

# Women Incur Identity and self in Toni Morrison Novel Love and Jazz

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## ABSTRACT

*Toni Morrison best known as American contemporary black women writer, won numerable awards including Noble prize for literature. She uses numerous themes in her works to show how African American women cope with numerous forms of oppression. Morrison novels Love and Jazz give voice to the voiceless by showing the struggles and attempts of ambitious black women characters who want to incur identity and self in patriarchal society. In this article we will attempt to demonstrate that both novels Love and Jazz, women characters manage to get strengthen and maintain their culture. They redefine themselves toward self-empowerment and to create space of non dominance.*

**Key Words:** *community, legitimacy, literary darkness, reconciliation and self-identity.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Toni Morrison (born 1931), was a literary giant of the 1980s and 1990s. Morrison established as a first-rate novelist, popular lecturer, cultural critic, editor, essayist and children's book author. [1] She unfolds the tales of African- American women pains of being ignored, oppressed and marginalized with a remarkable lyrical force. Morrison as a black women writers, she challenge the hegemony of white male language by developing a tradition of their own like form, language, narrative and freed from many mainstream literary conventions. She intended to teach people about all aspect of African- American life present and past and also her works give voice to the voiceless and record a history of ordinary people who have been ignored. Morrison affords female protagonist the voice to articulate their identities by showing the very well struggles and attempts of ambitious black women characters who want to free themselves from all kinds of oppression.

## II. IDENTITY AND SELF IN LOVE

Love is a complicated story, centers on a deserted seaside hotel, with multiple points of view and serious flashbacks, reveals the secret and histories of those inhabited the Cosey resort before, during and after the Civil Rights Movement. It also , the tail of a group of women all enamored with one man. The story is told in retrospect, it reveals different layers and versions of the truth, thus presenting multiple perspectives, which are focalized through their various narrative voices, are revealed through several vantage points both looking back and revealing the action in present time. Morrison uses different narrative structures and techniques to reveal

the personal and the emotional aspects of her character's lives, because the individual being is always the centre of attention in her works.

Old woman, referred as L is an narrator of the novel. She is a cook in Bill Cosey resort for many years. She differ from rest of the female character in the novel. She quietly oversees everyone and witnessing every thing with firsthand. In the same manner she observe Cosey life. Heed, his uneducated child-bride and May his delusional daughter-in-law take decisions in the business. May begins to view her own daughter as a threat and ally when she came to know about the friendship between Christine and Heed. May, daughter of an preacher sees Heed as an lower class girl, embodiment of everything, she perceives her to be a disgusting, dirty, contaminating and fears.

Both Heed and Christine as a girls have deep loving relationship that transcends racial and social barriers of class and caste. Mr. Cosey decides to marry Heed, a child bride to give him children is a wrong and ugly decision according to L. [2] L observes that their loneliness start immediately after their separation. Heed thought Christine as her rival and views her as the favored member of the family. Like wise Christine's feels the hostility that her position in the family is subordinate to Heed because her relationship with her grandfather Bill Cosey. Each women sees herself as the desirer and views others as the rival and preventing her from receiving the affection of Bill Cosey.

Cosey, neither love Heed nor give her children, but waste her life. In the end Heed hires Junior, hoping that Junior will help her find the real will of the Cosey estate. Cosey affection and love for Celestial leads him to write his will in favour of her, instead of his family. L, out of love for the family sets the plot in motion by poisoning Cosey and produce the fake will, which leaves everything to the 'sweet Cosey child'. The aging Christine retains a sense of loneliness, melancholy and has a fleeting awareness of just how misdirected her life has been. L forces Heed and Christine to have some kind of contact with each other by scribbling down a will of ambiguous meaning on a menu. They fight over the will, made their reconciliation in the end only. Heed becomes the primary care taker of an ailing May, after Christine gone and her grand father Bill Cosey dies. With the help of L, Heed continue her duty until May dies and Christine's returns.

Junior, who is behaved as uncaring and ignorant of other people's needs, especially old women Heed and Christine. Mr. Cosey was dead long before the arrival of Junior. Cosey resembles the substitute father and lover that Junior had been looking for all her life. She summoned to him by creating a supernatural connection to Cosey. In Cosey house, she sees the young boy Romen, she singles him out as a sexual object. Junior controls Romen to her needs and advantage, but disregard his feelings. Romen genuinely transforms her with the love she so desperately desires. Sandler guidance to his grandson Romen makes in to take clear decision, rushing off to the hotel to help the old women.

Till the end of the novel, Heed and Christine struggle over the Bill Cosey home and inheritance, rather than on the trauma they suffered and their lost friendship. Both the women focus on heiresses to Bill Cosey's legacy. They are unable to overcome the loss they have suffered in the cessation of their friendship. They believe that asserting their legitimacy to Cosey's inheritance will legitimize their own identities, so they focus on the recovery and assertion of their identities as heiresses to Cosey's legacy. Junior also feels a special closeness with those women characterized by mutual understanding. She causes the accident that kills Heed and physically abandons the older women in the desolate hotel. The shock of Heed's fall and long neglected neutral

space leads to revelation, the women's anger turns to sorrow and regret when they realize the loneliness they have inflicted upon each other.

There is a marked change in their attitude towards each other in their final meeting at the hotel. Learning from their mistakes, they begin their friendship again. In the course of Heed and Christine's overdue conversations, the traumas caused for each of them by Bill Cosey were shared. Individually, they cannot repair themselves. Together, they can achieve healing and beyond that, happiness. It is only at the end of the novel, in the face of death, their hate turned in to love and begin to understand what had happened to them. After regain the ability to express themselves, through conversation and each other's company, the women realize that they have spent painful years looking for the meaning of love in the wrong places. Morrison counters the despairing vision of the perpetuation of shame and hatred in the lives of her characters with a hopeful vision of the healing power of love, replacing lastly, the women discover the possibility of recovery from trauma by embracing their unity, and by doing so they may create their own self and identity, free from the racial and sexual oppression. In the closure of *Love*, Morrison provides a hopeful vision of the healing and power of loving. The female characters in *Love* create a new, generative space that requires them to tell their stories in their own words.

### **III. IDENTITY AND SELF IN JAZZ**

Morrison, *Jazz* society is haunted by the phantom of racism, slavery and sexism, apart from this its achievement lies in lyrical, culture and metaphorical treatment of history. Morrison taking readers towards the transformation of new history through new selves. Jazz, a twentieth century musical style that reflects the mood and the spirit of the black community, originated in the southern United States. Morrison starts developing the theme from slavery to non-slavery African character who lived in America. The characters find that to survive in the urban environment in which they are transplanted, they too, must be committed to change. The characters are subject to improvisational patterns of understanding and relating to one another. Like rest of the novel, Jazz also serve as a panoramic in scope and ambition. Reinvention is possible by its passion, speed, cultural vitality and with its non sequential cycles. Jazz capture the pulse of the African American masses by composing adulterous husband, young woman and aggrieved wife. Jazz itself allusions, wonderfully shows the different between rural and urban, past and present, individual and community and also appropriate metaphor for the tensions with in the novel.

Like Jazz music, the novel *Jazz* itself, is full of movement, twists and turns. Joe, middle aged man in the novel, husband of Violet. From the moment Joe sees Dorcas, she is the object of his pursuit. Joe stalks to Dorcas and seduces her. For Joe, Dorcas is icon of a charm and renewed of his youth. [3] Joe shoots Dorcas, when she demands her independence, taunting and humiliating him in the process. Joe convinces himself that he hunts Dorcas out of his intense love for her. The idea of social motherhood is presented in character of True Belle in the novel. Vera Louise is abandoned by her own parents and family because having affair with black slave man Henry. She become distressed when Henry also deserted her. True Belle provides her a feminine support which Vera Louise lack. During that time, white women who gave birth to non white infants commonly deposited the children at the Catholic Foundling Hospital. But against the norm Vera Louise kept the child herself. This act shows that Vera Louise reclamation of the self, brave act and her affection towards her child.

Dorcas, a wounded child who lost her parents to violent racism, a free thinking and self-serving girl. She is based on an actual homicide victim who refused to name her assailant and trapped within her limited

expectations of womanhood. Dorcas, seems more independent subject, she doesn't seem subjected to Joe. For Dorcas love mean 'a fight to win someone'. It clearly reflect in her relationship with Acton, enjoying other girls jealousy. Dorcas was murdered twice, Acton killing her psychologically and Joe killing her literally. Both the men are do violence to Dorcas. At last, it is Dorcas who help Violet and her aunt Alice to realise their own identity and space in the world. Dorcas in the hands of death only realizes the true meaning of love, inspite of her usual self- serving egotism, she think of Joe love and thereby chooses to sacrifice herself for the sake of Joe.

Violet is thrown out of the church after she attends the funeral in order to slash the dead girl Dorcas face with a knife. [4] Violet do this only, after she came to know about her husband Joe affair with teenaged girl Dorcas. Her inability to express herself to Joe is evident in the way she becomes more and more silent and her desperate longing for a baby causes her to sleep with dolls. When Violet begin to search for the power behind Dorcas, whom her husband Joe had been carrying on an affair. She questions everyone about the murdered Dorcas, mystique begins and end in Alice Manfred, Dorcas grief stricken aunt. She has refused to accept the position the community expects her to fulfill. She break the image of patriarchal object and act as a subject. It shows that Violet instead substitutes imitation for reconciliation. For Violet, she must allow herself to be reborn through the disruption symbolized by the Jazz process, it is one of the way to liberate herself from this self- constructed prison.

Black women may be a source of strength to each other. This fact was emphasizes by Morrison through unusual friendship between Alice and Violet. Alice Manfred is most central female character and ancestrol figure who reinforces the black female consciousness in Jazz. Alice, who has no children of her own, develops immense intimacy with Violet where in formalities vanish and courtesies disappear. Alice friendship with Violet uplift her from her fears and disappointment related to her own sexuality and potential victimization within a racist and sexist society. Vice versa their friendship allows both the women to mature emotionally. The two women transform their anger and frustration in to more positive sense. It makes a voice of own and feelings of relief. Alice makes Violet realize herself i,e she is the maker of life, and teaches the central principle of life which is love. Violet finds Alice as not only a friend but equal to her, who accepts her idiosyncrasies and is willing to interact with her on her often peculiar terms.

Felice, friend of Dorcas , an independent woman in her own right was a symbolic orphan, whose parents are separated from her by their work. She becomes the Traces figurative daughter. When Violet longs for love, searches endlessly for a way to release her pain, to understand her place and her identity in the urban environment she inhabits, Felice came to rescue her. She made Violet to learn, how she must open herself up to the world and people around her. Felice, telling Joe that Dorcas's final words. Helps the couple to mend their rift and open the love affair for each other. Like vice versa, it is a turn to realise Felice her identity. Violet explains to Felice, how she came to find herself, her identity and ambiguous self. She teaches Felice that identity is a result of being lost and creation is possible only through destruction. Violet, who finds her identity and teach it to Felice also. In order to secure their survival and their search for identity, remembering their African ancestors legacy- story telling, dance, music are all steps in a healing- process for them.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Morrison realize the responsibility to declare black women efficiency in enduring harsh lives and show the positive side of their lives. The women have subconsciously created a relationship, beneath the external reality of betrayal, anger and rivalry, which allows them to realize the importance of their unity and struggle for attaining completeness. Liberation have been achieved through highly contrasted settings, dichotomies, polarized language, prominent character conflicts and dualities. Morrison's fiction turns conflicts inside out and evoking extreme emotions for her readers. Her protagonists challenge power structure, begins wholeness through the journey toward self- empowerment and to create space of non dominance. Their common experience of dehumanizing conditions of slavery creates a powerful collective voice. They able to strengthen and maintain their culture, as well as share it with the world.

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