CHAPTER - VI

QUEST FOR SELF

The novels of Toni Morrison give the glimpses of the lore, the humor, the language, the values and the beliefs of black community and culture. The values that she applauds and finds useful, are always presented as a background for these major threats in the society that have caused blacks to distance themselves from and to be removed from the values and tradition of their own ethnic culture. These are alien standard of beauty; derive of existential selfhood, materialism, success and slavery itself. The penetrating analysis of these issues, Morrison offers, has been the most provocative part of her fiction. How blacks deal with these issues or whether their resolutions affirm or defeat community values, are the basic themes, she puts up in her novels.

The Bluest Eye, the first novel of Toni Morrison explores the problem of establishing self worth in a society where one is victim of both racism and classicism. Narrated by nine year old Claudia McTeer the novel details the lives of three young girls and their families and the way in which they struggle and sometimes lose their battle for self affirmation against the world that sets forth Anglo Saxon standards of physical beauty and a middle class life
style as the norm. From school primers to dolls, to movie, the girls and their families are inundated with images that deny the beauty and reality of their lives. The novel presents a simple theme and chronicles of the tragic torn lives of a poor black family of Pauline, Cholly, Sam and Pecola. Pecola, unlovely and unloved prays each night for blue eyes like those of the privileged blond white school fellows. She becomes the focus of mingled love and hatred engendered by her family’s frailty and the world’s cruelty as the novel moves towards savage but poignant resolution. John Leonard writes on the blurb of the novel The Bluest Eye. The view has been taken from his criticism published in New York Times:

*The Bluest Eye* is an enquiry into the reasons why beauty gets wasted in this country. The beauty in this case is black, the wasting is done by cultural engine that seems to have designed to murder possibilities.

It is the story of a black girl who wants blue eyes as a symbol of beauty and therefore of goodness and happiness. The statement of the theme though undercuts the tragic complexities of such a desire, Morrison is somehow able to impress us within her first novel that blue eyes, blond hair, bright skin are the symbol of beauty valued in the west as proclaimed by romantic novels, movies, billboards dolls and reaction of the people to golden
objects. But do we really understand the core of that myth and the value connotation it embodies? This simple theme, the mad hunt of a black girl for blue eyes, is a real and symbolic statement about the conflict between the good and beautiful of the two cultures. This quest is at the base of conflict between Anglo-American and Afro-American cultures. Morrison herself states:

The concept of physical beauty as a virtue is one of the dumbest, most pernicious and destructive ideas of western world. (89)

How Pecola comes to want blue eyes demands more than just telling Pecola’s story. Pecola’s desire is more than the result of her own personal story. It encompasses three hundred years of unsuccessful interface between black and white cultures. It examines how the ideologies, perpetuated by the institutions controlled by the dominant group influence, the making of the self image of black women. Elizabeth observes:

Morrison’s stunning insight reveals the disrupted emotions produced by living in a world where white standard and goals are presented to blacks as uniquely important and at the same time impossible for them to achieve. (383)

The parents of Pecola Breedlove despise themselves because they believe in their own unworthiness which is translated
in to ugliness for the women of that family. Pecola’s mother Pauline, who works as a domestic servant in a beautiful house, hates the ugliness of her house, her daughter, her family and what is worse, blames her sense of unworthiness on being black and poor. Pecola has been taught like all black children that blond hair; blue eyes and creamy skin are not only beautiful but are the surface manifestations of the very best characters God and nature ever molded. Pecola, the daughter who never considers herself beautiful, admires the eyes of white that she longs to possess through some miracle.

When the parents Pauline and Cholly fight, Pecola is so much frustrated at the situation of her family that she prays to God to make her disappear. She squeezes her eyes shut. Little parts of her body fade away, slowly. Her fingers go one by one and her arms disappear all the way to the elbow. Her feet vanish with the legs at once. Her stomach, chest and neck fade. Only her eyes are left. Try as she might. She can never get her eyes to disappear. They are everything. So long as she looks the way, she does and as long as she is ugly, she will have to stay with the people. Long hours she sits looking in to the mirror, trying to know the secret of
her ugliness, that makes her ignored and despised at school by the teachers and classmates alike.

It occurs to Pecola sometimes ago, if her eyes were different, that is to say beautiful, she herself would be different. Her teeth are good, and at least her nose is not big and flat like other neighbors. If she looks different, Cholly would be different and Mrs. Breedlove too. May be they will say:

Why look at pretty eyed Pecola. We must not do bad things in front of those pretty eyes. (34)

They further say:

Each night without fail, she prayed for blue eyes. Fervently for a year she had prayed. Although somewhat discouraged she was not without hope to have something as wonderful as would take a long time. (35)

Pecola never realizes that she has been under spell of white culture domination. All that she experiences is the repeated rejection and brutalization even more chillingly, her parents who have never experienced love and nurturing of it, do not know how to love. Hence they cannot give their children a sense of worth. In their world black represents the shadows of evil, the devil’s aspects, night, separation, loneliness sin, dirt, excrement and white
represents the mark of good, token of innocence, purity, cleanliness, spirituality, virtue and hope. Morrison says:

When the strength depends on its beauty when the focus is turned to know one looks as opposed to what one is, we are in trouble... (90)

But is this story primarily Pecola’s? Why is Claudia needed at all? The use of Claudia as a child narrator of Pecola’s descent into madness seems to be one of Morrison’s brilliant strokes. Obviously she does not have the necessary distance, space or time to know what is happening to her. She cannot look at her own story for she goes mad. Claudia tells Pecola’s story and makes some sense of it throughout the book. But even more dramatically:

The story is also Claudia’s story. She does not experience the gravest effect of the myth of beauty as Pecola does. She is not seen as ugliest of the ugly but she does know that blue eyes and blond hair are admired by all and she does not possess them, (Christian, 140-41)

The dolls she receives at Christmas, Shirley Temple mug and so on are the measures of her own lack of desirability. Frieda and Pecola have a long conversation about dolls but Claudia does not join them because she hates Shirley. Cholly and Pauline
eventually destroy their daughter when Pauline has Pecola, her comment is:

Eyes are all soft and wet. A cross between a puppy and
dying man but I knower she was ugly. Head full of pretty
hair but lord she was ugly. (98)

Pecola, when grown up overhears this comment of her mother, is shocked. The die is cast, Pecola, and then own child is assigned a bottom category in the scale of absolute beauty.

Pecola finds her way to Soaphead Church, supernatural reader, advisor and interpreter of dreams. One late hot afternoon he hears a tap at his door, observes a little black girl about twelve. He asks her:

‘What can I do for you my child?’
‘May be, May be, you can do it for me.’
‘Do what for you?’
‘My eyes’
‘What about your eyes’
‘I want them blue.” (138)

For the first time in his life he honestly wishes, he could do miracles. Never before he had really wanted the true and holy power, he is wild. In a Godlike manner he gives blue eyes to the girl. One can understand the grimness of his settlement that he
writes in a letter to God and sleeps into an ivory sleep forever: “I have caused a miracle. I gave her blue eyes... No one else will see her blue eyes. But she will. And she will live happily ever after,” (144) the damage is done. She steps in to madness, the madness which protects her from everyone. She spends her days, elbows bent, hands on shoulders, she acts like a bird in an eternal futile effort to fly, Beating the air, a winged but grounded bird, intent on the blue void, it cannot reach, cannot even see but which filled the valleys of the mind. By exploring the devastating effects that the western ideas of beauty and romantic love have on a vulnerable black girl, the novelist also demonstrates how these ideas can invert the natural order of an entire culture. As black and female, Pecola’s America is an accessible dumping ground. Dorothy comments:

_The Bluest Eye_, Morrison’s first novel presents a failed quest culminating into madness. The young Pecola Breedlove searches painfully for self esteem as a means of improving order on the chaos of her world. Because a sense of self worth and the correlative order that would accompany it are unavailable to her, in the familiar or wider environment, she retreats in to the subjective world of fantasy. (346)
In her next novel *Sula* Morrison examines and tests the endurance of women’s friendship. Now she approaches her subject in celebration as if to see what miracles love and friendship may accomplish for Sula and Nel that they could not for Pecola, Fried and Claudia. As perfect compliments, open incomplete without the other, Sula and Nel seek solace in each other’s company because they share the common bonds of being black, young and female in the world, with different social background. Together they face life, marriage, separation and death. Like the first novel, the second novel explores for the quest for self, thwarted by the society from where Sula Peace comes. In exploring the community’s system of belief Morrison weaves a fable about the relationship between conformity and experiment, survival and creativity.

Nel’s trip to south with her mother is significant to create the sense of individuality in her. Her mother is humiliated by conductor but she does not rebel. Rather she smiles coquettishly at his face. Her shuffling acquiescence in the face of white conductor’s hostility, during the trip, the sullen black male passengers, who refuse to help her mother, reflects their own helplessness and humiliation. Back home in the safety of her
bedroom she resolves to develop her strength. She gets out of the bed and lights the lamp to look into the mirror. There is her face, plain brown eyes, three braids and a nose that her mother hates. She looks for a long time and suddenly a shiver runs through her:

“I am me, she whispered. Me,”

Nel did not know what she meant, but on the other hand she knew exactly what she meant.

“I am me. I am not their daughter. I am not Nel. I am Me’.

Each time she said the word me, there was a gathering in her like power, like joy, like fear.” (28)

It is her (Nel’s) new sense of me-nests that allows her to cultivate a friend Sula Peace whom her mother initially disapproves. Sula’s ancestry is counterpoint to Nel’s. As Helen Wright, the light skinned lady has the most dubious background, so the Peace women are marvelous folk. Out of the awareness that their lives as black females are restricted by their community and by the outer society, Nel and Sula are drawn to each other. Nel who regards the oppressive neatness of her home with the dread feels comfortable in it with Sula who loves it and will sit on the red velvet sofa. As for Nel, she likes Sula’s woody house, where a pot of something is always cooking on the stove, where the mother
Hannah never scolds, gives direction where all sets of people drop in and dirty dish are left for hours at a time in sink.

It is perhaps in the dreams that the girls had met first. They were solitary girls whose loneliness was so profound; it intoxicated them and sent them stumbling in visions that always included a presence. Nel as only child sits on the steps of back porch surrounded by the high silence of her mother’s incredibly orderly house, feeling the neatness pointing at her back. Similarly Sula, also an only child, living in the household of throbbing disorder, constantly awry with things, peoples’ voices and slamming of doors, spends hour in the attic behind a curtain through her mind on a grey and white horse, tastes sugar and smells rose in full view of someone who shares both taste and speed. Both of them are with the dreams of someone to erase their solitude. So when they meet, first in the chocolate halls and next through the ropes of the swing, they feel the ease and comfort of the old friends. Their meeting is fortunate for it lets them use each other to grow on. They find in other’s eyes the intimacy, they were looking for and their friendship is as intense as it is sudden. They find relief in each other’s company and personality. Barbara Smith writes that the friendship between Nel and Sula is an example of, “the necessary
bonding that has always taken place between black women for the barest survival. Together the two girls can find the courage to create themselves.” (168)

Other significant moments define their intimacy as well. The first is Sula’s cutting of the tip of her finger in response to a thereof by a group of white boys whose menacing bodies block the girls’ route home. The second incident is the death of Chicken Little, the young boy whose body Sula swings and swings around in the play until her hands slip and he flies to the river and drowns. Both of them are Morrison’s favorite characters. The height and intimacy of their friendship makes explicit what can be called their interesting life long bond. Morrison says:

Yet they (Sula and Nel) are very much alike. They complement each other. They support each other. I suppose the two of the together could have made a wonderful single human being. They are like Janus’ head. (253)

As the childhood ends, all events reach their logical conclusion. Nel the daughter of proper Helen Wright marries Jude, losing the sense of her own identity. Sula the daughter of distinctive Peace women leaves the Bottom to college. Nel submits to the community’s standard of female behavior. She marries, has children and cares for the sick and old of her community. Sula
goes away and lives an experimental life. In marrying Jude Nel gives up her me-ness but her marriage does not dissolve their friendship. Ten years later Sula’s return imparts a magic to Nel’s days that marriage could not. Nel alone notices the brightness and color in the atmosphere. Even her body is not immune to the magic. She will sit on the floor as she had done as a girl. She does not wonder at it. She knows it is all due to Sula’s return to the Bottom:

Her old friend had come home. Sula, whose past she had lived through and with whom the present was a constant sharing of perceptions. Talking to Sula had always been a conversation to herself. (95)

Their life resumes an easy rhythm until Nel walks in to her bedroom and finds her husband and Sula naked. Not surprisingly this episode supersedes the women friendship. When Sula sleeps with Jude, she breaks the one taboo that breaks their friendship. Their respective reactions to this act counterpoint one another revealing their different value systems. After his betrayal with Sula, Nel suffers psychic disintegration and later a necessary recovery. In this condition, Nel wraps herself in the conventional mantle of sacrifice and takes her place with the rest of the women in community. While Sula not only refuses the role but steps
outside the caste of women, beyond any class definition she insists on searching herself. She is interested neither in being beautiful, nor becoming the mother. She openly flouts the conventions of society. She defies the traditional gender system that restricts female autonomy. She rejects the ideas of settling down and having babies. Eva assaults Sula with question “When you gone to get married? You need to have some babies. It will settle you’. ‘I don’t want to make anybody else. I want to make myself.’” (92)

She lives out her days exploring her own thoughts and emotions giving them full region. She is completely free of ambition, with no affection for money, property or things, no greed, no desire to command attention or compliments no ego. Morrison offers her as of the lawless individual whose life, she is fond of examining. Sula is an acute sensitive enigmatic and defiant woman whose non conformity is a:

“Living criticism... of the dreadful life of resignation other women live.” (Smith, 168)

Discarding everyone Sula had clung to Nel as the closest thing to both and self. She had not thought at all of causing pain to Nel when she bedded down with Jude. When Nel visits dying Sula,
she asks her why she did not love her enough to leave him alone to let him love her, Sula replies:

What you mean taking him away? If we were such good friends, how come you could not get over it? (145)

Because

With Sula’s question Morrison calls in to doubt the primary of Nel’s marriage over women’s friendship intimating that friendship may even supplant marriage. (24)

Sula experiences the pain of absence she had unwillingly inflicted on Nel. She is surprised to think and saddened by Nel’s rejection of her over Jude. Nel is the only person who had been real to her whose name she knew. She does not expect Nel to behave the way other would have. When Sula is dying, her last thought is to share with Nel her most personal experiences. We later learn when Sula is dying and is dead; Nel is to the only person in The Bottom who makes the arrangements for her funeral and who formally attends it. The practical element in this relationship, Nel always performs well in a crisis. The real tragedy is that she had allowed herself to become less then she was. Nel realizes the emptiness she had felt all of those years was not the pain of Jude’s absence but that of Sula’s. As a contemporary novel
about freedom and friendship, *Sula*, “Offers a female psychological development that defies traditional male centered interpretations of female development and calls out for an expansion of the woman centered paradigm.” (Gillespie, 28)

In *Song of Solomon*, Morrison moves away from the focus on black women that had been at the center of her first two novels. She now focuses her attention on the character of a black young man. The journey towards quest for self is the subject of this novel and chapter which have been heralded for its language, its cultural richness is song, folklore and myth and the transcendence through ancestral reconnection. Morrison creates a male protagonist, one who first becomes conscious of himself in relation to his people. It is the story of a young Milkman Dead and his quest inadvertent at first for his identity. The only son in the household of two elder sisters and a love starved mother who nurses him till he is six. Milkman is encouraged by his father to become a successful businessman. As a son he feels immense pressure to embrace his father’s affection for things and money in particular.

But Morrison as an artist, concerned with the dimensions of spirituality which offers Milkman an alternative to the pursuit of material success, spiritual fulfillment. (Furman, 35)
Milkman as one would expect chooses spirituality and in explicating its judgment, Morrison relates her precise boundaries of freedom and responsibility for individual. Like other characters, Milkman must be willing to resist all narrow definitions of self and take responsibility for the tough choice he makes. Macon Dead, his father has lost his freedom and knowledge of self. He has traded freedom for the wealth under the impression and mistaken belief that, “You will own it all. You will be free. Money is freedom, Macon. The only freedom there is.” (163)

He forbids Milkman any association with his sister Pilate, fearing that Milkman may be influenced by her unhealthy materialistic ways. Pilate, as a pilot to Milkman understands of humanity is a unique creation of Morrison. She lives a life with few of amenities of modern existence but supported by knowledge of ancestral history and family love and creates her own criteria for how to live in the world. A life time of acquiring property, collecting rents and making deals has rendered Macon a greedy self absorbed unforgiving man. Hating his wife Ruth, ignoring his daughters Lena and First Corinthians and disowning his sister Pilate are some of his family connections. Crossing the limits of meanness he advises his son Milkman to steal the gold that he
thinks his sister possesses and there starts his journey for self affirmation. Carolyn C. Denard briefs Milkman’s quest for self in these words:

Although his journey begins as a quest for money and revenge, it ends in glorious connection to ancestry revealed to him through the legends of great grandfather Solomon. Milkman answers not only his own submerged dipped questions of belonging but those of his father and aunt as well. The knowledge of the great grandfather who could fly and who indeed did fly away from the slavery destroying his manhood, empowers Milkman with love, strength and a triumphant sense of who he is and his own potential for transcendence. (327)

The first stage of Milkman’s journey towards the knowledge of self and community shows the low level of consciousness. It is manifested in his very nick name- Milkman who milks women, pilfering their love and giving them nothing in return. As the age of thirty two he does not know little about women even of his family, nor can he conceive of women as human beings not even his mother. Women in the house clean up his Messer cook food for him, keep house for him and shape their life around him. He takes all this for granted and never shows any consideration for them. He really never bothers to know them and
their suffering. The women become the measure to scan Milkman’s consciousness for them. His sister Lana says that his life has been a thoughtless life of self gratification.

You have yet to wash your underwear, spread a bed, wipe the ring from your tub, or move a flock of dirt from one place to another. And to this day, you have never asked one of us if we were tired or sad or wanted a cup of coffee... you are a sad pitiful, stupid, selfish, hateful man. (217-18)

Once he knocks his father in to a wall for hitting his mother, but that is less a display of his regard for his mother than an instance of arrogance. So isolated he is from his people that he is last to know about relationship between, Henry Foster and his sister. He is bored by all events showing his complete estrangement from community. Despite his father’s warning, Milkman does finally meet his Aunt Pilate. She is the source, the base from which Milkman must build his race and class consciousness. She symbolizes the bridge between the African past and American future.

She with her love for family, her desire to maintain connection with the past is responsible for the journey into self discovery that he finally takes. (Denard, 327)
When Milkman is arrested due to the theft he committed at his aunt’s, it is his aunt Pilate who rescues him. His shocking awareness of race and class is made more poignant by his personal confrontation with the police. While he feels ashamed of his father who buckles before the police man, he is proud of his aunt Pilate who sacrifices her dignity to free him from Jail. The stolen sack reveals old bones instead of gold. Milkman embarks a journey to Shalimar Virginia where his father thinks, Pilate would have hidden the gold. Instead of finding gold in the cave of Virginia, he finds the myths, songs and legends that contain his family history. Morrison admits that:

_Song of Solomon_ is her own giggle (in Afro American terms)

of the Protomyth of the journey to manhood. (28-29)

But she calls attention to the limitation of traditional quest by making Milkman less heroic and more human. Milkman’s growth and initiation are firmly grounded in his journey to the South which conclusively opens his eyes and his mind. This journey makes him realize that he had been a fool to have never valued what he has had. With the self awakening comes empathy. He begins to get an idea of what his women folk had done for his. He realizes how his growth as a man in to mature adulthood had
been made possible by Hagar’s sacrificial death and Pilate’s far seeing wisdom. The possum hunt however changes all the thinking of Milkman. Stripped of everything except his watch dressed in brogans army fatigue and a knit cap Milkman like other hunters must take his measure against the law of nature. The black men of Shalimar are more than the sum of money he might earn in city factories or from rent collections. Their primordial link to earth, to animals and to each other inspires Milkman to respect them. They can talk to animals and animals can talk to them. What don’t they know about human beings?

Milkman’s reveries have a domino effect toppling one illusion after another; money is not freedom but involvement, independence means submitting himself to people not escaping them. He confesses and repents his shameful retreat from relationships refusing any involvement in his parents’ problem, using Hagar’s love and throwing it. The old personality gives way to make space for a new spirituality so expansive that only the whole entire complete blue sea will contain its volume. The death of Pilate, above all teaches him the meaning of true flight without leaving the ground. Figuratively he moves from selfishness and materialism towards responsibility, knowledge and sense of
belonging. Dorothy. H. Lee gives the symbolical meaning of his journey:

He learns to relate to nature and to sustain himself in the woods without the useless trinkets of modern society... There he ponders the need for responsibility to others for the sharing not only of happiness but of their pain... he is divested of his ego. He risks a self and gains a new one.

(354)

The novel *Tar Baby* exposes the nature of safe heavens people create for each other and think them safe while the second person viewing it unsafe tries to escape from it. Valerian’s complications of character demonstrate well Morrison’s unwillingness to take the easy path of stereotype. Valerian, the first white character introduced by Morrison, is indulgently world weary. His cynical unromantic view of his own orphaned youth as a candy hair surrounded by dotting uncles and maiden aunts is easily applicable to his view of all social relations. Wife Margaret is tolerated as an incapable middle aged beauty twenty years his junior. Their son Michael is an irrelevant thirty year old social activist always in the search of next cause. After thirty years as butter and cook all that can be said of Sidney and on dine is that they are at least as familiar to him as his wife and son. Valerian
prompted by his cynicism leaves Philadelphia and comes to island, assuring the island as the safe place to live as a Quasihermit. The well planned greenhouse is the proof of his orderliness, at the same time he is completely stranger to the natural rhythms of island that play outside. The order of Valerians house is unnatural just as his presence on the island is unnatural.

But he does not sink completely in the readers view. He is in part borne up by his acts of decency, giving stocks to Sydney and Ondine and paying for their niece Jadine’s education paying social security taxes to prevent them from ending up like many domestic servants who spend their lives tending other people’s children. In other words he tries to search a safe world for his servant and he believes that he is living in a world that can not harm anybody. His wife Margaret is merely a visitor on the island. The solitude disquiets her as she has nothing to do but reflect. For her Philadelphia is the safer place than Island and she continues going to the city from island with the illusion of still living in Philadelphia, in bringing the turkey apple pies, Dutch bread, she makes deliberate effort to see the city at Island but fails as usual. In planning a special Christmas and cooking food her suffering makes her stronger and she emerges burnished by the fires of suffering:
She is no longer a visitor on the Isle Des Chevaliers as she settles in to her role of organizer and care giver. She appears natural and at peace, with her hair falling softly to her shoulder free of its tortured and teased arrangement and her peace returning to familiarity without it’s made up disguise. No longer in flight from her Margaret has a coherent identity finally. (Furman, 53)

Like the previous novels of Toni Morrison, *Tar Baby* demonstrates the consistency in her technique and in her visions of human problems and motivation:

Again the pattern of search is at the heart of story. Here however in contrast to explicit failures and triumphs of Pecola, Sula and Milkman we see at its center two overlapping, inter dependent and unresolved quests those of Jade and Son. (Lee, 355)

Significantly called copper venues; Jadine is a brown white woman European African. She loses her identity as a black woman and accepts white values. She is a tar baby, a creation of capitalist America. Her behavioral patterns, dress, language, association and ideology are those of the whites and demonstrate her hatred of Africa and all that is associated with it. Not only does she think like a European, she is closer to the Streets than to her uncle and aunt.
It is her attempt to escape in the other world that causes Jadine’s insecurity throughout the novel. She feels threatened by African women who are not only unashamed of their identity, cultures, and beauty but also proud of dignity and heritage. She seems the developed version of Pecola sometimes. Like Pecola’s Morrison points out danger in Jadine’s choices. The woman in the Paris Market calls attention to something that is missing in Jadine. She has no connection to her cultural past. Feeling insecure, she comes to the island in search of safety and support. But the island offers her no refuge and she has not lived with Sydney and Ondines, while talking to Charles Raus Morrison calls her “Cultural orphan,” (226) she is not the rebel thwarting connections that Sula is. She is not the mother woman that Nel is, standing jealous guard over domesticity. She is not the culture bearer that Pilate is. Jadine is a modern radical woman who wants to be free from every feminine feature.

Jadine does not wish to belong to her ancestral black world not only because she is in frantic search of her individual self but also because she does not have her ancestors to point the way. In their arrogance Sydney and Ondine have tacitly encouraged their nieces’ cultural disconnection. But they do not heed the price of
such acceptance. When Margaret tries to tell her what it is to be a woman, a daughter or a mother, it is too late, quite contrary to Jadine. Son has a great sense of belonging to his culture and community. He works like Tar Baby and all the other characters, retreat from black culture, he embodies its deepest currents. On the Island Jadine feels misplaced while Son is easily at home. What Milkman discovers at the end of story, Son already knows. Unlike Jadine Son reflects the people class mentality and he has socialist tendencies. He continues to be “a human being capable of spiritual emotional and intellectual growth.” (Heinze, 90) In her characterization of Jadine and Son Morrison initially brings out the study of community and culture. He is an African son who has sincere love for everything in general, African people in particular and African poor in special. Unlike Jadine, Sydney and on dine who harbor no love for African struggling masses, Son has fellow feeling and identifies himself with them. He understands and wants to make Jadine understand that one has to care for the people of the family, adjust particularly the elders. Jadine should understand that being black she must discover black values and care for her aunt and uncle who have become old and have sacrificed their life in giving her good education at pains. It is because of them that she
sits with whites and is educated by their help. Son is surprised to hear the words of Jadine when she includes herself with white. Unlike Jadine, Sydney and Ondine he knows that he is a Negro and can never become one with whites. He becomes the participating agent to reveal the false worlds of Valerian, Margaret, Sydney, Ondine and Jadine. In spite of so many differences Son and Jadine fall in love. Their relation is a sociological study of different cultures. Son so ardently loves her that she becomes Son’s main target for political education. He attempts to kill Jadine’s white ideology and insert his dreams in to her dreams while Jadine desires to manipulate his dreams by inserting her dreams to his. Each views others world as unsafe and attempts to bring the other into his or her own world. Their relationship becomes a hunting game between the old ways and the new, “One had a past, the other a future and each one had the culture to save the race in his hands. Mama spoiled Blackman will you mature with me? Culture bearing black woman whose culture you are bearing?” (232)

Unable to search the safe places for their counterparts, Son and Jadine end their romance and search as well. The readers are left to wonder whether anyone can regain the lost sustenance in the past and respect for simple ways of life.
Beloved explores the most oppressed period of slavery in the history of African people. When Morrison went through the real story of Margaret Garner in a newspaper clipping, she was deeply moved by the humanistic nature of the historical event how a woman was not going to allow her rights of motherhood to be usurped by anybody. Morrison wants to know nothing about Margaret Garner’s life in creating her story. She wants to depend on a shared response to construct the inside life of characters. In an interview with Marsha Darling, Morrison, remarks:

I did not do much research on Margaret Garner other then the obvious stuff, because I wanted to invent her life... I got to a point where in asking myself; who could judge Sethe adequately, since I couldn’t and nobody else that knew her could, really I felt the only person who could judge her would be the daughter she killed. (5-6)

The search for safe heavens continues in this novel. As the protagonist Sethe kills her young daughter because she wants to place her in safe places where she will not become the victim of Slavery like her and the heaven seems to her the safest place for that way. Beloved deals with the reconstructed memory, this novel deals with her life on Sweet Home Farm, her escape with her children to what seemed a safe heaven and the tragic events that
follow. On the socio psychological level *Beloved* is the story of Sethe’s unlimited quest for Motherhood with the haunting memory of the past. As in her previous novels the need for women to reestablish connections with one another is powerfully rendered in *Beloved*. When Sethe arrives with her new born daughter tied to the chest, Baby Suggs welcomes her. Sethe has a powerful mentor in Baby Suggs who kindles a desire in her to know her past and to love herself as a person.

Morrison explores a black woman’s self conscious protest to the duel oppression. It is not only the sexual exploitation that Sethe feels most oppressed by, but the humiliation of her nurturing abilities as a mother-stealing of her milk. One of the most damaging effects of the dual oppression of black women, against which Morrison writes, is the murder of one’s own child. Sethe does kill her two year old daughter and she does attempt to kill the other three children before she is slopped. Murder becomes Sethe’s act of mother love. The author retains in *Beloved* her concern with a woman’s extra ordinary capacity for love and sacrifice. She refers to murder her children rather than see them in bondage.

I could not let all that go back to where it was, and could not let her or any of them live under school teacher... Collected
change but of life she had made all the parts of her that were precious and fine and beautiful and carried, pushed, dragged them through the veil, out away, over there where nobody would hurt them. Over there outside, this place, where they would be safe. (163)

Infanticide presents one of the avenues of resistance on the part of slave woman. Although Sethe’s murder might be viewed by contemporary standards as limiting the content in which she committed up, it does not diminish her nature. If it were possible for a black slave woman like Sethe to live with her family and dignity and self respect in America in 1850s, she would not commit the hideous crime which was the mutilation of her vibrant mother love. Morrison’s queries in the novel are not about what Sethe does and why. These answers are available to anyone with knowledge of slavery. Morrison asks who the woman capable of making such a choice is. Who is the woman with such audacity? In her research for Sethe, Morrison returns to the first flashes of insight stirred by the fragments. Sethe is the kind of woman who loves something other than herself so much; she has placed all the values of her life in something outside herself in her children. And to save them from slavery she commits the murder. To understand
the grimness of this decision, one will have to go through the horror of slavery and its influence on the lives of black people.

Sethe like many children born in slavery had not known her mother. Raised communally by the plantation nurse, she had no right to the scared woman who had briefly and surreptitiously identified herself as Sethe’s mother and who was sick and later hanged. At Sweet Home Sethe’s children had fared better. Sethe managed to mother her children and protect them from environmental dangers, fire, the well and the animals, when Garner dies, the illusion of safe heavens is shattered and:

Sethe is forced to face a brutal reality of slavery. Her children don’t belong to her. They are property, subject to be sold, traded, raped, beaten and disposed of. In order to make them safe she and they would have to escape. And they do. First the children run and later she, pregnant with a baby that she delivers in a route to freedom. (Furman, 70)

To fight for the right of motherhood Sethe escapes to reject the power of slavery. Bare foot, bleeding, hungry, exhausted, disoriented, Sethe struggles to reach Ohio not so much to save herself for herself but for the life of her children’s mother. Only she has milk enough in her breasts for her two years old, who had gone ahead and for her new born. Sethe knows very well what it is
to be without the milk that belongs to you and the milk that is snatched from you to feed the white babies and sometimes nothing is left for your children. She knows that escaping slavery will help her in feeding her own children. When she reaches Ohio, Baby Suggs, her mother-in-law is there to protect her and her children. There she begins to claim herself and her children. Like a perfect mother she nurses the baby girls and kisses the boys from top to their heads to the tight round bellies. Her mother love is unrestrained:

It felt good. Good and right. It was big Paul D, and deep and wide and when I stretched my arms all my children could get in between. It was that wide. Look like I loved them more I got here... There wasn’t nobody in the world I could not love if I wanted to. (Beloved, 162)

Sethe is not in danger as Jadine is, of losing her identity as black woman. Indeed in denying historical identity Jadine eventually denies her link to Sethe and her struggle. Her struggle is against school teacher, his nephews and the system that enslaves and usurps the right of a mother. Jadine sees motherhood as inhibiting as Sethe sees it as necessary. Her slavery exempts definitions of woman. She revolts against suborder non human behavior by proving herself capable. Morrison calls attention to the
magnitude of Sethe’s defiance by accepting her situation and acting in that capacity. She has nobody to help her. All the men at Sweet Home are either dead or in chains. Paul A had been sold, two killed and Paul D was locked in barn with a bit in his mouth. Her husband looses sanity and cracks under the strain. But she with a plan sends her children on the route of freedom. For Sethe, duties of motherhood are not dissolved by insanity:

   I did it. I got up all out without Halle too. Up till it was the only thing I ever did on my own. Decided... I birthed them and I got them out and it was not an accident... but still it was me doing it, me saying. Go on and now, me having to look out, me using my own head. (162)

   Paul D fails to realize her love for her children and the way she acted for their safety. He thinks that being a woman she cannot do that without husband, sons and mother-in-law. He is wrong. This Sethe is new. The ghost in her house does not bother her. He is a little bit afraid of her. She clearly tells him that she is ready to apologize for her daughter but she does not want to hear anything against her. He comes to understand that it is very risky to love a lady like Sethe. That is much dangerous especially if it is her own children she has settled on to love. The best thing, he comes to know that is to love just a little bit and to leave a little bit for the
next time. He asks Sethe to make a space for him along with daughter and when they return after the entertainment at carnival, the shadows of three people (Sethe, Denver and Paul D) still hold hands. It is a sign of healing prospect of a new beginning. For all its sadness it has a hopeful ending. She not only knows herself as a mother but as a woman also with the help of Paul D.

_Jazz_ picks up roughly where _Beloved_ leaves off and continues the present story with greater motive and poetic intensity. Joe Trace is born in Virginia in 1873 and _Beloved_ opens in 1873. The missed mothering creates Sethe’s pain and releases her. The memory of lost mother and lost children creates the definition of relationship of husband and wife. The central role goes to fifty year old Joe Trace, a married man who loves his wife, seduces and falls in love with an eighteen year old girl, and then shoots her when she leaves him. Joe shares this role with his wife, Violet who crashes Dorcas’ Funeral to attack a girl who is already dead. The questions Morrison wants to explore are what kind of man desires a girl young enough to be his daughter, even his granddaughter? Why does he harm her? What kind of woman walks into a funeral in progress and assaults a dead body with a knife? If they are no psychopaths, then they are merely interesting
people and extra ordinary specimen of human condition. Morrison tells Nellie Y. Mckay about her characters:

(They are) the combination of virtue and flaw of good intentions gone away, of wickedness cleansed and people made whole again, interests Morrison. She does not judge characters by the worst, they have done or by the best but the combinations... (425-26)

Joe is a ‘nice neighborly’ man. Morrison does not brand him as an immoral man. With Dorcas, he is paternal, kind exactly in a way of doting, indulgent father, but moves like a wise generous lover. By the time Joe finds Dorcas, his marriage is routine lonely and silent. Violet speaks only to birds. 'When Joe thinks about his childhood, the readers come to know that he was looked after by Mrs. Rhoda, who told him with a sad smile that they disappeared without a trace. He always believes his mother will come back and he named himself Joseph Trace. His life becomes an everlasting process of hunting for motherly love. The mother image haunts him. It becomes an obsession followed by her rejection. People tell Joe about his mother that might be crazy and loved to live in the dense forest. He finds one woman living in forest hide place. He remembers that woman is somebody’s mother may be his own. Once he listen the scrap of a song coming
from a woman’s throat. Joe thrashes and beats his way up. The song stops and no response come. Second time he crawls towards the rock shut away by the greenery grown ruthless in sun and air. He hears breathing. Immediately, Joe falls to his hand and knees, whispering:

It is you? Just say it. Say anything. Give me a sign, then.
You don’t have to say nothing. Let me see your hand. Just stick out some place and I will go. A sign... He begged pleaded for her hand until the light grew smaller. “Are you my mother? Yes. No both, either or this nothing. (Jazz, 178)

Third time after marriage he tries to find her. He does not find the woman but a green dress, rocking chair without arms, a circle of stones for cooking, jars, baskets, pots, a doll, a photograph, but she is absent. He remains love hungry and continues to care about Violet despite her insane behavior. In fact his passion for Dorcas is the transformation of that hunger for love he searches. Joe can never hurt Violet and does not hurt Dorcas with deliberation. Morrison does not provide explicit reasons for Joe’s violence and yet the emotions which propel him towards Dorcas on the night of shooting are quite comprehensible. They are not the ordinary passions of violence, rage, fury, malice. His agony of losing his mother love emerges and he follows Dorcas’ tract
instinctively dogged. In beauty parlor, women speculate about a man Joe’s age asking questions with embarrassing urgency about a girl barely out of high school. A neighbor looks with a disapproving smile at his foolish demeanor. The search is pathetic, hopeless and sorrowful. For five days he traces her movements, reviews her scheduled appointment and analysis her discrepancies. Finally he traces her to a crowded apartment where she is locked in a dancing embrace with a new younger lover, swaying back and forth to music. Joe’s rambling all through the city is over. He has the gun but he believes it is the hand with which he wants to touch her. He wants to catch her before she falls. Unable or unwilling to leave her as she had urged him to do, Joe tracks her to realize:

I know how to treat a woman. I never have never would mistreat One, Never would make a woman live like a dog in the cave. (182)

He needs her acknowledgement that he belongs to her. But like Joe’s mother, the woman who lived in the cave and woods of Virginia, while he was growing up, Dorcas abandons him, does not claim him. In searching for one, he is also searching for another, the trail across the street of Virginia woods, where he hunted the woman who was said to be his mother, in order to be granted a glimmer of recognition. Joe never finds his mother. After the third
fruitless search his hurt feelings complete with the feelings of anger and humiliation that his mother would choose a cave not him. He however fined Dorcas. But she too has chosen not to give or receive his love, perhaps shooting Dorcas discharges the pent up misery and humiliation of the past.

The legal punishment does not serve the author’s purpose. She gives Joe an opportunity for redemption. In order to know about Dorcas’s past Violet goes to her aunt Alice and brings the photo of Dorcas. She puts her photo on the mantel piece of the common room where Joe and Violet revolve by turn. As Violet wants to know more and more about Dorcas, she feels that she is falling in love with her as the daughter she would have had. The mother hunger becomes common in Violet and Joe. In self imposed detention in his apartment Joe spends his days crying and his nights staring at the photo of Dorcas. Through heartfelt anger and grief Joe discovers forgiveness and peace of mind, when Felice, the friend of Dorcas comes to trace family and informs Joe that while dying Dorcas had the name of Joe at her lips, the suffering comes to an end. The entire quest for filial love ends with acknowledgement. In Felice now they find the lost daughter and friend. In time Joe accepts the situation and moves forward with
his wife. Thus Morrison’s novels are not just reveries of the past. She presents life in its ugliness and its beauty to put characters under duress in order to discover who survives and why.
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