CHAPTER – IV
INDIVIDUAL & COMMUNITY IDENTITIES OF BLACK WOMEN

Toni Morrison:  *Jazz & Paradise.*

Buchi Emecheta:  *Destination Biafra & Rape of Shavi.*

Toni Morrison’s *Jazz* (1992)\(^1\) and Buchi Emecheta’s *Destination Biafra* (1982)\(^2\) clearly discuss to a great extent the triple consciousness of race, gender and class that are targeted towards black women. In the case of black women, during their quest for self or individual identity they are inevitably exposed to ‘triple consciousness.’ In fact, the discriminations based on race and gender come together to create a new route for class discrimination. Indeed, racism, sexism and classism – all three combine as a whole to seep further into their already subjugated position within the white misogynist society.

A typical example evident in *Jazz* includes the extent of threat that covers all the crimes committed against black women by both black and white men. As a consequence of it, black women become dangerously armed. Similarly, Dorcas’s aunt, Alice Manfred does not feel safe anywhere including her own house for Joe “had come in her living room and destroyed her niece” while his wife “had come right in the funeral to nasty and dishonor her [Dorcas]” (Morrison 1993: 74). To add further to her insecurity,

Nevertheless, Alice thinks that women are not always subdued or defenseless like Dorcas who was an easy prey. According to Bhaskar A. Shukla, “the new generation of Black women are indeed no longer defenceless” (Shukla 2007: 116). For instance, Alice says that other black women have not surrendered and “were armed; black women were dangerous and the less money they had the deadlier the weapon they chose” (Morrison 1993: 77).

Similarly, in *Destination Biafra* Alan Grey harbors a fatal combo of sexist and racist outlook towards Debbie. He is the colonizer who wants to enjoy her as a wild and exotic piece of temptation. Likewise, she is furthermore an asset worth possession because of her British education and the rich class she represents being her father’s daughter in *Destination Biafra*. Alan as the representative of the colonizer is very clear about the perception of native women by his fellow white men. But there are things he cannot explain too. To quote him:

He wondered why he had always been attracted to the brownness of the African woman. To his own people he knew that this color meant primitiveness, backwardness, moistness, newness. He wondered what his father would say if he knew Alan had waited two whole nights in this hotel so that Debbie Ogedemgbe could come all the way from Oxford to join him. He could imagine his father saying, “The native woman is only an adventure, dear boy, don’t get too involved with her”. (Emecheta 1983: 35)

In addition, the very next moment, Alan reveals the racist and sexist beliefs that he values. According to Chandrani Biswas, Debbie is quite “different from the male conception of a traditional African woman” (Biswas 1998: 74). To quote Alan:
… he was not going to do his tying down with a girl like Debbie, for all her Oxford know how. She was slim and pretty, but arrogant. She was intelligent, nice to be with, but independent. She was too English for his liking. If he was going to go native, he might as well do it properly. The way he saw it, people like her were building themselves big identity problems. (Emecheta 1983: 36)

However, there is something that he is not aware about Debbie. She bursts out laughing when he started the topic of marriage. Her reply is even more shocking, “Definitely not to you! My parents would kill me, and your father’s grey moustache would never stop quivering …” (36). Indeed, she is a different kind of woman he is not familiar with.

On the other hand, within the patriarchal society of Nigeria there is the deep-rooted presence of gender discrimination irrespective of class or background. In the traditional rural setting, there is this ironical and humorous example. For example:

In the middle of the farm was the usual resting hut known as *uno ogo* ... They [men] would eat, and drink and drink and then gossip. Although they claimed to be running away from the women’s gossip at home, yet more gossip took place at the farms than in the homesteads. (206)

Likewise, the status and treatment of women within marriage is subdued. Such subdued position of women is very loud even in the case of Abosi’s lawyer wife, Julia. The hypocrisy trails advance further in the following lines:

His [Abosi’s] wife’s background was kept a little quiet, since she had been married before and had a thirteen-year-old daughter. Many
wondered why such a rich man who could have chosen any girl in Nigeria should go for a woman nearly the same age as himself; some cynics even said she was older. Yet they would have thought nothing of a man of seventy marrying a child of seventeen. To Nigerians, in marriage the male partner was superior and the female must be subservient, obedient, quiet to the point of passivity. But people shrugged their shoulders; Chijioke Asobi had always been a rebel ... The older women among the oceans of people watching the wedding procession shook their heads at her audacity in letting her child openly address her as “Mum”. Other women were either jealous or praised Juliana’s boldness. There was a strong suspicion that a new breed of Nigerian woman was in the making. (43)

But things look a little bit brighter for Debbie when she gets recruited by Abosi as a soldier. Unfortunately, the truth is not that pleasant in this significant remark of some soldiers, “Whatever you do, however much you are armed and in command now, you are still a woman” (79).

In *Jazz*, there is a presence of class division based on the color and profession even among black women. In the case of the Dumfray women, Violet “was very surprised because the Dumfrey women were graceful, citified ladies whose father owned a store on 136th Street, and themselves had nice paper-handling jobs: one took tickets at the Lafayette; the other worked in the counting house” (Morrison 1993: 18-9). However, the neighbor further adds a different side that says, “Cottown. Knew both of them from way back. Come up here, the whole family act like they never set eyes on me before. Comes from handling money instead of a broom which I better get to before” (19). In fact, Alice herself is also trapped in such class division. It is well represented in
Alice’s encounter with jazz music and the emotional turmoil it erupted inside her which made her almost hate it to the extent of smashing the music-box. In fact, she believed that “it wasn’t real music – just colored folks’ stuff: harmful, certainly; embarrassing, of course; but not real, not serious” based on “sermons and editorials” (59).

On the other hand, Emecheta has vividly predicted the doom of Africa. It is evident in the following narrow-minded and shallow divisions based on class, tribe, gender and corruption prevalent among the peoples in *Destination Biafra*. Indeed, the causes of the tragic war and the overall destruction are thoroughly discussed by Emecheta in these lines:

Mrs Teteku’s talk had reverted to the topic that never failed to delight her – her daughter Barbara. Babs was in the same class as the daughter of Ogedemgbé, the Nigerian money-man, as all Mrs Teteku’s friends in Kano knew for she would talk for hours the Ogedemgbé household. They were from the same minority tribe, and people knew that if all went well for the Ogedemgbes in the general election their relatives and tribesmen would not be forgotten. As a responsible person in Nigeria, one did not just go into politics to introduce reforms but to get what one could of the national cake and to use part of it and if possible the whole tribe; at least in this way much of the ill-gotten money returned to the society. (Emecheta 1983: 16)

More intricate difference within same community and gender is based on class division created by education and life-style or status. For instance, Debbie could not connect herself with other ordinary women who make up the majority of the population. There she has to keep mum about her background completely because they would have rejected her if the truth was revealed. Preeti
Choudhary further adds: “She [Debbie] has to camouflage her ethnic identity in order to escape too many enquiries.”

Morrison also ventures into the traumatic and brutal past that keeps on haunting the mind and life of black peoples in *Jazz*. Such painful black history has been experienced by many of the black characters like Dorcas, Alice and Joe-Violet. Dorcas’s tragedy as an orphan is narrated by Alice in these words:

He [Dorcas’s father] was pulled off a streetcar and stomped to death, and Alice’s sister had got the news and had gone back home to try and forget the color of his entrails, when her house was torched and she burned crispy in its flame ... She [Dorcas] went to two funerals in five days, and never said a word. (Morrison 1993: 57)

Moreover, Alice experiences her own share of black discrimination. And these experiences carve an unknown fear inside her for a life-time which included fear towards places and people around her. To quote her:

The drums and the freezing faces hurt her, but hurt was better than fear and Alice had been frightened for a long time – first she was frightened of Illionois, then of Springfield, Massachusetts, then Eleventh Evenue, Third Evenue, Park Evenue. Recently she had begun to feel safe nowhere south of 110 th Street, and Fifth Avenue was for her the most fearful of all. That was where whitemen leaned out of motor cars with folded dollar bills peeping from their palms. It was where salesmen touched her and only her as though she were part of the goods they had condescended to sell her; it was the tissue required if the management was generous enough to let you try on a blouse (but no hat) in a store. It was where she, a woman of fifty and independent means, had no surname. Where women who
spoke English said, “Don’t sit there, honey, you never know what they have.” And women who knew no English at all and would never own a pair of silk stockings moved away from her if she sat next to them on the trolley. (54)

Similarly in *Destination Biafra*, Emecheta highlights upon the drastically vile role played by England in her actions towards Africa. England’s double-faced nature is filled with greed. In fact, the greed has an overall colonial hand in creating, solving, fuelling and damage control of Africa’s destruction. In this context, Alan Grey is the exact symbol of England for “despite his avowed love for Nigeria, still felt that the country’s wealth should be shared with the powers of the West, preferably Britain” (Emecheta 1983: 73). He also has the greedy interest basking under the ignorance of the natives. To quote him:

> He was concentrating his search in and around Benin where there were many images – carved from wood, modeled in clay … He had no moral qualms about it, knowing that in Nwokolo’s household, now they had all been converted to Christianity, such things were regarded as embarrassing and anti-progressive and would be destroyed but for his interest in them. (71)

But Debbie who knows Alan too well mocks at his masked falsehood when he refuses to leave Nigeria during the chaotic war and destruction. She says, “Oh, come off it! Who do you think you are deceiving? Those old relics you claim to be saving are going to adorn your museums and art galleries” (92). Moreover, Alan’s true interest and British politics during the war cannot be hidden. More solid proof is intriguingly present in these lines:

> He must cancel his holiday, Alan decided. Nigeria needed him. If he delayed too long, and Saka Momoh should realize that he could win
without Alan’s help and the British equipment, then the oil might be given to whichever country flattered Momoh the most. These Africans made and change laws as it suited them. He was going back, to make sure of England’s share of the booty. The war in Biafra would be won in no time at all. Two days later ... A new trade, in ammunition and human blood, had begun. (156)

Surprisingly, Alan thinks that he “was a friend of both leaders” and that “he had not betrayed Momoh, neither had he betrayed Abosi” (197). But Debbie strikes back again on his hypocrisy. She says, “You mean you send arms to Momoh and food to Abosi? Well, I have heard of hypocrisy, but to see it practiced this way is something else” (242).

On the other hand, in Jazz there is a very complex relationship between race, class and gender that can break the soul of black peoples in general. In such situation, being together with someone helps in survival. Joe and Violet share a hard life together and survive well until they lost each other amidst the city life’s darkness of loneliness. To quote Violet:

She moved in with a family of six in Tyrell and worked at anything to be with Joe whenever she could. It was there she became the powerfully strong young woman who could handle mules, bale hay and chop woods as good as any man. It was there where the palms of her hands and the soles of her feet grew shields no gloves or shoes could match. All for Joe Trace, a double-eyed nineteen-year-old who lived with an adopted family, worked gins and lumber and cane and cotton and corn, who butchered when needed, plowed, fished, sold skins and game – and who was willing. (Morrison 1993: 105-6)

In fact, it was different when they landed in the city. Joe narrates:
When we moved from 140th Street to a bigger place on Lenox, it was the light-skinned renters who tried to keep us out. Me and Violet fought them just like they was whites. We won. Bad times had hit then, and landlords white and black fought over colored people for the high rents that was okay by us because we got to live in five rooms even if some of us rented out two. (127)

There are other unwanted choices that can burden one’s existence. For Golden Gray, it is ‘white or black’ with a white mother and a black father. For Joe, it is obsession and later rejection of his senile mother. And yet according to Hunters Hunter, “She [Joe’s mother] got reasons. Even if she crazy. Crazy people got reasons.” and also “that woman is somebody’s mother and somebody ought to take care” (175).

On the other hand, according to Protibha Mukherjee Sahukar, “Dorcas not only fills up her dreadful emptiness of being alone and want to mother-love, but as a young girl Dorcas actually symbolizes the mental picture of Wild that Joe has of her.” In fact, in his choice of Dorcas, he was actually recognizing the deep-longing for his mother. Sahukar further adds that for Joe Dorcas also “proves to be the last change” where she provides him with the new insight “to establish and sustain a personal identity.”

Similarly, Felice’s mind gets split when her mother, who had to shop for her bosses on her off days, gives her a ring from the white store. It is because she knows that her mother stole it out of spite. On the other hand, her father has talked to her about two kinds of white people – “The ones that feel sorry for you and the ones that don’t. And both amount to the same thing. Nowhere in between is respect” (Morrison 1993: 204). Then there are in addition “the
everyday killing cops did of Negroes, nobody was arrested at all” (199). Under such hatred she found Dorcas’s friendship to lean on and thus expresses:

My grandmother was suspicious of us being friends. She never said why but I sort of knew. I didn’t have a lot of friends in school. “Not the boys but the girls in my school bunched off according to their skin color. I hate that stuff – Dorcas too. So me and her were different in that way. When some mean nasty mouth hollered, “Hey, fly, where’s buttermilk?” or ‘Hey, kinky, where’s kind?’ we stuck our tongues out and put our fingers in our noses to shut them up. But if that didn’t work we’d lay into them. Some of those fights ruined my clothes and Dorcas’ glasses, but it felt good fighting those girls with Dorcas. She was never afraid and we had the best times. Every school we went to, every day. (200-1)

Likewise, Dorcas has her own share of discrimination. It results into a fragile and damaged identity she creates for herself which is based on the false concept of white beauty. Rambhau M. Badode opines that when she ventures out of her natural environment of black indigenous identity as “an object of male desire” and later invites the idea of a “sexual prey” for Joe who becomes her hunter.6 To quote Felice’s perception of her lost identity:

Guys looked at her, whistled and called out fresh stuff when we walked down the street. In school all sorts of boys wanted to talk to her [Dorcas]. But then they stopped; nothing came of it. It couldn’t have been her personality because she was a good talker, liked to joke and tease … (201)
In the case of Alice, the discriminations create inside her an unexplained and unknown fear. But she also has her reasons for feeling unsafe everywhere. She says:

… had seen and borne much, had been scared all over the country, in every street of it. Only now did she feel truly unsafe because the brutalizing men and their brutal women were not just out there, they were in her block, her house. A man had come in her living room and destroyed her niece. His wife had come right in the funeral to nasty and dishonor her. (74)

However, Felice dares to make her own choices against the expectations and demands made by others. In her own words, she says:

My grandmother is slower now, and my mother is sick, so I do most of the cooking. My mother wants me to find some good man to marry. I want a good job first. Make my own money. Like she did. Like Mrs. Trace. Like Mrs. Manfred used to before Dorcas let herself die. (204)

In the case of Destination Biafra, the struggle is more within the class and gender differences imposed upon women with marginal role played by racism. The following lengthy quotation reveals the truth behind this claim in a very apt way:

The Prime Minister … being a Moslem, he did not drink or eat pork and would not bring any of his wives to such a gathering. Yet his steely coldness held an attraction for the Lagos society women, who fluttered around him like butterflies in search of rare flowers, ministering to all his needs. Debbie charmed everyone, playing the dutiful daughter of Samuel Ogedemgbe. The climax for her was when she confidently gave the bridesmaids’ toast, her accent perfect and her smile unwavering.
That was what most fathers wanted: a daughter who not only was a been-to but who could talk and behave like a European. Everyone applauded, and even the Prime Minister almost smiled. And when someone shouted, “A chip off the old block!” Ogedemgbé and his wife were in seventh heaven as the whole gathering roared into happy laughter. (Emecheta 1983: 44)

Debbie’s choice to join the army has obstacles from prejudices of gender, class and race. So she seeks Abosi’s help instead of Alan for such action. Yet, her such revolting choice still is not free from class consciousness. To quote her:

She had thought of going to join Abosi ... because there her father’s strong moneyed tentacles would be less be able to prevent from accepting her. But she could as easily enlist in Lagos. At first she had thought Alan Grey would understand and put a word for her, but she realized that at heart he would subscribe to her father’s concept of what a woman should be. For her, joining the army was not a matter of going into action to shoot. She would be trained in military familiarization, but what she really hoped to achieve was to be a lecturer in one of the military academies ... (56-7)

Debbie and Babs are the new kind of women that Nigeria was facing for the first time and who “were determined to play their part in the new nation” (119). Choudhary even says that through Debbie, Emecheta puts forward a new type of woman where “the rural, lack-house, timid, lackluster woman is replaced by an individualistic, assertive, die-hard fighter for a cause.” Their wisdom and insight is undeniable in Babs’s lines:
Trouble is, how long will it remain a civil war, with those foreign vultures hovering ready to pounce on the mess we leave behind? Our natural resources, our oil, will be the end of us. Can’t those two men see the forces are wedging themselves between them to encourage the rift? (117)

On the other hand, women’s sexuality and marriage are treated as restrictions which are passed on for generations. They are further explained with much conviction by Alice in her own experiences of life. Her parents “spoke to her firmly but carefully about her body: sitting nasty (legs open); sitting womanish (legs crossed); breathing through her mouth; hands on hips; slumping at table; switching when you walked” (Morrison 1999: 76). She adds:

The moment she got her breasts they were bound and resented, a resentment that increased to outright hatred of her pregnant possibilities and never stopped until she married Louis Manfred, when suddenly it was the opposite. Even before the wedding her parents were murmuring about grandchildren they could see and hold… (76)

And unfortunately, “She passed it on to her baby sister’s only child” but she also couldn’t help wondering, “[W]would she have done so had her husband lived or stayed or if she had had children of her own [?]” (77). This creates a certain kind of invisible friction and misunderstanding between them. According to Shukla, Dorcas has failed to understand the fact that Alice is not helpless because she “has found strength and pride in her womanly skills and has managed to lead an independent life on the income she derived from her sewing” (Shukla 2007: 125).
Similarly, in *Destination Biafra* Debbie and Julia have to face blunts of such prejudices and traditions within the patriarchal order. The choices made by Debbie on marriage and sexuality are quite contradictory to what was expected from her. Biswas has clearly pointed her unconventional dream. She says: “Her [Debbie’s] ambition do not revolve around the dual conceptions of marriage and procreation” (Biswas 1998: 76). Debbie narrates her dream:

> It was just that she did not wish to live a version of their life – to marry a wealthy Nigerian, ride the most expensive cars in the world, be attended by servants … No, she didn’t want that; her own ideas of independence in marriage had no place in that set-up. She wanted to do something more than child breeding and rearing and being a good passive wife of a man whose ego she must boost all her days, while making sure to submerge every impulse that made her a full human …

(Emecheta 1983: 45)

And the truth behind such tradition and possibility is clearly revealed in the case of Julia after her marriage with Abosi. She is described as an educated and liberated woman before marriage. But her pre-marriage’s self-identity is unacceptable for both the patriarchs and traditional women. In fact, her domesticated post-marriage’s self is quite bitter. She says, “I knew I was marrying a soldier but not that he wouldn’t have his permission to complete his wedding,” and further “Juliana said, half seriously, so that it was impossible to tell whether she was proud of her husband for answering the call of duty or really bitter to have missed the celebrations” (56-9).

Moreover, Choudhary finds that the subordination “is unique to an African woman as she experiences sexual subjugation not only at the hands of her own men but also colonial subjugation by the European colonizers.”

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Indeed, it is no wonder that there is stigma shown by all men irrespective of color and class towards Debbie’s rapes which were committed by different men and many times. Unfortunately, they seem to forget the actual fact that the rapes happened on different occasions during her peace mission. For instance, Alan Grey who seems most liberal in outlook turns out to be a misogynist after all as “He was so distant, so English, such a gentleman” when he heard about Debbie’s rape. In fact, Debbie’s smile wobbled on her lips as she says:

Funny, I had expected the son of Sir Fergus Grey to behave differently from an unsophisticated Moslem African, but you reacted exactly like Salihu Lawal. Tell me, would it have made any difference if I had been raped by white soldiers? (243)

In Jazz, ‘destruction’ forms the second part of the three-fold passage of black people’s experience in a white racist society. However, the earlier discussed ‘triple consciousness’ forms the basis of the destruction of black people is general and black women in particular later on. Dorcas’s character is perceived with doubts by Violet as a seductress capable of destruction from a subjective point of view. But Joe has a different story regarding Dorcas’s photograph. The following narration proves the difference:

If the tiptoer is Joe Trace, driven by loneliness from his wife’s side, then the face stares at him without hope or regret and it is the absence of accusation that wakes him from his sleep hungry for her company. No finger points. Her lips don’t turn down in judgment. Her face is calm, generous and sweet. But if the tiptoer is Violet the photograph is not that at all. The girl’s face looks greedy, haughty and very lazy. The cream-at-the-top-of-the-milkpail face of someone who will never work for anything; someone who picks things
ly ing on other people’s dressers and is not embarrassed when found out … (Morrison 1993: 12)

Similarly, Felice found Dorcas as a force of destruction. To quote Felice: “Unless it was the way she pushed them [guys]. I mean it was like she wanted them to do something scary all the time. Steal things, or go back in the store and slap the face of a white salesgirl who couldn’t wait on her, or cuss out somebody who had snubbed her” (201-2).

In *Destination Biafra*, the total destruction of Africa has many contributing factors other than British colonial politics. The pride of the leaders is evident in such instance where the wound of Odumosu explodes in these words:

Chief Odumosu fumed with rage as he dashed home through the streets, inciting his own thugs. The whole town found itself in a mini civil war. Bullets sang in the streets of Ibadan. The police could do little, faced with groups of armed hooligans. Most of them were normally unemployed but had been given large sums of money and promised more if they saw the operation through. (Emecheta 1983: 51)

On the other hand, there is according to Abosi, the Military Coup with the objective of ‘Destination Biafra.’ He says:

I would rather say our destination is “Biafra”, since as far as I am concerned we’re not yet independent. We sent away one set of masters, without realizing that they had left their stooges behind. Even the matches we use in our kitchens come from abroad. I think this country needs a military respite, and so to Biafra we will go. Destination Biafra!” (60)
However, unfortunately after the coup, the power distribution formula created more tension with the addition of the abolition of tribalism. And then the blood bath of communal riots struck uncontrollably upon the innocent Igbos. It is especially worst upon women who are not only killed but heinously assaulted before, during and even after being raped. Such brutal act of blood bath is very vivid in the following lengthy narration of Ugoji:

Ugoji ran for his life out of the building. He passed the Yankee Bar on his way to his home and saw the horror, out of the corner of his eye, what they were doing to Area Mama. She was stripped naked and was being dragged by two madman who were tearing her feet in opposite directions. Area Papa was still alive, but only just. One of his shoulders had been completely hacked away...

... But when his eyes became accustomed to the darkness he saw that he had stepped on pieces of human body ... “Poor Regina[his girlfriend], poor beautiful Regina. I wish you had insisted on following me ... People who could murder such a beautiful woman in cold blood are not worthy of being called members of the human race.” (87-9)

Moreover, the destruction of genocide that followed is universal and even more horrible than the earlier cruelties. To quote him again:

At the railway station Ugoji wondered whether perhaps Regina had not been lucky. The passengers on the platform were still alive – just – but the killers had made sure that those Ibos who went back home would always remember their stay in North. Nearly all the women were without one breast. The very old ones had only one eye each. Some of the men had been castrated, some had only one arm, others had one foot amputated. All were in a shocked daze, their eyes staring as if from skulls of the long dead and buried. (89-90)
More violence and deaths follow:

One boy of about fifteen, ... started to blubber, with Saliva dripping from both corners of his mouth, “My mother, my father ... we were made to watch while they pounded them like yam with their clubs. My mother, she begged them for our lives and they promised her they wouldn’t kill us, but they made us watch our parents die. Then as we neared the door they noticed that my older sister was pregnant ... they pounded on her, spread her wide and pushed the sharp edge of their club inside her, pounded her and the baby ...”

... It was said that over thirty thousand Ibos died in the first part of the troubles. In Lagos, a place as cosmopolitan as any modern capital, things were even more chaotic. But whereas in the North the massacre was carried out openly, here it was done discreetly. People who had the remotest connection with Iboland started disappearing. Many dead bodies were found floating along the Lagos creek. (90-1)

According to Shruti Das, the readers are exposed to shocking situation in Jazz when women claw each other for the stake of a man. Violet’s extreme hatred for Dorcas is one such situation. Her action shocks them but “at the same time sympathizes with her, as she was generally a nice and harmless person, who loved birds” (Das 2009: 153). Joe creates hatred between two women. Violet goes mental to knife and disfigure Dorcas’s dead face during the latter’s funeral.

Das further adds: “Joe breaks the moral code by committing infidelity and yet has a justification for his act” (153). Thus, a very crucial question arises. It asks why Joe is given the license to kill Dorcas and go free merely
because of a guilty conscience. Such jealous and possessive form of hatred is manifested by Violet who confesses:

Women wear me down. No man ever wore me down. No man ever wore me down to nothing. It’s these little hungry girls acting like women. Not content with boys their own age, no, they want somebody old enough to be their father. Switching round with lipstick, see-through stockings, dresses up to their you-know-what. (Morrison 1993: 14)

Nevertheless, Violet’s mind is more twisted than earlier perceived. Her obsession with Joe has deeper complications from her experiences of harsh reality during her struggles for survival. She further adds:

I picked him out from all the others wasn’t nobody like Joe he make anybody stand in cane in the middle of the night; make any woman dream about … Any woman, not just me. Maybe that is what she saw … my Virginia Joe Trace who carried a light inside him, whose shoulders were razor sharp and who looked at me with two-color eyes and never saw anybody else … What did she see, young girl like that, barely out of school, with unbraided hair, lip rouge for the first time and high-heeled shoes? And also what did he? A young me with high-yellow skin instead of black? A young me with long wavy hair instead of short … Who was he thinking when he ran in the dark to meet me in the cane field? Somebody golden, like my own golden boy, who I never ever saw but who tore up my girlhood as surely as if we’d been the best of lovers? … Standing in the cane, he was trying to catch a girl he was yet to see, but his heart knew all about, and me holding to him but wishing he was the golden boy I never saw either. Which means from the very beginning I was a substitute and so was he. (96-7)
In the broader manner, the war in *Destination Biafra* is created by men and their uncontrollable thoughts and emotions. And unfortunately, it becomes responsible for all the crimes, assaults, sufferings and deaths that innocent women were subjected to. According to Preeti Choudhary, “During the war, they [women] have been subjected to the worst kind of physical, emotional and sexual domination. Most of them are victims of circumstances, left to fend for themselves in a hostile world.” In other words, the pride of men burnt the lives of women as hell fire. Loots, rapes and murders of women irrespective of age, marital status, class and background by both sides of armies is common. These heartless men did not even spare pregnant women or nuns to use for their amusement and torture.

As part of the overall brutality towards women, Debbie is repeatedly raped during her peace mission by both sides. J.O.J. Nwachukwu-Agbada finds that Emecheta had armed Debbie with gun as a soldier but unfortunately “both are of no consequence when she faces rapists who are supposed to be fellow Nigerian soldiers” like a very ironical surprise (Umeh 1996: 392). And yet these soldiers believe that women rule everywhere using ‘bottom power’ and not education in their favor which itself is sexist in so many ways. In her resistance, Debbie invites a very brutal and horrific rape experience. To quote:

She could make out the figure of the leader referred to as Bale on top of her, then she knew it was somebody else, then another person .. She felt herself bleeding, though her head was still clear. Pain shot all over her body like arrows. She felt her legs being pulled this way and that, and at times she could hear her mother’s protesting cries. But eventually, amid all the degradation that was inflicting on her, Debbie lost her consciousness. (Emecheta 1983: 134)
Yet, the gravity of such brutal rape does not end there. To quote Debbie:

To get up and start living again after the experiences of the past night was going to be a Herculean task. … She did not wish to live. She looked again at her mother, a well-kept woman fast approaching middle age, wearing only a lappa and torn blouse. Blood smeared the sides of her face and legs, but her eyes were dry; she was not crying, she was even trying to smile. Had she been raped too? That was a question Debbie would never ask. She felt guilty that, with all her education, she could not lift a finger to help her own mother. Had she been a man, they would have killed her outright; instead they humiliated her and left her to die slowly. (134)

Further, more humiliation is in store when Stella tries to seek justice for her daughter’s rape and torture crime from the soldiers. The mockery of the situation strikes hard in this response by the soldier to whom she reported about Debbie’s rape. He says, “Give her hot water to wash herself. Hundreds of women have been raped – so what? It’s war. She’s lucky to be even alive. She’ll be all right” (135). To quote Stella:

It was then that Stella Ogedemgbe saw her daughter’s point. They would become a laughing-stock. The pain and humiliation would forever be locked in their memories. She could not shut out the horrible way the Ibo woman with the child was killed, how they had pushed the butt of a gun into her, how they had cut her open, how the unborn baby’s head had been cut off and the older child kicked to death ... oh, it was too horrible. But Debbie was alive, and that was everything. (136)

Other than the direct and physical traumas inflicted upon women during war, there are psychological and non-surfaced traumas too. In the first instance,
there are Julia’s repeated miscarriages during the war. It has deeper and symbolic connotations related to it as “[s]She began to cry deep touching sob, and Abosi sat by the bed. After a few seconds he knew that she needed a doctor and quickly. For the rest of the day they watched helplessly as the little life, whose heartbeat they had already begun to hear, drained away” (98).

Likewise, the episode of the bizarre birth of Momoh’s third child and its death is also symbolic. In fact, it is a representation of the heinous and ugly side of war and its effect. The narration continues:

A Caesarean section was performed, but the child did not survive. While Elizabeth was still under anesthetic Momoh was shown the monstrosity that had been inhabiting his wife’s body. It resembled a giant frog more than any human he had ever seen, he thought. It must be a curse. He could not have been responsible for this thing. The deformed piece of humanity was wrapped with its afterbirth and quietly destroyed. All Elizabeth was told when she came to was that her baby had died during birth, and had been buried. Like a good wife, she knew she should not ask why she had not been able to see the body. (203)

On the other hand, Dorcas represents the ‘lost generation’ looking for that self-identity which gets brutally destroyed by racism. Her first realization and choice of her own is jazz music. Unfortunately, it gets brutally destroyed by racism in Jazz. She adds her sparkling emotions in these words:

Resisting her aunt’s protection and restraining hands, Dorcas thought of that life-below-the sash as all the life there was. The drums she heard at the parade were only the first part, the first word, of a command. For her the drums were not an all-embracing rope of fellowship, discipline
and transcendence. She remembered them as a beginning, a start of something she looked to complete. (Morrison 1993: 60)

Dorcas further enhances her rebellious attitude in her choice of sexuality and love interest. Joe is her forbidden secret which invited frowns. Then very contrarily, she chooses Acton over Joe. To quote her reasons:

Acton, now, tells me when he doesn’t like the way I fix my hair. Then I do 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 … Joe liked for me to eat it all up and want more. Acton gives me a quiet look when I ask for seconds. He worries about me that way. Joe never did. Joe didn’t care what kind of woman I was. He should have. I care. (190)

Dorcas’s choices reflect her desire to be cared for and loved which has been missing all her life after her parents’ death. However, her way of seeking attention from Joe is also twisted like her very interpretation of being loved and cared. To quote her thoughts: “He [Joe] is coming for me. And when he does he will see I’m not his anymore. I’m Acton’s and it’s Acton I want to please. He expects it. With Joe I pleased myself because he encouraged me to. With Joe I worked the stick of the world, the power in my hand” (191). Indeed, Jayita Sengupta observes that her life itself has “the complex chemistry of city life” as Dorcas says: “Listen, I don’t know who is that woman singing [jazz] but I know the words by heart” (Sengupta 2006: 193).

Similarly, Violet is also damaged from inside who seeks strange dreams to fulfill the vacuum that was rooted deep inside her own ruptured self-identity and existence. To quote her:
The hips she came here with were gone, too, just like the power in her back and arms. Maybe that Violet, the one who knew where the butcher knife was and was strong enough to use it, had the hips she had lost. But if that Violet was strong and had hips, why was she proud of trying to kill a dead girl, and she was proud. Whenever she thought that Violet, and what that Violet saw through her own eyes, she knew there was no shame there, no disgust. That was hers alone, so she hid behind the rack at one of Duggie’s little illegal tables and played with the straw in a chocolate malt. (Morrison 1993: 93-4)

However, in Destination Biafra, Debbie, as the protagonist does not lose herself when faced with hardships and adversities of her life during the war. Instead she transforms herself into a strong new woman who is ready to fight as well as defend for the stake of her people and country. She transforms from a jolly, rich and privileged woman to a hard-core soldier after suffering in the war as a helpless woman. And indeed, she finally manages to realize her self-identity in this lengthy and hard journey. In fact, after being repeatedly raped, Debbie changes her perspective towards many important aspects of life in a drastic way. In her own words, Debbie declares to her mother, “I don’t want the kind of life you are mapping out for me. I don’t want to get married just for protection. I don’t want anybody’s pity ... It is not a war between Abosi and Momoh. It is our war. It is the people’s war. Our very first war of freedom” (Emecheta 1983: 160).

However, in Jazz there is a presence of a certain fatal confusion within the characters of Dorcas and Violet regarding their self-identities. For Dorcas her new love towards Acton is all about everything opposite of Joe. To quote:
Dorcas is happy. Happier than she has ever been anytime. No white strands grow in her partner’s mustache. He is up and coming. Hawk-eyed, tireless and a little cruel. He has never given her a present or even thought about it … Other women want him – badly – and he has been selective … Dorcas is lucky. Knows it. (Morrison 1993: 188)

On the other hand, Violet longs for motherhood too much in a very desperate way. In fact, according to Das, it hits like a hammer and she did not even know “when she first hears about Dorcas, a girl young enough to be Joe’s daughter” having an affair with Joe (Das 2009: 155). And also her manner of fulfilling this craving for motherhood is somewhat odd and lunatic type. Still her logic and craving get infused like some kind of maze game. In fact, “[b]y and by longing became heavier than sex: a panting, unmanageable craving” and she brought a doll imagining “how old that last miscarried child would be now. A girl, probably” (Morrison 1993: 108). In other words,

… just when her nipples had lost their point, mother-hunger had hit her like a hammer. Knocked her down and out. When she woke up, her husband had shot a girl young enough to be that daughter whose hair she had dressed to kill … Was she the woman who took the man, or the daughter who fled her womb? (108)

Quite contrary to the confusion of Jazz, there is the mind-set of women in Destination Biafra. According to them, men and their greed along with pride when treated as synonymous to nationalism results towards downfalls. Moreover, men and their prideful actions are the culprits of the war and its traumatic deaths and sufferings. However, Stella as the older generation wants women’s freedom but she alongside nurtures some rigid norms too. She says, “We all want freedom for women, but I doubt if we are ready for this type of
freedom where young women smoke and carry guns instead of looking after husbands and nursing children” (Emecheta 1983: 108). In fact, Biswas says: “Debbie’s mother embodies the traditional African values and in her incomprehension and dismay at her daughter’s behavior, she reinforces the patriarchal values of African society” (Biswas 1998: 77).

On the other hand, Debbie questions Momoh and his advisers’ treatment of ‘democracy.’ While Babs is cynical about the suffering they are exposed to as consequences of certain greedy and corrupted people’s actions. She says:

The women and children who would be killed by bombs and guns would simply be statistics, war casualties. But for the soldier-politicians, the traders in arms, who only think of their personal gain, it would be the chance of a lifetime. And the politicians who started it all can pay their own way to Europe and America and wait until it has all blown over. (Emecheta 1983: 109)

The damaged identities of Joe and Violet are bagaged by their past traumas. It is such that it creates an inability to love each other in the normal way in Jazz. Joe observes the difference within Violet. To quote him:

Violet takes better care of her parrot than she does me. Rest of the time, she’s cooking pork I can’t eat, or pressing hair I can’t stand the smell of. Maybe that’s the way it goes with people been married long as we have. But the quiet. I can’t take the quiet. She don’t hardly talk anymore, and I ain’t allowed near her. Any other man be running around, stepping out every night, you know that. I ain’t like that. I ain’t. (Morrison 1993: 49)
However the juxtaposition of Joe’s claim of loyalty towards Violet is that he actually, “Sneaked around, plotted, and stepped out every night the girl demanded. They [Joe and Dorcas] went to Mexico, Sook’s and clubs whose names changed every week – and he was not alone” (49). He further confesses his attraction towards Dorcas. He says, “I picked you out. Wrong time, yep, and doing wrong by my wife … Don’t ever think I fell for you. I didn’t fall in love, I rose in it” (135).

In *Destination Biafra*, Debbie is approached by Momoh to act as a peace-keeper. However, it turns out that he sees her as a bait to lure Abosi for negotiations. In fact, according to Momoh, she is merely a sex-object and plaything for the high officials. He as a seasoned politician says shrewdly, “Your family and his were friends for a very long time, and of course you were both at Oxford, although you’re a woman … Not that that should be a handicap. It might help: you can use your feminine charm to break that icy reserve of his” (Emecheta 1983: 123). But Debbie is genuinely more concerned about the greater cause than such narrow-mindedness and so ignores it. She says:

To think that she was being delegated to go and convince Abosi that a united Nigeria was the thing to be fought for, just to keep alive the whims of the ambitious Saka Momoh! Well, it would not be because of Momoh she was going but because she personally believed that keeping the country together was a good thing. (123)

Destruction when treated with serious analysis and indepth effort results into reconciliation. In *Jazz*, reconciliation does not come from the community effort. It all comes from personal efforts for forgiveness and understanding. Violet is abandoned by the church members after the incident during Dorcas’s funeral. In fact, in the January meeting of the Salem Women’s Club Violet’s
name was brought up “as someone needing assistance, but it was voted down because only prayer – not money – could help her now” where she was left “to figure out on her own what the matter was and how to fix it” (Morrison 1993: 4).

On the other hand, according to Kavita Arya, the special bond Violet shares with Alice “helps them not only to converse but also to cry and to laugh; all three are signs of healing” (Arya 2010: 103). Alice also teaches her how to love as well as to laugh at herself. Similarly, Alice learns to forgive Violet and finds herself talking to her freely in a way she has never done with anyone. They also learn to laugh along with the lesson that “laughter is serious … more complicated, more serious than tears” (103).

However, Violet furthermore tries to move on without Joe after all the humiliation and pain by getting herself a boyfriend. She even allows her boyfriend to visit in her own house. Yet she ends up looking after Joe. And finally, she tries to come across a kind of reconciliation with the dead girl by looking about and discovering Dorcas’s life while she was still alive. To quote: “Violet’s next plan – to fall back in love with her husband – whipped her before it got on a good footing … So she decided to love – well, find out about – the eighteen-year-old whose creamy little face she tried to cut open even though nothing would have come out of that straw” (Morrison 1993: 5).

On the other hand, massive destruction is caused during the war. And Debbie is approached by Momoh to become the peace-keeper to interact with Abosi. Here, an important point of a general sexist outlook of men is put forward by Biswas. She says: “The attitude of soldiers and other men is the same to all women. Women are looked upon as mere sex objects by them”
Her perception and response towards such offer is contradictory. She even suspected that “one of the reasons for these men choosing her was that they guessed that were it not for Alan Grey Chijioke Abosi might well have married her” (Emecheta 1983: 126). After realizing her objectified and sexist use, the very next moment she acts like a girl with a crush for Abosi as “Debbie smiled to herself” thinking that if she would have earlier married Abosi then “both her own father and Papa Abosi” would have been so happy (126). However, her unexpected girlish flipping thoughts make her serious stand to become a peace-keeper waver with lack of seriousness. In addition, Debbie couldn’t stop questioning her own identity and role as she “sighed sadly” and asks her “position in all this mess” because she “was neither Ibo nor Yoruba, nor was she a Hausa, but a Nigerian” (126).

Later the entire mission turns out to be a failure after her two months’ lengthy journey to speak with Abosi. Her disappointment is very clear in these lines:

You won’t believe this, Chijioke, but I was originally sent – or let me say I volunteered – to come here to convince you to stop the war. That was months ago when things were not so good for Saka Momoh. Now I think my mission has come too late. Many people have died and still hundreds die each day, and yet it continues ... this war, I mean. (239)

She is once again asked by Alan to try to convince Abosi to surrender after he started his mission called ‘Mosquito Death’ as last resort. But again she is merely seen as an object of desire and not as an individual doing a meaningful job. The extract of their conversation has so much to prove:

“Good. Do your woman bit tonight,” he said. “Abosi used to fancy you, I used to see the desire in his eyes when he talked to you at
Government House in Lagos ... well, use that part of you to make him do what you say.”

Debbie walked up to Alan Grey and slapped him on both sides of his face.

“That is for the way you and your country have fallen in the eyes of the black nations. This war is one of your greatest shames.” (254-8)

In *Jazz*, the reconciliation comes through a rather unusual effort. Violet’s obsession with the dead girl Dorcas makes her come across many persons. Surprisingly, these people help her in one way or another to overcome the emotional turmoil and identity crisis haunting her to come to peace. She met Alice and Felice is such manner. However, it is surprising that Violet takes Dorcas’s picture and even “had the nerve to put it on the fireplace mantel in her own parlor and both she and Joe looked at it in bewilderment” (Morrison 1993: 6).

Originally the term ‘Biafra’ represented a beautiful thought during the military coup. ‘Biafra’ symbolized “freedom, freedom for the persecuted Easterners, most of whom are Ibos” (Emechata 1983: 183). But then everything turned topsy-turvy. Later it turns out that “this was not just a war that the rest of Nigeria wished to win, it was genocide” where “thirty thousand Ibos been killed in the North” and thus it “was a fight for survival” (185).

During the turbulent time of chaos, the women and children are unsympathetically abused and killed. They become the innocent victims of the war. The death of baby, Biafra, is very significant in this context. He represents the tiny hope for peace and survival. Debbie feels a strange connection with the other women as they grief altogether for his unfortunate death. To quote her:
Even when she was releasing the tiny stiff body from hers, she refused to look into its face. The small body, no more than a shrunken lifeless skeleton, fell out. It was then that Debbie noticed the other women watching her. There was no doubt that they felt as she did. On this issue their common Africanness came to the fore; a child was the child of the community rather than just of the biological parents. Their eyes met hers. What was there to say? The baby, their baby, had died. (212)

Nevertheless, there is in addition the truth behind the fear of losing everything in Dorothy’s panicky question, “Is our land Biafra going to die like this baby, before it is given time to live at all?” (212). Fortunately, the voice of reality, mutual understanding and help immediately comes in the words of Uzoma Madako, “Shame on you... Since when have men helped us look after children? Have you not old people in your cluster of homesteads, to do their job of bringing up the younger ones” (212-3). And so does the words of women’s wisdom in general regarding men’s so called fight for freedom surfaces more elaborately:

Our men! A few years ago it was ‘Independence, freedom for you, freedom for me.’ We were always in the background. Now that freedom has turned into freedom to kill each other, and our men have left us to bury them and bring up their children; and maybe by the time these ones grow up there will be another reason for them to start killing one another. (214)

On the other hand, Felice’s new perception is another part of reconciliation process in Jazz. It is broad and open-minded in nature but rather anti-Dorcas too. She realizes the conflict that Dorcas inflicted within Violet’s sanity as well as Joe’s possible side of goodness in these lines:
Dorcas was my friend, but I knew that in a way she was right. All those ingredients of pretty and the recipe didn’t work. Mrs. Trace, I thought, was just jealous. She herself is very dark, bootblack, the girls at school would say. And I didn’t expect her to be pretty, but she is. You’d never get tired looking at her face. She’s what my grandmother calls pick thin, and wears her hair straightened and flat, slicked back like a man’s except that style is all the rage now … I could picture her husband doing her neckline … He was that kind, and I sort of know what Dorcas was talking about while she was bleeding all over that women’s bed at the party. (Morrison 1993: 206)

However, Felice observes the difference between Joe’s warmth and her father’s coldness side by side too. In other words, she finds Joe more father-figure appropriate than her own father. Joe moreover has his own charm and attraction unlike her father. To quote her:

Dorcas was a fool, but when I met the old man I sort of understood. He has a way about him. And he is handsome. For an old man, I mean. Nothing flabby on him. Nice-shaped head, carries himself like he’s somebody. Like my father when he’s being proud Pullman porter seeing the world, and baseball and not cooped up in Tuxedo Junction. But his eyes are not cold like my father’s. Mr. Trace looks at you. He has double eyes. Each one a different color. A sad one that lets you look inside him, and a clear one that looks inside you … He looks at me and I feel deep – as though the things I feel and think are important and different and … interesting. (206)

Similarly, new views and perspectives of the women in Destination Biafra, are abundant regarding heavy and controversial topics like marriage and war. For instance, Debbie suffered more as a rape victim during and after
becoming the peace-keeper. Her mind bangs her with the thought of anger, frustration and of disappointment. To quote her: “If Biafran soldiers had done this, she might have been more able to understand. But Nigerian soldiers! It was Momoh who had sent her to Abosi in the first place” (Emecheta 1983: 157). Next to this trauma is the clash of ideas and ideologies between Debbie and her mother, Stella. The traditional Stella wants Debbie to get settled down instead of going for another mission. She tries to convince her daughter and says:

   Why don’t you stay here and get married? In marriage you’d have all the protection you need and no one would dare refer to what has happened again. If you go, fingers will always point at you ... An unmarried woman is never respected, Debbie. ... It is a man’s world here ... I’m going to build a new image for you. After a few years, people will forget; and, with your dead father’s name and money, the right man will come along. Don’t throw that all away. (159)

   However, the new woman inside Debbie does not agree to it. She says boldly: “I don’t want the kind of life you are mapping out for me. I don’t want to get married just for protection. I don’t want anybody’s pity ... It is not a war between Abosi and Momoh. It is our war. It is the people’s war. Our very first war of freedom” (160). But the prophetic wisdom of Stella ventures out significantly and voices herself against the selfish ego of every men. To quote her: “These men, whether in uniform or not, will repeat the same mistakes the so-called politicians made. You mark my words. I can’t stop you; you are a grown woman ... But maybe we all need our Biafras to keep us going. I only hope you don’t get too disappointed with yours when you find it” (160-1). Similarly significant is the advice that Debbie gives to their house-help, Dora. Debbie tells her not to stay back to find out who is a friend and instead “if there
is a rumour of any army approaching, whether Nigerian or Biafran, [she should] run into the bush” (162).

The insight of women is much more practical than the actual thoughts of the biased and egoist leaders. For instance, there is Babs’s thought upon the role of the colonialists. She says:

Trouble is, how long will it remain a civil war, with those foreign vultured hovering ready to pounce on the mess we leave behind? Our natural resources, our oil, will be the end of us. Can’t those two men see the forces are wedging themselves between them to encourage the rift? (117)

Another instance is the question upon the justification of war and its significance in the cry of disappointment by a woman. She says with much anger and disappointment:

Biafra, Biafra, what is Biafra? You killed our men from this part, Nwokolo; the Nigerian soldiers came and killed what your soldiers left. We are Ibuza people, but we now live in bush, thanks to your Abosi and your Biafra. Out town is now a ghost town. Go there and see Hausa soldiers killing and roasting cows. They shoot anything on sight, and kill anyone who gave shelter to your people. And when we needed you, where were you? Where was your Abosi when our girls were raped in the market places and our grandmothers shot? Please go back to your Biafra. You call us Hausa Ibos, don’t you? You call us fools because we fought your wars for you, and you are well protected in your place, claiming the glory? Please go away before you bring us bad luck. (230-1)
More factual truth comes pouring out. Undeniable truths of the war echo in these words:

Yes, we became tired of being in the middle. Your Biafran soldiers killed our men and raped our girls, because you accused us of harbouring enemy soldiers, then Nigerian soldiers would accuse us of the same thing even though we were innocent. There was nobody to protect us, so we formed our own militia. (230-1)

In *Jazz*, there is an unexpected turn of events. Dorcas is shot by her ex-lover, Joe, who happens to be the husband of fifty years old Violet. Felice is Dorcas’s best-friend who was with her during her last moments. And Alice was Dorcas’s aunt with whom she used to live. However, Dorcas has a unique effect upon others even after her death. Surprisingly, her absence creates proximity of other characters like Alice-Violet friendship and Joe-Violet-Felice trio. In fact, the first form of reconciliation is seen in Violet-Alice’s unique friendship. To quote Alice:

The thing was how Alice felt and talked in her company. Not like she did with other people. With Violet she was impolite. Sudden. Frugal. No apology or courtesy seemed required or necessary between them. But something else was – clarity, perhaps. The kind of clarity crazy people demand from not-crazy. (Morrison 1993: 83)

On the other hand, Violet also remembers a long forgotten lesson of life as she laughed with Alice and ponders over the complexity of laughter. Then there is the notorious trio of Joe-Violet-Felice as observed by Alice. To quote her:

I saw the three of them, Felice, Joe and Violet, and they looked at me like a mirror image of Dorcas, Joe and Violet. I believed I saw
everything important they did, and based on what I saw I could imagine what I didn’t: how exotic they were, how driven. Like dangerous children. (221)

Then again, more light upon the different sides of Dorcas is also visible in the different perceptions shared by Felice and Joe. For Felice, she was cold because till the last moment she was dry-eyed and “never saw her shed a tear about anything” (212). But Joe differs. For him she was soft and even admits “You know the hard part of her; I saw the soft. My luck was to tend to it” (212). But his love killed her for he was scared as he didn’t “know how to love anybody” (213). And the closing last message from Dorcas brought by Felice to Joe is that “[t]here’s only one apple” which manages to carve a new opening for Joe-Felice bond (213).

In Destination Biafra, Debbie Ogedemgbe starts as the daughter of a powerful and rich man of Nigeria, Samuel Ogedemgbe and Stella Ogedemgbe. She is already privileged being educated in England. She is also having an affair with a British officer, Allan Grey. However, luck takes a big U-turn when Nigeria breaks into war and she ventures into a lengthy and hard journey towards self-realization. In the tedious journey, she encounters and undergoes the worst sides of war where the women and children sufferer the most. The following extract justifies her entire experience of transformation:

A hot uncontrollable anger enveloped her, making her sweat and shiver at the same time. To be so betrayed, by the very symbol of Biafra! She remembered the pitiful baby Biafra who stretched and died on her back; she remembered the image of the young mother who was raped and then pounded to a pulp by those inhuman soldiers; she recalled the death of Ngbechi and his little brother Ogo, who had wanted plaintain...
and chicken stew and could take no more ... She had always known herself to be impulsive and that in this particular case circumstances would dictate her actions. Abosi must not escape! He must not be allowed to escape and leave all the believers of his dream to face Lawal and his crazy Operation Mosquito campaign. Like a good captain, Abosi should die honourably defending his ship. Her mind was made up. No man, or even Abosi, was going to make a fool or her, a fool of all those unfortunate mothers who had lost their sons, the hopes of their families. (Emecheta 1983: 257)

In context of Jazz, the perfect form of reconciliation appears in the deadly trio Felice-Joe-Violet. Their new relationship rekindles love between Joe-Violet. The following lines narrate Joe-Violet connection:

A lot of the time, though, they stay home figuring things out, telling each other those little personal stories they like to hear again and again, or fussing with the bird Violet bought. She got it cheap because it wasn’t well. Hardly any peck to it. Drank water but wouldn’t eat … She guessed the bird wasn’t lonely because it was already sad when she bought it out of a flock of others. So if neither food nor company nor its own shelter was important to it, Violet decided, and Joe agreed, nothing was left to love or need but music. They took the cage to the roof one Saturday, where the wind blew and so did the musicians in shirts billowing out behind them. From then on the bird was a pleasure to itself and to them. (Morrison 1993: 223-4)

Joe and Violet’s rediscovered connection is the very last part of the entire reconciliation that started with the search and discovery of Dorcas’s past. According to S P Dhanavel, “Felice’s arrival harmonizes the Trace household. Violet’s emergent [new] self leads her to a more intimate relationship with her
by sharing and talking personal things in their fragmental life” (Dhanavel 2006: 366). Thus, Dorcas’s past connects the present life of the various characters of the novel in one way or another. And finally, her character even after her death reveals the brutal past of racism. Yet, she still manages to give a glimpse of her probable present and future if she was still alive in the symbolic trio formed between Joe-Violet-Felice.

However, the novel ends with a twisted note. It brings out the unspoken and unexpressed side of love that was never fulfilled; and remained merely as a longing. The suspense of this voice lingers on in these lines with a longing:

I envy them their public love. I myself have only know it in secret, shared it in secret and longed, aw longed to show it- to be able to say out loud what they have no need to say at all: That I have loved only you, surrendered my whole self reckless to you and nobody else. That I want you to love me back and show it to me. That I love the way you hold me, how close you let me be to you. I like your fingers on and on, lifting, turning. I have watched your face for a long time now, and missed your eyes when you went away from me. Talking to you and hearing you answer – that’s the kick. (Morrison 1993: 229)

In Destination Biafra, the experience of the war and the exploitation and sufferings associated with it turns Debbie into a more than insightful new woman who thinks above mere degree knowledge. She ponders and says:

Why had it come to that? When the history of the civil war was written, would the part played by her and women like Babs, Uzoma and the nuns in Biafra be mentioned at all? Had her original aim of pleading with Abosi not become redundant? How many Ibos were killed yesterday? How many Nigerians? As far as she was concerned, they were all Nigerians. She knew that Lawal’s Operation Mosquito was just
one of four major ones. How many people were dying every minute on
other fronts? She sighed, wondering if the plight of people like them,
trapped in the bush, was noised abroad. What a mess! (Emecheta 1983:
195)

In fact, Debbie starts to experience dejection and disappointment in the
entire system of Nigeria. But her main concern is to write a record of all these
unspoken or unrecorded truth regarding the ugly side of war that common
people especially women and children are exposed to. So, with such aim to be
heard by all, this story of women’s experiences gets later recorded in the book
Destination Biafra. To quote her:

Debbie recorded all this in her memory, to be transferred when possible
to the yellowing scraps of paper she dignified with the name of
manuscript. They had survived with her so far, because most of the
incidents were written down in her personal code which only she could
decipher. If she should be killed, the entire story of the women’s
experience of war would be lost. A great deal of what was happening
was too dangerous to write down so she had to make her brain porous
enough to absorb and assimilate, writing down only key words to
trigger off her recollections when she finally sat down to put it all into
plain words. She must try to live, not just for the women but for the
memories of boys like Ngbechi. (223-4)

However, the reality that Debbie discovers about the ego and pride of
Abosi is harsh. And, it generates within her the worst feelings of hatred and
anger. Nevertheless, she has already discovered her ‘self-identity’ after her long
and harsh quest that shook almost all her faith upon ideology. She strikes back
at Alan Grey, “Why, why should you want to take me along with you? To start
patronizing me with your charity all over again? You forget I have the plague, you forget that I was raped” (258).

The ending of the novel seems very pessimistic with no hope with nothing to hold on for peace and survival. But fortunately, Debbie’s realization and self-identity is worth calling a tiny compensation after all the loss that the war had caused. She declares the truth of mental colonization that needs decolonizing. She says defiantly:

I see now that Abosi and his like are still colonized. They need to be decolonized. I am not like him, a black man, a black white man; I am a woman and a woman of Africa. I am a daughter of Nigeria and if she is in shame, I shall stay and mourn with her in shame. No, I am not yet ready to become the wife of an exploiter of my nation. (258)

Apart from the quest of ‘individual identities’ within a community, the significance of the community itself in building up and nurturing individual identities is an eye-opening fact. This interrelated and reciprocating nature of bond shared between black women and their community is especially of highest value and relevance. In other words, there is often the assumption that motherhood can change any ordinary woman into a loving and caring mother. But in Paradise (1999) biological mothers are not as perfect, strong and ideal as time and again portrayed. For instance, Mavis loses her twin babies in an accident when she leaves them locked inside a car by mistake. The trauma haunts her and she runs away from her family with another two children left behind. To quote her: “Mavis grabbed the purse, stuck her feet in her daughter’s yellow boots and escaped onto the front porch. She did not look toward the kitchen and never saw it again” (Morrison 1999: 27). She later shares her
delusional fear with her mother, Birdie, as she says, “[t]hey’re going to kill me, Ma” (31). Somewhat like her are many mothers from Ruby who visited the Convent. They are frequently ready to give up or abort their babies there.

Fortunately, the surrogate mothers nurture the children when the biological ones fail. Connie is such surrogate of many lost souls who enter the Convent out of desperation looking for security and help. For instance, Mavis is nurtured towards peace by Connie. Mavis’s past and fears haunt but they become bearable in the Convent. She says:

The lion cub that ate her up that night had blue eyes instead of brown, and he did not have to hold her down this time. Where he circled her shoulders with his left paw, she willingly let her head fall back, clearing the way to her throat. Nor did she fight herself out of the dream. The bite was juicy, but she slept through that as well as other things until the singing woke her. (48-9)

According to Shruti Das, “Interplaying the role of mothers, daughters, sisters and friends to one another, these African-American women affirm one another” (Das 2009: 182). Then there is Seneca acting as the surrogate mother of Pallas. The latter is a sixteen years old girl who gets cheated by both her mother and boyfriend. Unfortunately, she ends up being pregnant. Seneca provides her the right space and timely help. To quote her:

She can’t cry yet, thought Seneca. The pain was down too far. When it came up tears will follow and Seneca wanted Connie to be there when it happened. So she warmed the girl up as best as she could, tried to smooth the heavy hair and, carrying a candle, led her down to Connie. (Morrison 1999: 172)
Another instance is Patricia-Billie’s fight and Billie’s escapade for solace in the Convent when “[t]he fight took place in October 1973. Afterwards Billie Delia ran off and stayed at the Convent for two weeks and one day” (202-4). Likewise, Connie also shares a very special bond with the Mother. The reasons are:

Consolata was not a virgin. One of the reasons she so gratefully accepted Mary Magma’s hand, stretching over the litter like a dove’s wing, was the dirty poking her ninth year subjected her to. But never, after the white hand had enclosed her filthy paw, did she know any male or want to, which must have been why being love-struck after thirty celibate years took an edible quality. (228)

There is a rather unusual religious twist to the conflict between Ruby and the Convent. There is the aspect of worship of Mary above Christ and above Mary is Eve who is the mother of all mankind. In fact, Consolata’s worship of Sister Mary itself emphasizes “the matriarchal heritage of Biblical female authority.”11 However, Consolata is moreover the surrogate mother for Sister Magma. But surprisingly, Sister Magma also happens to be her savior. Their last interaction just before Sister Magma’s death is so complex and remarkable in these words:

On that last day, Consolata had climbed into the bed behind her and, tossing the pillows on the floor, raised up the feathery body and held it in her arms between her legs. The small white head nestled between Consolata’s breasts, and so the lady had entered death like a birthing, rocked and prayed for by the woman she had kidnapped as a child. (223)
Sister Magma’s death is soon followed by Connie’s sudden feeling of emptiness due to her loss:

When Mary Magma died, Consolata, fifty-four years old, was orphaned in a way she was not as a street baby and was never as a servant. There was reason the Church cautioned against excessive human love and when Mary Magma left her, Consolata accepted the sympathy of her two friends, the help and support from Mavis, the effort to cheer her from Grace, but her rope to the world had slid from her fingers. She had no identification, no insurance, no family, no work. (247)

Likewise, Connie is mother for many other women. Pallas reminds her of “another girl, about the same age, who had come a few years ago at a very bad time “(249). Later it turns out that this unnamed girl is Grace who also happens to be the mother of Seneca. Then there is the case of Arnette’s brutal miscarriage or premature delivery in the Convent. She turns out to be the girlfriend of Gigi’s boyfriend, K.D. It is more shocking because “the real damage was the mop handle inserted with a rapist’s skill – mercilessly, repeatedly – between her legs” where she is the one who “had tried to bash the life out of the life” with “the gusto and intention of a rabid male” (250). On the contrary, the following narration reveals the surrogate mothers’ remarkable love and care showered upon this unwanted baby boy:

Together Connie and Mavis cleaned his eyes, stuck their fingers in his throat, clearing it for air, and tried to feed him. It worked for a few days, then he surrendered himself to the company of Merle and Pearl. By that time the mother was gone, having never touched, glanced at, inquired after or named him. Grace called him Che and Consolata did not know to this day where he was buried. (250)
Surprisingly, the role of surrogate mother and biological mother is interdependent upon one another in *Rape of Shavi* (1983). And besides, the mothers are very strong and nurturing. In fact, the community mothers take care of everything about the child side by side with the biological mothers. For instance, Andria is a modern mother who is a working woman in England and fighting for humanitarian causes. Philip Wagner could not escape her presence in the cold weather with her young child doing protest. Moreover, she replies back more impressively saying that Kisskiss “won’t have a future if I[Andria] don’t bring her here to protest against the decision” of the president and as such that “[t]his encounter with a determined mother prepared to risk her child had made Flip rethink the position” (Emecheta 1989: 70).

Andria’s fighting spirit continues further in the alien place of Shavi. Motherly affection crosses all boundaries. It is such that the Shavian women are involved in nursing and soothing her daughter, Kisskiss into health without any hesitation. But suspicious Andria screams at the middle-aged Shavian woman who are rubbing oil over Kisskiss and saying soothing words, “Leave my daughter alone” (63).

However, Ista, a doctor herself is awestruck by the birthing procedure of a breech baby by the Shavian women. Later she admits: “I started to scream arrogance at them, because still there inside me I feel that nothing that originates from Africa can ever stand up to our western ways. Can’t you see, Andria, I’m one of the greatest hypocrites alive” (142). But then, Andrian perception changes radically. To quote her:

She [the Shavian woman] gave birth to her child. This was a difficult one – a breech and rather exhausting, but oh, Ista, it was so beautiful.
The baby came out according to gravity, so the mother didn’t have to bear down horizontally the way we do. The woman sitting behind her was to prevent her from having cramp. For a normal birth it would be just like going to the toilet. (142)

And consequently, it is obvious that later Ista ends up helpless feeling guilty for aborting her child with Mendoza that she conceived during their stay in Shavi. She wonders: “Thousands of women with little or no income had done it and were still doing it. So why hadn’t she kept the baby?” (175-8). In addition, the importance of motherhood is respected and acknowledged greatly in *Rape of Shavi*. It includes even the king himself. To quote him:

King Patayon thanked all the people around him and gesticulating with the horse tail in his hand towards Flip and the others, said, ‘I’m giving my wife, Shoshovi, a cow. I’ve offended her, the mother of my son, the woman who told the world that I’m a man. One should never underestimate the power of women. I only needed to offend her once, for her to invoke her sister goddesses to send the albino people. The goddesses have been merciful enough to turn them into friends. I understand that their chief, the one with hair like an utang, is a good cow-herd, too. And that their women enjoy cooking. (85)

More nurturing and wise side of motherhood emerges. After Shavi’s great loss and devastation due to Asogba’s greed, his mother is the one who speaks out the spiteful truth regarding his failure as a leader. She says:

Asogba, my son, you’ll have to start all over again. You’ve been foolish. You tampered with the peaceful life we had and now we’ve lost all our men, our way of life and our privacy. We have to start all over again. There are no more than fifty men in the whole of Shavi, but
we have at least kept all the young children alive. Your duty now, Asogba, son of Shavi, is to help us survive. (186)

However, the wise future king Viyon is faster to grasp the facts of life when he reminds Asogba the reality. He reminds Asogba: “Remember what the Queen Mother said to you the night we returned. She said that Shavi is the Mother of us all. She has been raped once, and we must never allow her to be raped again” (187).

Alongside the dynamic nature of motherhood is the complex nature of mother-daughter relationship. In *Paradise* there are four important instances – Dee-Dee/Pallas, Seneca/Grace, Mavis/Sally and Patricia/Billie Delia. Such as –

1. Dee-Dee and Pallas’s betrayal story: Pallas is shattered when she discovers the affair between her mother and her boyfriend, Carlos. She regretted the whole episode and its consequence. She saw “the grappling bodies exchanging moans in the grass, unmindful of any watcher” and then follows the “stupefied run to the Toyota” and “blind drive on roads without destinations” along with “bumping trucks” as well as “water with soft things touching beneath” (Morrison 1999: 169). However, Pallas survived all and around the end of the novel Dee-Dee is lucky to get a glimpse of a brand new Pallas with a baby and no hair. She is dumb-strucked and wonders that “[s]She of all people knew her own daughter’s face, didn’t she? As well as she knew her own” (312).

2. Patricia/Pat and Billie’s love-hate relationship: Patricia is abusive towards Billie as she is unable to either accept or protect the color politics played by the 8 Rock original families. She unfortunately targets
her frustrations to her innocent daughter with both guilt and helplessness. She admits:

Trying to understand how she could have picked up that pressing iron, Pat realized that ever since Billie Delia was an infant, she thought of her as a liability somehow. Vulnerability to the possibility of not being quite as much of a lady as Patricia Cato would like. Was it that business of pulling down her panties in the street? Billie Delia was only three then. Pat knew that had her daughter been an 8-rock, they would not have held it against her ... But the question for her now in the silence of this here night was whether she had defended Billie Delia or sacrificed her ... The royal Ease in her hand as she ran up the stairs was there to smash the young girl that lived in the minds of the 8-rocks, not the girl her daughter was. Pat licked her bottom lip, tasted salt and wondered who exactly the tears were for. (203-4)

3. Grace and Seneca’s story of rejection: Grace as a young and teen-aged mother leaves Seneca behind. She later tries hard to find her after growing older and having a family of her own. But the damage Seneca is exposed to is irreversible. To quote Seneca:

The habit, begun in one of the foster homes, started as an accident. …She did not cry. It did not hurt. When Mama Greer bathed her, she clucked, “Poor baby. Why didn’t you tell me?” and Mercurochrome the jagged cut. She was not sure what she should have told: the safety pin scratch or Harry’s behavior. So she pin-scratched herself on purpose and showed it to Mama Greer. Because the sympathy she got was diluted, she told her about Harry. “Don’t you ever say that again. Do you hear me? Do you? Nothing like that happened here.” After a meal of her favorite things, she was placed in another home. Nothing happened for years. Until junior high school, then the eleventh
grade. By then she knew that there was something inside her that made boys snatch her and men flash her ... Refuge with boyfriends was no better. They took her devotion for granted, but if she complained to them about being fondled by friends or strangers their fury was directed at her, so she knew it was something inside that was the matter. (260-1)

4. Mavis and Sally’s Reunion and Reconciliation: After running away from home when Sally was just a girl, Mavis meets her after many years. They overcome their misunderstandings immediately over a lunch. Sally reveals many untold fears to Mavis. She says: “I was so scared all the time, Ma. All the time. Even before the twins. But you left, it got worse. You don’t know. I mean I was scared to fall asleep” (314). Then there is a shared understanding too, “Daddy was – shit, I don’t know how you stood it. He’d get drunk and try to bother me, Ma” (314). But she is more courageous than Mavis, “I fought him, though. Told him the next time he passed out I was gonna cut his throat open. Would have, too” (314). And when, “their eyes met. Sally felt the nicest thing then. Something long and deep and slow and bright.” Mavis encourages her and says that she knew Sally to be stronger than her. And Sally admits “I don’t know what you think of me, but I always loved, always” (315). And they both realize the strongest bond they share with each other irrespective of time, space and misunderstandings.

Similarly, in Rape of Shavi, the mother-daughter bond is very strong and so is the support from the community mothers. Many significant instances emerge in the treatment of rape of Ayoko by Ronje as the symbolic rape of Shavi. And, “[a]After Ayoko had told her mother, Siegbo, all, the two women held each other and indulged in bitter tears for a very long time” (Emecheta
In fact, the women’s war against the culprit is the strongest example of the stand for a daughter by her mother as well as her community mothers. Shoshovi represents every woman of Shavi when she declares:

We don’t kill humans in Shavi, but we do sometimes kill animals for sacrifice to Ogene, or for food. And you know my friend that animals, once they have tasted something they think is good, will always come back for more, and if they fail to get it, they wander around snatching their pleasures anywhere. It’s Ayoko today, tomorrow maybe it’ll be my daughter, the princess Ama. I’m glad you haven’t told any of the men. You’re right, we must purify our land. This is our war. (106-7)

Generally, female bonding is stronger and dynamic in nature within the patriarchal society. As a consequence, such cooperative and coordinating kind of bond is often synonymous to threat against men’s order. In Paradise, the various female companions share a mixture of dynamic aspects of security, hatred, help, escape, etc. both within and outside the Convent as a women’s community. The most important feature is the hope for survival with a new identity. All the women of the Convent – Mavis, Gigi, Pallas, Seneca, and Connie – are somehow helped by other women to come there. However, it is quite contradictory that they end up staying much longer and frequently there.

The unusual encounter, interaction and bond that develop between Connie and Soane are so unconventional and special in many ways. Consolata narrates their first encounter in these lines:

She had never seen the woman – girl really, not out of her twenties – but there was no confusion from the moment she stepped inside about who she was. His scent was all over her, or hers was all over him ...
That and some other thing: the scent of small children, the lovely aroma of sweet oil, baby powder and a meatless diet … she was sharing him with his wife. Now she saw the pictures that represented exactly what that word – sharing – meant. (Morrison 1999: 239)

In addition, they have shared a man together; Consolata has saved Soane’s son; and similarly she helped Soane to abort a child just as “[t]he life she offered as a bargain fell between her legs in a swap of red fluids and windblown sheets” and thus “[t]heir friendship was some time coming” (240). On the other hand, Soan claims that her husband was lucky to have them both.

Moreover, a lighter and vivid but simple bond is visible among women too. This bond is often enlightening and memorable. Mavis shares her experiences regarding her numerous encounters with various hitchhiker female companions in these lines:

Picking up girls was the easiest. They were safe company, she hoped, and they helped with gas and food and sometimes invited her to a place where they could crash. They graced primary routes, intersections, ramps to bridges, the verges of gas stations and motels, in jeans belted low on the hips and flared at the bottom. Flat hair swinging or hair picket out in Afros. The white ones were the friendliest; the colored slow to melt. But all of them told her about the world before California. Underneath the knowing talk, the bell-chime laughter, the pointed silences, the world they described was just like her own pre-Californian existence – sad, scary, all wrong. High schools were dumps, parents stupid, Johnson a creep, cops pigs, men rats, boys assholes. (33)
Similarly, in *Rape of Shavi*, women who belong to different class, race, and background share a bond of unity through household chores like cleaning, sweeping, etc. Andria and Ista are reluctant but get adjusted quite soon. Then, there is the unspoken bond within women’s community. To quote one such instance:

> The women walked on for about an hour to an open space where there was not a single tree, but miles and miles of rocky sand. Here they stopped. They made sure that the net was tight, so that there was no way for Ronje to escape, without outside help. They simply left him there for the desert vultures, turned back mutely and went to their homes. they got home, their families noticed how exhausted they looked. When asked, they simply replied: ‘We went to make sacrifice to Ogene’. (Emecheta 89: 117)

Ayoko is part of such female bond and yet she represents the updated version of these strong women. She is the modern woman who takes a clever step to cover up the loophole left unnoticed by the elder women when they punish Ronje for raping her. To quote her:

> She quickly cut the wire and poured some water into his parched mouth noticing his body was full of sores. With frantic gestures she conveyed to him the danger he was in. She told him to tie the cloth around his body, and go far, very far away. She ran a finger across her throat dramatically, to show him that if he was found, he would be killed. (133)

And in *Paradise*, the women like Billie Dellie, Anna, Kate, Gigi and Mavis etc. are the modern and free women. These women are free enough to ridicule and mock at the hypocrisy and double standard that Ruby symbolized.
In addition, unique and paradoxical bonding through sharing is seen between – Connie-Soane (Deek), Mavis-Gigi (love/hate), Connie-Penny and Claudia (escape) and Connie-Lone Du Press (magical power). Further, Bhaskar A. Shukla observes that Billie Delia cannot stop “wondering” in the funeral about the Convent women’s silence and their return (Shukla 2007: 86). But there is hopeful wish in her thoughts:

More on her mind was the absence of the women she had liked. They had treated her so well, had not embarrassed her with sympathy, had just given her sunny kindness ... Billie Delia was the only one in town who was not puzzled by where the women were or concerned about how they disappeared. She had another question: When will they return? When will they reappear, with blazing eyes, war paint and huge hands to rip up and stomp down this person calling itself a town? (Morrison 1999: 308)

An intriguing point emerges in both the novels. There is an interesting twist to the usual connotation behind the term ‘ours.’ In fact, it differs significantly according to gender. When men use it, it refers to their male pride whereas for women it includes the entire community united as a whole. In Paradise, it is men’s murderous anger and violence against women’s survival instinct. But in Rape of Shavi, men’s war for greed is against women’s war for survival and justice respectively.

Shallow perception and logic behind the decision and attack upon the Convent women by the Ruby men in Paradise has so much double standard and misogynic ideas. In fact, Morrison opines that there is a selective terror targeted towards these women by the “racist and patriarchal societies” as part of the
“historical burial” that justifies the violation of them.\textsuperscript{13} To quote the mediocre of Ruby men:

It was a secret meeting, but the rumors had been whispered for more than a year. Outrages that had been accumulating all along took shape as evidence. A mother was knocked down the stairs by her cold-eyed daughter. Four damaged infants were born in one family. Daughters refused to get out of bed. Brides disappeared on their honeymoons. Two brothers shot each other on New Year’s day. Trips to Demby for VD shots common. And what went on at the Oven these days was not to be believed. So when nine men decided to meet there, they had to run everybody off the place with shotguns before they could sit in the beams of their flashlights to take matters into their own hands. The proof they had been collecting since the terrible discovery in the spring could not be denied the one thing that connected all these catastrophes was in the convent. And in the Convent were those women. (11)

And with the shallow mindset the men attacks unannounced the Convent women. Consolata dies on the spot. But what they did not expect is the equally strong and powerful counter-attack from the remaining women. In other words, the fight is between cold blooded-murderous attacks versus defenses with a certain vengeance. However, in the case of these women, bonding brings reconciliation and healing through chalks and candles while lying naked inside the chalk figures and dreaming aloud. Das adds, “The loud dreaming becomes a ritual that helps them to exorcise their hurt. It was therapeutic” (Das 2009: 184). Similar to these experiences is getting cleansed under the rain drops with Pallas’s new-born son who represents “new” hope.
In *Rape of Shavi*, the women’s war is the consequence of Ronje’s selfish and degrading rape of the future queen of Shavi, Ayoko. Indeed, it is also the symbolic rape of Shavi because Ronje’s greed and lust usurps and destroys the innocence and values of Shavi. Ayoko’s words justify this point: “These can’t be people – for how could real people go out of their way to destroy the lives of those who have shown them nothing but kindness since they arrived in their midst?” (Emecheta 1989: 103). The women’s community comes together and decides the punishment for such heinous crime against women. There is much logic and patience in these lines:

Ronje didn’t reckon with the force of the women of Shavi, Shoshovi, Siegbo, Iyalode and the older palace queens, who had all gone to the Ogene lakes to make a pact to silence. A dog that bit a human must be put down. There was only one concession – if Ronje did not appear on the same spot within the next seven days, they would know that he had repented. Then they would meet again and think of their next strategy. Meanwhile, Shoshovi urged everybody to bring their fishing nets. (115)

Another exceptional example of Shavian women’s bond is represented in the clitorization of Ayoko done. It is done by her own future mother-in-law, Shoshovi with certain hidden agenda. It reflects the importance of the value of the women’s power and choice in their affairs as well. Any objection of such deliberate act is ruled out by Iyalode, the female priestess herself. In fact, she argues defensively:

Any mother can perform this operation. Shoshovi wants to do it for her future daughter. So what’s the argument? Let her do it. What has it got to do with you men anyway? We don’t interfere with your circumcision
when you take the boys into the bush. So why can’t you leave us alone?
That part is our sex organ, so why should it be your problem? (147)

Another intriguing difference visible in women’s bonding and men’s solidarity is the treatment of important issues. Men’s honour is not just respect but more their pride. However, women’s wisdom is above any kind of mere egoistic and personal interest often practised by men. Patriarchy as a social order is filled with pride and prejudices in *Paradise*. It is evident in the question over the Oven and the Convent women. For instance, there are the actions taken up by Ruby men who thought and acted against these innocent women merely based on a very unreliable and variable logic. To quote the doubts and suspicions of these men:

Strange neighbors, most folks said, but harmless. More than harmless, helpful even on occasion. They took people in – lost folk or folks who needed a rest. Early reports were of kindness and very good food. But now everybody knew that it was all a lie, a front, a carefully planned disguise for what was really going on. Once the emergency was plain, representatives from all three churches met at the Oven because they couldn’t agree on which, if any, church should host a meeting to decide on what to do now that the women had ignored all warnings ... So when nine men decided to meet there, they had to run everybody off the place with shotguns before they could sit in the beams of their flashlights to take matters into their own hands. The proof they had been collecting since the terrible discovery in the spring could not be denied: the one thing that connected all these catastrophes was in the convent. And in the Convent were those women. (Morrison 1999: 11)
However, Steward’s illogical pride is contrary to the inherent history of Ruby. The founder member of Ruby, Elder, once sympathizes towards a black whore. To quote this whole incident:

In 1919. Taking a walk around New York City before catching his train, he saw two men arguing with a cloth. From her clothes, Elder said, he guessed she was a streetwalking woman, and registering contempt for her trade, he felt at first a connection with the shouting men. Suddenly one of the men smashed the woman on in her face with his fist. She fell. Just as suddenly the scene slide from everyday color to black and white. Elder said his mouth went dry...

Elder did not know he was running until he got there and pulled the man away. He had been running and fighting for ten straight months, still unweaned from spontaneous violence. Elder hit the whiteman in the jaw and kept hitting until attacked by the second man. Nobody won. All were bruised ... a small crowd began yelling for the police. Frightened, Elder ran ... He never got the sight of that whiteman’s fist in that woman’s face out of his mind. Whatever he felt about her trade, he thought about her, prayed for her till the end of his life ... Steward liked that story, but it unnerved him to know it was based on the defense of and prayers for a whore. He did not sympathize with the whitemen, but he could see their point, could even feel the adrenaline, imagining the fist was his own. (94-5)

Then there is also the story behind the building of the community ‘Oven’ by Zechariah in the following narration:

They were proud that none of their women had ever worked in a white-man’s kitchen or nursed a white child. Although filed labor was harder and carried no status, they believed the rape of women who worked in white kitchens was if not a certainty a distant possibility –
neither of which they could bear to contemplate. So they exchanged that danger for the relative safety of brutal work. It was that thinking that made a community “kitchen” so agreeable. (99)

However, the women’s community has another opinion and reaction towards it. In fact, they share more wisdom and support for their survival. To quote their thoughts and actions:

The women nodded when the man took the Oven apart, packed, moved and reassembled it. But privately they resented the truck space given over to it – rather than a few more sacks of seed, rather than shoats or even a child’s crib. Resented also the hours spent putting it back together – hours that could have been spent getting the privy door on sooner. If the plaque was so important – and judging from the part of the meeting she had witnessed, she supposed it was – why hadn’t they just taken it by itself, left the bricks where they had stood for fifty years? Oh, how the men loved putting it back together, how proud it had made them, how devoted. A good thing, she thought, as far as it went, but it went too far. (103)

Opposite to the racially conscious form of male masculinity as apparent in *Paradise* is Shoshovi’s cold treatment by King Patayon in *Rape of Shavi*. King Patayon’s negligence towards Shoshovi’s wishes challenges the claim of men’s love towards their first wives. It is the fear of Shoshovi’s wrath and not her request that fulfills her demand for the cow. In fact, it brings the deprivation faced by women from making choices within the institution of marriage.

On the other hand, racism is interpreted in a totally different way by the black community of Ruby in *Paradise*. It indeed represents the male’s pride. It
is unconventional to find that in Ruby it is not the whites who are exploiting and discriminating the blacks based on color difference. Instead the pure blacks of the original 8 Rock families reject anyone with mixed background. Such is the case with Patricia and her daughter, Billie Cato. Another significant example is the reduction of the families participating in the Christmas play. Kavita Arya sums up this Black racism and says that “the trajectory of this unforgiving and dogmatic separatism” moves towards the “illogical murderous conclusion” to kill the Convent women because “neither the founder of haven nor their descendants could tolerate anybody but themselves” (Arya 2010: 116).

In addition is the connotation and significance behind the heritage of Africa. Royal and Soan’s views have distinctive perceptions that represent different meanings of native under the lens of diaspora for the peoples in America:

All Soane knew about Africa was the seventy-five scents she gave to the missionary society collection. She had the same level of interest in Africans as they had in her: none. But Roy talked about them like they were neighbors or, worse, family. And he talked about white people as though he had just discovered them and seemed to think what he’d learned was news. (Morrison 1999: 104)

In Rape of Shavi, there is the presence of discrimination too. But it is also unique and different from the general perception of racism. The white peoples land as outsiders by accident on Shavi during a plane-crash. Even though they are different and unknown to the peoples of Shavi, the latter group accepted them with open arms without any suspicion or hatred. However, this is not the case when Asogba, the prince lands into England. He is sent into jail as soon as he arrives. Ironically, from there he comes back to Shavi with hatred
and lust that germinated after experiencing England’s discrimination and injustice targeted towards him. And later, Asogba’s pride and greed almost destroys Shavi completely until he comes back to his senses after the huge losses of life and property due to drought, famine and war. His drastic change is clearly noticeable as “[he]He exchanged more impersonal greetings with many of his old friends, shaking their hands instead of embracing them” and later, “he warns abruptly by firing a gun, “No one should talk to the albinos … Anyone, I repeat, anyone found talking with any of them will receive this” (Emecheta 1989: 161).

But luckily, women manage to overcome and overlook the shallow and dark views of men. Shoshovi is not that bitter like the men with pride even after going through hell. She says:

You allowed the albino people who came begging for help to know our strength, and then allowed them to rape us, to take all we had and all that made us a people. It is now for you to find a place for the New Shavi. This is your duty. Posterity will forgive you if you do so, but if you allow shame and sorrow to kill you, the future kriors will forever sing your damnation. We have been raped once, don’t let us be raped twice. (186)

Likewise, Billie Delia has much insight of the crack within Ruby unlike the rigid men with pride. To quote her,

Other than the damage being done to her palms, the wait Reverend Misner was forcing on everybody did not bother or surprise her. It was just one more piece of foolishness that made up this foolish wedding that everybody thought was a cease-fire. But the war was not between the Morgans, the Fleetwoods and those who sided
with either ... But to Billie Delia the real battle was not about infant life or a bride’s reputation but about disobedience, which meant, of course, the stallions were fighting about who controlled the mares and their fowls. Senior Pulliam had scripture and history on his side. Misner had scripture and the future on his. Now, she supposed, he was making the world wait until it understood his position. (Morrison 1999: 149-50)

Her observations are further supported by Richard Misner’s own observations and findings of Ruby’s decay and rigidity as an outsider. To quote him:

What was it about this town, these people, that enraged him? They were different from other communities in only a couple of ways: beauty and isolation. All of them were handsome, some exceptionally so. Except for three or four, they were coal black, athletic, with non-committal eyes. All of them maintained an icy suspicion of outsiders. Otherwise they were like all small black communities: protective, God-loving, thrifty but not miserly. They saved and spent; liked money in the bank and nice things too. When he arrived he thought their flaws were normal; their disagreement ordinary. They were pleased by the accomplishments of their neighbors and their mockery of the lazy and the loose was full of laughter. Or used to be. Now, it seemed, the glacial wariness they once confined to strangers more and more was directed towards each other. (160-1)

In fact, Patricia’s recording in her diary regarding the impact of racism upon the existing Ruby gives a finality of its doom due to its own people’s
narrow-mindedness and rigidity that they glorify and practice with much pride.

To quote the deep-rooted racism in Ruby:

This time the clarity was clear: for ten generations they had believed the division they fought to close was free against slave and rich against poor. Usually, but not always, white against black. Now they saw a new separation: light-skinned against black. Oh, they knew there was a difference in the minds of whites, but it had not struck them before that it was of consequence, serious consequence, to Negro themselves. Serious enough that their daughters would be shunned as brides; their sons chose last; that colored men would be embarrassed to be seen socially with their sisters. The sign of racial purity they had taken for granted had become a stain. The scattering that alarmed Zechariah because he believed it would deplete them was now an even more dangerous level of evil, for if they broke apart and were devalued by the impure, then, certain as death, those ten generations would disturb their children’s peace throughout eternity. (194)

However, Ruby women’s practiced wisdom for survival as opposed to the men’s pride since the starting journey of Ruby’s quest. The following lines aptly describe it:

The one established when the Mississippi flock noticed and remembered that the Disallowing came from fair-skinned colored men. ... Gave them food and blankets; took up a collection for them; but were unmoving in their refusal to let the 8-rocks stay longer than a night’s rest. The story went that Zechariah Morgan and Drum Blackhorse forbade the women to eat the food ... But Soan said her grandmother, Celeste Blackhorse, sneaked back and got the food (but not the money), secretly passing it to her sister Sally Blackhorse, to Billy Cato and Praise Compton, to distribute to the children. (195)
Unfortunately, the first victim of the pride of Ruby men is Patricia’s mother. She died during child-birth despite helps from the women of Ruby. The reason is astounding. Patricia recalls the history of her death as she collects and records Ruby’s story:

The women really tried, mama. They really did. Kate’s mother, Catherine Jury, ... and Fairy DuPres ... along with Lone and Dovey Morgan and Charity Flood. But none of them could drive then. You must have believed that deep down they hated you, but not all of them, maybe none of them, because they begged the men to go to the Convent to get help ... Even with their wives begging they came up with excuses because they looked down on you, Mama, I know it, and despised Daddy for marrying a wife of racial tampering. Both midwives were in trouble (it was coming too soon, legs folded underneath) and all they wanted was to get one of the nuns at the convent. Miss Fairy said one of them used to work in a hospital ... Finally they got Senior Pulliam to agree. But by the time he got his shoes tied it was too late. Miss Fairy rushed from your bedside to Pulliam’s house and hollered through his door – too exhausted to knock, too angry to step inside – and said, ‘You can take your shoes back off, Senior! Might as well get your preacher clothes ready so you’ll be in time for the funeral!’ Then she was gone from there. (197-8)

In *Rape of Shavi*, the various clashes between father-son and personal pride and elderly wisdom help determine the symbolic doom that awaited Shavi. For instance, the father, King Patayon’s affection is not that appealing to Asogba for there was no other way he could stop his son.

The people of Shavi would resort to physical means of persuasion only as a last resort … So, other than ordering his own son killed, there was
no way of getting him to obey. He would leave him to his conscience which would surely prick him as to whether it was right to question a King’s authority. But Asogba’s conscience worked differently … He was beginning to have had enough of this man, who thought his father, was nonetheless so slow, and who because of his younger wives took a kind of negative pleasure in humiliating his mother. (Emecheta 1983: 22-3)

In Paradise, the Convent incidence is dark in nature. So various versions emerge in favor of the people, the speaker was trying to defend. But Patricia recognizes all these versions and yet her wisdom helps her to save a version of her own which is true to the actual incident without any additional personal interest. The following lengthy narration is a solid proof:

Pat gave him [Reverend Richard] the two editions of the official story: One, that nine men had gone to talk to and persuade the Convent women to leave or mend their ways; there had been a fight; the women took other shapes and disappeared into thin air. And two (the Fleetwood-Jury version), that five men had gone to evict the women; that four others – authors – had gone to restrain or stop them; these four were attacked by the women but had succeeded in driving them out, and they took off in their Cadillac; but unfortunately, some of the five had lost their heads and killed the old woman, Pat left Richard to choose for himself which rendition he preferred. What she withheld from him was her own: that nine 8-rocks murdered five harmless women (a) because the women were impure (not 8-rock); (b) because the women were unholy (fornicators at the least, abortionists at most); and (c) because they could – which was what being an 8-rock meant to them and was also what the “deal” required. (Morrison 1999: 296-9)
Lone is also another woman of Ruby who is much aware of the changes, false history and pride that Ruby symbolized. To quote her:

As for Lone, she became unhinged by the way the story was being retold; how people were changing it to make themselves look good … Since they were accusing her of lying, she decided to keep quiet and watch the hand of God work the disbelievers and the false witnesses … One thing, for sure: they could see the Oven; they couldn't misread or misspeak that, so they had better hurry up and fix its slide before it was too late – which it might already be, for the young people had changed its words again. No longer were they calling themselves Be the Furrow of His Brow. The graffiti on the hood of the Oven now was “We Are the Furrow of His Brow.” (297-8)

On the other hand, in Rape of Shavi, Ronje as a character represents the racist colonizer who is also sexist. And his perception of black is lowly and dehumanizing towards Shavi people. To quote him:

Now he thought he must have been raving mad. How could he have married a girl who only knew how to fetch water, sweep compounds and had few words, apart from her smiles and her ‘Mesieres’? He would have left her behind, of course, when they managed to repair the Newark. There had been cases like that in many parts of the world, like West Africa, Vietnam and even the Pacific Islands, where there are many pale skinned people whose fathers were Europeans …

... Ronje didn’t think that someone like Ayonko could have the dignity not to want him. She was a black girl from the desert, an object of use for any white male wanderer. He had only done what generations of his race had done before. (Emecheta 1989: 114-5)
In fact, with this stubborn attitude of a racist, Ronje rapes the innocent Ayoko, who symbolizes Shavi as she is the future Queen of Shavi. In another sense, it was an act to boost his ego against his ex-wife who was with a black man and pregnant. But Ayoko has the wisdom to consult her mother, Siegbo. To quote her:

She walked straight to her mother’s house, for this problem was one that was beyond her and she suspected that, despite all her father’s authority, this was a problem that would be beyond him as well. In cases of this kind, women should stick together. She went to her mother, to cry at her breast, the breast that had given her life. (103)

Later Shoshovi represents all the women of Ruby when she declares the decision to punish Ronje for his evil deed. But the logic behind their war enveloped with insight and wisdom unlike the pride and greed of men’s war. She declares:

We don’t kill humans in Shavi, but we do sometimes kill animals for sacrifice to Ogene, or for food. And you know my friend that animals, once they have tasted something they think is good, will always come back for more, and if they fail to get it, they wander around snatching their pleasures anywhere. It’s Ayoko today, tomorrow maybe it’ll be my daughter, the princess Ama. I’m glad you haven’t told any of the men. You’re right, we must purify our land. This is our war.’ (107)

The type of punishment is also equally justified with logic. To quote the verdict:

Ronje didn’t reckon with the force of the women of Shavi, Shoshovi, Siegbo, Iyalode and the older palace queens, who had all gone to the Ogene lakes to make a pact to silence. A dog that bit a human must be
There was only one concession – if Ronje did not appear on the same spot within the next seven days, they would know that he had repented. Then they would meet again and think of their next strategy. Meanwhile, Shoshovi urged everybody to bring their fishing nets. (115)

In *Paradise* also there arise clashes in various values of Ruby after the convent incident. The clash between old and new thoughts and beliefs is quite prominent. However, it has distinctive attacks and counter-attacks targeted to one another in order to defend self from the blame of the violence. In fact, “The Morgan twins Deek-Steward and their respective families are also set apart after the incident” (292). To quote the changes in Deacon Morgan:

> It was Deacon Morgan who had changed the most. It was as though he had looked at his brother’s face and did not like himself anymore. To everyone’s surprise he had formed a friendship (well, a relationship anyway) with someone other than Steward, the cause, reason and basis of which were a mystery. Richard Misner wasn’t talking, so all anyone knew of certain was the barefoot walk that took place in public. (Morrison 1999: 300)

However, there was a core lesson that everyone had missed out for generations about Big Papa. It is suddenly discovered by Deacon in these lines:

> “I always thought Coffee – big Papa – was wrong,” said Deacon Morgan. “Wrong in what he did to his brother ...Now I am less sure. I’m thinking Coffee was right because he saw something in Tea that wasn’t just going along with some drunken whiteboys ... The way his brother thought about things; the choices he made when up against it ... Not because he was ashamed of his twin, but because the shame was in himself. It scared him. So he went off and never spoke to his brother again. (303)
In *Rape of Shavi* the valuable lesson of logic comes with a heavy price tag. Drought, famine and war killed majority of the people when Asogba’s greedy conquest for more land became uncontrollable. Iyalode, the priestess’s voice resounds the tragic truth as she declares:

> The drought killed many, and the people of Ongar killed the rest by taunting them and telling of your ‘desert conquests’. This killed all of the thinking men. You know that with them shame kills very fast. The talking men are still around, living and hiding behind the Shavi hills. You took all the men of action with you so we have very few men left.
>
> (Emecheta 1989: 185)

Next, there come the words of wisdom for survival and development in the words of the Queen Mother, Shoshovi, where old women represented wisdom as opposed to the new generation’s greed and violence. Peace returns only after paying a heavy price of much destruction caused by Asogba’s youthful greed and violence. To quote her:

> Asogba, my son, you’ll have to start all over again. You’ve been foolish. You tampered with the peaceful life we had and now we’ve lost all our men, our way of life and our privacy. We have to start all over again. There are no more than fifty men in the whole of Shavi, but we have at least kept all the young children alive. Your duty now, Asogba, son of Shavi, is to help us survive” (186).

And she further adds:

> You allowed the albino people who came begging for help to know our strength, and then allowed them to rape us, to take all we had and all that made us a people. It is now for you to find a place for the New Shavi. This is your duty. Posterity will forgive you if you do so, but if
you allow shame and sorrow to kill you, the future kriors will forever sing your damnation. We have been raped once, don't let us be raped twice. (186)

Thus, this chapter concludes with the point that the identities of black women are inseparable both as individuals and part of the community. Their individuality bakes the community bond’s unique characteristics of self-reliance and nurturing touch. On the other hand, the community also protects and preserves the individual survival along with the community values. The following chapter will deal with the three important social roles of black women as a girl child, a wife, and a mother respectively.
NOTES

1 Toni Morrison, *Jazz*, (New York: Plume, 1993)

2 Buchi Emecheta, *Destination Biafra*, (Glasgow: Fontana, 1983)


4 Probita Mukherjee Sahukar, “‘There she is’: Reconnoitering the Miasmic Leanings of Joe Trace in Toni Morrison’s *Jazz,*” *Journal of Literature, Culture and Media Studies*, 1.2 (2009) p. 177.


7 Preeti Choudhary, *op.cit.*, p. 70.


