Chapter 4: Human Identity in the works of Black Writers

It is the crucial theme in the works of black writers. This thesis aims to know the black identities in African American and contemporary novels written by Alice Walker. Other black writers belong to different traditions and generations, the black identities generated by them in their writings are completely different. As a Black tradition Nationalist Walker picks up the issue of identity in her novels and portrays the hardship of lives of black African American. She extols black Identity and keeps belief in an organic, Pan-African view of the identity. She shuts out white perspectives from her novels and the black identity built by Alice Walker is 'oppositional' to the white dominant tradition and culture.¹

The chapter of this thesis tries to explore Walker’s elements black’s heritage and culture respectively, and shows how Walker constructs a positive black identity in all of her novels. Unlike Walker, Toni Morrison, Afro-Caribbean writer Caryl Phillips estimates the black identity politics in today’s multicultural society. As a young black writer, Phillips is concerned with the concept of in between and he addresses the themes of multiculturalism’ and ‘hybridity’ in his novels. He also uses white perspectives in the construction of black identity.² That is why the black identity built in his work is 'concern' to the white. In some sort, the discussion in this chapter helps to identify the changes in the opinion of black identity over the last twenty years. Similarly James Baldwin, Langston Hughes, Ralph Ellison, Richard Wright, Zora Neale Hurston throw light on human identity. His novel Go Tell It on the Mountain is an explorative explanation of how people try to perceive their proficiencies.
This first novel of Baldwin illumines one's historical conscience and perception. The significance of this novel is to reveal how significant a sense of self is to the construction of identity. This novel concentrates on the historical, ancestral communication of a fourteen year old boy. Experience is something each of the expository characters strives with Experience. By the way of fiction, James Baldwin generated a sense of past that is crucial to a consistent sense of identity.

In revealing how James Baldwin's apprehension of identity is initiated through this novel, an illustration for why Go Tell It on the Mountain is his one of the most important works shall also be evolved. The characters experience a sense of shame in thoughts regarding their history. The significant form of the novel is every title character's interpretation of his or her felt experience.

In fiction, Go Tell It on the Mountain, everyone felt that John would be a preacher. Nevertheless, he even did not this idea any thought till he woke up that morning in May. He had remained present to the service, but the splendid feeling and realbelief was absent there. His was existing bodily there but still he did not attain an identity. In his work one can candidly identifies James Baldwin with John in that Baldwin who there is no doubt that the feeling he had sought in himself, thus changing his doubts and fears into pleasurable satisfaction. John finds that presence of the preacher's belief through their glowing, sacred looks.

Nevertheless, yet that feeling he does not experience and thus Does not accept it. John is always trying to watch and to seek and to look for but still John does continue to search and to watch and to seek in the eyes of saints for that the hour when the prognostication of the members of the church would be realized. Baldwin stress on John's watching to show of John's aspiring on the stage, for via aspiring, one eventually
achieves. Related to John’s quest for identity is the idea of John’s adopting an identity distinguish from his father’s. He wanted a distinguish kind of life,a different identity from predecessors. He would not be like his father, or his grandfather He would have another lifea cosmos not of the darkness and negligence of his father’s with James With his sense of a requirement for perceiving himself, John cries in a floodof tears to himself, what shall I do? What shall I do from the usual aspect of his day he wants to escape from the customary appearance of his day, to be recognized as somebody different to do things differently and a person other than John Grimes in the dirty streets of Harlem.\(^6\)

His mother’s birthday gift in the form of money, John tries to escapefrom the Harlem’s ghetto of to the downtown area of New York. He observes straight skyscrapers which are very tall, touching to the sky and tries to relatehimself to the tall and luxuriant buildings.\(^6\)It is idealizing a world of power in which he is the age of fourteen accepted without question. He is the mighty hero but. Still Baldwin’s imaginary ideas come into reality very soon and to that, narrow way which he must adopt in Harlem. While John wants to identify himself at the top of the hill with something great, large, adverse in his life his surrounding in where many times he underestimated by his father. He understands fully that he wishes to collaborate himself and to identify himself withsomething greater than he, but he does not actually understand and know what.\(^7\)

Throughout the despair and discontents of John’s life comeMore dissatisfactions created by his family’s disorder and nonstop quarreling.Gabriel Grimes, John’s father, cannot totally accept the bastard Johnas his son, thus augmenting John’s desire to really know him to have an identity with someone or something.Discontent is also prevalentin other members of the family dissension exists between Florence,Gabriel’s sister who lives with his family, and John; there is dissensionbetween
Gabriel and his wife, Elizabeth; there is dissension between Gabriel and his children, particularly John, who is not actually his child, and Gabriel.

The basis for many of the arguments result from Gabriel’s biased and impatient feelings toward and ill treatment of John. Yet through all of these disagreements and dissensions within this family, subtle and overt criticism of his family or himself emerges in the end John’s acknowledgement of who he is. Dr. Wallace Groves of San Fernando Valley State College argues that religious conversion stands for Baldwin’s feeling of moral energy as an artist which will give him the power to go tell his story on a mountain. John had found himself and prepared himself to aid others in finding themselves fulfilling the ideals of some of the persons at church and school that John would be a leader of his people. Although John receives only his religious identity by the end of the book, it is implied that John will be a leader in his church to counteract the hypocritical actions of his father.

On the other hand, intimate interaction between the black and white cultures for a long period influenced the culture of America. For instance, Jazz is now recognized as American music. Thus, African culture has significantly contributed to the culture of America.

Secondly, the black writers have always strove to establish cultural linkages with their African past, and thus to make their culture perfect to prevail for themselves and for the mankind. Matthew Arnold in his essay Culture and Anarchy rightly observes that the great aim of culture is the aim of setting ourselves to ascertain what perfection is, and to make it prevail. Black writers have promptly endeavored to make their culture prevail. They have done this by creating the images of their ancestors through their literature. As we know, the ancestors are the vehicles of culture transmission in any race. Therefore, the
black writers prominently present the images of the ancestors through their writings.

Morrison’s statement is perfectly true in respect of her fiction. Her novels are replete with ancestral figures- the sort of timeless people.\(^4\) For instance, Pilate is the ancestor in Song of Solomon. Similarly, she is a connecting link between Milkman, the protagonist of the novel, and his ancestors.

Precisely, Pilate’s personality shows a clear impact of her ancestors, which further transmits to Milkman. In short, ancestors instruct, protect, and provide wisdom to the characters through their experiences. Therefore they can neither be ignored nor be omitted from the writings. In this context, Morrison rightly suggests: When you kill the ancestor you kill yourself.

Thus, the role of an ancestor is very important, because he is a culture bearer. It is he, who hands over the culture of the past to the future generations. Even in Morrison’s case, we may observe that she had a very rich family heritage. Her mother, Ramah, was a religious woman. She loved singing. Her grandfather also took delight in playing violin. Thus, her house was suffused with folk music. Similarly, Morrison received the knowledge of folklore, myths, rituals, and beliefs of the black culture from her ancestors. Her parents were gifted storytellers. All these factors contributed to develop her imagination. Later on, she incorporated all her childhood experiences of the culture in which she grew up in her writing.

Aristotle writes in his treatise on Politics: Man by nature is a political being. The entire history of mankind is full of the stories of his love for power. As we know, the power comes through politics. Unlike other animals, man has a mighty desire to control others. The black African immigrant on the American land was inferior to the white native in respect of race, color, power, intelligence etc. Therefore, his political
exploitation by the whites was obvious. After a marathon chain of sufferings, struggle, dehumanization, and depression came the emancipation. The slavery was abolished, and the American society accepted the Negro as a human being. Nevertheless, the race prejudices remained intact as they were, and the Negro became a political issue.

However, when the Negro population increased, American politicians realized that the Negro vote had become potent. The blacks now have started using their votes to register protest against racial segregation. Racism became a national issue in the twentieth century. Negro leaders like Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. DuBois, and Martin Luther King Jr. etc. led the black race; and fought for their civil rights and racial justice.

On the other hand, almost all the twentieth century black writers echoed the political turmoil of this age. Morrison was one of the pioneers amongst them. Her novels frequently raise the issues of American politics of this period.

Thus, Morrison’s work is unquestionably political, because she explores the black history of dehumanization and degradation at the hands of the whites. Her novels emphasize the political relationships between the two clearly visible groups in the American society—dominated black and dominating white.

In The Bluest Eye (1970) Morrison has prominently dealt with the world of children. The protagonist of the novel, Pecola Breedlove is an eleven-year-old child. She is seen through the eyes of Claudia, another child of the same age, who is also the narrator of the novel. Morrison has skillfully depicted the experiences of black children growing up amid the standards of the larger white society in the 40’s with bitterly distorted and shockingly realistic parent-child relationships among the blacks.
The passage describes an ideal and happy American white family showing the healthy family relations. The novelist has skillfully used the portions from this passage to bring about a contrast between the black and the white families. Specifically, she explores the innocent world of children of the 40's. L.E. Sissman, in this regard rightly observes that she is dealing with children, not men, she is dealing with the 40's, not the present.

Pecola Breedlove, the key character of the novel, is an ill-treated child, whose parents are abusive. Morrison's depiction of Pecola’s relationships with her parents is very bitter and biting. There are two black families in the novel, the Breedloves and the MacTeers. Morrison contrasts the happy and healthy human relationships of the Dick and Jane family with bitter and biting relations in the Breedlove and the MacTeer families.

Where happiness and laughter prevails in the Dick and Jane family, there is hatred and disgust in the surroundings of MacTeers and Breedloves. Where the life is smooth and steady, peaceful and placid for Dick and Jane, it is full of struggle for the later.

Claudia's assertion is indicative of the bitterly distorted parent-child relationships in the black families. The adults in the MacTeer and the Breedlove families struggle for their survival in the stark racial atmosphere of America. May be the racial negativism has created a bitterness in their behaviour, which led them to hate themselves, their children, and the society. Thus, their behaviour might have distorted parent-child relationships in their families.

Even though, Cholly and Pauline are Pecola's real (natural) parents, they are very unkind to her, because she is black and ugly. We read in the fairy tales that stepparents ill-treat a stepchild; but it is ironical when the
natural parents and stepparents exchange their roles. In this respect, let us examine the mother-child relationship in this novel.

Of all the human relationships in the world, mother-child relationship is the most emotionally coloured. A mother is the protector and the savior.

In *The Bluest Eye* Morrison's treatment of mother-child relationship is very complex and complicated. The novel focuses on two prominent mothers – Pauline Breedlove and Mrs. MacTeers. Both are portrayed as black mothers, but with a contrast. Pauline Breedlove is the mother of two children, Pecola and Sammy. Her relationship with her children is without any filial attachment. She lacks the natural affection and love towards her children, which ultimately results into the unhealthy growth of mother-child relations. For a mother when a child calls her 'Mummy' or 'Mom', it is the greatest of all pleasures in the world. However, Pauline's children call her by her name. Maybe it is because of their father Cholly, who calls his wife Mrs. Breedlove. Morrison's narrator describes: Pecola, like Sammy and Cholly, always called her mother Mrs. Breedlove. It is usually seen that children imitate their fathers and elders in this regard. In fact, it indicates the lack of love in this mother-child relationship.\(^\text{12}\)

On the other hand, Pauline's love and all her caring is lavished upon the children of her white mistress. She has been very mean and full of negligence towards her own children. Her meanness is clearly revealed through a scene when Pecola accidentally pulls a blueberry pie from the table burning her leg painfully. Pauline treats her children very harshly, specifically Pecola. Pecola is a hapless girl. Pauline's love and care is only for the child of her white mistress. When she finds the little girl crying, she immediately turns her attention to her and consoles her thus saying: Hush, baby, hush. Come here. Oh Lord, look at your dress. Don't cry no more. Polly will change it. Neglecting her own children and offering care and protection to the children of her white mistress is
perhaps her obligation. She cannot escape it, as it is inevitable for her survival and also her family. She is an honest and sincere servant. As Tausif Sultana says, she exchanges her role of an ideal mother with that of an ideal servant. It is the height of Pauline’s testing time when Pecola is raped by her father Cholly, and when the later becomes pregnant. At this stage, Pauline becomes whimsical without showing her even sympathy: Pauline beats her and restricts her from going to school. Why the parent-child relations are so bitter and unhealthy? As Tausif Sultana remarks, the seeds of her parents’ discontent lie in their own childhood experiences.8 Pauline is the ninth child of her eleven children family. She is a neglected child. Maybe that she is a girl, and that too is the ninth child of the family, so she is ignored by her parents. In addition to being ignored by her parents she has a crooked, archless foot that flopped when she walked. It creates a deformity in her walking. When her mother goes to work outside, she is compelled to run the house, and perform her mother’s duties.13 All this creates an inferiority complex in her. Consequently, she lacks self-worth, and as the narrator describes, her general feelings of separateness and unworthiness she blame[s] on her foot. Since she doesn’t have self-esteem, she is unable to nurture feelings of self-worth in her children. Naturally, her relations with her children become unhealthy and bitter.

On the other hand, the relationship between Mrs. MacTeer and her children, Claudia and Frieda is less bitter. With contrast to Pauline Breedlove, Mrs. MacTeer is a strict but caring mother. One day while collecting coal, Claudia catches cold. When her mother sees her already packed with phlegm, she frowns at her: Great Jesus. Get on in that bed. How many times do I have to tell you to wear something on your head? You must be the biggest fool in this town. She scolds Claudia for not obeying her, but in spite of her angry words, her actions are full of care and affection for her child. Notwithstanding, all her anger and despite is out of her sheer love and affection towards her child. It is evident that
Mrs. MacTeer is a strict but protective mother. Her relations with her children reveal less bitterness than the relationship between Pauline and her children.\textsuperscript{14}

Now let us examine the father-daughter relationship between Cholly and Pecola. A cursory glance at this relation will make anybody dumbfound, because it crosses all limits of the family relationships, society, and ultimately the human relationships. It is the climax of the novel, when poor Pecola, an eleven-year-old black girl, is raped by her drunken father Cholly. Pecola’s rape by her father can be paralleled with Celie’s sexual exploitation by her father Alphonso in Alice Walker’s novel The Color Purple (1982). We can also observe a similar situation in Ellison’s Invisible Man (1952): Like Cholly Breedlove, Ellison’s Trueblood also sexually exploits his daughter Matty Lou.

On one Saturday afternoon, Pecola is all alone in the kitchen, washing dishes leaning over the sink. Cholly comes home drunk. When he looks at his daughter in that position a mixture of emotions surge through him. Under the influence of liquor he rapes his own daughter. Why? Tausif Sultana remarks: No one loves Pecola except her father who expresses his tenderness for her in a distorted manner by raping her.

What is this way of showing love towards one’s own daughter? What kind of this expression of tenderness towards one’s own daughter is? He is not only a drunkard, but a man with full of lust. No doubt what Cholly has done to his own daughter is unpardonable by any standards of life. Being her father he should have given her strength and support to fight against all the odds in the society. However, his relationship with his daughter is utterly distorted and perverted. It may be because of his disillusionment with life that he has no self-esteem. The cause of his lack of self-worth lies in his relationship with his own parents.\textsuperscript{18} The narrator tell us: When Cholly was four days old, his mother wrapped him in two blankets and one newspaper and placed him on a junk heap by the
railroad. Cholly is a forsaken child. Orphanage is imposed upon him by his parents. Being a fatherless child how can he know the duties and responsibilities of a father towards his own daughter?

Toni Morrison’s second novel Sula (1973) delineates the important ways in which black families shape their children’s identities through the complex parent-child relationships. The novel focuses on the black community in Medallion, specifically the Bottom. Sula not only portrays the way children are shaped, but also their effects on the parent-child relationships. At the centre of the novel there is a family of black female characters: Eva Peace, the Matriarch; her daughter, Hannah; and her granddaughter, Sula. Sula is the protagonist of the novel. Her father Rekus dies when she is three years old. She becomes fatherless losing the prerogative of paternal protection and care. Sula’s life is void of any father-daughter relationship. Now, the sole responsibility of taking care of little Sula is saddled upon the shoulders of her mother. However, her mother Hannah is unaware of Sula’s need for emotional nurturance. This affects the mother-daughter relationship between Sula and Hannah, which grows unhealthy, unnurturing and complicated. Toni Morrison explains: Her relationship to her daughter is almost one of uninterest. She would do things for her, but she’s not particularly interested in her. Probably this may be the reason, Sula doesn’t feel love for her mother. Her loneliness and the neglect of her mother turn her into a dreamer who searches her delight into technicoloured visions.¹⁹

After the death of her husband, Hannah sleeps with the husbands of her friends and neighbours. Although she doesn’t form any real relationship with them, she cannot live without the attention of men. Because of these affairs, Hannah neglects her daughter, and thus Sula becomes the daughter of a distant mother.

Thus, she is emotionally isolated. Her emotional isolation from her parents paves the way for her rebellion against the set norms of the black
community. She becomes a rebel. Sula consciously rebels against her family, the community, and a world apparently dominated by men. We can find a revision of Sula’s personality in Paul Marshall’s Selina (Brown Girl, Brownstones (1959)). Like Sula she is also a self-conscious rebel, who alienates herself from her native value system in order to establish her own identity. Anyway, Sula’s rebelliousness is obviously the result of her loveless relationship with her mother.

This directly influences Sula’s relationships with men in her adult life. She also sleeps with the husbands of other women. But there is a difference.

On the other hand, Sula is regarded as an evil by the whole town for she sleeps not only with the husbands of black women but also with the white men. It is perhaps the lack of nurturing parental love and care that has influenced her behaviour. Sula would have behaved differently if she had got ample care and affection from her parents. Her uncanny craziness in the relationship with her mother is exhibited when she witnesses Hannah burn not because she [is] paralyzed, but she [is] interested. What kind of that interest is? Is it the hatred or contempt? Or is it the bizarre strangeness? At the end of the novel, right before Sula dies, she confesses: I stood there watching her burn and was thrilled. I wanted her to keep on dancing. It seems that Sula’s negativity and harshness in her character is because of her uncared and unfortunate relationship with her mother.20

Eva is Sula’s grandmother. She has three children, Hannah, Pearl, and Ralph nicknamed Plum. Eva’s husband BoyBoy has abandoned her when their three children are small, just after five years of a sad and disgruntled marriage. Eva is a dominant mother. She sits in a wagon on the third floor directing the lives of her children. Perhaps her dominance has come out of her desertion by her husband. She accepts the responsibility and challenge to feed and care for her children. She bravely
struggles for the survival of her family through the adversities of poverty. Her relationship with her children appears to be very strong and protective. Even her desertion by her husband doesn’t make her desperate. She is ready to go any extent, and sacrifice to preserve and protect her children. It is evident from one of the incidents. As Patrick Bjork remarks, she valiantly struggles to survive while hand-to-mouth existence. There is a rumor in the black society that Eva has deliberately allowed her leg to stuck under a train, in order to collect insurance money. So that she would be able to provide for her family needs. What one might say is that Eva refuses to become a will-less object of exchange left to die in barren, one-room arrangements of the bottom.\(^{21}\) She is a brave and defiant black woman. In addition, she absolutely refuses to be bound by traditional, middle-class definitions of motherhood. The initial sacrificer, and protective mother-image of Eva gradually disappears, and she comes out with a negative image. The rest of the portrait of Eva as a mother is less positive, revealing a desire to manipulate her children’s lives and the lives of others as well. This, no doubt affects her relationships with her children.

Despite her struggle and attachment, her children are unimpressed and disinterested in her love. Consequently, strong and healthy mother-child relations cannot grow among them. Moreover, she develops complicated relationships with her children. At one hand, she is ready to sacrifice her leg so that her children should not starve, and on the other hand, she acts as a destroyer by killing her son Plum.

Ralph Peace, nicknamed Plum, is Eva’s youngest and best-loved child. He fights in the World War I and returns with a drug addiction. In her relationship with her son, one might observe an incest wish as Eva says, ... he wanted to crawl back in my womb and well ... I ain’t got the room no more even if he could do it. There wasn’t space for him in my womb. So one day she douses him with kerosene and burns him to death.
Tausif Sultana observes Oedipal characteristics in this mother-child relationship. Eva wants him to keep away. She says: I had to keep him out so I just thought of a way he could die like a man not all scrunched up inside my womb, but like a man. Morrison herself comments: She meant it was too painful for her, you know, the way you kill a dog when he breaks his leg because he can't stand the pain. He may very well be able to stand it, but you can't, so that's why you get rid of him. So she gets rid of him by putting him to death.

Another prominent mother-child relationship in this novel is the relationship between Helene Wright and her daughter Nel. In spite of being the daughter of a prostitute, Helene has been successful in becoming a respectful woman in the society. She is an impressive woman ... who won all social battles with presence and a conviction of the legitimacy of her authority. She plays the role of an ideal mother. She is the stereotyped image of the middle-class domesticated housewife and mother. She maintains a strong and healthy mother-child relationship with her daughter. The narrator tells us: Under Helen's hand the girl became obedient and polite. Any enthusiasms that little Nel showed were calmed by the mother until she drove her daughter's imagination underground. Although she suppresses her daughter's imagination, she doesn't discard it entirely, rather, she counsels her daughter to be constantly on guard herself. She is a strict mother having her own code of conduct. Her relationship with her daughter becomes quite healthy and strong. The result of which Nel grows into a worthy daughter who extends her mother's desires. That is, she participates in all female rites in the society such as: marriage, children birth and so on.

Beloved (1987) has at its centre a mother-child relationship put to terrible ordeals born by slavery. This novel is the reflection of a harsh reality of being a black mother. It is based on the true story of a slave woman, Margaret Garner, a Kentucky slave, who has killed her child
because she doesn’t want her to suffer at the hands of the white master, as she herself has suffered in her life. Morrison got this story in a newspaper while editing The Black Book.\textsuperscript{23} It is, as Ayesha Irfan submits, the historical fact that there were black women during slavery that suffocated their babies rather than allow them to be offered up to destruction by slavery.

Sethe is the central figure of the novel. She is the black mother who has killed her daughter in the past. Morrison deliberately employs Sethe’s act of killing her own daughter, to highlight the white atrocities against the blacks and the possible responses to them.

Morrison has portrayed two mother figures in this novel: Sethe - the protagonist of the novel, and Baby Suggs - Sethe’s mother-in-law. This novel is an exquisite expression of the mother-child relationships on the backdrop of slavery. It specifically pictures the predicament of the black mothers forced to be separated from their children. The oppressive cultural and social system does not permit the black mothers to nurture the mother-child relationships reliably.

Sethe and Baby Suggs cannot nurture their children as infants because they are taken from them, so that those black mothers would be free to do slave labour. They are not only separated from their children but from other women also, who could have advised them how to care their children.

Sethe is a strong woman. Her love is thick for her children. But the slave environment doesn’t allow her to be a reliable and nurturing mother herself. She understands the horrors of slavery in its most intimate violations of mother-child relations. She also understands the realities of being treated as an animal. Therefore she is determined that her own children should not endure the treatment she has received at the hands of white slaveholders. She loves her children so deeply that she wouldn’t
draw breath without them. She believes that this world of slave environment is not safe for her children. To her, death seems better than their dehumanization in slavery. Therefore she tries to kill all of her children rather than seeing them grow up in slavery. She plans to take them all to the other side where [her] own ma’am [was]. But she cannot succeed. She can kill only one of her children - a two-year-old daughter, whom she afterwards names Beloved. She desires that they would all be together on the other side, forever. But she is prevented and her other children are saved. As Ashok Mahashabde writes, Sethe’s act was an act of love and courage though it was criminal in the eye of law.

This novel has a unique depiction of mother-child relationship with all eccentricities. As a matter of fact, there is a haunting question. How can a mother kill her own daughter? How can it be a human act? It is understood that in the animal world many animals, sows in particular, are notorious for eating- that is, killing- their offspring when threatened by danger. But Sethe’s act is utterly unjustifiable. Nevertheless, she justifies it saying: Why I did it, How if I hadn’t killed her she would have died and that is something I could not bear to happen to her. Even after killing her daughter she is without repentance. She strongly believes that she [Beloved] had to be safe and she [Sethe] put her where she would be.24 This is the central incident of the novel that lays bare the awful, lingering effects of slavery on black mothers. It also exhibits the delicacy and degeneracy of the mother-child relationship. When Sweet Home plantation is taken over by Schoolteacher, life becomes more wretched for Sethe and her children. They are treated with utmost cruelty, rather reduced to human stock or human cattle. As Fredrick Douglass remarks, White slave holders were gentler to their domestic animals than to their slaves. For Sethe and her children there is nothing in the world more dangerous than a white schoolteacher. She is tired of her miserable position. So she at once decides to run away from the plantation. She sends her three children to Halle’s mother near Kentucky, along with Ella...
and other women on a wagon. At this time Sethe is pregnant. I had milk, she says, I was pregnant with Denver but I had milk for my baby girl.

Sethe’s words reveal her intimate care and concern for her two-year-old daughter Beloved. Her dialogue discloses her unfathomable affection. Every syllable in her speech shows the glimpse of a frantic expectancy to see her children. Here, Morrison has beautifully presented the eagerness and attachment in the mother-child relationship.

The incident of infanticide, as said earlier, is at the backdrop of this novel. But the actual story begins long after this incident. After killing her daughter and having convicted for seven years, Sethe is living in Sweet Home at 124, Bluestone Road with her daughter Denver. Sweet Home is haunted by the ghost of the dead child. Sethe’s two son’s, Howard and Buglar have already run away, for they could not bear the presence of the ghost. It is not only the fear of the baby ghost, but the fright of their own mother also, which makes them run away from home. They are very afraid of their mother. Neither Howard nor Buglar, as Sethe asserts in the novel, would let [her] near them, not even to touch their hair. They know that she [has] missed killing them. Even Denver, who remains with her mother at, is full of fear of her mother. She loves her mother but under obligation, because there is no way. She says: I love my mother but I know she killed one of her own daughters, and tender as she is with me, I’m scared of her because of it. The tenderness of the trust in the mother-child relationship has lost its existence. Denver’s fear is the fear superseding all fears. She says: I want to go to sleep but I know if I do I won’t wake up. So I have to stay awake while she finishes my hair, then I can sleep. Denver’s fear may be the fear of death and that too comes from her mother. Is it not the worst possible psychological damage of slavery to the mother-child relationship? However, at the end of the novel Denver’s all fears evaporate. Her views of her mother change. She realizes her mother’s self.
Denver, who has tense and fearful relations with her mother at the outset of the novel, now at the conclusion is full of pity, compassion and care for her. We see that the job she [has] started out with, protecting Beloved from Sethe, changed to protecting her mother from Beloved.

On the other hand, Sethe's love for her children is very ardent, intrinsic and full of care. Sethe's care and concern for her children are quite explanatory of a strong mother-child relationship on her part. But at the same time, as G. Lakshminarasaih remarks, social situation has caused psychological injury to her and her behaviour is shaped accordingly. Since Sethe is powerless to resist her white masters, she would have found the only psychological way of retaliating indirectly against the wrong done by the White slavers. In this view, where is the other way left for her unnatural, drastic behaviour except to kill her child?26

The roots of Sethe's unfortunate relationship with her children perhaps underlie in her own mother's inability to care for her. As an infant Sethe does not receive any care from her mother. This hurts her severely. Slave environment does not allow her mother to look after her child. Sethe, as a child is separated from her mother. She sees her mother only a few times in her life. Therefore she has only a few bits of memory of her mother. She says that she never knew [her] mother ... but [she] saw her a couple of times. As an adult Sethe understands the pitifully painful relationship with her mother. She also understands that slavery does not permit her to be nurtured.27 Admittedly; Sethe's relationship with her children is the response to her own mother's abandonment by wanting to be a reliable and nurturing mother herself.

Baby Suggs is the mother of Halle and the mother-in-law of Sethe. Black and white people sneer at her for she has eight children with different men. Morrison has portrayed a battered and tattered mother-child relationship between Baby Suggs and her children. She lives sixty
years in slavery, and loses her eight children to it. She accepts the dreadful truth, and tries to stop loving her children. But that is impossible. Her relationship with her children is tinted with uncertainty and indetermination. Her eight children are taken away from her.\textsuperscript{28} She has no permanent relation with any one in her life. She simply gives birth to them and serves as a breeding slave woman. She is never allowed to nurture them for a long time.

Halle is an exception. He remains with her for a long time and proves himself to be a worthy and dutiful son. As soon as grown up, he becomes aware of the physical deformity in her body. She decides to purchase her freedom to emancipate her from slavery.

Halle is the one person who has done something hard for her: ...gave her his work, his life. Through Halle, Morrison describes the cares and concerns, duties and moral responsibilities of a grown up son towards his parents. May be he believes in the preaching of the Bible through the teaching of his own mother: Honour thy mother and father that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. Thus, this mother-child relationship embodies faith, duty, affection, love, care and compassion.\textsuperscript{29}

Toni Morrison's most important novel, Song of Solomon (1977) is the exposition of a journey towards the discovery of a complex and hitherto unknown human relationships in a black family. Moreover, as Joyce Ann calls it, it is the protagonist's search for his domestic roots. Milkman's adventures of exploring his relationships with the past can be compard with the numerous adventures of a nameless hero in Ralph Ellison's Novel Invisible Man (1952). Song of Solomon is the saga of a black family: Macon Dead Jr., Ruth Foster his wife, their children Magdalene called Lena, First Corinthians and Macon Dead III (nicknamed as Milkman), Pilate, Macon Dead's sister, her daughter Reba, and granddaughter Hagar. The parent-child relationship in this novel is
suffered from egotism and self-centeredness. Milkman is the protagonist of the novel. He is born into the noble lineage of a prominent black doctor and a wealthy landowner. Ruth Foster, the daughter of Dr. Foster, is Milkman’s mother and Macon Dead II, a wealthy landowner is his father. The novel opens with a theme of imagination and sets up the tense, dry and loveless relationship between Milkman and his parents. The scene begins with Mr. Smith’s attempt to fly from the top of Mercy Hospital. Through the death of Mr. Smith, Morrison explores Milkman’s vision of the world as a child.

Milkman finds life dull and uninteresting. His relationship with his parents becomes dry and affectionless. He grows into an egotistical and selfish young man. Milkman lacks consideration and compassion for others. He feels alienated from his family. May be the absence of filial attachment in Milkman’s family is because of his father’s behavior.

Macon is a wealthy, black, property owner in the city. But he is very greedy and obsessed with money and power. In other words, he is a black capitalist and his house is a black capitalist clutter. It is obvious that Macon’s greed and acquisitiveness has an immutable influence on the parent-child relationship in his family.  

Milkman’s relationship with his father is loveless and far from any sensitivity. His father has more attachment toward money and power than toward his children.

Macon’s indifference and insensitivity contaminates his relationship with his children. Being a very stern and possessive father he doesn’t want Milkman to be influenced by Pilate’s unhealthy/unmaterialistic ways. So, he warns him: Just listen to what I say. That woman’s no good. She’s a snake, and can charm you like a snake, but, still a snake. He is talking about his own sister, the one he has carried in his childhood, in his own arms to the fields every morning. The reason of his hatred for his sister is the gold which they discover in a cave. Macon believes that Pilate has
taken it. He is certain that she has the gold. Although, he has been like a father to her for the first 12 years of her life, as a result, he did his best to hate her for the next 30 years. Similarly, he wants his son to hate her. He instructs, rather orders Milkman to stay away from Pilate.

Macon has infinitely worst relationship with his wife, Ruth. Naturally he wants his son to behave with her in the same manner. Milkman acts accordingly. So, when his father tells him about Ruth, he joins him in despising her. However, he feels put upon ... as though some burden has been given to him and that he doesn’t deserve it. Afterwards, when he discovers the truth, instead of appreciating his father’s confidence, Milkman is irked because he has been burdened with all that heavy crap about his mother.

Normally children imitate their fathers, but Milkman doesn’t. His relationship with his father is void of a natural instinct to imitate the parents. He is confident enough to establish his own identity. His determination can be clearly understood when he tells Guitar, I just know that I want to live my own life. I don’t want to be my old man’s office boy no more. And as long as I’m in this place I will be.

Had Macon been an ideal father, he would have appreciated his son. But he tries to persuade Milkman saying: I need you here, Macon. If you were going to go, you should have gone five years ago. Now I have come to depend on you. But Milkman does not stop. It is the sad and selfish relationship with his father that makes him to go ahead and find his own identity.

On the other hand, Milkman’s relationship with his mother is sympathetic. However, it is not the natural love. The narrator informs us: He had never loved his mother, but had always known that she had loved him ... Her confirmed, eternal love of him, love that he didn’t even have to earn or deserve, and seemed to him natural. And now it was decomposing. He knows that his mother [has] starved for a closeness
and affection that she cannot find in the tyrannical and sexually unavailable Macon. Therefore she has nursed him well past infancy.\textsuperscript{34} His nickname ‘Milkman’ is the mark of their unusually prolonged symbiotic attachment. When his father tells him about his mother’s illicit relationship with her father; he begins to hate her. More he thinks about her behavior, more he is disturbed.

More he thinks more he becomes convinced of her misbehavior. Consequently, there grows an admixture of sadness, anger, hatred and disgust in his relationship with his mother. Morrison’s narrator tells us: His mother had been portrayed not as a mother who simply adored her only son, but as an obscene child playing dirty games with whatever male was near - be it her father or her son. Now he is convinced of his father’s detest for his mother. He believes it true, what his father has told him. He is sure that she is a silly, selfish, queer, faintly obscene woman. He begins to feel abused. His relations with his mother become loveless and alienated. Afterwards he realizes that this is all the result of his parents’ loveless marriage.\textsuperscript{36} His father has justified his hatred towards Ruth in his distorted way. Milkman is shocked when he hears from his mother that his father has tried to kill him. His mother tells him: I know he never told you that he killed my father and that he tried to kill you. Because both of you took my attention away from him.

Milkman’s relationships with his parents become bitter and biting because of their damaged psyches. Both of them try to overwhelm him. He is full of disgust.

Karen Carmean rightly remarks: Milkman runs from becoming saddled with his parents conflict. As a matter of fact, this is a kind of emotional burden upon him. It is quite natural that he hates the acridness in his mother’s and father’s relationship, the conviction of righteousness they each [hold] on to with both hands. Resentful of this emotional burden, as Carmean observes, he sees himself as his parents’
undeserving victim until, discovering the importance of human relationships.

Ruth’s relationship with her father Dr. Foster is unnatural extending beyond his father’s natural life. It is even incestuous, for at the age of sixteen, she still insists on having him come to her at night, sit on her bed, exchange a few pleasantries, and plant a kiss on her lips. She adores her father not because she thinks he is perfect, but because he is the only person in the world who cares about her existence, how she dresses, how she is educated, and whom she marries. Father-daughter relationship between Ruth and Dr. Foster is evidently complex and uncanny. If this relationship really has something illicit in it, it is still a question?

The reason may be anything, but it is evident that Dr. Foster has an infatuation for his daughter. There is certainly a rise of extravagant passion in this father-daughter relationship. Ellmann and Feidelson rightly suggest: frequently the parents themselves exert a decisive influence upon the awakening of the Oedipus Complex in a child, by themselves following the sex attraction.45 In the light of the above statement, it is observed that the mother-son relationship (Ruth and Milkman) in this novel involves Oedipus Complex, whereas the father-daughter relationship between Ruth and Dr. Foster leads to the Electra Complex.37

Tar Baby claims a very special place among Toni Morrison’s novels for the exposition of its frail and fragile human relationships. This novel is suffused with a spectrum of tense and passionate emotions underlying the relationships between black men and women, white men and women, and black and white people. The analysis of the parent-child relationship in this novel reveals the horrifying history of mother-child relationship between Margaret Street and her son Michael.

Margaret Street, the principal beauty of Maine, is the wife of a cultivated millionaire Valerian Street. He is twenty years older than
Margaret. Valerian, now retired, lives with his pretty, young, ex-beauty queen wife in his mansion on a Carribean island. Michael is the only son of this white landlord couple. However, he stays away from his parents. Valerian Street's house, L'Arbe de la Croix is like a paradise. However, it is the sorrow of the husband and wife that their only son doesn't share this paradise. Why does the Son of the Streets keep himself away from his family? Why his relationship with his parents is grudgingly gruesome? In fact, the reasons underlie in the bestial behavior of his parents. Michael’s unconcerned relationship with his parents is doubtlessly the outcome of their treatment with him.\(^{38}\)

Valerian Street is a wealthy whimsical ruler, who refuses to see Margaret and Michael as other than his creations.\(^{48}\) In addition to this, his merciless mocking of Margaret compels her to behave stupidly. In this regard Patrick Bjork differs in his view. He writes that his (Valerian’s) demonstration of control appears innocuous and idyllic. How can it be accepted? Is it not Valerian’s unreasonable and unnecessary control over the lives of his family members leading them to estrangement? Margaret and Michael’s behaviours are nothing but their reactions to Valerian’s treatment of them. It becomes clear when, Ondine, a servant of the Streets, discloses that Margaret has tortured her son merely for fun, when he was a child. Ondine tells us that Margaret has stuck pins in his behind. Burned him with cigarettes. What Margaret has done to Michael is no doubt queer and cruel. However, the close examination of this parent-child relationship reveals that it is Valerian’s whimsicality that is responsible for her uncanny behaviour. Significantly enough, Karen Carmean rightly remarks, her sick action was ultimately directed at Valerian. It seems that Valerian’s considering his wife and his son as his belonging estranges them from him. It consequently results into the wreck of relationships in the Street family that leads Michael towards alienation. It is not that Margaret is innocent, rather she is made a scapegoat. For her part, she doesn't hold the whole blame. A close examination of the
relationship between Margaret and Valerian makes it clear that Valerian has married her to produce a beautiful male heir for the Street family. And she has done that appropriately by giving birth to Michael. Isn’t it the whim of a millionaire? Had he been poor, would he have shown such a capricious behaviour? As a result, this hollowness in the human relationship keeps Michael away from his parents.

Margaret’s maltreatment of her own child is definitely her behaviour dictated by the unfortunate circumstances. Let us observe these circumstances. Margaret is an ignorant, young girl. Valerian, twenty years older than she, is a busy businessman. He has no time for Margaret. Moreover, he forbids her to mix, or talk freely with the servants in the home. She is merely nineteen when she delivers a child. To become a mother in such an immature age, and that too of a child, who makes constant demands on her for continuous attention, is really disturbing. May be the bothersome baby and her own desperate needs to talk with somebody, would have compelled her to torture her child. However, this doesn’t mean that she has no love for her child.

Inspite of this, Margaret’s love for her child is ingrained with frustrations and unfulfilled desires. Therefore, however bad she behaves with her son, as Karen Carmean suggests, Margaret was desperately trying to rebel against the cold control of Valerian. Later on she confesses her helplessness for her cruelty. As a result, mother-son relationship in this novel appears disgracefully disfigured. Furthermore, the parent-child relationship in the Street family is not very hale and hearty. With this in mind, one can evidently understand, why does Michael avoid visiting his family on the occasion of Christmas.

The next major issue of parent-child relationship in Tar Baby is Jadine Childs’ relationship with Ondine and Sydney. Jadine, the black heroine of the novel, is an orphan. She has lost her parents in her early childhood. Sydney and Ondine, her uncle and aunt raise her. Having no
child of their own, they become her surrogate parents. They are faithful black servants of Valerian. Perhaps, it is because of them that Valerian pays for her tuition, while they provide her the rest of the requirements. In this way Jadine is educated at Sorbonne at Valerian’s expenses. Sydney and Ondine provide her their love and parental care. Notwithstanding, the parental bond between Jadine and her surrogate parents cannot grow very strong. It is not that Jadine doesn’t have respect for them; she certainly has: Nandine and Sydney mattered a lot to her but what they thought did not. Jadine conspicuously distances herself from them, because she does not like their thinking. As the novel advances, this distance widens. It is clearer with Therese’s (a character in the novel) observation that Jadine has forgotten her ancient properties. She has even forgotten the hardships that Sydney and Ondine have faced to support her. That is why, perhaps, she constantly reminds Son, he (Valerian) put me through school. Perhaps, it may be because she is educated in France. She grows up in an entirely different culture than her own. As a result, her relationship not only with Sydney and Ondine, but also with her white patron Valerian, is affected by estrangement. In this connection, Bharati Parikh puts her obvious observation: She (Jadine) feels alienated because she embraces white values. It may be that Jadine would have found white values more precious and praiseworthy. Therefore, she has developed a disrespect for her native culture. Consequently, her relationships with her surrogate parents, and her paranoid patrons suffer from alienation.

William Green, nicknamed Son, is yet another pivotal character of Tar Baby. He appears as a fugitive in the novel. His wife has been killed accidentally by him because of her infidelity, and now he is running from the law. He lives in Eloé, a small black town in Florida, with his father and sister. His mother is already dead. Segregated from home, he too is an orphan like Jadine. Although Morrison doesn’t throw much light upon
Son’s parents, the fragmentary information about his family available in the novel is sufficient to reveal his relationships with his parents.

Old man’s reaction is altogether affectionate. Is it not the revelation of the affinity and attachment in the father-son relationship? Anyway, it is evidently enough, to state that Son’s relations with his parents are naturally nourishing.

In Jazz Morrison presents a psychological turmoil in the lives of black people, and its effects on their parent-child relationships. Her characters fight to maintain their originality, and are completely unpredictable. This novel shows chaos of individual relationships. Parent-child relationship in this novel appears to be barren and burdensome. Tangential relationship between a parent and a child is rarely seen in this novel, because most of the characters are abandoned by their parents. We confront the parent-child relations in this novel through the reveries and flashbacks. There is a sizable collection of orphans in the novel. Although, it is well worth noting that none of the orphans have the whole story. Still, Morrison has been successful in depicting the passionate human relationships through the fragments of their lives. In the words of Karen Carmean: Morrison has written about human passion all her life, but never more systematically than in Jazz.41 It is the passion that compels her characters to come up as abandoned children through their complicated black lives. The orphanhood and barren-ness of the parent-child relationship in this novel is probably because of the nation’s being obsessed with skin colour.

Joe Trace is the main character of the novel. He is an orphan. He grows up in Vesper County, Virginia in the Williams’ household. The Williams raise Joe along with six of their own children. Joe tells us: I was
born and raised in Vesper County, Virginia in 1873. Little place called Vienna. Rhoda and Frank Williams took me in right away and raised me along with six of their own.

The Williams are very honest while taking care of Joe and their natural children. They do not differentiate amongst Joe and their children. However, at a certain point Rhoda Williams informs him that he is not their natural child. They have simply raised him. Joe narrates: She never pretended I was her natural child. When she parcelled out chores of favors she’d say, ‘You are just like my own’. When younger Joe asks Rhoda about his real parents she replies: O honey, they disappeared without a trace.

Although Williams are not Joe’s real parents, it is clear that they treat him with great affection. Thus, the relationship between them grows with honesty and authenticity. Joe Trace holds the Williams family in a very high regard, and is grateful for their relationship with him. Mrs. William feels a great attachment for Joe out of which she names him [Joe] Joseph after her father. After Rhoda tells Joe about his parents, he changes his last name as Trace, concluding that he is the trace that his parents have left without. Nevertheless, Joe doesn’t feel the absence of his parents. It may be because of the nourishing love he receives from the Williams. He says: I didn’t miss having a daddy because first off there was Mr. Frank. Steady as a rock, and showed no difference among any of us children.42

Hunter’s Hunter is another parental figure in Joe’s life. Joe identifies him as the best man in Vesper County. Joe’s relationship with him appears like a father-son relation.

Joe is full of reverence and respect for this man for he teaches valuable lessons to him. Joe says: [he] taught me two lessons I lived by
all my life. One was the secret of kindness from white people – they had to pity a thing before they could like it. The other – well, I forgot it.⁴³

He even intimates Joe that his mother is Wild, a wild woman who roams the margins of society. Joe makes three attempts to search her but remains unsuccessful.⁴⁴

Violet is the daughter of Rose Dear and an itinerant father. She later on marries Joe Trace in Virginia. She too is an orphan like Joe. Violet’s father has deserted her family in her childhood. Her family loses all of their belongings on account of the debts of her father.

Violet’s mother Rose Dear is almost desperate. True Belle (Violet’s grandmother) arrives and puts her daughter’s life back together. She rescues the family from poverty. Four years later when Rose Dear is convinced that her children are in safe hands, she commits suicide by jumping into a well. As David Ron puts it, Violet’s mother committed suicide because she couldn’t bear the pressure of trying to support her children....

Violet becomes an orphan because of the death of her mother and her father’s desertion. Although this parent-child relationship is expressed through Violet’s distant and fading memories of her childhood, the barrenness in this relationship can be clearly noticed. Because of the barrenness in the parent-child relationship Violet becomes frustrated. Her frustration is manifested through her act of kidnapping a child, as she is unable to bear one. Is it not then the effect of her orphan status?

Dorcas is one of the central characters of the novel. She too is an orphan like Joe and Violet. Her parents are killed in riots in East St. Louis, Illinois. Poor Dorcas remembers her father: As a matter of fact, he wasn’t even in the riot; he had no weapons, confronted nobody on the street. He was pulled of a streetcar and stomped to death. She also remembers that her house was deliberately set on fire. She recollects
that her mother and her doll collection were trapped inside, and burnt alive. She has the distant and fading memory that her house was [being] torched and she (her mother) [was] burned crispy in its flame.\textsuperscript{45}

The impact of her parents' death is so deep that she becomes almost incautious, indiscreet and independent. May be the absence of parental care has created carelessness in her behavior. Her independence is marked by her relationship with Joe Trace. It is also seen through her love for fast life, vampy clothing, and Jazz.

However, in spite of her efforts, Alice cannot control Dorcas. She makes herself free from her aunt's puritanical ideas. Alice's puritanical attempts to nourish her niece neatly go fail and futile. Dorcas becomes shallow, self-absorbed, obsessed with her looks, clothing, sex. In short, the lack of hale and hearty parental care ruptures Dorcas' innocence, and her orphaned childhood makes her a victim.

Golden Gray is yet another orphan in the novel. He is the son of Vera Louis Gray, the daughter of a white plantation owner in Vesper County. Vera's father colonel Wordsworth Gray has seven mulatto slaves. Vera loves one of them, and becomes impregnated. When her father discovers it, he slaps her, and disowns her. In a sense, the disowned Vera is an orphan. Vera moves to Baltimore with a slave of her choice – True Belle, where she gives birth to a son, and names him as Golden Gray because of his radiant golden skin. Vera is an evasive and sentimental character. She keeps the paternity a secret for eighteen years. Later on True Belle gives him (Golden Gray) necessary information of his father. Golden Gray leaves for Vienna in search of his father.

Then he meets his (presumably) father Henry Lestory. He explains him that Vera Louis never informed him of the pregnancy. He further says: A son ain't what a woman say. A son is what a man do.
Henry doesn’t want him as his son as he is. He tells him, if he intends to live as his son, he would have to accept a self-identity as a black person. On hearing this, Golden Gray’s respect and reverence for his father vaporizes. He becomes angry, although he doesn’t speak or act. Golden Gray was sober now and his sober thought was to blow the man’s head off. Anyway, even though his parents are alive, Golden Gray lives the life of an orphan. He doesn’t receive proper parental protection and proximity in dire need.

Paradise presents the self-contained stories of the human relationships of five women (Mavis, Gigi, Seneca, Consolata and Pallas) at a Convent. In this novel, as appeared earlier in Beloved, Morrison again delineates the destructive power meeting with the passion of parental feelings. Through Mavis Albright, we are once again confronted to the extremity of imbecile and immature mother-child relationship. Once she goes to buy groceries along with her children. She leaves the children in the car and enters the shop. The windows of the car are closed, so the children suffocate and die in the car. Thus, Mavis becomes responsible for the death of her infant twins. This is a very shocking incident of the novel. At the same time, it is hard to believe. How can a mother do it to her own children? Later on she repents, and says that they were to her the only ones who enjoyed her company and weren’t a trial. It may be because she is abused by her demanding husband, and closed in on all sides by unbearable circumstances. Since she herself is a foster-child, there is a vacuum in her life. When she discovers her boy friend in bed with her mother, it is quite natural to be out of her wits. The repercussions of her tortured and tormented life might have compelled her to remain careless towards her children. However, when she realizes, the havoc has already happened. Now, she suffers from the feelings of guilt due to her past actions. As David Ron remarks, she is terrified (even) of her three living children (especially her eleven-year-old daughter Sal).
Mavis’ mother tries to console her reminding her of her other children. She says: You still have children. Children need a mother. I know what you have been through, honey, but you do have other children. However, Mavis is broken because of the irreparable psychological damage she has unwittingly inflicted upon her twin infants. Consequently, it affects her relationships with even her living children. Now, she is unable to provide them mother-love.

Although Mavis has unintentionally killed her infant twins, unlike Sethe of Beloved, she is not seen expressing her emotions emphatically over the loss of her children. In other words, Mavis has very unfortunate mother-child relationships with her children.

Grace (nicknamed as Gigi), and Pallas have the absence of parent-child relations in their lives. We are informed that Gigi’s mother is unlocatable, and her father is on death row. In contrast, Pallas grows up as the only daughter of affluent, divorced parents. The separation of her parents possibly has created emptiness in her life. Similarly, Billie Delia, a young woman, seeks refuge at the Convent after a fight with her mother. Her quarrel is the indication of the loss of her healthy relations with her mother. She has lost all the respect and reverence for her mother. Since she receives the required parental-protection from the Convent women, she feels that it is a place where you can stay for a while. No questions...where you can collect yourself...things through with nothing or nobody bothering you all the time. They’ll take care of you or leave you alone...whichever way you want it.⁴⁸

Consolata, the senior convent woman, is abandoned in the street garbage, as a child and then raised by a white Catholic nun Mary Magna. Though herself a foster-child, Consolata receives proper parental care from Mary Magna. Is it not evident from Consolata’s assertion that Mary Magna is [her] mother (Pds. p.48)? Through Mary Magna she receives all the naturally nourishing mother-care, so she rejects all the blood ties as
inherent to mothering. Therefore, when Mary Magna dies, although Consolata is fifty-four years old, she feels orphaned in a way she was not as a street baby. Unlike other women in the Convent, Consolata enjoys healthy human relationships.\(^{49}\) It may be because of this, she becomes, as David Ron writes, a sort of guru of a spiritual girl scout camp.

Seneca is a twenty-year-old young woman, staying at the Convent. As a child, at the age of five, she has been abandoned by her mother Jean. Poor Seneca, suffering from the absence of parental-protection, helplessly takes refuge at the Convent.\(^{50}\)

Having stayed away from her mother for a considerable length of time, Seneca refuses to identify her mother. May be that she has an anger in her mind for her abandonment. May be that she has hatred for her mother. Mary Conde rightly remarks: Jean has, at this wrenching moment, lost her daughter forever. Anyway, the reasons of Seneca's strange behavior with her mother underlie in her past experiences.\(^{51}\)

Toni Morrison's recently published novel Love shows the glimpses of the parent-child relationship between Bill Cosey (the central figure of the novel), and his son Billy Boy in the flash back. When we are acquainted with Billy Boy, he is already dead. He is the only son of Bill Cosey from his first wife named Julia. It appears that Bill Cosey's relationship with his son might have been very strong and sturdy. Moreover, he might have been on good terms with his son.\(^{52}\) Unfortunately Billy Boy dies of walking pneumonia. But when he is alive, they have very good time. They treat each other more like pals than father and son. Bill Cosey neither interferes in his son's life nor takes the trouble to know him. Even when Billy Boy marries May, he does not resist him. He simply wonders why he picked a woman like May to marry. He thinks that if his son would listen to him he would have made him his shadow, somebody else.

This evidently indicates that the father-son relationship between them would have been healthy enough to make Bill Cosey an ideal father
at least for Billy Boy. Merle Rubin remarks in her review of this novel: He seemed to embody all the qualities people admire in a man.\textsuperscript{53}

Although Bill Cosey appears to be a self-confident, charismatic personality, his relationships meant differently to different people in his life. He may have been a good father for his son, but he is not as good a grandfather for Christine. She is the daughter of Billy Boy and May. Although Bill Cosey provides parental protection to his granddaughter, he lavishes his love upon Heed, his wife of the same age as that of his granddaughter. Who could have stopped him? The narrator tells us that he was the Big Man who, with no one to stop him, could get away with it and anything else he wanted (Lv. p.156). It is no doubt then that Christine hates her grandfather. Bill Cosey's relationship with Christine is settled on this hatred.

Similarly, Romen is the teenage grandson of Sandler and Vida Gibbons. Romen's parents are engaged for military services. Therefore he lives with his grandparents. Romen's relationship with his grandparents is full of love and care.\textsuperscript{54}

Sandler and Vida are very enthusiastic to provide him parental care. Because they believe: Parents idle, children sidle. Romen's grandparents are cautious enough concerning his progress.\textsuperscript{55}

Unlike Romen and Billy Boy, Junior Viviane is an uncared-for teenage girl. There is an absence of parent-child relationship in her life. She asserts: I never knew my daddy ... He was killed in the army. Vietnam ... And my mother didn't care a thing about me (Lv. p.151). Her assertion reveals the lacking of parental proximity in her life. This lack of parent-child relationship might have created in her a longing for her parents. It may be because of this, when she accepts a job, as a secretary to Heed, her emotions to have a father, are aroused.

It is quite natural, because orphanhood is imposed upon her. What else she could do?
The mother-child relationship between May and Christine embraces the swing of the pendulum of emotions. At once May acts as an ideal mother, and then encourages the enmity between Heed and Christine. May is the widow of Billy Boy, the soft-spoken daughter of a preacher. She is brave and hardworking. As Merle Rubin says, she seems to have been a model of efficiency. She helps Bill Cosey, her father-in-law to run the hotel. After the death of her husband, she bravely looks after her daughter. The narrator informs: May was the first mother I saw who weaned her baby at three months. She raises her daughter in such a way so that she would not feel the absence of her father.

Afterwards, she becomes desperate when she finds her father-in-law marry her twelve-year-old daughter’s playmate and put that playmate ahead of everything, including herself, her daughter, and all she ha[s] worked for. Her behavior becomes full of jealousy and hatred for her father-in-law and his teenage wife. This even affects her relationship with her daughter. It is because of her that Heed and Christine, once good childhood friends, become bitter enemies of each other. The narrator asserts: I blame May for the hate she put in them. Even, at the closing of the novel, Christine explains Heed that it was her mother who made them quarrel. She says: Hating you was the only thing my mother liked about me. It is another thing that finally (after the death of May) Heed and Christine manage to break through their fight, and re-establish their friendship and love.
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