd. in Bell 239). Similarly, participation in the civil rights movement, ambivalence about the black power movement, especially its male chauvinism, and boredom with their actual or expected lives as suburban housewives spurred many American women to renewed activism for women's rights. Most of the leading feminists were and are middle class white women. Subject to restrictions against blacks as well as those against women, the black women is for many people, as black folk wisdom teaches, "de mule uh de world". Her experiences and truths are generally glossed over or ignored when references are made to women and blacks. However their liberation depends on the liberation of the race and the improvement of the black community.

Black and white voices were raised in protest against racism, poverty, war, corruption, and sexism. There were the cries like 'we shall overcome' or 'Burn baby burn!' Female voices for radical change had great impact on the African American novels of 1960s. Barbara Smith writes:

When Black Women's books are dealt with at all, it is usually in the context of Black literature, which largely ignores the implications of sexual politics. When white women look at black women's words they are of course ill equipped to deal with the subjectives of racial politics. A Black feminist approach to literature that embodies the realization that the politics of sex as well as the politics of race and class are crucially interlocking factors in the works of Black women writers is an absolute necessity. (qtd. in Bell 235)

Women of the late 1960s began to feel that they are inherently valuable, their liberation is necessary not as an adjunct to somebody else's, but because of their need as human persons for autonomy and first person subject in the society not as object connected with men.

Most of the conscious black women realized that sexual politics under patriarchy is as pervasive in Black women's lives as the politics of class and race. They also found it difficult to separate race from class and sex oppression because in their lives they are most often experienced simultaneously. Black women knew that there was racial sexual oppression. Many black women were raped by white males in the period of slavery and racism so black women writers started to represent such hidden shadows of black life in their novels.

Alice Walker adapted the term 'womanist' from black folk expression to signify a black feminist of color, a woman who, among other things, is boldly committed to the survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. African American novels by black women provided the necessary context for a better understanding of women's problems and sufferings. It also helped for further understanding of why black women are primarily concerned with how racism,

classicism, and, sexism have influenced the progress of creativity, love, power, manhood, and womanhood in the black community.

Black women were not supposed even as an element or part of the life. They were totally absent or silent from the literary and non-literary text by black men as well as white men and women before 1970s. Calvin Hertton reminds, “Except for Gwendolyn Brooks and perhaps Margaret Walker, the name of not one black woman writer and not one female protagonist was accorded a worthy status in the black literary world prior to the 1970s” (Hertton 139). Whatever the reason it might be, women writers like Morrison, Alice Walker, and Barbara Smith successfully displaced the stereotypic image with realistic images of black women.

Many black women novelist employ a greater or lesser degree the following signs and structures:

- (1) Motifs of interlocking racist, sexist and classicist oppression;
- (2) black female protagonist;
- (3) spiritual from victimization to the realization of personal autonomy or creativity;
- (4) centrality of female bonding or networking;
- (5) a sharp focus on personal relationship in the family and community;
- (6) deeper, more detailed exploration and validation of the epistemological power of the emotions;
- (7) iconography of women’s clothing; and
- (8) Black female language.

(Smith 168)

In pursuing these symbols and structures we deduce that black women are creating the texts, which are different, but this does not mean that their works constitute a distinctive literary tradition. Many black women writers including feminists underscore the problematic of a separate black female literary tradition.

Mary Helen Washington says:

Black women are searching for a specific language, specific symbols, specific images with which to record their lives, and, even though they can claim a rightful place in the African American tradition and the feminist tradition of women writers, it is also clear that for purposes of liberation, black women writers will first insist on their own name, their own space. (43)

There are many inter textual parallels between black male and black female to determine the consistency, distinctiveness, and frequency of their appearance and use in narratives by black women in deciding for themselves whether the separate black female literary tradition exists.

2.5 Quest for Racial Identity and Space for Female Subjects

Abolitionism, women's rights, education, equality, and commercialism were the burning social issues of the 1860s. To teach black Americans was considered as a great crime by the law of the United States. Against this law, some blacks were receiving education in some parts of Southern Country. Some black Negroes knew the value of education and started to read and write themselves. Rests of them were helped by the whites and their children. Some self-educated slaves like William Wells Brown and Frederick Douglass expressed their feelings, experiences, and the reality of the chattel slavery by writing antebellum novels. William Well Brown's *Clotel*; or *The President's Daughter; A Narrative of Slave Life in the United States* (1853) and Frank Webb's *The Garies and Their Friends* (1857) were published in London. Martin R. Delany's *Blake; or The Huts of America; A Tale of Mississippi Valley, the Southern United States and Cuba* (1859), and Harriet E. Wilson's *Our Nig* (1859) are the first novels published by Black Americans in the United States.

Harriet E. Wilson was the first African American women novelist. Wilson's *Our Nig* (1859) is an intriguing synthesis of the sentimental novel and the slave narrative of fiction and fact, of romance and autobiography. *Our Nig* opens with the marriage of Frado's parents- Mag, a 'fallen white woman' and Jim, a 'kind-hearted African'. After the death of her black father, the mulatto protagonist Frado is deserted by her white mother. Like the author Harriet Wilson, nineteenth-century white Massachusetts' family abused her like a slave girl for several years.

Wilson's double consciousness and double vision are apparent in the title, theme, and protagonist of *Our Nig*. The severe physical illness and spiritual desolation resulted Frado's abuse by Northern white Christian hypocrites is made more acute by her marriage to a fugitive slave and his apparent desertion during her pregnancy. Frado's resistance on the beatings of Mrs. Bellmont is the main step towards spiritual independence and self-realization. Wilson clearly wanted to tell a more complete story of black women than a political agenda or literary form of her day. As Barbara Christina has noted, "She questioned the progressive platform of her time –that white northern women were the natural allies of black, that the North was not racist, that all the black men were devoted to the women of their race" (331).

The principal theme of Wilson's novel, *Our Nig*, is that Northern blacks must also struggle for liberation and literacy against the "Southern principles" of racist oppression and Christian hypocrisy practiced by many Northern whites. The point of view, narrative structure, and style also reveal the double vision characteristics of the black American experience and African American novel. Henry Louis Gates Jr. points out that "Even though *Our Nig* shares many of the elements of the over plot of nineteenth century women's fiction given in Nina Bayon's *Women's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America, 1820-1870*, it

significantly inverts the plot structures of the “White Women’s Novel” to create the Black women’s novel” (qtd. in Bell 48).

Our Nig ends with Frado leaving New Hampshire. Wilson’s double vision and her historical significance are her unique treatment of the theme and character of the tragic mulatto. Wilson not only introduces into American fiction the first interracial marriage in which the wife is white and husband African, but also develops the character of her mulatto protagonist. It is the first step in the history of African American literature to invert the plot structure of the “white women’s novel” to create the black woman’s novel. Frado’s own mother abandoned her, Mrs. Belmont and her vicious daughter Mary ruined Frado’s health so that she had trouble supporting herself and her ultimate hope; her husband, a professed fugitive slave turned out to be a fake and left her. *Our Nig* clearly and convincingly illustrates that African American women like Frado had been victim of genderized and racialized society.

From the end of the Civil War to the turn of the nineteenth century, a new age came in the history of African American people. It was the age of technology, commerce, and finance for white America, but for black, it was an age of short-lived political freedom and long-term repressive law, peonage, convict labor and lynching. Aside from a fourth version of William Wells Brown’s novel *Clotel; or, The Colored Heroine: A Tale of the Southern State* (1867), no new African American novel was published until James Howard’s *Bond and Free* (1886). The major literary dilemma of African American novelist of this period was how to be true to their vision of reality and still reach their predominantly white readers.

Charles Waddell Chestnutt (1858-1932), generally considered the first major African American novel writer, responded with ambivalence and creative genius to the lore of his race and region. The subject matter of the third generation of the black

novelist is closely related to the prevailing hope or despair of black of ever fully realizing their racial and national identities in America. Sentimentality, seduction, sensationalism, and suicide: psychological, emotional or physical, are the general characteristics of popular romance in eighteenth and nineteenth century Britain and America. In contrast, as illustrated in antebellum and post bellum narratives, the distinctiveness of the early sub genres in the tradition of the African American novel is derived from their frequent, systematic, and consistent use of music, cultural sharing, and personal experiences. Bernard W. Bell writes:

. . . The Afro-American subgenres also combine the themes of love, marriage, and success with the protagonist's struggle for freedom from color and caste discrimination in a quest to fully realize his or her rights and potential for growth as a person of biracial and bicultural identity. The uniqueness of the Afro-American novel, in short, derives from both the double consciousness of its socio-cultural and socio-psychological content- and the double vision immanent in the pattern of oral and literary conventions of Afro-American and Euro-American sign system that structure that content. (79)

They produced more refined and better novels to fight against and alleviate slavery. Anna Julia Cooper's *Womanhood a Vital Element in the Regeneration and Progress of a Race*, included in "Voice", argued that the education and elevation of black women is crucial to racial uplift, for societies may be evaluated best by the status of their female members. In Cooper's words, "The fundamental agency under God in the regeneration, the retraining of the race, as well as the ground work and starting point of its progress upward, must be the black woman" (qtd. in Gates and McKay 554). Cooper shares the belief like other African American writers that Black

women were especially well situated to analyze and offer solutions to society's injustices because of their position as women in a sexist society. She wants to improve the condition of female by education and opportunity in academic field so the black women can feel themselves as an important bond of society.

Zora Neale Hurston (1891-1960), one of the more mysterious figures in black literature, emphasizes the pastoral aspects of rural black life and African folklore in her novels. Her *Mules and Man* (1935) is generally regarded as the first collection of African American folklore to be compiled and published by an African American. In her first novel *Jonah's Gourd Vine* (1934), Pearson, a Baptist minister who is unable to remain faithful to his wife between Sabbaths, *Jonah's Gourd Vine* is loosely modeled on the infidelities of Hurston's father, who was also a preacher. Their eyes were watching God; celebrates one individual's triumph over the limitations imposed on her mainly by sexism and poverty.

Richard Wright (1908-1960), a renowned black writer, got inspiration to write books for the self-identity of Negroes. *Long Black Song* is one of the few works by him written for the perspective of women. It is believed to be based on the tragedy of his uncle Hoskins, a successful bar owner in Elaine, Arkansas. He was murdered by whites who wanted his business and his land. *Native Son* (1940) defined Richard Wright as a major literary talent and it made him the first African American writer to receive both critical acclaim and commercial success. Critic Irving Howe declared, "The day *Native Son* appeared, American culture was changed forever" (qtd. in Gates and McKay 1377).

Richard Wright's rewriting of the myths of the "bad niggers" continues to stun readers by the power of its naturalistic truth. Wright, a member of federal writer's project, was "a man with mission and message: his message was to overwhelm the

sensibilities of the white world with the truth of his naturalistic vision and the power of his craft ship; his message was that the African American was American's metaphor" (Bell 154). Wright's *Native Son* explores the impact of oppression on the black psyche. It reveals how racial segregation is inextricably linked with white and black myths of the bad Nigger in shaping Biggers, protagonist in Wright's *Native son*, attitudes, and activities.

James Baldwin, another important African American novelist, always spoke for the identity of blacks. His way of writing involved a preoccupation with the intertwining of sexual with racial concerns, particularly in America. He published his first novel *Go Tell It On the Mountain* in 1953. He has spoken the voice of female sufferings and male domination of religious society of United States at that time. In an essay of James Baldwin, Kenneth Kinnamon writes:

By means of a carefully crafted tripartite structure, rich characterization, and distinctive stylistic voice, Baldwin tells the story not only of John Grimes, a Harlem young undergoing a personal and religious crisis, but also of his stepfather, Gabriel; his stepfather's sister, Florence; and his mother Elizabeth. With historical scope as well as personal immediacy, the author shows how gender, race, and religion affect the lives of these worshippers in the Temple of Fire Baptized. (Riggs 48)

Baldwin's books have dealt, in one-way or another, with race, gender, and slavery that was from long past in Southern and Northern America.

After the publication of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* in 1952, the literature of African American writers reached in a great height due to its popularity. Arguably the most comprehensible fictional probing of the twentieth century American psyche, it is

entitled to a place beside the nineteenth century *Moby Dick*. Ellison's *Invisible Man* shows that his creative consciousness encompasses a vast range of the world's literature, Kenneth Kinnamon writes:

Invisible Man concerns the quest of an unnamed young black man for personal identity and racial community as he travels from South to North, from innocence to experience, from self-deception to knowledge, from spurious visibility to an existential invisibility. These journey take place in the immediate context of the late context of the late Depression, but, as they unfold, their implication extend backward in time to the reconstruction, slavery, and the founding of Republic, and outward from the protagonist's self to the social situation of black America and to the very nature of the democratic experiment. (qtd. in Riggs 270)

Ellison's *Invisible Man* also reveals that black women had been victim of slavery. African American women were not only the victims of racial and genderized society, women in Asian countries and even the women of European countries were oppressed by male domination. They were classified as second sex. In *Invisible Man*, to revive Norton (a male character in the novel) from the shock he suffers after hearing Truce blood's incest; the narrator takes him to the Golden Day for a stimulant. The mere presence of the white trustee ignites the powder keg of emotions sealed up in the veterans and explodes in chaos and violence. One of the 'patients' immediately greets Norton as his grandfather, Thomas Jefferson.

Gentleman, this man is my grandfather!

But he is *white*, his name is Norton.

I should know my grandfather! He is Thomas Jefferson and I am his grandson- on the field- nigger side, “the tall man said.

Sylvester, I do believe that you are right. I certainly do, “he said, staring at Mr. Norton. Look at those features. Exactly like yours- from the identical mold. Are you sure he did not spit you upon the earth, fully clothed?” (Ellison 73)

Satire used in these lines, as throughout the novel, is double edged. Jordan comments:

While reconstructing the legend that one of the fathers of the country, the principal author of the Declaration of Independence, also fathered three or more children by his slave mistress, Sally Hemings. Ellison simultaneously deconstructs the myth of white purity and the fear of miscegenation by illustration that since the founding of the nation white men have been violating black women and fathering children by them. (Jordan 464-65)

Negro writings in the past had been confined to humble novels, poems, and plays. White America never offered these Negro writers any serious criticism. The more important fact is that a Negro could write was astonishing. Nor was there any deep concern on the part of white America with the role of Negro writing should play in American culture; and the role it did play grew out of accident rather than intent on design.

2.6 The New Experiment in African American Novels

African American novels from 1962 to 1983 has been characterized by continuity and change because of the novelists’ attitude towards life and language especially the imaginative use of narrative conventions shaped by the complex blend

of the social and cultural forces. During this period, Black novelists used structure and styles appropriate for the imaginative reconstruction of their sense of the double consciousness of black people as refracted through their particular vision of a rapidly changing experience of social reality and art.

To protect the rights of the Vietnamese people, the American military machines destroy their villagers, crops, and countryside with thousands of tons of bombs and deadly toxic chemicals. To preserve law and order, the police use clubs, water hoses, electric cattle prods, and snarling dogs on praying, singing civil rights demonstrators. To save souls of his flock of followers, a contemporary shepherd, the Reverend James Jones encouraged hundreds of drink poison Kool-Aid. Challenging the authority and purpose of literature, cultural theorist and literary critics celebrate it as a non-discursive, non-conceptual mode of discourse that has no authority of purpose beyond its symbols, signs, and structures. Euro-American novelists such as William Gas, Donald Barthelme, Ronald Sukenick, John Barth turn to fantasy and black humor. Other novelists such as Saul Bellow, Bernard Malamod use more traditional techniques to portray more conventional visions and values. In contrast, African American novelists of that time attempted to displace personal ambivalence and determination, a sense of community, and a respect for human rights. Novelists like John A Williams, Alice Walker, and John Oliver Killens continue the traditions of realism. Ernest Gaines, Roland Fair, Williams Melvin Kelley, Hall Bennett, and Charles Wright experimented with the modern forms of slave narratives, romance, fables, and satires. Other novelists, especially Toni Morrison explores poetic realism.

Alice Walker (1944), winner of Pulitzer Prize in 1982 for her novel *The Color Purple*, is committed to explore insanities, oppression, and triumphs of black women. In her first novel *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, Walker provides more

compassion for her female characters than male characters. The omniscient author-narrator catalogs episodes in the Copeland family life, especially Brownfield's, to arouse the reader's indignation at the price black women pay as the victim of economic, racial, and sexual exploitation. Margaret Copeland, Brownfield's mother, was like the family dog in some way. "She did not have a thing to say that did not in some ways show her submission to his father" (Walker 12). Grange drives her to drink, degradation, and death. Brownfield makes his wife quit her teaching job- "her knowledge reflected badly on a husband who could scarcely read and write because it made him feel, briefly, good. Every Saturday night he beat her, trying to pin the blame for his failure on her by imprinting it on her face. . . . The tender woman he married he set out to destroy" (63). Through violent abuse and forcing the family to move from one sharecropper's shack to another, Brownfield destroys his wife spiritually and physically.

Walker's Pulitzer Prize winning novel *The Color Purple* is more concerned with the politics of sex and self than with the politics of class and race. Its unrelenting, severe attacks on male hegemony, especially the violent abuse of black women by black men, is offered as a revolutionary leap forward into a new social order based on sexual egalitarianism. Bernard W. Bell Writes:

Although rooted in the particularity folk experience of some southern black women, the awakening of protagonist's consciousness to love independence, and sisterhood is more romantic than realistic. Rather than portray the growth into womanhood of an average southern black woman of the 1920s and 1930s, Walker has created a contemporary paradigm of the liberated woman . . . (263)

2.7 Morrison's Aesthetic Perspectives

Toni Morrison, born in Lorain, Ohio, in 1931, is the African American writer to win the Nobel Prize for literature in the year 1993. She wrote about a dozen of books including more than half dozen novels, essays, drama, and criticism. Her school life began in Lorain, Ohio, and she completed her Master's Degree in English from Cornell University. She worked as an instructor at Texas Southern University. While teaching at Howard University, she married a Jamaican architect and gave birth to two sons, but her married life could not go further and it ended soon. She sought divorce from her husband. Although she is aged, she has been teaching at Princeton University for a long time.

Morrison admits that her parents and grandparents influenced her by telling their experiences and stories based on oral tradition in black culture. Her keen interest in oral tradition practiced in the black community enabled her to compose perfect stories and write popular novels. She has shown her mastery and perfection in materializing ancient folklores and artifacts, myths, and legends, rites and rituals that emerge from the very core of the African black culture. The story of ghost and magic, popular in the black culture, helped Morrison to acquire perfection and implement it in her writings. In 'Introduction' of casebooks on Morrison, Linden Peach writes, "These stories must have been at least partly responsible for the blurring of the boundaries between fantasy and reality and between fact and fiction in Morrison's novels, which some critics have taken, despite Morrison's own objection to the label, for 'magic realism'"(3).

Morrison grew up in a terribly gendered, racialized, and sexualized society in America. She faced many problems in her literary career because of her color and sex. It was and is very difficult for people to work in a gendered and

racialized country if you are black and women. So, Morrison believes that the primary function of black history and art should be the rediscovery, reinterpretation and reevaluation of black life and experiences as lived by the black people.

Morrison's novels continue the poetic and Gothic branches of the African American narrative tradition. Bell writes:

Gothic in the sense that black poetic realists like Morrison strive more for truth of sensation and environment than for truth of fact, focusing on the supernatural ties of the present to the past and on psychological and sociological concepts for their images of ethical conduct in a world of misery and unnatural events; poetic in the use of the metaphoric and metonymic qualities of the language, the substitutions of figurative for literal expressions, as well as “debt bold strokes of color, distilled experience, and fluting but sharp and frequently recurring images.
(269)

Morrison herself writes:

. . . I cannot rely on these metaphorical shortcuts because I am a black writer struggling with and through a language that can powerfully evoke and enforce hidden signs of racial superiority, cultural hegemony, and dismissive ‘othering’ of people and language which are by no means marginal or already and completely knowable in my work
. . . . (*Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and Literary Imagination* xii-xiii)

Morrison is interested for the purpose of fiction, into the corners of the consciousness held off and away from the reach of the writer's imagination. The major characteristics of African American literature- individualism, masculinity, and social engagement versus historical isolation are not, in fact, represented in white

literature. Black people signified little or nothing in the imagination of white American writer. So, Morrison tries to uproot such tradition. She blends social reality with African folktales and myths, which reveal Africanist presence in American literature. Morrison says:

Critics do not see anything or meaning in the tropes of darkness, sexuality and desire in Ernest Hemingway or in his cast of black men . . . An instructive parallel to this willed scholarly indifference is the centuries long, hysterical blindness to feminist discourse and the way in which women and women's issues were read (or unread). Blatant sexist readings are on the decline, and where they still exist they have little effect because of the successful appropriation. (*Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and Literary Imagination* 14)

Toni Morrison uses the black vernacular tradition in her writing, which allows readers to participate in those traditions. Her works reflect her attempt to reconcile individual and community. The aesthetic progression of Toni Morrison was the postmodern concept of the sublime (as opposed to traditional constructions) and the beautiful to argue that her works reflect her attempts to reconcile individualism and community. In most of her novels, Morrison emphasizes on “ the preservation of the self; the reconciliation between the individual and the community; the restoration of regeneration of family, the home, and the natural world; and a powerful emphasis on survival rather than destruction” (Conner 50).

Morrison has explicitly worked to distance herself from western (predominantly white male) traditions in favor of situating her writings within an African American cultural and aesthetic tradition.

It is true that Morrison's knowledge of the black lore helped her to establish original African tradition on one side, and associate them with the existing issues as the reflection of the past on the other. Morrison's novels *Song of Solomon*, *The Bluest Eyes* and *Sula* are novels of poetic realism and gothic fables about growing up poor, black, and female in a male dominated white society of middle class people.

In the *Bluest Eye*, Pecola, a Breedlove, the eleven years old girl struggles hard to seek the blue eyes as the symbol of beauty, prosperity, and perfection. Pecola becomes conscious of her surroundings and her own existence, considers lackness in the absence of the bluest eyes. She thinks that it is the blue eyes that have a power to make her a beautiful, respectful and perfect girl. When she becomes crazy for the blue eyes, her drunken father, in a sensual mood, seduces her and she becomes pregnant. So she loses her sanity. It is painfully difficult for little black girls to grow into healthy womanhood with a positive 'self-image' when "All the world had agreed that a blue eyed, yellow-haired, pink skinned doll was what every girl child treasures" (20).

In *Sula*, Sula is disappointed at the possessiveness and jealousy of the one person to whom she felt close. No longer, she thinks, is Nel willing to affirm, the possibilities of life, to risk rebellion against social conventions and traditional sex roles in order to define herself and assert her independence and vitality.

When they met in 1922, Sula and Nel's friendship was as intense as it was sudden. "Because it had discovered years before that they were neither white nor male, and that all freedom and triumph was forbidden to them, they had set about creating something else to be" (52). Solitary and lonely, they were the only children of distant mother and incomprehensible fathers – Sula's was dead and Nel's a seaman. Nel's mother, Helen Wright, was attractive, vain and oppressively class conscious in

an effort to escape her Creole mother's wild blood. Resisting her mother's attempt to impose distorted middle-class values on her, Nel declares: "I am me. I am not their daughter. I am not Nel. I am me. 'Me'"(28). These lines clearly reveal the desire of black woman, most of the protagonist in Morrison's novels, for their own female subjectivity. Black women, living as slaves of white owners, were fighting to shift the 'object' you, female as second rank citizen, able to do anything with the permission from her husband, and concept of second sex, into the female subjectivity. They were woman.

Morrison's novels have a complex relationship with history. Her life spans the last two thirds of a century, which has seen magnificent changes in civil right for black people in America, and wider public recognition of African American women writers. "All her novels are in a sense 'historical novels' in which characters", as Barbara Rigney has said, "are 'both subjects of and subject to history, events in "real time", that succession of antagonistic movements that includes slavery, depression, reconstruction, and war', but even though they may appear to be quasi documentaries that bear historical witness they posit history as narrative, sometimes deliberately distorted or half remembered, as fantasy or even as brutal night mare" (Peach 61).

Many critics have agreed that Morrison, in one form or another, has raised the hidden voice of African American women. Black women are not satisfied in their role that is provided by the society. They always try to grab whatever the white women possess and do to be complete without trying to know their self and woman subjectivity because of the paradigm of the society. Linden Peach writes:

. . . . Sula is seen as rejecting the Black Nationalist view of the male as the prime victim of racialism- a role that assigns women a secondary role as healer of the black man's damaged masculinity- and its critique

of heterosexuality rejects one of the key principles of black Aesthetic discourse to depict male-female relationship as complementary unions. While recognizing that aspect of the novel, such as the victimization of women within the roles society allows them and the depiction to black men, invite a feminist reading . . . (“Introduction” 12)

In *Beloved* (1987), Morrison uses black female characters like Sethe, Beloved, Baby Suggs, Denver to bring out the black women’s desire for complete self or subjectivity. Jennifer FitzGerald studies Morrison’s novel *Beloved* from a psychoanalytic perspective and criticizes psychoanalytic criticism for having isolated psychic experience from the diversities of ethnicity and class. “Barbara Schapiro extends the pre-oedipal psychoanalytic model of Sigmund Freud in interesting ways by drawing on Jessica Benjamin’s *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism and the Problem of Domination*” (Peach 16). Benjamin modifies object relation theory to form what she calls ‘intersubjective theory’ as a complement to intrapsychic theory. She maintains Klein’s emphasis on primary relationship in self-development, but argues that the self develops through relationship with another subject rather than through object relations. Fitzgerald explains how,

Beloved explores the intersubjective and intrapsychic effects of growing up as black in an environment where inter subjectivity is severely curtailed. Benjamin’s location of domination in the breakdown of the boundaries which maintains the attunement of self and other is especially appropriate to the psychoanalysis of white racialism and intra-racialism among black people. (qtd. in Peach 17)

Toni Morrison, almost in all her novels, depicts the women’s problem of the contemporary male dominated white society. Morrison’s novel not only reflects this

kind of gender issues and cultural schizophrenia, but also deconstruct the role relation of sex. She reveals male-domination, female struggle for their identity, and riot.

Morrison bases her characterization on spiritual and mythical grounds. She portrays every female character with strength and wisdom she explores within. Every character in this regard, seems conscious of her inner strength with a sudden awareness of reality and truth and tackles the situation with attained black identity. So we find her every female character struggling for female subjectivity and perfection.

III Female Desire for Subjectivity in *Jazz*

3.1 *Jazz: Singing the Blues*

African American literature has its origin in oral tradition, myth, folklore and chanted music. Music is a site where forms and content, image and ideas are one and they are indissolubly linked at creation. Henry Louis Gates writes in his essay that “from classical ritual and its offspring, tragedy, all the way to opera and musicals, the boundary between music and literature has proven a dynamic site of interplay, and one that has enjoyed many of the greatest writers of the twentieth century, from Thomas Mann and Marcel Proust to James Joyce and Wole Soyinka” (52).

It is found that few musical traditions in America have had more modern masters than has the African American tradition from the blues to rhythm and blue from soul to rap from ragtime to jazz. It is a commonplace that the achievement of black literature does not rival the range and depth of its musical counterpart. Henry Louis Gates further writes, “While many black writers have used musicians and music as theme and metaphor for their writing, none have attempted to draw upon jazz as the structuring principle for an entire novel. None that is until Toni Morrison’s new novel, *Jazz*” (54).

African American artists cross-fertilized literature, music, and paintings to reflect the complete identity of black people. Some white critics objected such aesthetic appropriation. Black music is always called something- spiritual, gospel, jazz, boogie-woogie, bop, bebop, rap- but it is never called music, for example twentieth century music or modern music. Jazz, born of the blues, is the urban version of African American music. Furthermore, Amiri Baraka explains:

Jazz incorporates blues . . . as cultural insistence, a feeling-matrix . . .

So at its strongest and most intense and indeed most advanced, jazz

expresses the highest consciousness of that people [the African American nation] itself, combining its own history, as folk form and expression, with its more highly developed industrial environment.

(262-64)

Jazz is well adapted to the claiming of the narrative 'I,' i.e., to stand as the teller of the African American history. Morrison has many times articulated her awareness of the significance of black music for the African American community; she has also expressed that the African American novel has to take over the functions of the music that no longer belongs exclusively to the black people.

In contrast to jazz, blues music has retained much more clearly its identification with African American sources of origin and development, perhaps because, as Paul Oliver explains, "implicit in the term 'blues' was the whole tragedy of black servitude since Black Anthony Johnson, the first of the 'twenty and odd Niger's' to set foot on American soil, landed from a Dutch 'man of warre' at Jamestown at 1619" (qtd. in Rubenstein 2). The blues emerged out of the tragic circumstances of African American history, expressing the themes of suffering and misery that has arisen from poverty and destitution, from disease and disaster, violence and brutality, from bad living conditions and aimless migration during the Harlem Renaissance.

Morrison has elaborated the relationship between the central literary preoccupation and a central theme of the blues. Comparing Morrison's *Jazz* and jazz music, Koenen writes, "my notion of love-romantic love- probably is very closely related to blues. There is always somebody leaving somebody, and there is never any vengeance, any bitterness. There is just an observation of it, and it is almost as though

the singer says, “I am so miserable because you don’t love me, but it is unthinkable” (qtd. in Rubenstein 3).

This feeling is directly articulated in *Jazz* through the song of a man sitting on a fruit crate, whose wooden leg serves as an allusion to the famous blues singer Peg Leg:

Blues man. Black and bluesman. Black therefore blue man.

Everybody knows your name.

Where-did-she- go- and- why- man. So- lonesome- I –could- die man.

Everybody knows your name. (119)

Like penetrating expression of blues and jazz, Morrison’s lament on the ‘absence of love’ has both deepened and broadened the course of her fiction. It expresses the experiences of loss of individuals who have been separated from their relatives as well as it is a legacy of cultural dislocation and black identity.

Jazz is set during the 1920s, an era of emerging cultural optimism for African Americans. Though most of the action in *Jazz* takes place in the ‘City’, several flashbacks are set in rural Virginia, including the self-contained story of a mulatto named Golden Gray. The narrator of *Jazz* is uniquely ‘without sex, gender, or age’ to highlight its function not as person but as the voice of a talking book as the book is talking. Initially, the voice exults as it records the emergence of a new order; “Here comes the new. Look out. There goes the sad stuff. The bad stuff . . . History is over, you all, and everything is ahead at last” (*Jazz* 7). This voice celebrates the era of the ‘New Negro’, cultural pride and new musical use. Morrison also plays in ‘blues’ music itself by expressing a countervailing theme. As the voice concedes in the novel, “word was that underneath the goodtime and the easy money something evil ran the streets and nothing was safe- not even dead”(9). Almost all music critics admit that

jazz music developed from the blues. Mary Ellison describes the essential relationship between the two forms; “Jazz and blues have always been different genres of the same music, with jazz emphasizing the instrumental and blues the vocal content. Jazz has consistently dependent on the blues, from its inception to its most recent developments” (9).

The narrative construction and reconstruction reflects the character’s legacy of personal dispossession. The narrative records represents both the real and the false hopes offered by the city. And as it first celebrates the advent of new era, it directly comments on the meaning of relocation for “a million others” (32). The voices in *Jazz* reflect the mixture of voices of black people in Harlem Renaissance.

I am strong. Alone. Yes, but topnotch and indestructible- like the city
 in 1926 when all the wars are over and there will never be another one
 At last, everything’s ahead Here comes the new. Look out.
 There goes the sad stuff. The bad stuff. The things- nobody-could-
 help-stuff. . . . World was that underneath the good times and the easy
 money something evil ran the streets and nothing was safe-not even the
 dead. (*Jazz* 7-9)

In these above lines from the *Jazz*, the play on the written and oral language mirrors the structure of the blues music and the instrumental variation of jazz. The narrator seems to thrive on pain and on the lyrical laments of all the voices telling tales of woe in the narrative, and its very form captures the unpredictability of jazz. The blues tells the stories that could or could not be told by the buried voices. Even Dorcas’s aunt, Alice Manfred swore she heard a complicated anger in it; something hostile that disguised itself as flouring and roaring seduction.

. . . It faked happiness, faked welcome, but it did not make her feel generous, this juke joint, barrel hooch, tone house music. It made her told her hand in the pocket of her apron to keep from smashing it through the glass pane to snatch the world in her first and squeeze the life out of it for doing what it did and did and did to her and everybody else she knew or knew about. (50)

Here, music functions as a substitute voice. The voice in *Jazz* repeatedly reports the social, racial, sexual, and genderized terrorism. The structure of *Jazz* depends on a call-and-response pattern. Each of the ten sections of Morrison's novel concludes with an idea or phrase to which the operating words of the next section response; additionally, like jazz improvisation on a blues theme, each response opens into a new direction. The first section of the novel ends with the words "I love you" (24). The second section of *Jazz*, opens with the response "or used to" (27), and shifts- as a musical improvisation might shift to a different basic chord- to reflection on Violet's loneliness; she has released her lovebirds in response to Joe's new interest in the young girl Dorcas, who also reminds Violet of her own childlessness. Similarly the link between the last two sections of the novel depends on call and response of the shifting meaning of particular phrase: Dorcas's friend Felice, comparing her grandmother's preparation of catfish with Violet Trace's- the letter's version too heavy on the hot pepper- explains that she drank plenty of water rather than refuse the fish (and hurt violet's feedings) because it "eased the pain"(216); the narrative's final section opens with response, "Pain. I seem to have an affection, a king of sweet tooth for it" (219).

Thus, pain is the subject of blues music and Morrison's novel *Jazz*. The shifting of musical improvisation also reflects the shifting of female desire in black society after the slavery and racism like Harlem of 1925 is the time of new desire. At this particular cultural and historical moment, only certain voices can be captured. Mostly indistinct voices fusing with the great voice of city. The text becomes then a musical score, an open (to change), instrumental space in the literal sense of the term.

. . . Alice Manfred stood for three hours on Fifth Avenue marveling at the cold black faces and listening to drums saying what the graceful women and marching men could not. What was possible to say was already in print on a banner . . . But what was meant came from the drums. It was July in 1917 and the beautiful faces were cold and quiet; moving slowly into the space the drums were building for them Now, down Fifth Avenue from curb to curb came a tide of cold black faces. Speechless and unblinking because what they meant to say but did not trust themselves to say the drums said for them . . . (53-54)

The cityscape is suddenly redesigned and redefined by this unexpected wave of the black flooding part of downtown and protesting against white violence during the deadly East St. Louis riot of 1917. Taboo breaking and boundary crossing become in dissociable. The New York silent marchers cross over to "where white men leaned out of motorcars with folded dollar bills peeping from their pa . . . It was where Alice, a woman of fifty and independent means, had no surname. 'They eventually infringe upon the uncharted and unsafe territory' South of 110 Street" (54).

3.2 *Jazz Aesthetic*

In 1951, James Baldwin wrote that “. . . it is only in his music . . . that the Negro of America has been able to tell his story” (qtd. in Grandt 1). Morrison’s *Jazz* sweeps interrogating the meanings of history and identity. There was a debate among the critics that whether the jazz music is black music or white music. Instrumental music is a much more abstract art form than literature, but the contemporary critic still faces the same dilemma that confronted Roy Eldridge: the apparent paradox that jazz music is at once a distinctly black American art form as well as a cultural hybrid.

Toni Morrison’s *Jazz* is not about jazz at all. Its very first paragraph sounds the basic theme: a woman named Violet went to a funeral to mutilate the face of a dead girl Dorcas who had been shot by Violet’s husband in a desperate act of misguided love. This is the melody on which the disembodied first person narrative voice improvises a story constantly adding, revising, reinventing, and shifting back and forth among various characters. Narrator evokes various voices, as Morrison explains, to reflect “a jazz performance is open to change, and the other musicians have to respond quickly to that change. Somebody takes off from a basic pattern, and then the others have to accommodate themselves. That is the excitement, the razor’s edge of a live performance of jazz” (qtd. in Grandt 2).

Morrison understood the importance of jazz for her writing only in 1983. In an interview with Nellie McKay, Morrison describes her style, as “hanging on to whatever that ineffable quality is that is curiously black. The only analogy that I have for it is music . . . That is what I am trying to get at . . .” (153).

In order to access the jazz aesthetic, Morrison's jazz critics have primarily focused on two aspects of her novel: narrative structure and language. Paula Gallant Eckart claims that, "though unarmed, jazz is the essential narrator of the novel" (13). Critics have pointed out that the narrator resembles a jazz soloist who improvises on a basic theme. The novel's first paragraph-and in the course of the solo constantly invents, re-harmonizes, elaborates, digresses, and explores. Narrative voice is engaged in the creative process of storytelling, reacting and responding to other voices:

Risky, I'd say, trying to figure out anybody's state of mind. But worth the trouble if you are like me- curious, inventive and well informed. Joe acts like he knew all about what the old folks did to keep on going. But he couldn't have known much about True Bell, for example, because I doubt Violet over talked to him about her grandmother- and never about her mother. So he didn't know. Neither do I. Although it is not hard to imagine what it must have been like. (137)

Such storytelling is truly improvisational, "I watched them through windows and doors, took every opportunity I had to follow them, to gossip about them and fill in their lives" (220). It is not only in terms of narrative structure and technique that Morrison's *Jazz* is jazz; it is also jazz on the level of language itself.

Dorcas lay on a chenille bedspread, tickled and happy knowing that there is no place to be where somewhere, close by, somebody was not licking his licorice stick, tickling the ivories, beating his skins, blowing off his horn while a knowing woman sang ain't nobody going to keep me down you got the right key baby but the wrong keyhole you go to get it bring it and put it right here, or else. (60)

The repetition of sounds, punctuation marks, deliberate use of commas, and continuous flow of rhythm and rhyme used in these lines enacts the sound and structure of jazz music. Morrison's jazz critics reference *Jazz* as a marker of authentic blackness. Alan J. Rice concludes that "Morrison's jazzy prose style is . . . an aesthetic device to foreground her blackness" (394). Another jazz critic Robin Small McCarthy writes that, "in her consistent use of selected conventions of the jazz aesthetic, an in concert with our African ancestors, Morrison seems to sing out that 'the holy spirit will not descend without song'" (295). There are doubts among some critics that if the literary jazz aesthetic transcends culture, race, and even language itself, how can a critical aesthetic of jazz still be useful for the study of American literature because the text's structure and style contain certain elements derived from jazz music improvisation, call and response etc. Morrison's novel, *Jazz*, thus becomes jazz literature. Some readers ask the questions how Morrison's novel, a novel in which the word jazz occurs only once on the title page, is grounded in the history of the music?

The first paragraph of the novel mentions that, "Violet went to the funeral to see the girl and to cut her dead face" (3). Violet's split consciousness that leads to her cutting her rival shadows, Joe's hunt for his mother and his chase after his lover Dorcas. Joe's hunt for his mother and later Dorcas is paralleled by Golden Gray's chase after his biological father, Hunter's Hunter. Golden gray likens his own chase to the search for an imputed arm: "I will locate it so the severed part can remember the snatch, the slice of its disfigurement. Perhaps then the arm will no longer be a phantom, but will take its own shape, grow its own. Muscles and bone, and its blood will pump from the loud singing that has found the purpose of its serenade" (159). Here again the narrative voice of *Jazz* links the motif of cutting of identity, meaning,

and music. The narrative voice itself concedes, defeat towards the end of the story in a novel filled like a jam session with contesting, contrasting, and competing voices. The narrator appears to be the loser.

So I missed it altogether. I was sure one would kill the other. I waited for it so I could describe it I was so sure it would happen. That the past was an abused record with no choice but to repeat itself at the crack and no power on earth could lift the arm that held the needle. I was so sure, and they danced all over me. Busy, they were, busy being original, complicated, changeable- human, I guess you would say, while I was the predictable one, confused in my solitude into arrogance, thinking my space, my view was the only one that was or that mattered. (220)

As music created in the moment; all jazz, the jam session, and the cutting contest in particular; relies on the interplay between the musicians themselves and between the performers and their audiences. Like jazz, *Jazz* too depends on that interplay between voice and listener, narrator and reader, more so than any of Morrison's other novels. *Jazz* ends with a plea for our response to the narrator's call; "If I were able I'd say it. Say make me, remake me. You are free to do it and I am free to let you because look, look. Look where your hands are. Now" (229). We are asked to participate in the performance of the narrator's story; after all, as Violet points out toward the end, "What is the world for if you can't make it up the way you want it?" (208). Thus the narrator's improvisation is a failure only if we fail to answer its call and refuse. Jazz critic Ajaya Heble observes, "Improvisation teaches us by example that identity is a dialogic construction, that the self is always a subject- in- process" (95).

A useful critical *Jazz* aesthetic therefore must always also be grounded in the history of jazz music. Morrison's literary jazz alerts us to the paradox that jazz music is both: a distinctly black American art form and "world music". Jazz music is inextricably grounded in the black experience in American and yet, at the same time, it challenges the received binary pairs of white and black, the new world and the old, oppression and freedom, male dominance and female voice of pain and suffering.

3.3 *Jazz: The Story of Unmothered Children*

Toni Morrison's *Jazz* tells the story of many black children who did not get mother-love in their childhood because of harsh slavery which was seen everywhere. Due to the lack of mother love, black children dislocate their 'self'. The memory of their lost mother is the motor force of *Jazz*. In *Jazz*, Violet's narrative is a series of replacement, and, a chain of substitution in which her love of Golden boy shifts to her love for Joe Trace, but the 'mother hunger' hit her like a hammer. She is obsessed by the memory of the dead girl Dorcas. Thus, Violet seeks to fill up the space in her self that death of her mother ruptured.

Violet's rejection of motherhood is also tied to her mother's death. The text tells us, "The important thing Violet got out of that was to never never have children. Whatever happened, no small dark foot would rest on another while a hungry mouth said Mama?" (102).

Violet suffered many miscarriages in her life. They were thus became her "more inconvenience than loss" (107). Later Violet imagines her daughters, as she plays with the dolls. She describes it as an abortion:

Was she the woman who took the man, or the daughter who fled her womb? Washed away on a tied of soap, salt and castrol oil. Terrified, perhaps, of so violent at home. Unaware that had it failed, had it failed,

had she braved mammy made poisons and mammy's urgent fists, she could have had the best-dressed hair in the city. (109)

These lines show that Violet rejects to be a mother because of such miscarriages. Violet says, "Her mother. She didn't want to be like that. Oh never like that"(97). Violet expresses such agony what Adrienne Rich has termed 'matrophobia': "the fear not of one's mother or of motherhood but of becoming one's mother" (qtd. in O Reilley 4).

To know the 'self' and recognize women's subjectivity, mothering is very important. In the process of mothering, in loving her daughter, the mother enables the daughter to love when she herself becomes a mother. Only those daughters who have received maternal love as daughters are capable of giving their maternal love to the children when they become mother. Rose Dear's despair and later death prevent her from giving such love to her daughter Violet. So, Violet refuses to become like her mother. Violet realizes that she is psychologically unprepared for mothering.

However, Violet has not been real mother, she continually positions herself in a mothering role. The narrator of *Jazz* illustrates it how Violet find herself in different situation, "She is staring at infants and hesitating in front of toys displayed at charismas" (107). It is the tragedy for Violet not to get chance of having been mother herself. She remembers, "By and by longing becomes heavier than sex; a panting, unmanageable craving . . . She began to imagine how old that last miscarried child would be now. A girl, probably. Certainly a girl. Who would she favor? What would her speaking voice sound like? . . ." (108).

Violet comforts herself with a doll that she hides beneath the bed and thinks about the babies she has lost. Later Violet tries to find about the life of her mother to find herself. The narrator continues:

Violet had the same thought: Mama. Mama? Is this where you got to and couldn't do it no more? The place of shade without trees where you know you are not and never again will be loved by anybody who can choose to do it? Where everything is over but the talking? (110)

In such moment Violet identifies with her mother and is able to understand her mother's life. As Violet gains insight into her mother's life as a woman, she also comes to understand the life her mother lived as a daughter. Rose Dear is eight when her mother True Bell is taken to Baltimore. Years later when True Bell eventually returns home to Rose Dear, she entertains her now. Grown daughter with tales of Golden Gray. What Rose learns from these stories is that her mother does not hate this white boy who took her from her own daughters years ago. The stories tell her, as they did with Violet, that this boy has claimed her mother's heart; he, not she, is the beloved child. She also learnt why her mother committed suicide. At last, Violet is able to understand her mother's suffering, torture and pain caused by the vicious slavery and male dominated ideals. Rose Dear failed at mothering because her mother True Bell was the victim of slavery.

I don't know how hard it was for a slave woman to leave a husband that work and distance kept her from seeing much of anyhow, and to leave two daughters behind with an old aunt to take care of them. Rose Dear and May were eight and ten years old then . . . May-be, she felt bad. Anyway, choiceless, she went, leaving husband, sister, Rose Dear and May behind, and if she worried, the blond baby helped soothe her, and kept her entertained for eighteen years, until he left home. (141-42)

Rose Dear could not be a good mother because she had never been a daughter. Morrison's *Jazz* recovers the matrilineal heritage and returns the daughter to the lost mother. The other lost mother in Morrison's *Jazz* is Wild whom Joe Trace searches here and there. Joe, the son of Wild, takes on the surname Trace after his adoptive mother explains to him that his real parents "disappeared without a trace", he adds, "the way I heard it I understood her to mean the 'trace' they disappeared without was me" (124). Joe is also a motherless child. He knew that his mother is lost and he gives his last name Trace. He says:

The first day I go to school I had to have two names. I told the teacher Joseph Trace. Victory turned his whole self around the seat.

'Why you tell her that?' He asked me.

'I don't know', I said, 'cause'.

'Mama be mad. Pappy to' . . .

'No they won't,' I said. 'Your mama ain't my mama'.

'If she ain't, who is?'

Another woman. She be back. She coming back for me. My daddy too.

That was the first time I knew I thought that or wished it. (124)

These lines of *Jazz* clearly express the pain that the child has when he has lack of mother love. He cannot be a man because of lack of mother love. Joe Trace shifts the desire of mother love to Violet to Dorcas, but he does not find it. Joe does not seem ever to have had an original self because at birth he was abandoned by his mother. Joe says, "Before I met Dorcas I'd changed into new seven times" (123). He had no familial identity so he makes up his own self-identity and literary names as Joe Trace. In 1925, Joe recognizes the he "changed once to often" (129). Several selves

inhabit in Joe throughout the novel because he lost his mother and carry the wounds of unmothered children. Joe goes in search of his mother Wild. The narrator tells us”

. . . he made three solitary journeys to find her. In Vienna he had lived first with the fear of her, then the joke of her, finally the obsession, followed by rejection of her. (175)

Joe tries to find Wild, but when there is no response, he becomes angry.

. . . But now they were full of her, a simple-minded woman too silly to beg for a living. To brain blasted to do what the meanest sow managed: nurse what she birthed . . . There are boys who have whores for mothers and don’t get over it. There are boys whose mothers stagger through town roads when the juke joint slams its door. Mothers who throw their children away or trade them for folding money he would have chosen any of them over this indecent speechless lurking insanity . . . (179)

Later on, Joe finds in Dorcas the mother he never knew and wants from her the love he never had. With the death of Dorcas, Joe is, at last, able to grieve the loss of his mother and move beyond the grief toward forgiveness and acceptance.

Morrison argues that self-love depends upon the self’s first being loved by another self. Morrison emphasizes how essential mothering is for the emotional well-being of children. Never having been loved by their mothers, the unmothered children never learn how to love themselves. Without this self love the subjective ‘me’ is lost and they try to find their subjectivity in others that is object me. *Jazz* tells the story of orphaned, abandoned and unmothered children who never take the journey from mother love to self-love. Thus, they never know their own selves. Motherless ness causes dislocation of the self or fragmentation on subjectivity of African American

women. Black women were the productive force of children as well as the household works. So, after giving birth to the child, they had to go in the plantation to work. Most of them were sold in different place. Morrison's characters like True Bell, Rose Dear and Violet never got mother-love in the genderized and racialized world where they were grown up. That is why African American women's subjectivity is misplaced or fragmented. They seek to find it through such literary voice such as *Jazz*.

3.4 Denial of Patriarchy and Whiteness

Toni Morrison's *Jazz* from the outset rejects patriarchy. Violet says, "my grandmother fed me stories about a little blond child" (208). There is no any information about her grandfather. Joe Trace, a male character who lost his parents in his childhood waits and searches his mother. He tries to see her in Violet and Dorcas. But, he does not give any attention to his father. He is not worried about his father's love.

The story of Golden Gray can be studied as the denial of whiteness in Morrison's *Jazz* so that black women can see their own self and subjectivity. If we can rethink and understand the Golden Gray, a blond child, then only we can understand the black identity. Golden Gray is a crack and trace because:

The hilarious grown up comments he made when a child and the cavalierlike courage he showed when he was a young man and went to find then kill, if he was lucky, his father. (142-43)

Golden Gray's desire of killing his father is the symbol of killing of white patriarchy. He is a mulatto, the product of slavery. The narrator does not want us to love or hate him but to understand: to see that this white looking man with a "black skinned nigger" father has no authentic self. Golden Gray is given an arm, ". . . During the journey he worried a lot about what he looked like, what armor he could

call as. There was nothing but his trunk and the self of his jaw but he was ready, ready to meet the black and savage man who bothered him and abused his arm”(159-60).

Golden Gray expresses an ideal for black Americans and a horror for white ones. His name indicates his in-between ness. He is golden, not white, gray, and not black. He is identified not as ‘other’ but as ‘intimate’ - as being at the heart of racial tension, of the meaning of slavery of black self-hatred. For white Americans, he is the symbol of miscegenation, of “the sins of fathers”. Golden Gray is a symbol of what tortures black Americans if they accept the definition of human of the master narrative. From the moment he finds out that he is black, he hates his black self and this self-hatred means that he has to destroy its source, his father, who was white.

Hunter’s Hunter tells Golden Gray that he has to choose what he is going to be- in a sense white supremacy or black identity. He can choose to be white because he is not black. He is gray and blond child, but if he chooses to be black, he has to “act black, meaning draw your manhood up-quick like, and don’t bring me no white boy sass” (173). He chooses to be black. We know that he does not choose his father. It is the victory of black over white.

The narrator also explains Violet and Joe’s relationship. When Violet know that Joe Trace fell in love with Dorcas, she plans to take revenge:

Violet is mean enough and good looking enough to think that even without hips or youth she could punish Joe by getting herself a boyfriend and letting him visit in her own house. She thought it would dry his tears up and give her some satisfaction as well. (4)

African American women like Violet were trapped in the male domination and patriarchal black society. Violet is able to challenge her husband. She plans to punish

Joe Trace by giving Psychological punishment for his guilt of love affair with Dorcas; it is one of the most important steps to break patriarchal domination.

The beginning of the twentieth century is also the time when women have joined in some of the organization formed for their rights. “Regardless the grief Violet causes, her name was brought up at the January meeting of the Saleem Woman’s Club as someone needing assistance, . . . the club mobilized itself to come out to the burnt out family’s aid and left Violet to figure out on her own what the matter was and how to fix it” (4). Such organizations were necessary at that time to raise some voice for the rights of women and help them. As husbands are not able to control wife in the male dominated society, the patriarchy and male domination becomes feeble. Black women started to avoid unnecessary attention to the males so that they can see their self.

“Violet takes better care of her parrots than she does me. Rest of the time, she’s cooking pork I cannot eat, or pressing hair I can’t stand the smell of . . . (49).” We see that Joe Trace wants Violet to decorate her, put oil, comb her hair according to his wish. He does not want her to make it in her own way, but he confesses that Violet does not care him. She does it according to her wish to dismantle the patriarchy and form the society in which there is equal liberty for female subjectivity.

3.5 African American Desire for Self

The age of 1920s is the age of Harlem Renaissance or black renaissance. It is the time of blues and jazz music. Jazz is the medium of expressing hidden desire of African American people. Toni Morrison’s *Jazz* becomes the voice of desire. It is created by musicians to give voice to their buried desires, and jazz, in turns, awakens its listener’s buried desires, seen first as sexual desires and then as the desires that

make Alice want to “Squeeze the life out of it for doing what it did and did and did to her and everybody else she knew or knew about” (59).

Morrison’s *Jazz* begins with the simple plot of the triangular love story of Joe Trace- Violet- and Dorcas.

Sth, I knew that woman. She used to live with a flock of birds on Lenox Avenue. Know her husband, too. He fell for in eighteen-year old girl with one of these deepdown, spooky loves that made him so sad and happy he shot her just to keep the feeling going. (8)

The story begins in such a way that different characters have their own story and background, which has motivated them for the desires. Joe Trace’s sexual drive moves her to seek out Dorcas. But later when his desire is not fulfilled, he killed her to keep the feeling going.

Harlem is an appropriate backdrop to Morrison’s novel because of its historical connection to desire both as the object of desire during the great migration of the first part of the twentieth century and at the place where desires were fulfilled during the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s.

The wave of black people running from want and violence . . . like the others, they were country people, but now soon country people forget. When they fall in love with a city, it is forever, and it is like forever I don’t mean they hate them, no, just that what they start to love is the way a person is in the city; . . . (33)

Black people like Joe and Violet, after the migration, have new desire of their identity. They were the black people rooted in the slavery and racism, but they wanted to form their own new life, which could cover the shadows and clouds of their life. They did not want to continue their feeling of lack. “Little of that makes love, but it

doesn't pump desire" (34). Actually black people have so many desires, which are created by the genderized ideals, but they are never fulfilled. In Langston Hughes term, they are the deferred dreams of Negro people.

Morrison suggests that the desire of this historical moment was to be "more like the people they always believed they were" (35). Unfortunately they never got an opportunity to experience it as free Negro with their free subjectivity. For long after emancipation proclamation, they waited to be their hopes and dreams true but they never realized it. The only option was that they had to curse the slavery, their ancestors and their past, which means they were cursing themselves. The story of *Jazz* moves forward and backward from the sexual desire of Joe Trace and Violet to search their self-identity at the end of the narratives.

It was a randy aggressiveness he had enjoyed because he had not used or need it before. The ping of desire that surfaced a long with his whisper through the closing door he began to curry . . . , he decided on Dorcas. Regarding his marriage to Violet. He had not chosen that but was grateful, in fact, that he didn't have; that Violet did it for him, helping him escape all the redwings in the country and the ripe silence that accompanied them. (30)

Suddenly, Joe feels some sexual desire and chooses Dorcas for the fulfillment of such desire. He continues that Violet is not chosen by him and she does not care him.

The narrator of *Jazz* expresses the desire of Violet who wants "the little blond child" in her earlier age.

The one she would have liked and the one I used to like before . . . my grandmother fed me stories about a little blond child. He was a boy,

but I thought of him as a girl sometimes, as a brother, sometimes as a boyfriend. He lived inside my mind. Quite as a mole. But I didn't know it till I got here. The two of us. Had to get rid of it. (208)

Her grandmother's stories about; the blond child made Violet to desire white self. She runs after the blond child, the blond refers to Golden Gray, the son of Miss Vera Louis and "a Negro boy from out Vienna way". She thinks that she will be whole and her 'self' will be complete if she obtains whiteness and male character in her life. It seems that the "tricky blond kid living inside Mrs. Trace's head" (211) was the cause of Violet's psychological wounding and the subsequent displacement of her original self.

A great driving force of the Harlem Renaissance was to present a new subjectivity for the "Negro" which was neither the supposedly intellectually and spiritually inferior being that whites had built their systems of first slavery and then racism upon nor the brutal animal that they claimed to the Negro. This New Negro is a self-dependent man. The spirit of this "New Negro" came with the concept of subjectivity by claiming that the African American are independent as an individual and part of group. African American should be recognized as independent race, which means they love free to think and act as subject.

3.6 Physical Violence: Psychological Killing of Female Subjectivity

African American history is the history of genderized and racialized society. Either they were white or black, their mind and social activities were the continuation of the practice and imposed by the history. African American women were resisting the unnecessary torture and flaws that the society imposed on them. The story of Joe and Violet are set against the bleak conditions in the south at the time: segregation, the exploitation of labor by white landowners, the miserable wages paid, the injustices

and deceptions practiced on the people deliberately kept illiterate. This sociological context is not just background detail presented in the detached language of sociology.

The narrator of *Jazz* also illustrate the lines of physical torturing:

. . . he shot her just to keep the feeling going when the woman, her name is Violet, went to the funeral to see the girl and to cut her dead face. (3)

Joe's physical killing of Dorcas is the process of killing woman's subjectivity in the male dominated society. Joe tries to make Dorcas his possession of love, sexual partner; his object, but when she denies the object role he shot her. Joe's violent shooting of Dorcas is not only one incident, there are many such incidents in the city.

Everyweek since Dorcas's death, during the whole January and February, paper laid bare the bones of some broken woman. Man kills wife. Eight accused of rape dismissed woman and girls victims of. Woman commits suicide. White attacker indicted. Five women caught. Woman says man beat. In jealous rage man. (74)

Such shooting and killing not only kills the body of women, it literally kills women subjects long before they are given such trouble. The wounds and beating and the marks and scars in female body are the symbol of wounding in their subject. They are not able to live as subjects in genderized and sexualized society. A male desire of the contemporary society is to fix the objective role to woman. They want to confine women as object wanted by them. Women psychology is also formed according to the ideas and conceptions of the society. They are taught to do everything as desired by the society. Mothers are the first who kills the subjectivity of their daughter because they teach their daughter every norms and values of traditional society. So, women are compelled to reform themselves according to the dominant beliefs. As Violet is

the physical product of the society, her mind carries the false ideals imposed by the male dominated white society. So, at first, Violet reduces her female 'subject' as 'object' role. She is wanting to be wanted by her husband, Joe Trace.

From Malvonne she learned the girl's address and whose child she was. From the legally licensed beauticians she found out what kind of lip range the girl wore; the marcelling iron they used on her (though I suspect that girl didn't need straighten her hair); the band the girl liked best. (5)

When Violet discovers that Joe desires Dorcas, she plot to win Joe back by learning all that she can do about Dorcas so she can become her. Now Violet has no sense of herself as female subject with her own desires.

Dorcas seems, at first glance, a more independent subject. She does not seem subjected to Joe, as he is the one who rushes to satisfy Dorcas's demands. To show her confidence and superiority, Dorcas says, "with Joe I worked the stick of the world, the power in my hand" (191). But later she is also uncomfortable with this type of power and captures the most able male, Acton she says:

Acton, now he tells me when he doesn't like the way I fix my hair. Then I do it how he likes it. I never wear glasses when he is with me and I changed my laugh for him to one he likes better. I think he does. I know he didn't like it before. And I play with my food now . . . He worries about me that way Joe never did. (190)

Dorcas has become a passive receptor of white patriarchy. She is happy with the psychological killing of her woman subjectivity and likes to be as wanted by Acton which she calls "giving her personality" (190). The male subject of this male dominated society is dependent on having an object, i.e. female. When the object is

removed from the male subject, the subject figuratively dies when. When Dorcas becomes the object of another man, Acton, Joe shoots Dorcas “he shot her just to keep the feeling going” (3). Joe’s action of shooting is not only to take revenge. He hopes to fix the image of Dorcas in his mind so that he can always have his object- ‘female subject’, Dorcas, with him. In a conversation with Felice, Violet explains how she forgets her subjectivity.

. . . ‘Forgot it’

‘Forgot?’

‘Forgot it was mine. My life. I just ran up and down the streets wishing I was somebody else’.

‘Who! Who’d you want to be?’

Not who so much as what. White. Light. Young again. Now you don’t?

. . . How did you get rid of her?

Killed her. Then I killed me that killed her..

Who is left?

Me. (208-209)

Violet recognizes that the stories of adored blond child produced in her a longing to be white, bright, and young. This desire demanded from her a denial of her real, original black female self. The headstrong female self of Virginia is further displaced by the citified Mrs. Trace. The recovery of her original self occurs when both the “little blond child” and the Mrs. Trace “who wanted to be something else” are exorcised from her consciousness. The narrator says that:

Violet regrets that it must be so; not only is she losing Joe to a dead girl, but she wonders if she is not falling in love with her tool. When she is not trying to humiliate Joe, she is admiring the dead girl’s hair;

when she is not cursing Joe with brand new cuss words, she is having whispered conversation with the corpse in her head; when she is not worrying his loss of appetite, his insomnia, she wonders what color were Dorcas's eyes. (15)

It is a process of connection between two female objects, Violet and Dorcas, "When the woman, her name is Violet, went to the funeral to see the girl and to cut her dead face: (3). Violet finally sees her violent attack on Dorcas's dead face as metaphorical attack on the patriarchal object that both (Violet and Dorcas) are supposed to be. Violet rebels against her object role. Her attack on Dorcas's dead body is the attack as object role of women which violet rejects.

She ran, then, through all that show, and when she got back to her apartment she took the birds from their cages and set them out the windows to freeze or fly, including the parrot that said, 'I love you'. (3)

The freeing of birds is the process of killing her object me and freeing her 'soul' for the transformation to the female subjectivity. The second stage of Violet's development into a "subject me" is represented by her killing this violent part of herself. She recognizes this "killing me". That other Violet saw ". . . how the ice skim gave the railing's black pole's a weaponry glint" (89). And "Violet not only knew the knife was in the parrot's cage and not in the kitchen drawer, that Violet remembered what she did not" (90).

We are not actually shown how she killed the me that killed. But we are left to wonder what prompts Violet to kill this stage. In *Jazz*, Morrison goes on to remind us, first, that this disruptive, female desire is unfamiliar and initially threatening by having Violet afraid of it and, second, that we must learn to decipher it by having

Violet initially misinterpret it. Violet's initial response these outbursts is to "shut up" (23). And the first time she tries to act on this desire. She thinks that what she wants is a baby. Not knowing that what she really desires is her self, she misreads her desire through the dominant lens, which allows mothers to experience subjectivity through their children. She, however, does reject her misinterpretation and returns the baby before anyone could prove she was going to take it, but she still does not know how to turn her unusual desires into "subject me".

Concerning to Violet's split subjectivity, one thinks of Du Bois' theory of racial double consciousness, "This sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of other, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (*Souls of the Black Folk* 16-17). However, the nature of Violet's double consciousness encompasses not only issue of race but also the issue of gender and regional displacement. Morrison further reveals Violet's fragmentation- her double consciousness- by describing her alter ego in terms of 'that other Violet':

Whenever she thought about that Violet (the one who was brave enough to do anything) and what that Violet saw through her own eyes, she knew there was no shame there, no disgust. That was hers alone. (94)

After meeting and marrying Joe, Violet had been strong, assertive, and resilient. Violet comes to recognize that her love for Joe- the man she chose- endangers her sense of subjectivity in the south. Violet's fear of loss- of losing Joe to the memory of his dead lover. Retreating into silence a metonym perhaps of the silent lives live in urban apartment buildings like Violet's. Violet thinks:

I got quiet because the things I couldn't say were coming out of my mouth anyway. . . . The business going on inside me I thought was

none of my business and non of Joe's either because I just had to keep hold him anyway I could and going crazy would make me lose him.

(97)

Significantly, Violet realizes her subjectivity after she establishes a sisterly bond with Alice Manfred, Dorcas's aunt, from whom she seeks motherly counsel. As in many of Morrison's novels, mothering is not always done by one's biological mother or by one who is generally older. Interestingly, Alice and the dead Dorcas are pivotal characters in Violet's quest for subjectivity as they provide what she lacks in the north family and community. Both represent absence presences in that Dorcas becomes the daughter Violet never had and Alice becomes the mother whose suicide haunts her.

IV Conclusion

African American Women's Recognition as Subjects

Toni Morrison who herself is pragmatic in her outlook intends to make a great change in black culture, which she finds still dominated by the traditional patriarchal hegemony. She is very much aware of double pressure upon the black women who feel themselves "neither white nor male" and working independently with their clear self and women's subjectivity.

Morrison's fiction has always been concerned with deconstructing the frames of reference within which African- American identity has been, and is constructed. *Jazz* is a significant contribution to our understanding of this aspect. Morrison's *Jazz* is anchored in an ever-increasing social complexity and embraces a new cultural and ethnic pluralism of which the city in *Jazz* becomes a symbol- indeed, Morrison's novel can be seen as a search for a collective way of dealing with differentiated identities, themselves the product of racial, gender and geographical differences, rather than absolute binaries which even the concept of hyphenated identities such as African American privileges.

Morrison's *Jazz* is not the culmination of an evolutionary process in the narrative tradition, but the product of social and cultural forces that shapes the author's attitude towards the social and economic life of African American women. In contrast to the Euro-American novel, however, the African American novel has its roots in combined oral and literary traditions of African American culture. In their quest for status, power and identity in racist, capitalist, patriarchal American social aura, the African American literature, particularly, novels, is one of the symbolic literary forms that black American have produced. *Jazz* is not an exception to this symbolic act.

Thematically and structurally, *Jazz* is dominated by the struggle for freedom from all forms of suppression and by the personal struggle to realize the full potential of African American women's subjectivity.

Toni Morrison employs a new technique of characterization in *Jazz*. Her protagonists are vivid men and women with blood and flesh, deep insight and unlimited potentiality along with inexhaustible strength. In her early novels they are highly influenced by the vision of quest for subjectivity. They grow up in the community, observe it deeply, explore its lackness and need, launch a desire, return with a proper solution and pour it until the society rises to a level of perfection and completeness. Such sense of female subjectivity is the key to energize the protagonist.

Although *Jazz* music is clearly an important influence on the novel, many of *Jazz*'s narrative features, such as telling the same story from different perspectives, cross connecting different story lines and even the call-and-response are found in Morrison's previous novels. *Jazz* is typical of Morrison's novel in its concern with place and displacement, the interrelatedness of past and present, and with characters who are alienated from the places and people who give them identity. James Van der Zee's photograph, and the story of the young girl lying in her coffin from Billop's book are clearly the source for two of the incidents in *Jazz* including the opening event in which Violet tries to disfigure the face of Dorcas's corpse in the open coffin. The girl in Van der Zee's photograph was killed at a party with a gun and silencer by someone who was jealous mirror's Dorcas's death.

In *Jazz*, Joe killed Dorcas because he cannot bear to be abandoned a second time, as he was by his mother, who might or might not be Wild of whom Dorcas reminds him. Dorcas has tended to be seen as Joe's substitute for his mother, Wild, or as exemplifying what the city unlashes in people. Indeed, Dorcas is a complex

character. Violet's character is shown as violent as she went to the funeral to see the Dorcas and cut her dead face. From her grandmother's tale of the pampered and worshiped Golden Boy, Violet learns that with whiteness and maleness one is assured love and happiness so she shoves Joe for her happiness. Although she is not a mother, she wanted to experience it by stealing a baby in the street. She split her self-identity in other things. She tried to grab what Dorcas had so that she could win Joe Trace's love and affection again which she later realizes was in vain.

In *Jazz*, female characters suffer great from every aspect of their life. True Bell is the victim of slavery so Rose Dear cannot be a good mother. Violet is the victim of genderized, racialized and sexualized society. Violet sees her self in others, as it is the dogma of the male dominated society. She goes to attack the dead body of Dorcas because she does not know her own subjectivity so she is jealous to Dorcas's beauty and whiteness. She plays with dolls and remembers the miscarried child when the 'blond child' and Mrs. Trace "who wanted to be something else" are exorcised from her consciousness, her desire of female subjectivity-'me' hit on her head like as a hammer. She realized that women as subject, independent, subject is essential for the love and happiness of African American women.

Violet struggles for split self and seeks it in her insanity. In search of women's subjectivity, Violet starts to act differently. She invites Felice in and they talk. Something opens up. Violet saw Felice as female subject and looks at her as female subject. Joe begins to treat Violet as a female subject. When Violet brings him his food, he says thank you, baby, take half for yourself and Felice notices something about the way he said it as though Joe appreciated it. At the end of *Jazz*, Morrison leaves us with an understanding of black female desire as a desire antithetical to dominant desire and steeped in the need to recognize women as subjects.

Morrison's *Jazz* is the African American women's desire for freedom, literacy and subjectivity-personal and communal-grounded in social reality and ritualized in symbolic acts inclusive of African American music jazz. The music that tells a story of African American people through the currents of history, the music that plays and sings liberation, searches and finds African American identity in reality as they have hoped. Then only they can live in the male dominated society independently as female subject exercising their happiness with the males and whites.

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