CHAPTER - II

GAYL JONES’S EXPLORATION OF THE BLACK FEMININE PSYCHE.

Gayl Jones as a fiction writer is known for her two exceptional novels: Corregidora (1975) and Eva’s Man (1976). Writing in the 1970s she belongs to what Barbara Christian (1985: 179) terms as the “second phase” of African American Women’s fiction writing or the “second renaissance” of African American writing. This phase of early 1970s is marked by the critique of racism and sexism in African American women’s literature. What is unique in the case of Gayl Jones is that though she is writer of astounding merits she has been neglected in the critical panorama for a long time due to some prejudiced and biased views of the contemporary critics.

Madhu Dubey (1994:2) astringently comments:

Gayl Jones’s fiction is conspicuously absent from most black feminist works on the black women’s fictional tradition, including Barbara Christian’s Black Women Novelists, Susan Willis’s Specifying, and Marjorie Pryse and Hortense Spillar’s Conjuring. The critical neglect of Jones is not surprising, for her novels do not conform the ideological aims or the formal predilections of black feminist criticism. Jones’s fiction cannot be absorbed into a tradition impelled, by the struggle against negative stereotypes into a tradition authorized by black folk practices associated with the rural South.

Only Mari Evan’s Black Women Writers has two articles on her.

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Gayl Jones can be considered a rebel in this sense who was not carried away by the inundation of the ideology of positive race images of the Black Nationalist Aesthetics and discourse. She defended her stance very bitterly as the question of stereotypes versus full characterization of black women in the fiction forms, the central concern of early black feminist critics such as Barbara Christian and Mary Helen Washington. It was as if a cleansing and purifying movement having cathartic effects.

Critical reception of Gayl Jones’s two novels, *Corregidora* and *Eva’s Man*, has been ambivalent at best. Sally Robinson (1991:135) also criticizes this aspect in the following words that feminist critics in particular have tended to stay away from these two troubling texts. Hazel Carby in *Reconstructing Womanhood* does not even mention these works in the list at the end of her critical book. Similarly Barbara Christian’s works *Black Women Novelists: The Development of a Tradition*, as pointed earlier omits any mention of Jones. Sally Robinson (1991:135) further comments:

> Written in the 1970s climate of “identity politics” these texts seem to stubbornly defy that context because they work to dismantle the humanist paradigm of singular and definitive identity.

Gayl Jones clarifies her stance in and interview with Claudia Tate about critics’ tendency to “castigate” her, in Tate’s terms for writing “about characters who do not conform to positive images of women or black women.” Jones replies:
I like something Sterling Brown said: you can’t create a significant literature with just creating “plaster of paris saints.” “Positive race images” are fine as long as they are very complex and interesting personalities. (Tate 1983:97)

What she expects is that images may be positive or negative but they must be “complex” and interesting” or in other terms round and not flat.

In an interview essay wit Mari Evans “About My Work” Gayl Jones argues about critical response to Eva’s negative image:

To deal with such a character as Eva becomes problematic. Should a Black Writer ignore such characters, refuse to enter “such territory” because of the “negative image” and because such characters can be misused politically by others; or could we try to reclaim such complex, multidimensional contradictory characters as well as try to reclaim the idea of the ‘heroic image’? (Mari Evans 1984 : 233).

Defending her stand for her use of negative race images Gayl Jones further elaborates her concerns as a fiction writer. But before dealing with that aspect it would be worth noting how critics are not impartial in dealing with Jones. Madhu Dubey (1994:6-7) throws light on it:

Critics tend to canonize Neale Hurston, Alice Walker, and Toni Morrison as exemplary black women novelists and marginalize compelling writers such as Gayl Jones whose fiction renders urban manifestations of oral forms such as blues.

To depict the urban life in oral form i.e. the urban oral literature such as blues has been the specialty of Jones, and that is quite neglected.
Coming back to Jones's literary concerns along with portrayal of black urban women's lives in black urban oral language, she explores the psychology of women characters, human relationship in which she is quite interested. In an interview essay "About My Work" with Mari Evans, Jones argues:

I am interested principally in the psychology of characters-and the way(s) in which they order their stories-their myths, dreams, nightmares, secret worlds, ambiguities, contradictions, ambivalences, memories, imaginations, their "puzzles." For this reason I cannot claim "political compulsions" nor moral compulsions" if by either of these one means certain kinds of restrictions on imaginative territory" or if one means maintaining a literary decorum." I am interested in human relationships, but I do not make moral judgments or political judgments of my character. I am not a didactic writer, characters and readers have the freedom of moral judgment (Mari Evans 1984:233).

Jones take a neutral stance in the sense that she does not want to teach anything or give a message through her writing. She mentions that she has no political "stance" but she is interested sometimes in the relationships between history, society, morality and personality. In an interview with Claudia Tate, Jones (1983:95) reiterates her concerns of being interested in the psychology of women:

"... telling stories that happen to be there ... in relationships that happen to be there ... in relationships between men and women particularly from the viewpoint of a women,
the psychology of women, the psychology of language and personal histories.”

In the same interview she further points of that she is also interested in “abnormal psychology” (96) which can be applicable to both her novels Corregidora and Eva’s Man.

Celvin Hernton writes that when black women writers such and Gayl Jones, Toni Morrison, and Alice Walker raised gender related issues in their fiction, black nationalist critics “accused (d) these women of being Black men haters, bull dykes and perverse lovers of whites men and women” (Dubey 1994:20)

( In 1970s novel emerged as a predominant in black women’s literature. ) Most of the black women’s novels published in this period experiment with the oral folk forms in an attempt to liberate a uniquely black narrative voice. Folk-storytelling devices animate the narrative medium of Alice Walker’s Meridian, and the blues determines the narrative voice and structure of Gayl Jones’s Corregidora.

Gayl Jones is interested in spiritual and psychological realities of the characters that exceed nationality. Her world is ‘abnormal’ and insane’. Keith Byerman (1985:10) comments:

Gayl Jones whose interests in spiritual and psychological realities cause them to exceed the boundaries of realism. She focuses on the non-rational element of human life: madness, sexuality, death. Jones’s narrators border on insanity. Her writing contains gothic elements in the sense that they deal with obsession, violence that has a sexual character, and are grotesque.
Gayl Jones creates bizarre, oppressive worlds. The characters seem abnormal because they fall to adjust to the conventions of the social life. They are seen as insane, grotesque, or perhaps merely a bit “crazy.” Keith Byerman (1985:171-172) explicates, the specialty to Jones’s fiction that it is not only “radical” but also creates most “oppressive” societies. Her fictional world is “beyond realism and ‘insane.’” Byerman comments:

Gayl Jones of all writers, creates the most radical worlds. Not only are the societies depicted the most thoroughly and directly oppressive, but she also denies readers a “sane” narrative through which to judge world and narrator. Most frequently, her narrators have already been judged insane by the society...

Given the irrationality of both narrator and world... Jones’s stories and novels works because they effectively give voice to those who have suffered by structuring the experiences, the texts become blues performances... the world of Ursa Corregidora and Eva Canada, now matter how disordered are the worlds of human experience.

Melvin Dixon points out that the fictional landscape of Gayl Jones’s fiction is the relationship between men and women, full of dishonesty and abuse. Dixon comments:

Jones’s fictional landscape is the relationship between men and women, a field her characters mine with dishonesty, manipulation, and mutual abuse. The battleground is sex and Jones uses the right
sexual vocabulary to strategize the warfare. Afro American language and story-telling tradition are the main sources of Jones’s development (Mari Evans 1984: 237)

Jerry W. Ward observes that same things when he points out that the abuse of women and its psychological results fascinate Gayl Jones. He comments:

The abuse women and its psychological result to magnify the absurdity an obscenity of racism and sexism in everyday life. The novels and short fictions invite readers to explore the interiors of caged personalities, men and women driven to extremes. (Mari Evans 1984 : 249)

Jerry Ward opines that narratives of Ursa Corregidora and Eva Medina Canada intensify the reader’s sense of “terror” in fictions. (246). In an interview with Roseann P. Bell Gayl Jones (1979 : 283) reiterates that her writing has been concerned with the relationship between men and women.

Gayl Jones’s two novels have different terrains. While Corregidora appeared when she was twenty-six and a student. It is a neo-slave blues novel dealing with the four generations of Brazilian slavery in rural Kentucky. Eva’s Man is about a young black woman’s recollection of the events leading up to her confinement in a mental institution. It is a bizarre saga of turmoil and trepidation. Both of her novels extend and enrich the themes in her stories in the collection White Rat (1977). The earlier novel makes the association between
racial and sexual domination that “Asylum” makes, while later expands that story’s interest in madness. As in “The Women” lesbianism is introduced in both the novels. Both Ursa and Eva confront the problem of White Rat: how to achieve a strong sense of identity in a society that devalues individual worth on the basis of race and sex.

(A) *Corregidora* (1975): A Neo-Slave Blues World Song.

Gayl Jones’s first novel *Corregidora* (1975) belongs to the neo-slave narrative tradition like the first African-American woman Nobel Laureate Toni Morrison’s novel *Beloved* (1987) and Sherley Anne William’s novel *Dessa Rose* (1986) quite naturally, therefore it paves that tradition and strengthens it. *Corregidora* has another enchanting dimension of being a blues novel, as the protagonist Ursa Corregidora is a blues singer.

Though Jones’s both the novels were “castigated” for the “negative stereotypes” by the critics and had to suffer neglect from them, she received wide accolade for *Corregidora* from Toni Morrison, her publisher’s editor at Random House. Toni Morrison acclaimed Gayl Jones’s first novel *Corregidora* as a “story that thought the unthinkable”, a radical break in fictional representations of black women:

No novel about any Black Woman could ever be the same after this. *Corregidora* had changed the terms, the definitions of the whole enterprise... Ursa Corregidora is not
possible. Neither is Gayl Jones. But they exist.
(Dubey 1994: 84)

Gayl Jones emphatically dissociates art from politics and so her work intentionally disqualifies from the Black Aesthetic definition of good art. In an interview with Roasean Bell, Jones replied that “it is difficult to say what Corregidora should teach, I don’t start of thinking of writing itself as instructive, nor in the sense of message. (Rossean Bell et. al. 1979:86)

In an interview essay “About my Work “ with Mari Evans., Jones further develops this argument of her detachment with politics:

I think sometime you just have to be “wrong”; there’s lot of imaginative territory that you have to be “wrong” in order to enter. I’m not sure one can be a creative writer and politician - a “good” politician (Mari Evans 1984:235)

When Corregidora was first published, black reviewers castigated its “politically incorrect” presentation of “sexual warfare” in the black community.

Grier and Cobbs, Billingsley and others argue that the contemporary black matriarchy is a legacy of slavery. In Corregidora, the matriarchy constituted by Ursa’s great-grandmother, grandmother, and mother also has its origins in slavery. Bernard W. Bell coined the term “neoslave narrative in The African-American Novel and its Tradition (1987:289). According to Bell neoslave narratives are “residually oral, modern narratives of escape from bondage to freedom.”
Naomi Morgenstern (1996:107) calls the neoslave narratives like *Corregidora* by Gayl Jones, and *Dessa Rose* by Sherley Anne Williams as novels of trauma, she calls Corregidora as a novel recording the history of violence a first person narration of a blues singer. It is a novel of trauma she further argues in the sense that though Ursa has never been a slave, but neither can she leave enslavement. Naomi Morgenstern further comments that Corregidora does not completely fit Bernard W. Bells’s definition of the neoslave narrative. She observes:

> It (*Corregidora*) may be a “residually oral, modern narrative” about slavery, but it does not tell the story of “escape from bondage to freedom”.

But as a blues novel, Corregidora is an exquisite rendering of suffering. It is matrix of, violence and oppression. Ursa’s telling her story and her mother’s story is to contrast it with the “epic” almost impersonal history of Corregidora.

Claudia Tate (1979 :140) points out that the story comes out in monologues that “seep through Ursa’s consciousness in moment of psychological stress. As the story is told throughout the novel in Ursa’s subconsiousness, Gloria Wade-Gayles (1984 : 172) comments that it is a bizarre and horrifying tale of perversity and abuse, a commentary on the “sickness of slave culture”.

Claudia Tate (ibid :140) observes that the ‘internal’ drama of Ursa’s ancestors and her love to Mutt-the ‘external drama’ of her
relationship are connected by stream-of-consciousness narration. The interior monologues are marked as italicized and non-italicized ones. Italicized monologues recall Corregidora's relationship with his slaves and non-italicized ones mark Ursa's relationship with Mutt. Claudia Tate calls the novel a bizarre romantic story.

Ursa's telling her story and her mother's story is to contrast it with the "epic" almost in impersonal history of Corregidora.

The novel delineates four generations of Corregidora women through the consciousness of Ursa Corregidora, the protagonist who belongs to the fourth generation. We come to know the Corregidora history seeping through Ursa's consciousness, dream sequences and interior monologues. Thus there are two dramas in the novel. Claudia Tate (1979: 139) explains them as "external" and internal" dramas. The "external" drama of Corregidora involves Ursa's estrangement from her husband, Mutt Thomas, who in a jealous rage pushes her down a flight of stairs in the spring of 1948. She is injured and in the hysterectomy operation she loses the child and the womb forever. She divorces Mutt and marries Tadpole for a brief period and later reunites with Mutt in the end after the gap of twenty two years. Corregidora's "internal" drama is related with Ursa's conflict with their slave heritage in the nineteenth century Brazil. Her inheritance of slavery of her great-grandmother, grandmother, and mother by Corregidora.
Corregidora opens with an act of violence. When Mutt Thomas insists his wife Ursa Corregidora, a blues singer to stop singing, an argument ensues. In a jealous rage he pushes his newly pregnant wife down the steps of the night club and fall results. Ursa is hospitalized and operated hysterectomy and loses her child and womb. Now she can never fulfill the pledge made by the women in her family “to make generations.” The novel details Ursa’s attempt to free herself from the guilt imposed by her physical limitation and from resentment against her now estranged husband.

Ursa is singing blues in the nightclub or in seedy restaurant. She is urban, worldly and lives in the black community in Kentucky. The novel takes place in 1948 but the tragedy began during slavery and lasted through three generations, in the nineteenth century. Corregidora, a Portuguese seaman turned plantation owner, turned rapist, turned breeder of mulatto women, enslaved and sexually exploited Corregidora women in Brazil. Corregidora was a slavemonger who slept with his slaves, sired children by them and then slept with his children. The element of incest pervades the novel through the figure of Corregidora and it ascribes the vision of evil predominating in the novel. Corregidora was a breeder who sent his women out to sleep with other men so that he would have mulatto children for the market. According to the legend preserved by the family Corregidora fathered both Ursa’s grandmother and her mother.
Keeping alive this humiliating experience of incest and passion become the life purpose of these women and their descendants. Each generation produces the next primarily to protect against the destruction of the truth by those in power.

Mutt, however, is not the only culprit, Ursa learns that she comes from generations of abused women and women abusers. Great-Gram was the slave and concubine of Corregidora, their child becomes his mistress and bore another woman, Ursa’s mother. When slavery papers where burned to deny slavery ever existed, that these women may not have ever existed, their sole defence is to make generations to preserve the family.

Melvin Dixon delineates the etymology of the word ‘Corregidore’ and points its significance. Dixon comments:

Corregidore in Portuguese means ‘judicial magistrate. By changing the gender designation, Jones makes Ursa Corregidora, a female judge, charged by the women in her family to “correct” (from the Portuguese verb Corrigir) the historical invisibility they have suffered, “to give evidence” of their abuse, and “to make generations” as a defence against their further annihilation. Ursa’s name also come from the man responsible for much of this pain, the Brazilian coffee planter and whoremaster Corregidora. Ursa must bring justice to bear upon his past exploitation of Blacks as slaves and women as whores and his present haunting contamination of her life (Mari Evans 1984:239)
The novel uses the flashback technique—using Ursa Corregidora’s consciousness through which we know the details. The novel opens, as pointed out earlier with an act of violence. After deadly injured by Mutt, Ursa does not allow him to come to see her at the hospital. The incident takes place at the Happy’s Café where she is singing. During her hospitalization Tapole McCormick looks after her and she begins to stay with him later. There she ruminates over her married life with Mutt, how she fell in love with him, as he used to come to listen her blues singing. She used to sing for him—selected him as her man who “heard” her and other “listened.” But as time went on Mutt become very ‘possessive’ about Ursa after marriage. He does not like her singing in public. As doctor has advised her rest, Ursa after the hysterectomy operation, muses in an interior monologue about her past life with Mutt taking rest on the bed.

Mutt didn’t like for me to sing after we were married because he said that’s why he married me so he could support me. I said I didn’t just sing to be supported. I said I sang because it was something I had to do but he never would understand that (3).

“I don’t like those mens messing with you, “he said.
“Don’t nobody mess with me.”
“Mess with they eyes.”
That was when I fell. (3)

Ursa’s inability to make generations has political cognisance— to resist the invisibility of these slave women in the annuls of history when the
entire records of slavery were burned down. And Ursa has been taught to make generations since she is five years old.

Ursa and Mutt don’t live together after the accident. She so constantly curses him in the hospital when she is unconscious during the treatment that even the nurses are shocked. She divorces Mutt and begins to live with Tadpole McCormick who now runs the Happy’s Café where Ursa sings. He takes care of her in the hospital. There she decides to desert Mutt. So she requests Tadpole to take her to his home when she is discharged from the hospital, because she doesn’t want to go back to the Drake Hotel where Mutt and she lived.

After Ursa is somewhat recovered Tadpole asks her about her health:

“What do you feel?”
“‘As is part of my life’s already marked out for me-the barren part.’
“You can’t expect a woman to take something like that easy.” (6)

She feels that something “more than the womb” (6) has been taken out. As if her entire personality is snapped. After living together for some days Tadpole proposes her to marry him and she consents, and they marry. But the marriage does not prove to be fruitful and does not work out. Ursa comes to know that Tad is unfaithful, and is disloyal to her and she deserts him also. She is a free woman again.

It was twenty two years after Mutt and Ursa were separated and she has not forgotten him. She is constantly thinking about him but she
hasn’t seen him again. She recalls how she saw Mutt for the first time when she was singing blues at Preston’s. Mutt repeatedly came to hear Ursa singing and their first meeting and how they fell in love with each other. She recalls:

When I first saw Mutt I was singing a song about a train tunnel. About this train going to the tunnel but it didn’t seem like they was no end to the tunnel and nobody knew when the train would get out, and then all of a sudden the tunnel tightened around the train like a first. Then I sang about this bird woman, whose eyes were deep wells. How she would take a man on a long journey, but never return him. (147)

Another element that Gayl Jones tries to highlight is that of sexism crossing the boundaries of racism. For Corregidora, the slave owner, the slave women are commodities, their bodies are economically exploited as prostitutes. But same is the case about Ursa’s father Martin and Mutt himself. Both of them though black, behave like Corregidora. It is critique of sexism across the racial issue. It is the gender jeopardy that makes black women to suffer. Black women like Ursa’s ancestors had to suffer as slaves at the hands of racist white slave owners like Portuguese Corregidora, or the wife of Mutt’s great-grandfather had to suffer from the white racist American slave owners. But here the suffering of black man and women is at par. What makes the difference is that they, the black women had to suffer at the hands of both the white and black men because of gender. The black women are slaves
and commodities of both white racist Americans and the black sexist males and they are always downtrodden as slaves. It means that they are trapped in the synergetic multiple jeopardy of race, gender and class in the heterosexual relationship. In two different relationships Ursa’s father Martin and her husband Mutt exploit her mother and her respectively on the basis of gender, i.e. being a woman. When Ursa’s mother goes to see her husband Martin after many years he slaps and beats her severely black and blue and snapping elastic of her pants insults and humiliates by making her walk naked like a whore in the street. He said “Get out... Go on down the street, looking like whore...”(120). She walks through the streets head hanging and facing people’s insidious taunts and gestures. It is death to her. Martin’s behaviour is no better than the whoremonger Corregidora who prostitutes Ursa’s Great-Gram, grand mother and other black slave women. Mutt also mistreats his wife Ursa in the same way. When Ursa is not ready to stop singing blues Mutt decides to auction and sell her at the café like the slaves who were auctioned at the auction blocks in slavery or like Corregidora, the slaveowner. They argue bitterly. Mutt is tired of hearing about Corregidora women. He asks her why she remembers that old bastard Corregidora and Ursa has no answer to this. He surprises Ursa by saying that she is one of the Corregidora women. He argues with her:-

“If you wasn’t one of them you wouldn’t like them mens watching after you.”
“They don’t watch after me, Mutt.”
“I wish you’d take that damned mascara off. It make you look like a bitch—” (154)

Mutt prohibits Ursa not only from talking to the men in the audience but that they must not look at her. She pleads.

“Last night you didn’t want nobody to say nothing to me and tonight they can’t even look at me.” (155)

When he declares his evil intention of auctioning and selling her at the café like in the slavery it shocks Ursa:

“That’s what I’m gon do,” he said. He was standing with his arms all up in the air. I was on my way to work.
“One a y’all wont to bid for her? Piece a ass for sale. I got me a piece of ass for sale. That’s what y’all wont, ain’t it? Piece a ass. I said I got a piece a ass for sale, anybody wont to bid on it?”
“Mutt, you wouldn’t”.
“You think I won’t. I’m be down there tonight, and as soon as you get up on that stage, I’m a sell me a piece a ass,” (159)

But he doesn’t do so:

“I’m glad you didn’t, Mutt.”
“It wasn’t on account of you, it was on account of my great-granddaddy. Seeing as how he went through all that for his woman he wouldn’t have appreciated me selling you off” (160)

But later on enraged Mutt knocks and pushes Ursa down the stairs of the café seeing that she doesn’t stop singing at last. And it results

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fatal-loss of child and womb to Ursa. The possessive Mutt’s argument to stop her singing that she is inviting men in the audience in her through her gaze. And the audience are having scopophilia-enjoying through gaze or watching. That’s why he tells Ursa that they the audience are messing with their eyes. Accordingly paranoid Mutt the audience leeringly lusts for Ursa. The novel also criticizes the commodification and objectification of woman in male gaze.

But when Ursa and Mutt meet again after twenty two years they are reconciled and united. This reconciliation and union of Mutt and Ursa in the blues stanza marks the end of novel.

The “internal drama” of the novel interrelated to Ursa’s life is the saga of her ancestor’s lives in slavery of Simon Corregidora.

It is a bizarre and horrific tell of nineteenth century Brazilian slavery. Simon Corregidora, a Portuguese seaman turned plantation owner is a slave owner and whoremonger who slept with his black women slaves, sired them and slept with his children too. This sinful tale of incest becomes the nightmare of Ursa’s Great-Gram, grandmother, and mother. Corregidora fathered Ursa’s grandmother and mother too who were his daughters. Corregidora also prostitutes these slave women and exploits them spiritually and economically. Selling their bodies become the landmark destiny of their lives. But they resist his
oppression by transferring orally the experiences of each
generation to the next one so that the memories of atrocious
slavery may be alive in their minds. The Corregidora women resist
their invisibility in the annuls of history when all the records of
slavery were burned away as if it never did exist. The racist White
Americans wanted the world to forget the crime and sin of slavery.
But the barbaric atrocities and scars are permanent in the minds of
the black from generation to generation as the Corregidora women
want to keep that spirit alive. So it becomes the mission of these
Corregidora women to “make generations” so that they give birth
to daughters and continue the heritage of slavery. Every
generation adds its own part in it and Ursa has been taught to do
so since she was small child of five. She is made to believe it to be
true and not raise any doubts about it. This is an obligation that
haunts every woman in each generation.

The matriarchs in Corregidora, too embody the force of past
oppression, as their ideology remain locked within the framework of
slavery. Most important is Tadpole McCormick, a male character, who
points out that the Corregidora women’s:” procreation, that could also
be slavebreeders way of thinking” (22)

From the age of five Ursa hears the story of Corregidora women,
from Great-Gram first and then from her mother until it becomes the
abiding part of their consciousness. Their past becomes her past and in
a terrifying way controls her present. For her Corregidora, as Claudia Tate (1979:140) comments is the:

“Symbolic progenitor of all evil. Within Ursa’s limited world; much like the serpent in the Garden of Eden.”

The story seeping out of Ursa’s consciousness is the tragic saga of slavery of black slave woman including her ancestors-her Great-Gram, grandmother and mother. It is crucially horrific as she narrates to Tadpole, her second husband:

“Corregidora, old man Corregidora, the Portuguese slave breeder and whoremonger........... He fucked his own whores and fathered his own breed. They did the fucking and had to bring him the money they made. My grandmamma was his daughter but he was fucking her too. She said when they did away with slavery down there they burned all the slavery papers so it would be like they never had it” (8-9)

Adam McKible (1994:225) comments that in Corregidora hegemony effaces its earlier criminality through the destruction of incriminating records.

Richard T. B. Barkasdale (1986:404) comments that Corregidora asserts that the black women’s sexual slavery began with slavery-a time when the system granted every master and every white male overseer the unchallenged right to use and abuse every female slave on the plantation according to his fancy.
Catherine Clinton (1994:209) argues that rape was an integral part of slavery, not an aberration or dysfunction. (Goldberg 2003:449)

Tadpole finds it difficult to believe and so he questions its veracity. But Ursa replies:

"My great-grandmother told my grandmamma the part she lived through that my grandmamma didn’t live through and my grandmamma told my mama what they both lived through and we were suppose to pass it down like that from generation to generation so we’d never forget. Even though they’d burned everything to play like it didn’t never happen. Yeah, and where’s the next generation." (9)

Ursa’s grief is that she can’t make generations as she has lost her womb and made sterile by Mutt.

Tadpole thinks that what Ursa tells may not be true, there must be some interpolations or insertions made in it by Ursa’s foremothers. When Tadpole raises the doubt Ursa snaps him.

"Well, some things can’t be kept in. What I didn’t tell you is old man Corregidora fathered my grandmamma and my mama too”. (10)

To this Tadpole has no answer, so Ursa further continues “

“What my mama always told me is Ursa, you got to make generations. Something I’ve always grown up with.” (10)

If Corregidora is so atrocious to Ursa’s foremothers and the black slave women there must be a feeling of hatred in the minds of these women
and Ursa. Tadpole asks Ursa “I guess you hate him then, don’t you?” to this Ursa replies that to concretize and particularize the hatred for Corregidora Ursa bears a photograph of him smuggled by Great-Gram. She tells Tadpole, “I’ve got a photograph of him. One Great-Gram smuggled out. I guess, so we’d know who to hate...” (10)

From Ursa’s consciousness pours forth how Great-Gram was prostituted as a child. Ursa recalls how Great-Gram told her the mission of “making generations” when she was a child:

... as if words repeated again and again could be substitute for memory were some how more than the memory. As if it were only the word that kept her anger.

What Great-Gram tells Ursa cannot be doubted, and when Ursa raises the doubt the old woman slaps her and admonisher her in strange words by making her aware of the role Ursa has to play:

“When I’m telling you something don’t you ever ask if I’m lying. Because they didn’t want to leave no evidence of what they done-so it couldn’t be held against them. And I’m leaving evidence. And you got to leave evidence too. And your children got to leave evidence. And when it come time to hold up the evidence, we got to make evidence to hold up. That’s why they burned all the papers, so there wouldn’t be no evidence to hold up against them.”
I was five years old then. (14)

Ursa knows very well what all the Corregidora women want. What they have been taught to want is to make generations. Ursa is also taught that:
"...The important thing is making generations. They can burn the papers but they can’t burn conscious, Ursa. And that’s what makes the evidence. And that’s what makes the verdict." (22)

To this Tadpole replies:

"Procreation. That should be a slave-breeder’s way of thinking." (22)

Corregidora, a slave owner can be a slave breeder. He wants more slaves to be sold and prostituted. But Corregidora was not the only one to do that, there were many like him. And as Tadpole points out procreation was a slave breeder’s way of thinking.

Now what makes Ursa angry is that she cannot make generations because Mutt’s pushing her down the stairs of the café has caused her to lose the baby and the womb forever. But she vents her anger:

And what if I’d thrown Mutt Thomas down those stairs instead, and done away with the source of his sex, or inspiration, or whatever the hell it is for man, what would he feel now? At least a woman’s still got the hole. (40-41).

Every generation from Great-Gram to grandmother to her mother instructs Ursa to make generations. Her mother also tells her “not to bruise” any seeds in her. She tells Ursa how her Gram was born. Ursa remembers it in an interior monologue:

...... Ursa ......Honey, I remember when you was a warm seed inside me, but I tried not to bruise you. Don’t bruise any of your seeds. I won’t Mama.
Catherine, Lawson, her friend tells Ursa that her voice is changed and it
appears that she has been through something-tragic in her life. The
voice is a little strained. Cat comments:

"Your voice sounds, little strained, that's all. But if I hadn't heard you before, I wouldn't
notice anything. I'd still be moved. May be
moved more, because it sounds like you been
through something. Before it was beautiful
too, but you sound like you been through
more now."

"I know what you mean, but it's still
changed."

"Not like the worse. Like Ma (Rainey) for
instance after all alcohol and men, the strain
made it better, because you could tell what
she'd been though. You could hear what she'd
been through."

"Well, I don't have to worry about men."

"That'd make you go through more not having
a man."

Ursa thinks how Mutt used to ask her to whom she belonged to him or
to Corregidora but now all her seeds are wounded. She muses over this
in an interior monologue:

What she (Cat) said about the voice being
better because it tells what you've been
through. Consequences. It seems as if you're
not singing the past, you're humming it.
Consequences of what? Shit, we've all
consequences of something, stained with
another's past as well as your own. Their past
in my blood. I'm a blood-Are you mine Ursa or
theirs? What he (Mutt) would ask, what would
I ask now?...But it's your fault all my seeds are
wounded forever. No warn ones, only, not
even bruised ones. No seeds... No seeds. Is that what snaps away my music, a harp string broken, guitar broken, string of my banjo belley. ...When do you sing the blues? Everytime I ever want to cry, I sing blues—or would there be glasses of tears? (45-46)

The Corregidora women’s lives are so haunted by Corregidora that they have lost their individual identities. They bear his name as they have lost and forgotten theirs. It may be acceptable in slavery but after emancipation also all of them including Ursa’s mother and Ursa her self have kept Corregidora’s names. After Marrying Mutt, Ursa still clings to Corregidora’s name and doesn’t accept Mutt’s name as his wife, this incenses Mutt and so he comments:

“Ain’t even took my name. You Corregidora, ain’t you? Ain’t even took my name. You ain’t my woman.” (61)

Ursa like her grandmother and mother is a mulatto. Only her great grandmother was pure, original black woman—a coffee-bean woman. The subsequent generation are mulattos. But on asked about “passing”, Ursa refuses to pass and gets benefited and maintains her identity as a black woman.

When slavery came to an end the slaveowners burned all the record to destroy all the evidence of slavery but they couldnot destroy what was instilled in minds of the slaves. Ursa is told by her foremothers:

“.... They burned all the documents, Ursa, but they didn’t burn what they put in their minds: We got to burn out what they put in our
minds, like you burn out a wound. Except we got to keep what we need to bear witness. That scar that’s left to bear witness. We got to keep it as visible as our blood.” (72)

Mutt teaches Ursa what Corregidora taught her Great-Grandmother-to use the four-lettered, obscene, bawdy, street language. Mutt is shocked to hear Ursa use such a language but Ursa is not shocked. She replies that it is he (Mutt) who taught her so:

“Didn’t I tell you you taught me what Corregidora taught Great Gram. He taught her to use the kind of words she did....” (76)

Ursa asserts that she is a Corregidora woman whose past is so embedded in her blood that she cannot wipe it out. She cannot separate her past from the present it haunts her like a ghost or spirit:

I am Ursa Corregidora. I have tears for eyes. I was made to touch my past at an early age. I found it on my mother’s tiddies. In her milk. Let not one pollute my music. I will dig out their temples. I will pluck out their eyes. (77)

The novel reveals a distrust in the white slave owners who destroy the written records and evidence of their misdeeds—may be of slavery in the case of the Corregidora women or destroying the land records of Mutt’s father and confiscating the entire piece of land from him as thy tore away the page from the past record by making generations and passing the legacy of slavery from one generation to the next, keeping the spirit burning and scar not to be
healed but bleeding. But it is not possible in the case of Mutt’s parents who lose their land.

When slavery was abolished people reveled and rejoiced. People-black slaves were free to go anywhere, but the Corregidora slaves didn’t go anywhere. They simply clung to him. Same happened in the case of Ursa’s mother, but she did something that made Corregidora angry and so she had to run away. Ursa tells these recollections:

“.... Naw, I don’t remember when slavery was abolished, cause I was just being born then. Mama do, and sometime it seen like I do too. They signed papers, and there wasn’t all this warring they had up here. You know, it was what they call pacific. A pacific abolition. And you know people was celebrating and rejoicing and cheering in the street, white and black people. An they called Isabella the Redemptress, you know, because she signed the paper with a jeweled pen. And then after that black people could go anywhere they wanted to go, and take up life anyway they wanted to take it up. And that’s when the officials burned all the papers cause they wanted to play like what had happened before never did happen. But I know it happened. I bear witness it happened.” (78-79)

But what happened in the case of slaves and the Corregidora whores was a strange thing. They had nowhere to go and so they still lived with him. Ursa contunes:

“Mama stayed there with him even after it ended, until she did something that made him wont to kill her and then she ran off and had to leave me. Then he was raising me and
doing you know I said what he did. But then something after that when she got settle here, she came back for me. That was in 1906. I was about eighteen by then.” (79)

Ursa met her mother and they came to Louisiana. Ursa was worried what should have happened to her if her mother hadn’t come to take her as Corregidora had evil intentions in keeping her too.

Along with the history of Corregidora’s and her foremothers Ursa has the legacy of her father-Martin. How he met her mother at the train depot. How they married and after she had Ursa he left her mother. But Ursa’s mother never tells these things to Ursa. She comes to know about her parent’s relationships from her grandmother.

Ursa wants to know her mothers entire life with her father Martin, so she goes to the place where she is living. She visits her Mama and wants to talk things with her. Ursa’s mother tells her how she met her husband Martin at a place across the train depot were she used to have lunch. She didn’t pay him any attention because she was looking for ‘no man’. But when she had Ursa he married her and then he left. Ursa’s mother tells her experience:

“But then I know it was something my body wanted, just something my body wanted,” (16)
“It was like my whole body wanted you.........”
“I know you was gonna come out a girl even while you was in me.” (117)
“When I know about you, Great Gram went and talked to him, I begged her not to, but he came and married and then...... he left me.” (118)
Ursa’s mother went to see Martin only once after that. He saw Ursa once when she was two years old so she cannot remember him. When Ursa’s mother went to see him he beat her and called her a bitch and made her to walk like whore in the street. It was a humiliating experience for her that she could never forget. Martin was basically angry because he was used by the Corregidora women to make generations. He was made to play the role of Corregidora-to make generations. He was given the role of Corregidora. That’s what incensed him and made him angry and so he couldn’t let Ursa’s mother see him. Ursa’s mother tells her memories with Great Gram. Great-Gram told Mama how Corregidora wouldn’t let her see some man because he was too black.

It was Martin who had the nerve to ask them (Great-Gram and Gram) what Ursa’s mother never had to ask, “How much was hate for Corregidora and how much was love.” (131). Desire and hate two humps of the same camel. Martin asked the Corregidora women how much they hated and loved him and that made them angry and they disliked him.

The white racism and sexism-gender discrimination surfaces in the novel when the Melrose woman commits suicide. People comment about the inaction of police as she is a “nigger woman”. They simply file the complaint and close the file and the case is over. People comment:
"A daddy got the ways the police ain’t anyways, she wasn’t nothing but nigger woman to the polices. You know they ain’t gon take they time to find out nothing about a nigger women. Somebody go down and file a complaint, they write it down all right, while you standing there, but as soon as you leave, they say, ‘here, put it the nigger file. That mean that they got to it if the can. Naw, they don’t say put it in the nigger file they can say put it in the nigger woman (emphasis in original) file, which mean they ain’t gon never gone to it... (134)

A stark contradiction arises in the two tendencies reflected in the novel. Pregnancy, giving birth to the daughter or a child and “making generations” is not only a biological urge of the motherhood or woman hood for the Corregidora women including Ursa who is made barren by Mutt. It is an obligation of the past abuse of Corregidora that haunts their lives and distorts and perverts them. And in that sense Martin and Mutt are abused from their natural roles. “Making generations” may be a matter of pride in the case of Corregidora women to keep the scar of alive and to avoid the multiple invisibilities caused by multiple jeopardy in slavery and beyond and so Corregidora women insist on “making generations”.

But the situation is paradoxical in the case of May Alice and the Melrose woman. For them pregnancy proves to be a matter of shame and not of pride. When May Alice is of shame and not of pride. When May Alice is pregnant and gives birth to a child, Harold who is responsible for
it, deserts them and Alice and her mother have to leave the place. The case of the Melrose woman is more tragic in that she commits suicide on getting impregnated. The man responsible is not punished by the police as it is a "nigger woman" (emphasis in original) case.

The gender trauma inextricably nags in both the situations beyond the racial oppressions. "Making generations" is to resist annihilation of Corregidora women and that becomes their mission. But "making generation" is not so pleasant for May Alice and Melrose woman, it endangers their lives. The novel critiques these two opposite phenomena.

Madhu Dubey (1994:78) comments that the Corregidora women mythicize their oppressive history. They mythicize the reproductive ideology and it is demythicized by May Alice and Melrose woman. Both the women react to their pregnancies with guilt; the Melrose women even kills herself. Grandmamma tells Ursa that Corregidora would have maltreated and abused Ursa's Mama and Ursa because he was crooked. She continues:

"...... He fucked her and he fucked me. He would've fucked you and your mama if y'all been there and he wasn't old and crooked up like he got....... He raised me and when I got big enough he stared fucking me..... He wasn't buying up them fancy mulatto womens though. They had to be black and pretty. They had to be the color of the coffee-beans. That's why he always liked my mama better than me. (172)
This is an incredulous saga of incest and pain and suffering that shatters our imagination. The Corregidora women tell Ursa that her centre is her womb. The limbo even becomes more profound when she is no longer able to make "generations." Ursa's mother tells her experience to Ursa:

"Like my whole body or something know what it wanted even if I don't want no man. Cause I wasn't looking for none. But it was like I know it wanted you. It was like my whole body knew it wanted you, and knew it would have you, and you'd be a girl." (116-117)

Ursa's mother use of 'it' for her body suggest the economics of slavery. Hortene Spillars suggests that the economic system defines the black slave as "chattel" on the same level as "livestock" or even household possession. Sally Robinson (1991:159) comments:

Slavery that produces the slave as object for the master's consumption. This is the experience of slavery described by Jones in Corregidora and the impasse in which the Corregidora women find themselves their inability to "transcend" slavish consciousness might be explained by the fact that they have had to produce themselves as object for consumption.

In comparison of Brazilian slavery with the American—one Carl Degler mentions that in Brazil black women slaves were used as prostitutes than as breeders. He points that many a slave owner made his living by selling the bodies of his female slaves. This happens in the case of Corregidora a Brazilian slave owner who prostitutes his black female
slaves including Corregidora women-Great-Gram and Gram and treats them for lucrative financial gain. The difference comes into focus when Corregidora rapes these black slave women and make other white customers to do so (Sally Robinson 1991:153)

There is another dehumanizing aspect to it as pointed out by Black Marxist feminist critic Angela Davis who thinks that the rape of black women by white men during slavery can’t be seen simply as a cultural construction of white women protected from male lust.

“rather, can be understood as weapon of domination a weapon of repression whose covert goal was to extinguish slave women’s will to resist and in the process to demoralize their men. “ (Sally Robinson: 1991:153)

The problem for Ursa as a blues singer is that she is barren because of Mutt’s mistreatment. She experiences guilt at being unable to pass on the family story to daughter as Keith Byerman (1985:177) comments:

Mutt seems to have succeeded where the slave owners failed: they could only destroy the record while Mutt can destroy the truth itself by effacing the future.

The tale attacks male domination which assaults female identity and integrity. As she can no longer make “generations” Ursa determines to rewrite the story of Corregidora’s “coffee bean woman”, Great-Gram...: “I’ll make a fetus out of grounds of coffee to rub inside my eyes.” (54) ...Her fantasy of rubbing the grounds of coffee inside her eyes suggested her desire to see the world and history a new to
subvert the hold Corregidora has over the construction of that history.

Ursa’s obsession with Corregidora tends to paralyze her in the present but Mutt and Tadpole do try to help her overcome this paralysis.

Melvin Dixon argues that Mutt’s violence against Ursa enables her “to free herself from the pattern of mutual abuse implicit in the pledge (to make generations) itself.” (Mari Evan 1984:239). Dixon calls the end of the novel as a “healing communication” (ibid :245)

Melvin Dixon comments that Mutt frees Ursa from the oppressive matrilineage that held men and women captive and forces her “to come to new terms with her femininity.” (Mari Evans 1984 :239-40) Mutt unknowingly liberated Ursa from this oppressive past as he doesn’t know that she is newly pregnant when he knocks her down and causes her abortion and hysterectomy. Ursa is a new woman now not bound by the chains of past but ready to sing “a new world song.” The Corregidora matriarchy in the novels is only evocation of collectivity sustained by oral cultural transmission. The Corregidora women’s experience of slavery is literally erased when the slave owner burns all written records. The women resist their exclusion from official history by means of oral narrative: “we were suppose to pass it down like that from generation to generation so we’d never forget” (9). The Corregidora women must produce generations who will carry their
version of history in future: "The important thing is making generations. They can burn the papers but they can't burn conscious. And that is what makes the evidence." (22)

Madhu Dubey (1994:74) points out the significance of these women's mission of making generations:

As a means of making generations, the womb becomes the site of these women's political resistance, and their definition of themselves ... for the Corregidora women to claim the power of their wombs is an important oppositional strategy.

The blues element brings the folk element in the novel. It enriches the African American folk heritage. African American women have a rich a classic tradition of blues singing like Ma Rainey, Billie Holiday, Bessie Smith and others and Ursa perpetuates this tradition.

When Ursa began to sing publically her mother opposed her. She even thought that it was singing to the "devil." She was sitting in the church and praising God and Ursa was singing to the devil. She tries to pull Ursa off the stage. Ursa resists her mother. She now recalls the incidence:

When I first had people liking my singing, it was down at that place that was more somebody's house than a restaurant. When Mama found out she came and got me. "I ain't gon have you singing no devil music. Me over there sitting up in church trying to praise God, and you over at Preston's singing to the devil."

"What about Grandmama's old blue records?
You didn’t say nothing to her.”
She didn’t answer, then she said” That ain’t the
devil coming out of your own mouth.” (146)

In *Liberating Voices* Jones (1992:196) observes that “the language
of the blues is generally concrete graphic, imagist, and immediate.
Jones’s novel have often been described as blues songs or performances
(Byerman :1985:172). The blues are very significant the Ursa as she
explains:

“What do the blues do for you?”
They help me to explain what I can’t explain.” (56)

As pointed out by Ralph Ellison in his work *Shadow and Act*1972: 256-
257 in women’s blues, especially the “classic” form recorded by Bessie
Smith, Ma Rainy, and others, the lyrics are rich with a mixture of joy
and sorrow. The voice rendering the lyrics is always sensual
authoritative, and in control of the emotions dissolved.

Catherine Lawson’s remarks about the change in Ursa’s voice
after accident proves what Keith Byerman that this beauty is deepened
by Ursa’s suffering. But more important is that her singing has acquired
a power that it previously lacked:

“You got a hard kind of voice”, she said
now. “You got like callused hands, strong
hand but gentle underneath, strong but
gentle too. The kind of voice that can hurt
you. I can’t explain it hurt you and make
you still want to listen.” (96)
Ursa tries to defend her blue singing and her foremothers’ passing the oral heritage:

...What was their life then? Only life spoken to the sounds of my breathing or a low playing Victrola. Mama’s Christian songs and Grandmama wasn’t it funny—it was Granmama who liked the blues. But still Mama would say listening to the blues and singing them ain’t the same. That’s what she said when I asked her how come she didn’t mind Grandmama’s old blues records. What’s a life always spoken and only spoken? (103)

Ursa’s blues songs are oral piercing, entrancing, sensuous and entertaining. Claudia Tate (1979:141) comments that Ursa sings the blues because it is her way of turning pain into leisure and freeing herself psychologically from a tyranny of historical oppression.

Ursa’s mother opposition to her singing is constant because these songs are devil’s and it is her destruction. She scolds and admonishes Ursa who replies:

I’ll make a fetus of grounds of coffee to rub inside my eyes. When it’s time to give witness I’ll make a fetus out of grounds of coffee. I’ll stain their hands. (54).

The coffee grounds from the plantation owned by Corregidora or as the text of her pain, provide the raw material for the song she will sing. Ursa is fiercely defensive of her story, her body, and her music. Rather than posting herself as the objectified and “watched” performer, she defends herself from a voyeuristic male gaze.
Ursa believes that “everything said in the beginning must be said better in the beginning.” (54) she thinks that her barrenness has snapped away her music, her harp string is broken, guitar is broken, string of her belly is broken. There strain in her voice. (46) On asked when does she sing the blues, Ursa replies:

Every time I ever want to cry, I sing blues. Or would there be glasses of tears? (46)

When Ursa sings she picks out a man to sing to. And when Mutt starts coming in, she keeps picking out him to sing to. And when they are married she has him a man to sing to. She thinks that the others only “listen” but Mutt “hears” her (52)

In a prophetic way Ursa replies Tadpole that the blues are very significant to her. Through blues she is able to communicate what she cannot do through the words. Blues singing is the trajectory of Ursa’s life a blues artist:

What do the blues do for you?
It helps me to explain what I can’t explain. (56)

Through blues Ursa wants to sings a “new world song” a universal song that will appeal to everybody. It will encompass not only her life but also lives and of Corregidora women and all his black slave women. It will be a Portuguese song but it wont be a Portuguese song. It being a song of new world will not only cover the pathos of the (Corregidora) black slave women but it will also sing of their emancipation, freedom and new life in the new world from slavery. In a very significant
interior monologue Ursa confesses her religion of blues music, her spirit of blues singing that is the very soul of the novel. It is the yearning of her spirit:

I wanted a song that would touch me, touch my life and theirs. A Portuguese song, but not a Portuguese song. A new world song. A song branded with the new world. (59)

For some black nationalist critics like Amiri Baraka, the blues is the only cultural form that is free of white ideology, it communicates therefore an authentic black voice that literary texts have been unable to achieve. Only in the blues mode did black artist maintain “their essential identities” as blacks. The world projected in the blues music is “the Blackest and potentially the strongest” (Madhu Dubey 1994:83)

Houston A. Baker, Jr. writes about the significance of the folklore in Black American literature:

What is genuinely new in contemporary works of Black American literature is their use of folklore as the foundation of a uniquely black cultural tradition. (Madhu Dubey 1994:84).

The arguments made by Amiri Baraka and Houston A. Baker Jr. support the thesis made by the novel of using the folk-lore of blues music. Gayl Jones presents Ursa Corregidora, the protagonist of the novel as a blues singer.

Madhu Dubey (ibid.:84) assesses the significance of blues to Ursa:

In a difficult double move, Ursa’s blues voice allows her to express a feminine sensibility

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that is at least politically free of the oppressed and oppressive collective tradition represented by the Corregidora women's narrative. In appropriating the blues form, Corregidora satisfies the Black Aesthetic injunction that black writers should use oral forms to express a distinctively black consciousness.

In a unique and tragic incantation the interior monologue brings out the suffering of all Corregidora and black slave women. Ursa continues her musing.

I thought of the girl who had to sleep with her master and mistress. Her father, the master, her daughters. The father of her daughter's daughter. How many generations? Days that were pages of hysteria. Their survival depended on suppressed hysteria. (59)

That was the hysteria of slavery the negro slavery but particularly of more tragic slavery of black women. The Corregidora women of four generations are the victims of that hysterical system embedded in sinful, lustful and incestuous relationships, prostituting them not only for procreation but for monetary gains.

When Ursa reconciles and unites with Mutt after twenty two years, she is forty eight year old. She goes back with him it is not the same room but the same place-Drake Hotel. The same feel of the place. Ursa thinks that their union after a long time should be like that of Great-Gram and Corregidora:

It wasn’t the same room, but the same place. The same feel of the place. It had to be sexual. I was thinking, it had to be something sexual
that Great-Gram did to Corregidora. I knew it was to be sexual: "What is it a woman can do of a man that make him hate her too bad he wont to kill her one minute and keep thinking about her and can't get her out of his mind and next?" In a split second I knew what it was, in a split second of hate and love I knew what it was, and I think he might have know too. A moment of pleasure and excruciating pain at the same time, a moment of broken skin but not sexlessness, a moment just before sexlessness, a moment that stops before sexlessness, a moment that stops before it breaks the skin: "I could kill you" (184)

I the final act of reunion with Mutt, Ursa performs fellatio on him and that gives her power and control over him in the heterosexual relationship and she says "I could kill you". Ursa's transfiguration in Great-Gram and Mutt's in Corregidora is ambivalent. Ursa continues:

It was like I didn't know how much was me and Mutt and how much was Great-Gram and Corregidora like Mama when she had started talking like Great-Gram. But was what Corregidora has done to her. (emphasis in original) to them, and any worse than what Mutt had done to me, than what we had done to each other, than what Mama had done to Daddy, or what he had done to her in return making her walk down the street looking like whore (184).

*Corregidora* ends on the note of what Faith Pullin calls reconciliation or "happy ending" (Dubey : 1991:74) of the union or Ursa and Mutt after a long gap of twenty two years. The novel depicting this union ends also
on the note of a sequence of three lines blues stanza, representing Great-
Gram, Gram and Mama:

"I don’t want a kind of woman that hurt you."
He said.
"Then you don’t want me."
"I don’t want a kind of woman that hurt you."
"Then you don’t want me"
"I don’t want a kind of woman that hurt you."
"Then you don’t want me."
He shook me till I fell against crying. "I don’t
want a kind of man that I’ll hurt me neither." I
said. He held me tight (185)

Ursa leads from blues solo to duet in the end between her and Mutt that
produces mutual consent and authority. The end of the novel reveals
the rhythmical blues stanza of six lines. The tragic saga, full of pathos
and pain of Corregidora women, and “internal drama” is related to this
“external drama” of Ursa’s life with Mutt and Tadpole which has a
silver lining of reconciliation.

Deborah Horvitz (1998:257) observes that Corregidora is a
psychological journey and draws parallels with that of Sophocles’s
Oedipus in the sense of both Ursa and king Oedipus suffer
psychological trauma and their past haunts both of them. In the case of
Ursa she is aware of the past legacy, and in the case Oedipus it
irrevocably dawns on him in a thunderous way.

Sondra O’Neele (1982:25-37) defines Corregidora in the Western
Buldingsroman and Kunstlerroman traditions in the British and African-
American friction like Charles Dickens’s David Copperfield, and Great
*Expectation*, William Golding’s *Lord of the Flies*, James Joyce’s *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* or Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man*, Richard Wright’s *Black Boy* and James Baldwin’s *Go Tell it on the Mountain*. It furthers the same tradition in African American Women’s fiction of Paule Marshall’s *Brown Girl, Brown Stones* or Toni Cade Bambara’s *The Salt Eaters*. It makes the trajectory of Ursa-and African American woman artists—the blues singer to maturity.

*Curregadora* has, Ann Allan Shockley points out, the features of latent lesbianism. She point out this trickling of lesbian element in the novel does not depict such over relationships. She comments on this phenomenon:

There is now trickling a Lesbian themes in the fiction and non-fiction by Black Lesbians. Even heterosexual Black female writers and now-women identified women are throwing in for better or worse an occasional major or minor Lesbian character. Unfortunately, within these works exists an undercurrent of hostility, trepidation, shadiness, and in some instances, ignorance, calling forth homophobic stereotypes (Barbara Smith 1983:86)

Ann Allen Shockly further observes that Gayl Jones “always seems to toss a minor Lesbian character or two in her “novels”. (ibid:89) In Curregadora, Ursa the principal character rebuffs a lesbian advance made by a young girl named Jeffy (Jeffrine) when she stays with her friend Catherine Lawson who is also implicitly lesbian but her relations are not elaborately discussed in the novel. Ursa recalls:

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I was drowsy, but I felt her hands on my breasts. She was feeling all on me up around my breasts. I shot awake and knocked her out of the floor...there was smell of vomit in the room, like when you suck your thumb. (39)

The noise of knocking Jeffry also makes Cat awake. But she is not surprised with what has happened, as both Cat and Jeffry have lesbian relations, as Cat’s husband rejects sexual relations with her and the white master where she works constantly insults her.

Gloria Wade-Gayles (1984:175) comments on the novels uncertain treatment of lesbianism:

Gayl Jones treats two lesbian characters with sensitivity but she steps back from developing them or making clear use of them in the novel. Our failure to get a handle on the novel that does justice to Jones’s vision demonstrates the need for clearly defined and tested approaches to lesbian criticism. With such approaches we might find that Corregidora belongs to the tradition of latent lesbian fiction.

In Corregidora, Gayl Jones employs black urban diction in a town of Kentucky. It shocks with its raw language, using four-lettered, bawdy, obscene, filthy street language. Not only the male characters like Mutt and Tadpole and Corregidora use such language but even women like Ursa also use it.

In an interview with Michael Harper, Gayl Jones points that writing Corregidora was a “song... It was a ritual.” (Michael Harper 1979:358)
Jones uses Black speech as a major aesthetic device in her works. She uses rhythm and structure of spoken language to develop authentic characters and to establish new possibilities for dramatic conflict within the text.

Both of Gayl Jones's novel, *Corregidora* and *Eva's Man* use the first person narrative technique. We get to know the story through the consciousness of the protagonists-Ursa in *Corregidora* and Eva in *Eva's Man*. The first person narrative technique is direct and immediately appeals the readers. In *Corregidora* we come to know the story seeping through Ursa's consciousness. Both what Claudia Tate calls, the 'internal' and 'external' dramas, are reflected through Ursa's consciousness.

The black urban diction adds the ripeness and maturity to the writing which is very unique in African American women's fiction writing. This oral and folkloric elements are masterfully interwoven by Jones in both her novels.

Valerie Gray Lee (1980:266) points out the use of folk talk in the novel:

Instead of using "conventional English" many blackwomen novelist employ a folk talk that is metaphorical instructive and entertaining ... The use of folk language is used to capture the more subtle dynamics of black life...the folktalk that goes on among mother and daughters center on men folk... many of the writers and turning and returning to one of the oldest, universal themes: love and
man/woman relationship. Zora Neale Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) ...and Gayl Jones’s *Corregidora* (1975) support this thesis.

In an interview with her teacher and poet Michael Harper, Gayl Jones delineates another phenomenon of her writing: She further comments:

I learned to write by listening to people talk ... the best of my ...writing comes from having *heard* (emphasis original) rather than having read ...my language foundations were oral rather than written (Michael Harper 1975: 352-53)

She points out the source of her writing and establishes her self in the African-American literary tradition:

I made connections with slave narrative tradition.

There are two types dialogues in the novel. Some of the dialogues are ritualistic and some are naturalistic...most of the italicized dialogues between Ursa and Mutt are ritualistic.

Commenting on the thematic concern of the novel that is relationships between men and women, Jones explicates that she explores the women-women relationship but not really men-men relationship in the novel. The relationship between men and women she is dealing with is a blues relationship but there is close relationship connection between her poem “Deep Song” which is a blues poem, and Corregidora which is a blues novel:

The blues calling my name
She is singing a deep song

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She is singing a deep song
I am human.

What Gayl Jones in an interview with Michael Harper calls *Corregidora* a metaphor is deeply related with this poem of hers, as both the poem and the novel are deeply rooted in blues tradition (Michael Harper 1975:374)

Madhu Dubey (7995:253) points out Corregidora women become imprisoned in history and Ursa is defeminised by hysterectomy. Elizabeth Swanson Goldberg (2003:447) comments that *Corregidora* deals with pain and torture. Prostitution of female slaves in Brazil amounts to an institutionalized practice of rape. Some critics like Dubey (1995:102) suggest that Gram and Great Gram may have enjoyed or more precisely desired -their torture even as they hated at/him.:

"They were with him. What did they feel? you know how they talk about hate and desire. Two humps on the same camel? Yes. Hate and desire both riding them, that’s what I was going to say."

*Corregidora* ends where Jones’s her second novel *Eva’s Man* (1976) begins. Eva’s action can be said a sequel to Ursa’s. In the reconciliation with Mutt Ursa performs fellatio that empowers her over him and she says, “I’ll kill you”! (1984) Eva continues further as she not only poisons kills her lover Davis Carter and performs fellatio but castrates him. Eva uses the power that Ursa gets and kills and castrates Davis. Both the novels portray the bizarre and insane worlds and delineate the “negative stereotypes” as critics castigate them, though illogically.
(B) The Gothic and Grotesque World of *Eva’s Man* (1976)

Gay Jones’s second novel *Eva’s Man* (1976) is equally bizarre, stunning, and profound like her first novel *Corregidora* (1975). Both the novels portray the bizarre worlds in which their protagonists and characters are mired in the worlds of sex, violence, and insanity. In this thematic sense *Eva’s Man* can be considered a sequel to *Corregidora,*

_Eva’s Man_ begins with the fait accompli of what Ursa only fantasized about. In this thematic sense both the novels delineate the quite wild, bizarre and unbelievable worlds. We find that Eva, the protagonist of the novel is subjected to sexual abuse/molestation from time to time by the various black males since she is five year old to the age of forty three when she is twice put in prison of her heinous crime of poisoning and castrating her lover Davis Carter. She is not the only victim in the society but the fates of her mother and her relative Jean and her mother’s friend Miss Billie are no more different. They also face and suffer the gender exploitation from black men.

Critics and writers like John Updike also criticized Jones in creating negative characters like Eva who they think are against males and particularly black male community. Another two similarities between the two novels are the themes of blues and lesbianism.

Gayl Jones’s interest in ‘abnormal psychology’ of the characters is found reflected in *Eva’s Man* like *Corregidora.* The incestuous relationship of Corregidora with Ursa’s foremothers is a piquant sign of
the hysteria of slavery and white racism, and the central action of the novel-Eva’s poisoning and castrating her lover Davis Carter is equally abnormal. Both the actions is these two novels are pervert. But in the case of Corregidora this abnormality is beastly in nature and signifies the demonic form of white racism. In Eva’s case her act is the culmination of her lifelong and recurring subjugation of sexual victimization and molestation in the sexist male dominated patriarchal African American society. In both the novels women have no identity of their own but they are the prey of the lust of men in the male dominated society.

Both the novels-Corregidora and Eva’s Man are first person narrations using the flashback techniques of interior monologues and stream of consciousness techniques. Corregidora seeps through the consciousness of Ursa Corregidora, the protagonist of the novel. Similarly Eva’s Man is narrated by Eva Medina Canada, the heroine of the novel who is now twice in jail for her crime. So both the novels lack the authorial intrusion in them, as she does not make any moral authorial judgments in the actions of the characters.

Both the novels use Black dialect as the medium of narrations instead of standard English. This use of black dialect enriches the texture of the novel and proves its uniqueness.

Madhu Dubey (1994:89) comments that unlike Corregidora, Eva’s Man cannot be even partially recovered into Black Aesthetic critical
mode. The novel’s salient thematic and formal features, such as its treatment of castration, its use of black dialect, stereotypes, and incoherence jeopardize us from distilling any clear didactic meaning. So the contemporary critical perception of Eva’s Man was unanimously unfavorable.

Richard Stookey eulogized the novel for not aiming its anger and violence against racial oppression and found it “refreshing” and “elevated” above the genre known as the “black novel” and into the realm of universal art. Stookey dismisses racism as a narrow parochial concern and states the dynamics of sexual oppression constitute a literary theme of universal interest (Madhu Dubey 1994:89).

Black Aesthetic critic Hairston writes that the novel was accepted by white reviewers because of its critique of black men rather than of white society. The feminist focus of the novel is on sexual rather than on racial oppression (Madhu Dubey 1994:89-90). The Black Aestheticians like Keith Mano (1976:66) argued that the novel lacks any merit.

Toni Morrison’s comments that “all her (Jones’s) novels are about women tearing up men”, points to the one feature of Eva’s Man that drew the most extreme negative reaction from the contemporary critics on Eva’s castration of Davis which constitutes the climax of the novel (Dubey 1994 : 90)

The narrative of Eva’s Man is composed of dreams, memories, interrogation scenes and exchanges between Eva and her cell-mate
Elvira; it is a narrative originating in Eva’s consciousness and is fragmented and disjointed. As Jones remarks in a interview with Claudia Tate that Eva is an unreliable narrator who takes control over her story, but does not put the pieces of the puzzle together (Claudia Tate 1983: 95)

The novel reflects with the flash back technique. The novel begins with the climax scene. Eva has poisoned and castrated Davis. On being informed by her, the police arrest an imprison Eva. It is from the psychiatric prison cell that Eva recalls the tragic incidents of molestation and sexual abuse in her life and in the lives of her mother and other women that culminate in her heinous crimes. She also comes into contact the different authorities and institutions in the society including the police, the law, the psychiatrists and the media (the press).

Gloria Wade-Gayles (1984:175) observes that Jones’s vision of black womanhood is more developed in this novel. She comments:

Gayl Jones’s vision of black womanhood is more developed in her second work *Eva’s Man*. In fact, in some ways, *Eva’s Man* is a companion work. The theme of hate and the desire are repeated and the themes of sexual exploitations and oral sex are reflection of a woman’s hostility and her power to kill. The vision remains one of horror.

Toni Morrison is therefore correct in saying that Jones’s writing is “an exception to black women’s writing” in that it is “never .... about joy.” (Wade-Gayles 1984:175)
Gloria Wade-Gayles (ibid: 175) further comments about the tragic element in the novel:

There is not only absence of joy..... there is also preoccupations with raw and crude sexual lust, sexual profanity, and mirror is broad enough to reflect everything that happens in the netherworld of sex. Like an female erotic novel, it reads like the script of X-rated movie.

Gloria Wade-Gayles (ibid :176) further argues, that the novel reveals the victimization of black woman by black man:

The novel is an exception to black women's writing also because it emphasizes sexual victimization almost to the exclusion of any interest in racial oppression. ...... The black man's brutal victimization of the black women is the major chord in her work.

In an interview with Michael Harper in the Massachusetts Review, Gayl Jones describes her novel as a “horror story” that starts with “the telling and some times the answers come out of the telling” (Michael Harper 1977:701)

Eva recalls from the prison cell the scene that opens the novel with the arrival of the police on the spot who find proofs of Eva’s crimes and the horrified land lady of the hotel. It also reveals how a press article showed Eva with an uncombed hair like a ‘wild woman.
The novel opens with the representation of Eva’s crime in the media and its popular reception.

Like Trueblood in Ralph Ellison’s Invisible man (1973) the site of Eva’s violent and aberrant sexuality becomes a space for occult ritual.
Her crime undergoes a bizarre reenchantment, or retelling. The repetition of telling her crime acts like a narcotic. Eva grumbles, “They (the people) want me to tell it (the crime) over and over again” (4)

Elvira is the woman in the same cell with Eva. Eva’s cellmate at the psychiatric prison. Eva is not allowed to go out like Elvira and other prisoners because they’ve got more control than her; and because of the nature of the crime that Eva committed before she was brought here.

The details submitted by the captain in the court throw light on her earlier life. The captain looked at the paper and then said:

Eva’s been in the trouble before, when she was seventeen she stabbed a man she wouldn’t talk them either, wouldn’t say anything to defend herself. She was given a six month sentence. She spent the first three months in a girl’s reformatory, and then she was old enough to be fingerprinted and put in prison for the remaining three months. She wouldn’t even tell why she stabbed him. The man claimed, ‘I wasn’t doing anything but trying to buy the woman a beer’ She was married in 1955 to a man named Hunn. Last job she had was in a tobacco factory.

Some people who were at the trial thought Eva a whore because of her crime. But that was the easiest answer according to Eva. Many people including the psychiatrists and people from newspapers approach her and ask her the reasons behind the crime. Eva tells the reader at the beginning of her narrative how her questioners want to hear about;
At first I wouldn’t talk to anybody. All during the trial I wouldn’t talk to anybody. But then, after I came in here, I started talking. I tell them things that don’t even have to do with what I did. But they say they want to hear that too... I know I am not getting things straight, but they say that’s all right, to go ahead talking. Some times they think I’m lying to them, though. I tell them it ain’t me lying, it’s memory lying. I don’t believe that, because is still as hard on me as the present, but I tell them anyway. They say they’re helping me. I’m forty three years old and I ain’t seen none of their help yet. (5)

But the psychiatric institution finds an “easiest answer’ for her aberrant acts of madness. The psychiatrists try go after same predictable motivation for human behaviour.

Eva resists the straightforward interpretations the official speakers want to impose on her. As her cell-mate Elvira observes, the authorities, need to see her as crazy, to explain her in this way:

“Now, you ain’t crazy. When you first come you was crazy, but you ain’t crazy now. They gon keep thinking it, though. ‘Cause its easier for them if they keep on thinking it. A woman done what you done to a man”. (41)

From this psychiatric prison cell Eva recalls the memories of her life. She remembers the crime that she committed five years ago when she was thirty eight years old. But too Eva it doesn’t seem that long...... It doesn’t seem like five months ago. She remembers the last event of

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sexual exploitation that led her to the heinous crime of poisoning and castrating her lover Davis carter.

Eva comes to know Davis in a hotel where she is listening to a blues singer. Eva is married but now a free woman and lives in Kentucky. When they are introduced to each other, Davis, who is from South asks her if she is afraid of him like the old woman of thirty was scared of Davis who was only fourteen. This question sets Eva on the trial of various memories of molestations in her as well as the lives of other women related to her. Davis’s question reminds her the first molestation by a boy who deflowered her with a dirty popsicle stick when she was just five years old.

Davis’s question also reminds Eva the male gaze or attitude towards looking Eva. It is Eva who first noticed Davis, who looked like her husband in his youth. Davis thought that Eva was sitting in the dark corner of the hotel is whore. Elvira also tells Eva that these people think Eva a whore. They think that Eva as a whore attracts, bewitches the people. Davis also thinks that Eva is probably in the habit of sitting there in the dark corner just so men would come to her. This idea brings to her mind another incident of molestation by a car owner who thinks Eva to be a ‘bitch.’ The car owner brings his car to the corner of the street where Eva is standing lonely. He thinks Eva a whore and opens the doors of the car thinking she may come in with him. But Eva’s cold response enrages him and slamming the door of the car he
drives away quickly. Eva experiences and witnesses the car owner's evil way of looking at her when the buses were on strike.

Sometimes the molestations and abuse that Eva suffers from the black males is interrelated with other black women. Gayl Jones is representing Eva and other black women who suffer from sexism as tokens or representatives of entire black womanhood and the different black male abusers are representatives of black community. Gayl Jones was castigated for such negative stereotypes of black feminism. She was criticized for the negative portrayals of characters like Eva who poisons and castrates her lover, Davis Carter, a black man. The simplest possible answer that was deduced or inferred that Davis represented all her black male abusers. Here again Gayl Jones was criticized for the negative delineation of black males as rapists. The predicament of Eva and Miss Billie, her mother 's friend for example is similar in the sense that both as black women have suffered sexual abuse from the same black man Mr. Logan.

Miss Billie describes how Mr. Logan, who was a carpenter, molested her when she was a five or six years old. She further advises Eva not to let that old man mess with her. She tells Eva that one cannot forget the first man that abuses you.

Eva thinks about the first male that abused her. He was a little boy called Freddy Smoot. He lived in the same building. He deflowered Eva with this dirty popsickle stick when they were playing
in the empty apartment. Eva was five years old at that time. Eva is always afraid of Freddy after that. Whenever he finds a chance he molest her. Miss Billie says that the boys are ‘bunch of wild horses’. When Freddy leaves New York for Jamaica with his mother, a woman of loose character, he presents Eva a little pearl handed pocketknife.

The next man that comes in Eva’s life and abuses her is Tyrone, a musician, when she’s twelve years old. Here Eva’s story is related with her mother. Tyrone comes in Eva’s life through her mother. Eva’s mother has illicit relations or an affair with Tyrone. He was ten years younger than Eva’s mother. Eva’s father comes to know of it but keeps silent for proof as he worked at a restaurant and come home late. These relations had an adverse impact on Eva. But when Tyrone began to come home with Eva’s mother he molested her whenever he found her alone in the house or on the stairs. When Eva’s mother is busy in the kitchen and his is also with Eva and playing the game of jacks he abuses her. But when he finds that there is no response from her he starts bringing gifts to seduce her. When he tries to grab her below the stairs Mr. Logan who sees them and cries, “Hoot.” As he was also an evil eye on Eva. She escapes from Tyrone.

Eva’s father is incensed to find her mother’s adultery with Tyrone. When he finds both of them sitting together he makes Tyrone to go out and vents his anger on his wife. Eva describes the incident vividly that depicts the domestic abuse in the married relationship of her parents:
But now he was tearing that blouse off and those underthings. I didn’t like hear nothing from her the whole time. I didn’t hear the thing from her.

"Act like a whore, I’m gone fuck you like a whore. You act like a whore, I’m gonna fuck you like a whore".
He kept saying that over and over. I was so scared I kept feeling that after he tore off all her clothes off and there wasn’t any more to tear, he’d start tearing her flesh. (37-38)

When Eva is seventeen years old another similar incidence happens. This incidence is related to Eva and Jean. Here the culprit is Alfonso her cousin. Alfonso and his wife Jean and his brother Otis come to live in New York, from Kansas city and they stayed at a hotel.

When Alfonso is trying to mess with Eva at the restaurant, they come across a man in the late fifties...the thumb of his left hand is missing, having evil intentions. When Eva resists Alfonso’s advances he leaves her alone in the hotel. So finding her alone at a table, the man with the thumb of his left hand missing approaches her. He is old enough to be her father, to be her grandfather. He is Moses Tripp.

Finding her alone Moses Tripp tries to molest her so Eva defends her self with the knife that Freddy Smoot has gifted her. She stabs Moses Tripp’s wrist. Eva is arrested and sentenced for six months imprisonment. She is sent to a reformatory and then to prison. She didn’t defend herself in the court but simply accepts the punishment.
The next man Eva comes to know and who maltreats her in her husband James Hunn 'Hawk'. Eva is sent to a reformatory under the charge of attacking Moses Tripp, because she is a minor. But later on she is sent to a prison where she comes to know James Hunn, who is fifty two years old when Eva marries him after the completion of her imprisonment and Eva is eighteen years old. When Eva is imprisoned her parents come to see her regularly in the beginning but later on they stop coming as the relations are strained. So James Hunn, who is imprisoned under the charge of murder of man over a woman is the only man she can talk to. James Hunn continues to visit Eva after his imprisonment is over. So they get close to each other and the result is their marriage.

But the real trouble didn’t start until Eva and James Hunn moved down to Kentucky. Eva was enrolled in a school. Nothing went wrong till they moved to a house where there was a telephone. James Hunn wanted the telephone to be disconnected but Eva wanted it. Having been asked the reason he said that he didn’t want Eva’s lovers calling her. So finally the telephone was disconnected. That was the first sign of his anger and possessiveness. Eva lived for two year with him. But Eva began to notice that he was an old man older then the teacher in the school. He was a watchman. He argued that he was too old to have children.

James Hunn vented his real anger when he finds Eva talking to her schoolmate at home. He told the boy to get out. Then he reached over and grabbed her shoulder and started slapping her and shouted:
“You think you a whore, I’ll treat you like a whore. You think you a whore, I’ll treat you like a whore.

... Think I can’t do nothing. Fuck you like a dam whore.
“Naw I’m not lying. “He said, “Act like a whore, I’ll fuck you like a whore. Naw, I’m not lying.” (163)

This reminds us of the abuse of Eva’s mother by her father.

Another character that bespeaks the sexual abuse is Joanne, a case of child molestation, who said:

“You know the first time they discovered me in a truck with an old man. He asked me to get up in the truck and he said he would give me money. He didn’t do nothing but ‘handle me’. That’s what the court said, ‘handle he and gave her some money.’ I wasn’t nothing but four years old.” (151)

Eva also comes across a passenger in bus who tries to seduce her. He also tries to offer fruits and sweets to her but Eva does not respond positively so he gets off the bus.

The man in the office also tries to molest Eva and so do children in the streets.

Fascinated by the intercourse but too young for actual physical intercourse. Freddy substitutes a dirty popsicle stick to explore Eva’s genital area. Freddy a prepubescent boy uses pocket knife as a gift which is a symbol of dangerous potency of
male. Each scene after Freddy's points man's domination of women.

John Updike (1976:74-77) and Addison Gayle (1976: 48-52) argue that *Eva's man* is a feminist attack on men ...on black men. To prove their manhood is to read the book too narrowly. Each encounter builds and reflects earlier ones and makes the involvement and the repulsion more intense.

It can be argued that the culmination of these recurrent events of sexual victimization and molestation in Eva's life and in the lives of her kith and kin and the other black women she knows is her poisoning and castrating her lover Davis Carter. He epitomized and symbolized all the women abuser in her life as well as other black women. As has been noted, it is Eva, who is sitting in the dark corner of the restaurant, notices Davis, who looks like her husband James Hunn in his youth. She is alone after leaving her husband. Eva thinks that Davis has taken her to be a whore as most of the men did in her life. He brings her to a hotel room and waits for three days to make love to Eva as she is menstruating. He confines imprisons her for five days. He does not even allow her to comb her hair and clean the room. When Eva is imprisoned for poisoning and castrating Davis the press has released news in the newspapers having Davis's and Eva's photographs. Her cell-mate Elvira shows her the picture to Eva like a 'wild head'. Eva recollects:

He wouldn't let me comb my hair. I don't know why but he kept me in the room and
wouldn’t let me comb my hair. Took my comb and kept in his pocket.
“What’s the shit you won’t to comb your hair for. Ain’t nobody see you but me”. (10)

Eva’s memories about the different women abuser are mixed with each other. As she thinks in a flash back narration her memories about the climax... i.e. Davis’s murder and castration are mixed with her memories of other black men who tries to molest her and other black women. Eva thinks of Davis’s comments about her hair:

“You look like a lion, all that hair, “he said laughing, “Eva Medusa’s a lion”.
“Medina,” I said.
“Medina,” he said, “How’d you get a name like that?”
“It was my grandmother’s name”. (16)

Davis thinks that Eva Medina is Eva Medusa. He thinks her to be Medusa, one of the dominating images he ascribes her to. Medusa having all that dominating mythological and metaphorical relevance-snakes for hair-and her gaze turning men to stones. Medusa has all that destructive force. Eva proves it by murdering and castrating Davis. Here she symbolizes the Evil as she is once called instead of Eva. She represents the evil or the darker forces of death and destruction.

Davies further ascribes Eva to another pejorative metaphor of Eve. He calls her ‘Eve’ instead of Eva:

“Why did you come here, Eve?”
“My name is Eva”.

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"Why do you get so angry?"
"I don’t know, I just never liked to be called Eva. I don’t know why."

Davis calls Eva as ‘Eve’. It is the second important image in the novel. Eve has Biblical connotations. Eve, who is seduced by Satan in the form of snake to taste the apple, the forbidden fruit of knowledge to cause the fall of man and made him lose the paradise. Eva, who is called Eve, by later one bites off Davis’s apple and castrated him.

Davis said that there was something sinister in Eva’s eyes that brought him their with her. He thinks that Eva’s gaze is enticing and bewitching. Davis said:

"There was something in your eyes."
"What?"
"I could tell by your eyes how you felt. I could smell you wanted me."
"I couldn’t help looking." (46)

These remarks remind Eva of the events in the life of her mother and great grandmother. There is something in their eyes coming through inheritance that attracts and bewitches men. She remembers how the gypsy Medina whose name was given to Eva’s grandmother told her great grand mother:

"There’s something in my eyes that looks at men and makes them think I want them." (46)

Davis’s remark also makes Eva think what her mother told her lover Tyrone:

"Why did you come over and say something to me in the first place?" I heard Mama ask Tyrone.
"There was something in your eyes that let me know I could talk to you."
"Didn’t I see anything in the other women’s eyes?"
"Naw". (46)

Davis in afraid of Eva’s look and so he asks her not to look in that way. He repeats asks, “Eva, why won’t you talk.” (16) Eva’s silence unnerves Davis. He sense loss of control. “What are you thinking. You’re not talking.” (126)

Davis asks “Why won’t you talk about yourself?” (67) And “Why wont you talk to me Eva?” Eva simply asserts that she does not “like to talk of (her) self”, offers no explanation but a cavalier, “I just don’t.” Davis responds, “You make man wonder what’s there,” and insists that” there’s more to you than what I see.” (73) He says, “By the time I get through with you, I want to know you inside out.” (45) .....When he falls to draw an answer from Eva he says, “You hard to get into.”(76) The quality of hardness in ascribed by Davis, the psychiatrist, Alfonso and Elvira.

When Eva is brought into the interrogation room her hair is uncombed. It was “turning into snakes” (51). Eva’s thinking of her hair as snakes reminds us of the earlier image of Medusa termed by Davis. The images of uncombed hair as snakes strengthens the earlier image of Medusa having snakes as hair.

Davis does not allow Eva to sweep the floor of the room in which he has imprisoned her. He is irritated at the thought of cleaning the room.
Eva wants to keep the same image of herself after Davis's murder. During her confinement Davis doesn't allow her to comb the hair, snatches away the comb from her, but after his murder Eva doesn't want to comb her hair too. The detective provides a comb to her but she returns it without combing her hair. Eva remembers that Davis said her hair was: "a woolen halo"(64) and Davis doesn't let her hair comb after they make love. Eva asks what if they go out but he says that they are not going out.

Davis says her a dragon and makes her dance, she dances, her hair uncombed, her shoulder careless. She dances and laughs and he sits on the bed and he watches.

There is some similarity in these molestations and victimizations. Eva's mother receives a obscene call. The psychiatrist asks Eva in a similar tone, and Elvira has the same motive:

"How did it feel?" Elvira asked.
"How did it feel?" the psychiatrist asked.
"How did it feel?" Elvira asked.
"How do it feel Mizz Canada?" the man asked
my mama. She slammed the telephone. (77)

The climax of the novel is the scene in which Eva poisons and castrates Davis. There are two inferences that led Eva to do such bizarre deed. First, she is fed up of the confinement in which Davis has imprisoned and sexually exploited her for five days, and so she wants to escape from it, to take revenge on him. Second for Eva, Davis is not only and individual who has
molested and raped Eva, but represents and symbolizes for all the black persons who molested her and other black women she knows. Eva wants to take revenge on him. Eva’s action is pre-planned. She plans to poison him:

“I’m going out” he said.
I went into the janitor’s closet and got the rat poison. I tore a piece of sack and made an envelope and shook some powder in and put it in the pocket of my skirt, then I went back and sat on the bed. Then I sat on the floor. (122)

Eva thus mixes poison in Davis’s drink and food and kills him. As if only to poison Davis is not enough for her revenge Eva performs the bizarre deed of castrating him and uprooting the very phallocentric source of female victimization:

I got on the bed and squeezed his dick in my teeth. I bit down hard. My teeth in an apple.
A swollen plum in my mouth. (128)

The symbol of ‘apple’ connects to the earlier Biblical symbol of Eve and thus brings out the collective meaning of Eve biting the apple bearing the mythological connotations and overtones. This scene also brings out the blood imagery:

“I am not good tonight. I’m bleeding.”
...
Blood on my hands and his trousers. Blood on my teeth. (129)

There is blood because of Eva’s period. And there’s blood due to Davis castration.
Eva's in a mood of euphoria after her crime. She goes to the restaurant and devours her favourite food cabbage and sausage, and returns to the scene of crime. Questions are raised about both her deed but no concrete solutions is found. As it has been pointed out earlier, her poisoning of Davis can be ascribed to her revenge either of his confining, imprisoning and sexually exploiting her for five days or she might have taken him as the representative of all the molester in her life or in the lives of her kith and kin and the other black women she knows. But that is the easiest answer found for her crime of poisoning and castrating Davis. But it is not completely logical and convincing. And in this case also the crime of poisoning is enough, as there is no probable answer pertaining to her second crime of castration. Questions are raised if poisoning was not enough for her revenge. Another not very convincing reason is put forward is that Eva's is a "crime of passion". As there are no marks of wounds and injuries found on Eva made by Davis, it is concluded that Eva killed and castrated Davis because Eva loved him but he couldn't return her love.

In the euphoric mood after killing Davis, Eva enjoys her freedom, and it is Eva herself who informs the police about her crime and gets arrested.

The castration occupies a highly privileged place in the novels plot as the climax, the castration inevitably bears a interpretative weight. The castration scene is marked by the sudden appearance of
italics and by a symbolic and metaphorical overload. Eva offers a series of metaphorical overload. Eva offers a series of metaphorical substitutes for the penis, such as sausage, apple, plum and milkweed. The metaphorical substitution further extends to include owl, eel cock and lemon. Eva’s comparison of the castration of Eva’s biting the apple opens up a rich symbolic field.

There are also possible reasons for Eva’s castration of Davis. She killed and castrated Davis because she did not tell her about his wife (129). The reader cannot however, accept the explanation. “That’s what they said at the trial because that was the easiest answer they could get.” (4) Hence Michel Cooke has described *Eva’s Man* a curt, elided whydunit.” (Madhu Dubey: 1994:101)

There are several possible reasons for Eva’s castration of Davis: his silence about his wife, his physical imprisonment of Eva, his refusal to commit himself to her his stereotypical perception of her as a whore. All these answers are true to a certain extent but do not answer adequately the question of Eva’s motivation. These explanations are imposed on Eva at the trial, by the psychiatrist and by a curious, sensation seeking press and public. Eva herself remains conspicuously silent about her motive, refusing to provide an authoritative interpretation of the castration.

So the castration means everything and nothing: the novel surrounds its climatic incident with obscurity and density, and it is
bitterly criticized. Black aesthetic criticism of *Eva's Man* rises to a shrill and almost paranoid pitch when it confronts the novel's presentation of castration. In Addison Gayle's view, literary and even political judgments give way to sheer personal vilification of the author. According to Gayle it is Jones, and not Eva who seeks a personal release from pain, a private catharsis, which could be achieved only when Black man had rendered impotent (Madhu Dubey 1994:101).

In a discussion with Roseann Bell, Gayle goes even further:

"If Gayl Jones believes that Black men are what she says they are, she ought to get a whole man." (Roseann Bell 1979: 125)

Gayl Jones refuted such criticism. In an interview with Michael Harper she comments:

"I'm sure people will ask me if that's the way I see the essential relationship between men and women. But that man and women don't stand for men and women they stand for themselves, really." (Michael Harper 1979:301)

Jones partly succeeded in her attempt to restrict the meaning of *Eva's Man* to particularly story of particular man and woman. Several critics, such as Larry McMurtry (1976:5), Margo Jefferson (1976:104) have read the novel as a narrow, concentrated exploration of a single life, that is not representative of the lives of black men and women in general. Another unsigned review of the novel observes:

The novel ...is of interest only for its investigation into abnormal psychology. It
does not have the large canvas and social perspective of her previous *Corregidora* (Madhu Dubey: 1994:102).

But Eva remains silent about her crime before the authorities. She is completely silent at the trial and therefore inferences are made about her crime that it was “a crime of passion.” Moreover Eva is considered ‘crazy’ having a criminal background because in the case of assaulting Moses Tripp when he tried to molest her, Eva didn’t open her mouth justify and defend her action. And that’s why she was sentenced six months imprisonment and she accepted it meekly. Her silence leads the authorities to think of Eva as ‘mentally insane’ and she is sent to a psychiatric prison.

Here in the cell of the psychiatric prison Eva slowly opens up before the authorities that the police psychiatrists, media persons and her cell mate Elvira, who is imprisoned on the charge of killing three men by supplying poisonous wine. The authorities representing different institutions in the society claim that they want to help Eva by knowing her confession and truth. But Eva says that she hasn’t seen any of her help in the five years time. And moreover she is not straight in what she tells them. She even tells them unwanted and unnecessary information and she is charged of telling lies and they listen. But she says she is not lying but it her memory lying.

Another charge that Eva is labeled with is mixing fact and fiction. She mixes truth and imagination. And because of this mixing of truth
and imagination the central action of the novel i.e. of castration is shadowed. Eva confesses of doing the crime but her narration puts it in doubt. Eva seems to be telling lies. Eva mixes fact with fiction, imagination and fantasy.

Eva is charged of committing the crime because of her insanity. The lawyer declares:

"I submit the insanity of Eva Medina Canada, a woman who loved a man who did not return that love. Crumbled sheets and blood and whisky and spit." (150)

She is considered ‘crazy;’ and interrogated even by Elvira:

Why did you kill him?
I did.
...
The police report says you didn’t.
I did ... I wanted to ...
He thought I belonged to the streets. (167-68)

Along with the dominant metaphors symbols and images that pervade the novel like Eve, Medusa, Evil, as are explained earlier having the Biblical and mythological and religious connotations, overtones and references, is the image of Queen Bee. This image of queen bee also has negative shades of meaning. It symbolizes the destructive forces like those of Eve, Medusa and Evil. The queen bee seduced men, stings them and kills them, it is not more different than a common woman. It is ordinary and common place but specializes in her evil power. Miss Billie tells Eva and her mother about queen bee that she (the queen bee)
kills every man she goes with (17). Eva think that the queen bee looks like a bee and goes around stinging men but when Miss Billie shows her a queen bee in the street she is an ordinary women like her mother. (44) Eva tells Davis about the queen bee that she is ‘marked’. She had three men and all of them died. When the first man died they started whispering, but after the third one, they were sure. But she was in love with the third man and she killed herself. (71) A women is a queen bee and men are drones (non working male honey bees)

Along with the mythological and Biblical imagery, the images from animal, bird and insect worlds also dominate the novel. They concretize the darker forces already strengthened by the biblical and mythological images. Some of the images from animal and bird kingdom are the wild horses, cockroaches and an owl. All of them symbolize and stand for the wild and evil forces in nature.

To Miss Billie the friend of Eva’s, mother Freddy and his friends the children, playing and shouting represent a bunch of ‘wild horses’. They represent uncontrolled raw animal energy and passion. These children try to seduce Eva, follow her and pass, obscene comments.

When Eva is lonely in the prison cell, she watches a pair cockroaches on the wall. The female cockroach chased by male cockroach-their mating and copulation. To Eva these cockroaches symbolize molestation of the women by men. They (cockroaches) represent the insect world having the similar animal passions like
human beings, they are the microcosm of the human universe drawing parallels in the animal and human world.

The last image of an 'owl' signifies the evil force if sucking human blood. It originated in Eva's imagination of where she thinks that the owl is 'sucking her blood'. It is an old owl 'that sucks her blood under her nails and she bleeds'. (176)

All these images add a trope of violence and bizarreness to the novel. These wild images and symbolism strengthen and make the novel compact powerful and enriching in its intrinsic structure.

All the metaphors, symbols and images employed make Eva to be delineated a 'negative stereotype' representing the African American women. The metaphor of 'Evil' symbolizing Eva or a woman in set against the dominant and positive image of 'good that the man or male' represents, 'Evil' symbolizes the darker forces of 'night' and 'ignorance' versus the brighter forces of 'light' and 'knowledge'. The metaphor of Eve relates Eva as woman being 'seducer' and 'enchantress' and 'temptress' responsible for the 'fall of man' by biting or tasting the apple, the forbidden fruit of knowledge. These Biblical, mythological, religious metaphors enshrine Eva with destructive forces and powers.

The Biblical and mythological metaphors of Medusa a with her hair and snakes symbolizes Eva represents the destructive and demonic forces. It has another Biblical and mythological metaphor implicit in it of 'snakes' standing for Eva's wild hair and Satan seducing Eve to taste

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the apple responsible for the fall of man. The metaphor of snake implies the overtones of impersonating Satan the ‘fallen Angel’ and enticing Eve/Eva for biting Davis’s apple/or the forbidden fruit of knowledge. These two metaphors symbolize Eva as the destructive deed she did. They help to paint her in black and darker hues.

The imagery from animal, bird and insect worlds also thickens and darkens the negatives shades with which Eva is portrayed. The imagery of ‘wild horses’ used for children stands for the insatiable lust of black men and also of black women. The owl sucking the blood under Eva’s nails concretizes the blood imagery of Eva’s menstruation and Davis’s castration. The images of copulating cockroaches the male chasing and mounting the female on the wall that Eva watches in the prison cell symbolizes the recurrent lust, sexual exploitation and victimization in the lives of Eva and other black women she knows by black men. Here the human beings are grotesquely reduced to the levels of animals, birds and insects. The dehumanization of the lives of black men and women to the level of this brutal level intensifies the central act of poisoning and castration and adds gothic dimension to it.

In Corregidora (1975) for example, the heterosexual experience with Mutt, liberates Ursa, from shackles off her family obligation of ‘making generations.’ But in Eva’s Man, Eva’s first heterosexual experience with Freddy Smoot, initiates her into violence after
molestation with dirty popsicle stick, (one of the many objects in the novel that stand in for a penis). Freddy presents Eva with pocked knife. Eva threatens with this pocket knife when Alfonso tries to molest her, and actually uses it when Moses Tripp takes her for a whore, Eva’s stabbing of Moses Tripp leads to her first imprisonment in the novel, an imprisonment that is later replicated when her husband James Hunn keeps her locked in his home, and when Davis confines her to his apartment.

Madhu Dubey (1994:41) comments that Eva’s physical imprisonment parallels her psychological imprisonment:

Eva’s literal physical imprisonment parallels her psychological imprisonment in the male created stereotypes of black women as whores and bitches. There stereotypes serve the double function of constructing black women a powerful, dangerous force; and of justifying the black masculine attempt to contain this force.

Madhu Dubey further explicated the implications of these two negative stereotypes about the black women:

The stereotype of the black woman as a whore, for example inverts black women with an excessive disorderly sexual energy, which then become the object of masculine regulation. Similarly, the bitch stereotype endows the black women with destructive power and strength, the subjugation of black women by blackmen is thus rationalized as an attempt to curb this destructive power (ibid.:41)

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When Eva occupies the position of the greatest power over Davis, as she kills the castrates him, she is actually submitting to the images through which Davis has perceived her. Soon after they meet Davis misnames Eva Median as Eve and Medusa, thus remaking her in the traditional conception of women as evil corrupters and destroyers of men. Eva seems to acquiesce to Davis’s naming of her even at her moments of greatest resistance. Biting Davis’s penis, she casts herself in the role that Davis assigned her to Eve biting the apple:

“I bit down hard, my teeth in a apple.” (128)

Immediately after the castration, Eva assumes Davis’s second image of her:

“I’m Medusa, I was thinking. Men look at me and get hard-ones. I turn their dicks to stones. I laughed “ (130)

Eva also enacts the role of the third stereotype of black women the queen bee, who takes lover and kills them one after another. Similarly Eva takes Davis as lover and kills him. But Eva falls short in the sense that original queen bee commits suicide and martyrs while Eva refrains from doing so.

In his diatribe against *Corregidora* and *Eva’s Man* Addison Gayle urges readers to censure these novels’ distorted, stereotypical presentation of blacks and demands instead, more “realistic paradigms of black experience (Madhu Dubey 1994 :92)
But Gloria Wade-Gayles (1984:178) justifies Eva’s Man on the grounds of its realism:

Jones’s fictive world mirrors the real world
Joyce Ladner and other sociologist have studied.
The press portrays Eva as a “wild woman” (3)
and the general public perceives her as “whore” (4).

Moses Tripp tells Eva:

“One of these days you going to meet a man,
and go somewhere and sleep with him. I know a woman like you.” (166)

Eva’s encounter with Davis, confirms Tripp’s perception of her as a whore.
Madhu Dubey (1994:93) observes that even while the novel militates against the stereotypical perception of black women as whores and bitches it does not offer any alternative authentic definition that exceeds the stereotypes.
Dubey further comments that the novels’ exclusive reliance on stereotypical characterization refuses the realist model of character.

The novel’s reliance on stereotypical characterization provoked John Updike’s (1976 :75) comments:

The characters are dehumanized as much as by (Jones’s) artistic vision as by their circumstances.

June Jordon observes:

“I fear for the meaning of this novel. What does it mean when a young Black woman sits down to compose a universe of black people limited to animal dynamics. Such perverse,
ambivalence contribute to the understanding of young girls in need of rescues and protection. (Madhu Dubey 1994:94)

The novel posits a narrow presentation of black as sexual creatures. All of the novel’s characters are driven by a sexual appetite that is beyond the control of reason. Eva learns to view herself and other black as sexual animals through the education she receives from Miss Billie and her mother. Miss Billie repeatedly uses animal imagery to describe black males. Freddy Smoot is a “banny rooster” (14) and other black boys in the neighborhood are a “bunch of wild horses” (20) Miss Billie’s repeated words “Once you open up your legs...it seem you cant close them” (15) suggests Eva her society’s feminine sexuality as uncontrollable natural urge. The entire novel suggests the association of sexual, natural and animal and imagery invoked through food, sex and defecation. When Eve resists Elvira’s lesbian advances she describes Eva’s “sitting on pot, but afraid to shit.” (40) Mustard reminds Davis of “baby’s turd” (8) and vinegar and eggs of feminine sexuality. Moses Tripp calls Eva “sweet meat”. (68) And she looks at the plate of pigfeet before him. Alfonso mocks Eva’s virginity and says “most girls of your age had meat and gravy.” (57) After sex with Davis Eva feels “like an egg sucked hollow and then filled with raw oyster.” (66)

The metaphorical identification of food and sex culminates in Eva’s castration of Davis, “I raise blood, slime from cabbage, blood sausage.” (128)
Madhu Dubey (1994:95) comments on the synergetic relationship between this imagery:

Confining its characters to this restricted orbit of food, sex and defecation in *Eva’s Man* seems to support the age old racist, stereotype of blacks as, primitive and animalistic.

The novel was castigated for the negative stereotypes by black aesthetic critics. In his caustic review of *Eva Man*. Addison Gayle comments that the novel remains trapped in the negative, myth “borrowed from a racist society”. According to Gayle, *Eva’s Man* envisions blacks as:

... a primitive people defined totally in terms our sexuality ...ours is a world of instinctual gratification where sex, not power not humanity reigns supreme.” (Madhu Dubey 1994: 95)

Gayle’s comment is accurate in the sense that *Eva’s Man* does not overtly or thematically resist the primitive stereotype.

John Leonard (1976:17) argues that the novel obliquely targets white racism as the source of sexual black stereotype. He comments:

The whites took everything away from the blacks but their sexuality, and that distortions of that sexuality are responsible for Eva.

Madhu Dubey (1994:95) observes that *Eva’s Man* fails to critique the stereotype of “the primitive black”:

*Eva’s Man* repeats and recycles a limited number of sexual stereotypes... The problems with *Eva’s Man* then is not that it fails to critique the stereotype of the primitive black, but that
this critique in not explicit enough to meet the Black Aesthetic. Gayl Jones was aware that her ambivalent use of stereotypes of the primitive black could not be reconciled with the contemporary concern with a "positive race images" (Claudia Tate: 1983 : 6-7).

Sally Robinson (1991:167) comments that the three images of Medusa, Eva and Queen Bee used in the novel have mythological and racial implications:

In literally castrating Davis, Eva claims a power that mythologies of race and gender have always assigned to women, at least metaphorically. Throughout the text Eva identifies with three mythological females figures who have common in one thing: they hold a deadly power over man. Eva's identifications with Medusa, the Queen Bee and Eve literalizes the metaphorical construction of the black women as a victim of her own excessive sexuality who is turn, victimizes men.

Sally Robinson (1991:168) comments the most rational explanation of Eva's behaviour would be to see her a murder then castration, of Davis as a logical reaction to personal history of sexual exploitation. Similarly Keith Byerman (1985:183) supports Robinson's hypothesis that Eva's act is precipitated when:

"the epitome of sexual domination is reached: the actions and attitudes of her father, her husband, her cousin and all other men she and other women encounter culminates in Davis's reification of her."
Sally Robinson (1991:175) argues that sexuality is an arena of power relations in Jones's texts it must be understood within the context of potential violence and exploitation. Alfonso is the man who beats his wife regularly, and one male (his brother Otis) observes their working as some kind of "blues ritual." (131) The "blues ritual" suggests the complicity of husband and wife in which the husband wields power over wife.

In killing Davis, Eva literalizes the metaphor of the queen Bee's power to destroy the drones and in doing so she challenges the ideology that has produced woman as a lethal force. Keith Byerman (1982:447) suggests that Eva is an example of characters who:

become grotesque either by being victims who personify and exaggerate their society's obsessions or by resisting its conventions, sometimes by carrying them to their logical and violent extreme.

In her discussion of black female adolescence Joyce Ladner (1972:109) writes that by the age of eight a black girl in the ghetto has "a good chance of being exposed to rape and violence" and this experience plays a decisive role in the girl's definition of womanhood.

The two images of women that dominates Eva's Man. One hardly new and black literature in the image of the 'whore'. The word is used loosely throughout the novel to refer all women and second is of 'bitch'. All men use these words loosely for every
woman, wives or others. Eva’s father calls her mother as a ‘whore’ and every boy that comes across Eva also takes her to be whore. Davis, and Moses think Eva a ‘whore’.

The exploitation of women that began in slavery continued after it and is commonplace in *Eva’s Man*. In an interview with Claudia Tate Gayl Jones explained that the images in the novel show “how myths or the ways in which men perceive women actually defines their characters (Claudia Tate 1983:146)

There is a curse of sexuality in *Eva’s Man*. Domination is exercised by men. Women are victimized. Virtually every woman suffers some attack on her integrity. Men are promiscuous.

Miss Billie tells that queen bee is cursed, each man she loves dies. Every aspect of society family folklore friendship, marriage is presented infused with sexuality. The element of folklore percolates through three images of queen been, Medusa and Eva, reinforces the view that women by nature are sinful; they are responsible for the evil in world. Original sin in a cosmic way has attached itself to the female gender.

Eva is taught by her mother and Miss Billie that men are by nature lustful, and that women can’t be innocent. This psychological training is complemented by her physical encounters. If Eva resists sexual encounters, then she is labeled silly or criminal. If she even appears to submit, then she sill be labeled a whore. She observes such things in her family and marriage also, she notices the father figure
dominant and her mother in adultery. In her marriage with James Hunn, he treats her as whore his possessiveness, refuses to allow a telephone to be installed. Eva repeats the mistake of her mother in bringing her school mate at home, and finds her husband behaving with her wife her father did to her mother. It makes her to think that gender is her destiny or what Sigmund Freud said that anatomy is the destiny of a woman.

Davis is another man to rob her of her humanity. There is something is Eva’s eyes that attracts Davis like the other man. At one point Eva feels as though there are rusty nails in her hands. This is Christ imagery. She has symbolically liberated all women by poisoning and castrating Davis.

He calls her “Eve” (44) and again she angrily corrects him, but he continues to associate her with women who are fatal to men, women whose gaze is lethal lure: “there was something in your eyes”(46); “Don’t look at me that way.” (47) Elvira on the other hand accuses her of Salome: “Just like in that Bible story, ain’t it? except got his dick on a platter” (47) “My hair looks like snakes, doesn’t it?” (77) . . . Eva’s biting of Davies’s penis relates to the event of biting into the apple of knowledge.

Francois Lionett (1993:144) comments on all the cultural symbols in the novel:

All the cultural symbols that construct women as a dangerous temptress, a bewitching snare,
are brought together at the scene of Davis castration.

These are cultural images of women.

Eva’s silence, tremendous as, Medusa’s silence. It is also a culture image. Helen Cixous explains the silence:

Silence is the mark of hysteria. The greats hysterics have lost speech, they are aphonic, and at times have lost more than speech; they are pushed to the point of choking, nothing get through. They are decapitated, their tongues are cut off and what talks isn’t heard because it is the body that talks and man doesn’t hear the body. In the end, the woman pushed to hysteric is the woman who disturbs and is nothing but disturbance. (Francois Lionett 1993:145)

Eva resists her construction as a zombie. Eva is “little evil, devil bitch”(35) a “sweet (castrating) bitch” (64,127,138,13,173).

There are certain phallic images used in the text-the dirty popsickle stick used by Freddy. The measure with a bubble used by Mr. Logan, a carpenter. They intensify construct the phallocentric myth of Davis’s castrated penis wrapped in a silk handkerchief and presented as a “jewel” (49) in the court as proof against Eva.

The various entrapments that she experienced with Freddy, her father, and James have now become a literal prison with Davis. The physical quality of her incarceration is reinforced by the imagery. The bodily functions of menstruation, sexuality, flatulence, urination, and
defecation, all of which the tone indicates are to be considered unpleasant, are accompanied by foods that can be construed as parallel to these function: sausage covered with mustered beer, hard boiled eggs, cabbage woman reduced to the dehumanized object of man’s unquenchable sexual desire. Two observation should be made about Eva’s act of sexual violence. First, Jones’s describes it in graphically realistic terms. Her account of surrounding the act is explicit.

Eva Medina Canada, the protagonist of the novel and her grandmother are named after the white gypsy, Medina and it is very significant. Eva tells Davis:

The gypsy Medina, Great-Grandmama said had time in the palm of her hand. She told Great Grandfather, “She told me to look in the palm of her land and she had time in it.” Great Grandfather said, “What did she want you to do, put a little piece over top of the time.” Great grandmother said, “No”. Then she looked embarrassed. Then she said, “She wanted me to kiss her insides her hand.”
Great Grandfather started laughing. (48)

Madhu Dubey (1994:97) comments that the image of gypsy Medina holding time in the palm of her hand exemplifies her control over time in the palm of her hand exemplifies her control over time, as opposed to Eva’s helpless entrapment in it...Eva tries to recover Mediana’s secret power over time by kissing the palm of Davis hand.

In the entire novel Eva tries to affirm her continuity with her namesake. She wanders from town to town has the mobility of
gypsy, and also draws attractions to her own wild hair.

Miss Billie, a friend of Eva’s mother gives Eva’s mother gives Eva one of her ancestors wooden bracelets when she is five years old and impresses upon Eva the importance of being "true to one’s ancestors." She said there were “two people you had to be true to those people who came before you and those people who came after you.” (22). How can you be true to those that come after you if there ain’t none coming after you?” (85-86) She (Miss Billie) is angry at her daughter’s lack of interest in marriage. Eva alienation from the ancestral cycle is signaled by her loss of Miss Billie’s bracelet when she is eight years old. The bracelet symbolizes a continuity dependent upon reproduction: Miss Billie withholds the bracelet from her daughter Charlotte until she decides to get married and have children.

These metaphors, images and symbolism drawn from the remote corners of the Bible, Mythology, wild insect, animal and bird lives are one of the parts of the structure and style that also includes the language of the novel; as instead of using the “standard English” Gayl Jones uses “Black English” or a ‘negro dialect’ in this novel also like her first novel Corregidora (1975). The four lettered, raw obscene, street language enriching the texture of the novel adds a folkloric dimension to the novel. The first person narration in the novel has the similar direct effect on the reader. As Gayl Jones does not use authorial intrusion in the narration and does not pass any moral judgments on the characters.
Gayl Jones also points out the difference between the author and the narrator and the absence of political messages in her work in an interview with Charles Rowell:

There are moments in my literature as in any literature, that have aesthetic, social and political implications but I don’t think that I can be "responsible" writer in the sense that those things are meant because I’m too interested in contradictory character and ambivalent character and I like to explore them, without judgments entering the work without a point of view entering. Madhu Dubey 1994:102).

The use of the first person narration works to distance the author. The complete absence of authorial intervention closes as within Eva’s mind and compels us to read the novel as an effect of a particular character’s restricted version.

Diance Johnson remarks that Jones seems to record what people say and think as if it were no fault of her ... Perhaps art is always subversive in this way (Madhu Dubey 1994:102)

The first person narration of the novel helps to contain the novel’s controversial thematic material. It is impossible to assessing any truth value to Eva’s narration because as the psychiatrist tells her at the beginning of the novel she does no know how “to separate the imagined memories from the real ones” (10). The reader doubts what Eva says, “Naw, I’m not lying”. He (James) said, ‘Act like a whore I’ll fuck you like a whore.’ ‘Now, I’m not lying’ (163). We know that Eva is
lying; for she attributes to James the exact words that her father spoke to her mother. The very exactness of the repetition here and elsewhere, robs Eva’s narrative of the authority of realism. The use of first person narrative in Eva’s Man like the other novel in the 1970s is a gesture of revolt against Black Aesthetic.

Eva’s unreliability permeates even the central action of the novel, her castration of Davis. The police report and the prison psychiatrist inform Eva that she did not bite off Davis’s penis, as she believes: the very truth of the novel’s central incident is thus thrown into doubt.

Eva’s madness function as a kind of safety value. The use of mad narrator seems to distance not only the reader but also the author from ideological implications of the work. Keith Byerman (1985:99) discounts reading of Eva’s Man as a feminist novel on the grounds of Eva’s madness, emphasizing that “the ideology, the madness are Eva’s, not Gayl Jones’s.” It make the novel a kaleidoscopic jumbling of time. At the end of the novel Eva tells the psychiatrist:

“Don’t explain me. Don’t you explain me.
Don’t you explain me.” (173)

In an interview with Gayl Jones, Charles Rowell comments that the first person as a narrative device is a preferred form in the oral tradition. (Madhu Dubey 1994:104)

Unlike Corregidora, Eva’s Man does not use standard English to mediate the dialect spoken by its characters. John Wideman (1983:81) also
supports this idea. In an interview with Claudia Tate, Gayl Jones remarks that Eva is an unreliable narrator who takes control over her story, but does not put the piece of the puzzle together for us (1983:95). The narrative resists unity. Unlike the Corregidora women Eva exercises a certain control over her narrative; while Great Gram and Grandma speak in the kind of automatic repetition beyond their agency.

Sally Robinson (1991:166) comments that the critics like Keith Byerman (1985:184), Gloria Wade-Gayles (1984:175) and Melvin Dixon (1984:235) opine the fact that all Eva’s memories and dreams address sexual exploitation of women has led to the novel’s critics to see Eva’s act as the logical if extreme and violent-reaction to the overwhelming pattern of male domination of women’s bodies which describes her experience. But according to Robinson such a view puts the critics on the side of authorities. This view is supported by Gloria Wade Gayes. She writes (1984:82)

Eva understands that she castrated Davis and poisoned him because “he came to represent all the men she had known.”

Eva’s silence places her in the margin of hegemonic discourse, as a disempowered subject or rather, object, the Other

The technique she uses in the novel is that the story is told in disconnected dialogues, in dream and fantasies, in fractured time sequences and “here about whereabouts” places in memory and myth, in flashbacks, that take the reader into Eva’s past. In an interview with
Michael Harper in the *Massachusetts Review*, Gayl Jones explains that in using memory and fantasy as well as story telling, she reclaims Eva Medina’s whole past and reveals all the things that led up to ...her relationship with her lover. The skillfully handled first person point of view facilitates this reclaiming and, most importantly humanizes a strange woman as the flashback begins, Eva is resurrected from a comatose state into clarity. (Michael Harper 1977:701)

In the same interview Jones attempts to dispel the notion that Eva and her lover represent a statement on male female relationship in the black community. They (Eva and Davis and Eva’s other male abusers) “stand for themselves really.” (ibid.:700-1) But this disclaimer is hardly convincing in the light of the heavy emphasis on sexual abuse that characterizes all the flashback and all the dreams. The recurring theme of the novel is that black men see black women as sexual objects “bitches” and “whores” who like to be laid and who will accept abuse and sexual victimization.

Loyle Hairston comments that in her second novel *Eva’s Man*, Gayl Jones plunges the readers again into murky depths of her world of sex and violence. *Eva’s Man* is a study in male hostility (Madhu Dubey 1994:89-903).

John Updike (1976:74) comments on the thematic concerns:

Femaleness as experienced by American black was Gayl Jone’s subject in her first novel *Corregidora* and *Eva’s Man*, her second novel continues the exploration with a sharpened
starkness, a power of ellipsis that leaves ever
darker gaps between its flashes a rhythmic
exact dialogue and visible symbol.

John Uplike further comments on the concept of evil in the novel.

Evil is no idle concept to her (Gayl Jones)
*Corregidora* concerned the evil that passed from
the practitioners of slavery into the women who
were its victims and evil permeates the erotic
education of Eva Canada (ibid).

The narrative fragments do not add up to coherent picture of the past,
and the novel thematizes its structural discontinuities by stressing the
gaps and fissures in Eva’s memory. On a structural level Jones makes
no attempts to placate her readers.

The text is rife with incoherence the central act of the genital
mutilation is never confirmed in details. “What I’m trying to say is (35)
and “I don’t remember” (170) and autobiographical “I don’t want to
tell my story”. (77) What African American writes men and women like
Toni Morrison but not only Toni Morrison, have repeatedly stated that
what marks black literature is the distinctive language of the text. This
is supported both by Gayl Jones’s novel *Corregidora* as pointed out
earlier and *Eva’s Man* in their distinct use of black dialect.

Keith Byerman (1985:181) argues about the Gothic element in the
novel: that the structure of *Eva’s Man* is not linear but cyclic. He terms
it as Gothic structure:

In *Eva’s Man* the women does what Eva
refused to do, and this difference marks the
boundary between sanity and madness. Through the use of this mad narrator, Jones denaturalizes and defamiliarize the system of male sexual dominating. Eva, in her blues performance articulates in extreme form the experience of women and rebels against it. Since Eva is obsessive, she exaggerates the oppression and thereby forces the readers to reconsider this aspect of this social order. The effect is a novel of Gothic and grotesque.

Structurally, the narrative operates as a whirlpool in its downward, ever-tightening, ever-faster, spiraling moments. Keith Byerman (1985:183) comments that, as in Corregidora, so in Eva's Man, victimization creates in women significant power. The pattern of the narration are those of madness, time and space displacement, obsessive emphasis on sexuality and violence.

Keith Byerman (1982:447) comments about the grotesque element in the novel:

Eva, the central figure of the novel, who poisons and castrates Davis is, in literary terms a grotesque. But such figure is not used by Jones just to shock or entertain; rather she uses bizarre characterization to examine the even greater grotesqueries of American society.

The grotesque as a literary convention has two aspects found in Eva's Man. The grotesque appeals to be something in as that pre-rational, that defies intellectual categories. The grotesque is deliberately extravagant, distorted, violent, and ugly but strangely attractive and repulsive.
Keith Byerman (1982:457) further comments on these phenomena:

The Horror in the novel leads to murder, incest and schizophrenia. Madness of the central character. Eva’s act, though violent, is a way of resisting the oppression. Eva is an ‘avenging angel.’ Her crime is a symbolic, liberation from the particular grotesqueness of her society.

Eva’s Man applies the conventional use of grotesque. It has some sort of obscenity that shocks our sensibilities. The elements of necrophilia and castration also shock us as the central character’s insane and perverse behaviours.

Defining the novel as a Black Vortex, Keith Byerman (1980:93) comments of the Gothic structure of Eva’s Man:

Gothic literature has long been a vehicle for the expression of the repressed, violent, terrifying, erotic and obsessive aspects of human experience that could not be articulated elsewhere. As a popular form it is used by such Southern writers as Faulkner. As means of treating the themes of violence, sexuality, obsession and power, its patterns and techniques have been found useful by both women and black writers. An especially powerful rendering of the Gothic is found in the novel Eva’s Man (1976) written by Gayl Jones.

Eva’s Man, though not designed as a gothic novel, follows this structure pattern very closely. The central character Eva describes her experiences that are destructive of her sanity through repeated images, scenes, words. Eva response to her victimization in a male dominated
society by literally excising the root of that evil: she bites off the penis of her lover after poisoning him. This violence is taken as the evidence of her inanity and her quest ends in the still centre of a hospital for the criminally insane. She is last seen speaking to and uncertainly enjoying sexual favours from mirror image character, Elvira. Her journey has been through a Gothic whirlpool (ibid.: 9)

The structure of Eva’s Man reflects Jones’s interest in abnormal psychology. In an interview with Claudia Tate Gayl Jones explicates it:

The person who is psychotic might spend a great deal of time on selected items, so there might be a reversal in the relative importance of the trivial and what is generally though of as significant. In Eva’s mind, time and people become fluid. Time has little chronological sequence, and the characters seem to coalesce into one personality (Claudia Tate 1979:146)

The story is told only from Eva’s point of view, thus there is not only the increasing structural intensity of the events but of the madness of the narrator. The fluidity and coalescence mentioned above are necessary to the creation of this mad narrator and her mad tale. The chapters become shorter and more condensed as the narrative progress.

Eva’s has no faith in the authorities including the police, the psychiatrists and the lawyers. They claim that they want to help her but she has not seen any help coming in five years. She calls the psychiatrists Dr. Frauds. The psychiatrists name Davis Smoot makes her chuckle and reminds her of her two molesters-Davis Carter and
Freddy Smoot. When Dr. Davis Smoot tries to explain the things to Eva she sharply snaps him and cries”. Eva is angry because the psychiatrist tries to seek some explanation from Eva for her action.

Sally Robinson (1991:178) comments on Jones’s exploration of the sexual exploitation of black women:

Jones is more interested in exploring the sexual exploitation of the black women than in looking at the victimization of the black man as rapist. Nevertheless *Eva’s Man* contains exaggerated representations of black male sexuality.

Sabine Brock and Anne Koenen argue about Jones’s turning of sexuality as a weapon:

Jones suggests..... by her intensive and frequent a exploration of the vagina dentala-myth that women are not only (and not the only) victims of sexual violence and they can turn sexuality into a weapon by exploiting male fears (Sally Robinson 1991:180)

Jones’s narrative performs a critique of a masculine and racist discourses and their positioning of women.

Melvin Dixon chides Eva for failing to acknowledge the “part she has played in abusing men...”Eva persists in acting out with the rules of women predators”. Melvin Dixon states:

Rather that acknowledging the part she played in abusing men....... Eva persists in acting out with Davis the role of women predators. (Mari Evans 1984:247)
Dixon further comments that Eva’s silence is yet another sign of her passivity. Dixon comments:

Eva remains imprisoned literally and figuratively by her silence that simply increases her passivity and her acceptance of the words and definitions of others (Mari Evans 1984:246)

Eva is inarticulate and brutally silent throughout most of the novel as if she is rebelling against language or had just lost her voice completely while filling upon cabbage and sausage and Davis’s penis.

Melvin Dixon argues that Eva’s refusal to speak keeps her “imprisoned literally and figuratively” (ibid.:118) Eva is exposed to and affected by child molestation at the early age of five. She witnesses sadistic/ masochist relationship between Alfonso and Jean, the sexual abuse of her mother by her father and experiences of sexual abuse from Freddy Smoot, Alfonso, Moses Tripp, James Hunn, and Davis Carter. Eva’s sensuality is shaped with environment of abusive men and her negative experiences with them.

Eva is not silent but maintains control. As Jones points out that Eva’s matter of fact style is problematic as there is no sign of moral judgment from the author for she believes in her characters autonomy when they narrate their lives. Jones comments:

...they (critics) are bothered by the fact that the author doesn’t offer any judgments or shower her attitude towards her offense, but simply has the character relate it. For example, Eva refuses to render her story coherently. By
controlling what she will and will not tell, she maintain her autonomy (Claudia Tate 1983:97)

Because of Eva’s autonomy and unreliability as a narrator, we are no closer to a rational explanation of her behaviour. Eva pays a heavy price for maintaining the autonomy, she is put in psychiatric prison. What Eva brutalizes by her silence is the coherence of the official discourses which she attempts to recuperate. This is her “rebellion” and it is also her power, it is Eva’s discursive power. If Eva is indeed “crazy” she exhibits some surprisingly “sane” insights into the politics of male domination, she call the psychiatrists as Dr. Frauds.

Toni Morrison therefore is correct in saying that Jones’s writing is “an exception to black women’s writing” in that is “never ...about joy” (Wade-Gayles 1984:175)

Gloria Wade-Gayles (1984:175) further comments:

There is not only absence of joy, there is also preoccupation with raw and crude sexual lust, sexual profanity, and sexual perversion. Jones’s artistic mirror is broad enough to reflect everything that happens in the netherworld of sex... Like female erotic novel it reads like the script of X-rated movie.

Gloria Wade-Gayles (1984:176) further argues:

The novel is an exception to black women’s writing also because it emphasizes sexual victimization almost to the exclusion of any interest in racial oppression .... The black man’s brutal victimization of the black women is the major chord of her work.
In an interview with Michael Harper in the *Massachusetts Review*, Gayl Jones describes her novel as a "horror story" that starts with "the telling and sometimes the answers come out of the telling" (Michael Harper 1977:701) In *Eva’s Man* a companion text to Corregidora Eva uses pocket knife against Moses Tripp and arsenic and teeth against Davis to take revenge. Jerry Ward observes that Eva’s life history contains a series of sordid, dehumanizing sexual encounters (Mari Evans 1984:254)

*Eva’s Man* is a Black women’s blues song, and it not only "powerful" but "empowering" song. The novel delineates what it is to be woman and to be an African American women.

Gayl Jones two novels *Corregidora* and *Eva’s Man* are blues narratives. In former the protagonist is literally a blues performer, an active participant while in the latter, the protagonist though passively listening to blues singing in a restaurant, is more metaphorical or at the level of the narrative itself. These novels offer a new way of looking at women’s oppression because within the blues tradition the oppression is named and made more tangible.

Jones uses the novel, a Western form, to incorporate the blues to explain and comment on the lives of African American women. And oral form of blues is use to a literary form of novel. Jones does it by using the analytical quality of the blues.
According to Sharley Anne Williams in blues situation mood or feeling is expressed where it is described, commented upon and assessed. The reader has the exposure to Eva’s inner thoughts and one can witness her analytical process as she makes decision throughout the novel (E. Patrick Johnson 1994:28)

Jones explores some of the themes of the aesthetics of oral blues like Eva’s imprisonment, sexual innuendo, broken heartedness, poverty racism and sexism along with homosexuality. Jones infuses an oral tradition with a literary one.

E. Patrick Johnson (ibid :30) compares blues with the gospels and comments that the blues does not prepare one to “wait on the Lord”, to remove the obstacles of life, rather they prepare one to take stock of his or her situation and ponder the next course of action. Johnson further argues that this “analysis” certainly holds true for Eva, as she assesses her situation with Davis who holds in her as a sexual prisoner. Confronted with a situation in which she must make a decision, Eva realizes that this is her opportunity to devise a plan of action, so she decides to poison Davis:

‘I’m GOING OUT’ he said.
‘Bring home some brandy. I feel like that instead of beer.’
I hadn’t meant to call the place home. He must have noticed it because he laughed and said he would. I nodded. He went out. The door closed hard.
I went into the janitor’s closet and got the rat poison. I tore a piece of sack and made an
envelop and shook some powder in it and put it in the pocket of my skirt, then I went back and sat on the bed. (122)

The exchange between Davis and Eva before he gets the rat poisoning is reflective of a dialogue between two cordial lovers. But Eva’s actions after Davis leaves lets the reader know that all is not well between the two. Eva gives an illustration to Davis that their relationship is amicable but she comes to the critical realization that she cannot remain captive. Thus she plots Davis’s murder. Eva articulates her burdensome life having been “done wrong” by the men in her life until she come to the point where she cannot deal with the pain anymore. She evaluates her situation as Davis “symbolically comes to represent every man who has abused her.”

E. Patrick Johnson (ibid.:31) observes that the blues does not transcend a problem as in the spirituals, but calls for action. The blues does not look for a resolution in heaven of feel that “the Lord will make way”, rather, it searches for answers in the tangible realities of life.

Accordingly, the solution that Eva finds is to kill Davis, does not wait God to deliver her, rather, after analyzing the situation, she takes it upon herself to do what she feels is in her best interest. Eva’s behaviour is consistent with the blues ideology in that if a man has “done you wrong” then he must “pay”. Davis is the “sacrificial lamb” as he represents for Eva, all of the men who sexually abuse her.
E. Patrick Johnson (ibid.:32) observes that the blues mode empowers African American women and leads them to action like Eva. Eva take the role of Queen Bee.

Eva's narrative also exemplifies techniques such as hesitations, repetitions and exclamationary phrases and sounds. Jones uses this pattern consistently in *Eva's Man* such that the novel can be categorized as what Patrick Johnson (ibid:32) a calls as a "speakerly" text, for the blues is meant to be heard rather than read. The technique is exemplified in this passage:

I said I don't know how anybody else was going to vote. I said I just knew how I was going to vote. He said there was ten percent more black people since he was a foreman, and that he liked people that should gratitude, I said I didn't know how anybody else was going to vote. He asked me how I was going to vote. I said I knew how I was going to vote. I said I knew how I was going to vote. He said he had some money for me if I wanted it. I said I didn't know how anybody else was going to vote. He said never mind that. He said he didn't mean that. (75)

The lyricism of the text points to the oral nature of African American culture as it intersects with and produces the blues tradition. Language becomes the focus in the novel of Jones emphasizes on what is said but how it is said. Language is ritualized for the musicality of speech grounded in the blues. The reader has to explore the musicality of text:

We are in the river now. We are in the river now. The sand is on my tongue. Blood under
my nails. I’m bleeding under my nails. We are in the river. Between my legs. They are busy with this woman now. They are busy with this woman... (176)

The passage has a deeper meaning caught up in the music. Eva’s mixing fantasy and reality is not a symptom of “madness”, but represents the repetition of a sounds and words as in the blues aesthetic:

Nothing you wouldn’t know about
Nothing you wouldn’t know about
Nothing you wouldn’t know about. (135)
And
An owl sucks my blood. I am bleeding underneath my nails. An owl sucks my blood. He gives a fruit in my palms. We enter the river again... together. (176)

Eva moves in and out of fantasy and reality and that creates the musicality of words. Juxtaposing of the two images may heal the painful wounds for African American women of sexism and racism.

Eva’s murder of Davis is a self empowering experience rather than a nihilistic one. Melvin Dixon argues:

Eva confuses Davis with Alfonso, Moses Tripp, and James Hunn. When she finally divides to be active in lovemaking with Davis by music hard, deep with my breath, it is too late. She has already poisoned him. Eva’s behaviour here is demented and pathetic, a travesty of the successful coupling Ursa of Corregidora finds with Mutt (Mari Evans 1984:119)
Facilitated by the blues traditions, Eva literally and symbolically paralyses the weapon (the phallus) responsible for pain. Like Eva's life the lives of African American women are complex, and are bound between the binary relationship of sexism and racism: rather they are caught in a liminal stage. The blues idiom provides a way to talk about complexity of experience. The blues element enriches Eva's Man like Corregidora dds an oral and folkloric trope to it.

Like in her first novel Corregidora the lesbian element percolates in Eva's Man also. But she simply sprinkles it in the novel and according to some critics does not allow it to develop to full maturity. There are some instances of lesbianism in the novel. Some instances of lesbianism are direct and some are indirect.

Ann Allen Shockley comments that the novels inherent treatment of lesbianism is not surprising, given the contemporary hospitality to positive portrayals of lesbian characters in the black fiction. Lesbianism and castration are the two thematic elements of Eva's Man (Barbara Smith 1979:95) It is interesting to note that the name Eva is contained within the name ElVirA this would seen to suggest that Eva is meant to be reincorporated into a different economy. It is in that space (prison) that Eva can envisage in a world where a lesbian "continuum" as defined by Adrienne Rich (1986:51,43) can replaces the violence of compulsory heterosexuality and female sexual slavery.
Gayl Jones comments on the lesbian element in the novel, a part of blues tradition:

There have always been more responses to the narcotic sensuality in the books than to the lesbianism. I do not recall lesbianism entering into my critical discussions except as part of the overall sexual picture (Claudia Tate 1983:97)

Eva has implicit lesbian relationship with Miss Billie’s unmarried daughter Charlotte. Charlotte doesn’t think of a boyfriend and of a husband or marriage and behaves like a lesbian with Eva.

Eva’s act of fellatio on the castrated and now feminized and defiled body of Davis, a sign of necrophilia, can also be described to the implicit lesbianism. Eva/Eve performs fellatio and takes a bite of Davis apple/penis that causes the “fall of man”.

The most explicit act of lesbianism is performed by Elvira, Eva’s cell-mate on her, an act of cunnilingus or oral sex at the end of the novel. Elvira who makes lesbian advances and finally, at the end of the novel, Eva succumbs to her advances:

Last night, she got in the bed with me, Davis, I knocked her out, but I don’t know how long I’m going to keep knocking her out............... “Tell me what it feels sweet, Eva. Tell me when it feels sweet, honey”.
I learned back, squeezing her face between my legs and told her, “Now”. (176-77)

Françoise Lionnet (1993:133) defines the new breed of black heroines like Eva who resist their dehumanization with the violent end:
Though victimized by patriarchal social structure that perpetuate their invisibility and dehumanization black female characters actively resist their objectification, to the point of committing murder...
Gayl Jones uses a female protagonist and the themes as disfiguration, castration, and imprisonment, feature prominently in her work.

For this writer the end justifies the mans when the end is freedom from sexual oppression. Unlike Harriet Jacobs, Jones has no illusion about the fate of women who take action to save themselves. Jones’s Eva is incarcerated.

A geography of pain that unites Gayl Jones with other Black women novelists. Castration and hysteria are central to the narrative of Eva’s Man. Gayl Jones’s title seem to focus on the man in of the story. It is after Davis’s death that the story attempts to explain without however requiring that the murderess have a believable rational motive.

Biman Basu (1996:194-195) points out how the novel suffered because only of its sociological criticism:

_Eva’s Man_ suffered in the critical and political atmosphere (that reduces African American literature to mere sociological criticism).... The text goes against the grain politically and is disturbing in the violence of both its language and sexuality.

In an interview with Charles Rowell, Gayl Jones states that she does not make any political statements about her works

Come critics would probably want a greater directness of political statement, I don’t like
direct political statement...... The conflict between aesthetic, political and social responsibilities...... involves dilemmas in Afro-American literary tradition (Charles Rowell 1982:42)

One cannot but suspect that she is remained of Zora Neale Hurston’s vitriolic responses to the criticisms of Richard Wright, who did “want a greater directness of political statement.” Jones however adds, “I don’t dwell on it (the conflict) when I’m telling a story” (ibid.: 42)

Gayl Jones recognizes the problem in African American tradition in an interview with Charles Rowell:

That subject is problematic for Afro-American writers even more so women (why many of our early writers scrupulously avoided it) because when you write anything dealing with sexuality it appears as if you’re supporting the sexual stereotypes about blacks. So do you scrupulously avoid the subject as the so-called uplift writers did or do you go ahead with it? (ibid.:46)

Critical views differ about Eva’s act. Some see her as passive and paralyzed by dominant constructions of her subjectivity and others as resisting even disrupting these constructions.

In an interview with Claudia Tate, Jones comments:

The main idea I wanted to communicate is Eva’s unreliability as the narrator of her story (Claudia Tate 1983:95)

By rejecting the coherence of a dominant discourse, Eva maintains a vestigial control. While “autonomy” may seem to be outrageous
misnomer for someone in prison, silence and indeterminacy can be understood as resistance.

_Eva’s Man_ offers a series of instances of abuse which may credibly culminate in Davis Carter’s representing status. Her rebelling in poisoning and castrating Davis is not against and individual but a larger structure of power. The institutional forces—law enforcement, judicial and psychiatric...have specific contours “domestic abuse,” “crime of passion”, unfaithful deceitful lover,” “unrequited love,” “mad women” “parental neglect/abuse” “insatiable lust,” and representative” criminal.

Edward Said’s postcolonial theory is useful in studying black women’s fiction as Eva is racial, gendered and sexual Other.

_Eva’s Man_ is not pleasant novel but an extremely disturbing one. Gayl Jones calls it a “horror story” in an interview with Michael Harper (Michael Harper 1982:361) as a response to oppression murder and mutilation may not be justifiable, but he novel points out how the oppressed subject might negotiate these structures of violence...Dismantling of a phallocentric structure. Eva’s act of covering Davis’s penis in a silk handkerchief and further being kept by the authorities in the ice box and presented in the court as a jewel' represent the phallocentric order.

Eva performs an act of fellatio of Davis after poisoning as Ursa does on Mutt in _Corregidora_ but her Eva castrates and defiles his dead body.
The novel uses stream of consciousness technique like Corregidora. There are several passages by Eva in the novel that read like interior monologues. Where Eva says, “yes I was hurt by my love. My soul was broken...” (143). And in another place, the author describes Eva’s sense of loneliness and neglect:

She stands naked on the street. She asks each man she sees to pay her debt. But they say they owe her nothing” (144)

Two observation should be made about Eva’s act of sexual violence. First Jones describes it in graphically realistic terms. Her account of surrounding the act is explicit. Eva’s crime reflected a national trade the rise in violent crimes of the sixties. Eva’s Man castigated by the critics for its delineation of the negative stereotype of Eva, though illogically is a complex novel portraying a rich and varied life of African American women.

The artistic and tragic vision as reflected in Gayl Jones two novels: Corregidora and Eva’s Man reflects the multidimensional contours of the lives of African American women. Corregidora, a neo slave blues world song deeply embedded in history depicts the tragic lives of Ursa Corregidora and her foremothers. Eva’s Man a companion text to her earlier novel in many ways like it vividly critiques the sexual subjugation and victimization of Eva, and other black women by black men. Both these novels are artistic commentaries on the multiple jeopardy of race, gender, class and sexual preference in which the African American women are trapped.

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