

# Conceptualization of Violence in Toni Morrison's Jazz

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*“Where there is no human connection there is no compassion. Without compassion, then community, commitment, loving, kindness, human understanding and peace all shrivel. Individuals become isolated, the isolation turns to cruelty and tragedy hovers in the form of domestic and civil violence” - Susan Vreeland*

## **Introduction**

The 1992 historical novel, *Jazz* by Toni Morrison is mostly narrated in Harlem during the 1920s. Through exploring the past of various characters both male and female, Morrison exposes the panic stricken brutal realities of the black urban existence and life of woman in a society like America. This paper gives a deep insight into the theme of violence; its subset collocation among various characters and analyses the victimisation and emotional traumas put up with characters like Violet, Joe, Dorcas, Alice Manfred, Vera Louise, Golden Gray, the unnamed Dark Lady and Wild. Love and obsession are the two side of a same coin, similar in certain aspects but varied in its form and nature. Love is soothing, supportive and an uncontrollable feeling when a person wants best for his/her loved ones even if they are not part of their lives, whereas obsession is an insane, violent feeling that is capable of hurting others with the clutchers of manic love. The awful and appalling love in Morrison's novel is accomplished with psychological, social, historic, cultural and economic ingredients of urban Black life. Its lion portion is the manifestation of a corrupted culture in its racial past and present. Several external forces transform the conventional “signifiers” of cruelty and evil into jestus of extra ordinary and brutal love-incestuous rape, infanticide and murder, not only

articulate the immorality committed by the dominant culture, but also by the “the other”. The novel’s plot emerges from a series of action including emotional anguish, marital infidelity, psychological struggles, love, revenge and enmity. This appears to be the kernel from which every ill and brutal activities germinates.

The theory of violence can be scrutinized as a condition of human nature which includes psychobiological and temperamental vulnerabilities as an instinct. Violence can also be the consequence of a damaged psyche including various interrelated traumatic conditions as exposed through the characters in *Jazz*. This novel suggests that violence is not an enduring lumb of humanity. Almost all the characters in *Jazz* are either victims of violence or being victimised by the brutal deeds of some other characters. Women’s aggressive acts are much less likely to be violent and are often defensive reactions. In several cases where women do inflict serious or fatal violence on others is usually in response to years of hidden psychic traumas, domestic abduction, isolation and mental torments. “*Violence commands both literature and life and violence is always crude and distorted*” (Ellen Glassow)

The study aims to project major and some minor characters and through them a trail to give varied colours to the concept and meaning of violence. Violence is being portrayed in a complex level which not only indicates physical harm and psychological pestering but can also examine in an extensive concept of obscuring the reality. Defacing ones individuality, neglecting responsibilities, foeticide, sexual assault, causing injury, questioning ones identity, causing desperation and hopelessness, abandonment, creating fear, murder, transgression of truth all these can be analysed as genres of violence and brutality. The repetition of “Violence” is comprehended throughout the novel which is structured as an overcoming of abandonment, domestic violence slavery and rejection.

Toni Morrison’s protagonist, Violet well known for her extends of revenge and willpower is also a strong investigator who shrewdly and tactfully gathers all information pertaining to Dorcas. Exploring Violet is like “watching an old street pigcon pecking the crust of a sardine sandwich that cats left behind”. As the story unfolds, the readers are exposed to the scene of Violet and her husband Joe taking turns to throw off the bed covers, “rise up from the sagging mattress and tip toe over cold linoleum”. The words of Martin Luther King that “at the centre of non-violence stands the principle of love” is to be recollected at this juncture. The significance of this quote is that the deterioration of love between Violet and Joe ended up in violence, thus making their life sterile. The only living presence in the house is the photograph of a bold, unsmiling girl staring from the mantle piece. The mantle over the fire place was once decorated with “shells and pretty coloured

stones". All of that has gone and now "only the picture of Dorcas Manfred sits there in a silver frame waking them up all night". Even after Dorcas's homicide, her intangible presence makes Violet's life a consequential one. Her revenge and anger remains perceptual and "a dead girl's face has become a necessary thing for the night". The author calls attention through Violet that "violence" is typically not intentional but rather a problem of impulse. Her deeds of brutality are the consequences of psychoanalytical traumas that are possessed through unconscious thoughts, feelings, desires and memories.

Violet endured deeply during her childhood days. She was abandoned by her father, grown up among four siblings and a single mother and has strong emotional ups and downs. She could not express herself and was deprived of her own individuality. These inner sores appends to the character with her mother Rose Dear's suicide. Eventually under the guardianship of her grandmother, she reverted her sentimental instabilities and insecurities into willpower and hard heartedness as she started to work in the fields in Vesper County and earn her livelihood. Like her husband Joe, Violet is also a victim of negligent and invisible father and was forced to live a life unprivileged of mother's love.

In the inception Violet seems to be angry and revengeful towards Dorcas. She has an illicit relation with Joe. So she comes right at Dorcas's funeral "to nasty and to dishonor her". It is obvious that the words of Dorcas's aunt Alice Manfred is hallmarked. "Thus she changed the whole point and meaning by ruining the service". "To out her dead face" is Violet's distinct intention but she could only make a lesion behind her earlobe. The picture of Dorcas given by Alice Manfred seems to be appreciating for Violet, before she comes to know her relationship with Joe. She looked "calm" without smile but was "very bold and looked alive". But noe, the same photograph looks "greedy, haunty and very lazy". At one point of time, Violet discovered another Violet in her. "That Violet" as she mentioned is violent enough to attack a dead girl. She out rightly attacks the "cream-at-the-top-of-the-milk pale face" of Dorcas even after her murder. "That Violet" is jealous of the coal black eyes of light skinned Dorcas. The user boys threw out "that Violet" of the church during the funeral. She is exposed to all sorts of ignorance and criminality, peace, music and colors. The fact that a sense of fear haunting the inner self of people especially the Blacks avenues them to undertake certain delinguent reactions. The fear inherited in the subconscious of Violet redirected her to commit the criminal act. The transformation of Violet's name to the sobriquet "Violent" ironically strokes the prehistoric urge for her survival.

"The Burial of the Dead" is the title of the first section of T.S. Eliot's poem *The Waste Land*. It is a reference to the burial service at the Church of England. The negative

assessment of human experience permeates the poem. Toni Morrison's *Jazz* opens with a reference to a real "burial of the dead". The vision of human life characterised by a death-in-life of almost all the characters, for the most part Violet is significantly projected. Dorcas Manfred is dead, Joe Trace killed her, Violet interrupted the funeral and cut the dead woman's face. Violet and Joe is haunted by "memory and desire" similar to the "city dwellers" in Eliot's *The Waste Land*. Thus they face destruction and are forced to commit violent acts. Violet always lives in "memories". Desperate search for love, estrangement, silent sufferings and emotional isolation are experiences of Violet and Joe that can be compared to "A Game of Chess" suggested in the second section of *The Waste Land*. Toni Morrison employs a significant concept of *The Waste Land* for the purpose of drawing the characters of Violet and Joe. Toni Morrison literally improvises upon the two enigmatic passages for the same. But the line, "cracks and reforms and burst in the violent air" retouched the real character of Violet to suit her very nature unconditionally. Similarly "violet air" and "violet light" are connected to the violence that projected the character of Violet. The line 367 in *The Waste Land* "murmur of material lamentation" refers to the crucial details of Violet's life.

Before the appearance of Dorcas, Violet's house is full of music. The birdcages are full and splendour stick on to the house. She has arranged mirrors for the birds to look at themselves. The symbolic portrayal of urban race is picturized as "caged birds". Through 'mirror', the protagonist's deep desire to express herself against the atrocities of the whites is presented. Like wise caged birds are synonyms of the violence shown towards the suppressed coloured race.

Violet like Joe and Dorcas lost parents at an early stage of life. Dorcas is being nurtured by her aunt Alice Manfred. Similarly Violet's grand mother True Belle fostered her. Joe's arrival adds colours and music to Violet's life. Violet, the victim of lost childhood is deprived of parent's love especially her father. Aggressiveness and vengeance started governing her, once she felt isolated and left barren. Because Joe abandoned her like her father but for a span of three months. Her father's physical and emotional absence contradicts with Joe's psychological absence of love that seems to be "fading" day by day. So is her inner conscious that eagerly pressurizes her to beat or hit Dorcas in "silver frame". This irked her so painfully and prompts to make queries to Alice Manfred about her niece and Joe, "Then what? What he sees in her?". It is generally assumed that being thrown out of the church after cutting the face of dead Dorcas will be "the end of it" the "shame and all". But it isn't. Violet goes to the extent of releasing her caged birds especially the unnamed parrot

which used to tell her “I love you”. This unnamed parrot is Violet’s living image and wishes to spread love, music and peace in the life of others particularly of Joe’s. As the parrot’s “I love you” is unbearable for Violet, her love seems to be unbearable for Joe, for he abandons her in search for another love “comfortable” for him. It has to be analysed that Violet is equally brutal as Joe because she uncaged the talking parrot with hospitality. Its wings have “grown” stiff from disuse and appears to be “dull in the bulb light of apartment. She is aware that the parrot cannot survive once uncaged, as it cannot fly on its wings “that had not soared for six years”. Her emotions are so unpolished as to handle the love, the parrot has given. She never gives reply to the parrot’s “I love you”. The arrogance of the named whites is portrayed through Violet’s violent, unrepenting attitude. This serves as a contradiction to the nameless coloured folk under the chains of slavery. The pathetic plight of Violet as an individual and the urban community to a greater extent is represented as “just trembled on the sill, shivering and barely turning his green and blond head” like the parrot. Violet’s violence of denying her parrot a free and independent life is symbolic of the white’s intervention of the coloured people who are thrown to barrenness and deprived to live a happy-go-lucky life.

Violet is so arrogant and revengeful as she gets going with the outrageous act of begetting a boyfriend. Violet is mean enough and good looking enough to think that “even without hips or youth she could punish Joe”. This vividly suggest that if she is strong and her hops are healthy, she could strongly attack and “cut that mess”, Dorcas’s face. Violet has become so rude and ruthless that she is nothing but persistent and no “wise crack or ugly lock stopped her”. The word “crack” is used in lines 363 and 366 of Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, “over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth” and “cracks and reforms and bursts in violet air”. The very central image “crack” is used by Toni Morrison for the purpose of describing the consequences of Violet’s increasing inability to cope with her haunting memories and her acute sense of lack that itself is a manifestation her “private cracks”

Violet can’t even seek forgiveness about her inhuman act, that itself is violence. Alice Manfred’s words “No, not that. That’s not it forgiveness” evidently projects this and the sarcasm underneath this line juxtaposed with the emotional struggles of “that Violet” who walks up and down the streets creating traffic and the one who has no control over her language “wearing her skin using her eyes” is Violet herself who is originally calm and peaceful. This turning point makes her realise that the real Violet is the one who hauled hay in Virginia and handled a four-mule team in the brace.

In light of all wrong doings, she named herself “Violent”. But the intention of this paper is not to affirm that Violet is “Violent” as she herself calls. Violence is not a part of her

real nature. Her generousness is crystal clear while examining her kitchen. Even all the rooms are congested and dark, her kitchen is “roomy enough to accommodate four people”. The real Violet later realized that one “can’t rival the dead for Love” and “that Violet’s” eyes are hindered by revenge that “Lose every time”. The hidden violence of the protagonist aims at relieving herself from the traumatic experiences she faced as a result of psychiatric illness of insecurity, instability, isolation, alienation and abandonment.

Joe a kind, good at heart man is driven by sadness, isolation and desperation. His wife Violet known by the nick name Violent. His sufferings and inner struggles led him to commit a murder. The deep-rooted instability and insecurities and painful childhood memories prompts him to violate the normal nature of him being kind and gentle. He is also a victim of mislaid father as his wife Violet’s. Joe is such a decent fellow that he never chased women like all the “sweet backs”. Because he is of the view that such an act is surely an act of violence against women. He never insults and ill-treats Violet, which according to him are acts of Violence.

At an adverse point in life, Violet is disappointed of being childless and started sleeping with a doll. Joe Trace has always been relinquished and left barren for years before his encounter with Violet. But later driven by loneliness from his wife, is forced to abandon her. After many years he wakes up from his sleep “hungry” for Dorcas’s togetherness. The recurrence of the word “Violence” used by the unnamed narrator has great thematic significance. The voice of nameless narrator epitomizes the nameless parrot at Joe’s apartment signifying the “voice of the oppressed”. The primordial appetite for survival that is seen in the life of Violet is perceived in Joe’s ego. This essential nature tried hard for the survival of his love relation with Dorcas. Being rejected and relinquished by Dorcas, in conclusion he dissected himself to commit the lawless action against her. The construction of Joe’s apartment is such that the windows have no access to the moon and not even a tint of street light enters through the window pane. This mirrors the life of Joe, allowing a tint of mercy and finer feelings of sentiments his life and attitude. Hindered by anger and desperation Joe commits the same fault of giving up Violet for a period of three months. This is an act of deliberate violence. It is through the mouth piece of an attendant the words “Never get the way” the violence deep rooted in Joe is filmed. As said earlier Joe’s apartment picturizes the state of affairs of both Joe and his wife “The rooms grow darker and darker” is the manifestation of Joe’s inner self which grow complex day by day.

Alike violet it’s for Joe, the photograph of “a bold unsmiling girl” staring from the mantle piece has become a “necessary thing for their nights”. The mantel over the fire place

once decorated with” shells and pretty coloured stones” has gone and is now replaced with the dead girl’s photograph in “silver frames”. This makes Joe wake up all nights. Before Dorcas’s assassination, Dorcas has been Joe’s “necessary thing for three months nights”. The consequence of Joe’s cruelty leaves behind him with sleepless nights even after her death. When Joe first encounters with Dorcas, “his eyes burned”. The unnamed narrator very tactfully projects the word “burn” mimicking the hidden violence snoozed in their relation. This emotional burning leads Dorcas to finally die at Joe’s hand. Driven by sadness, fear of losing his love and desperation of solitude, Joe commits the murder of Dorcas. The mirror kept at Joe’s apartment for the birds very beautifully projects Joe’s mental struggles of being alone, “mirror glancing black at them”. Joe is not at all a ruthless killer. He has been victimized violently both physically and sentimentally. Born to an unknown father, he was adopted by the Williams. His mother also left him in the wildness and their love is symbolized by “fading”. He is deprived of the tenderness of motherhood. His mother’s name “Wild” very clearly affirms this fact. At a crisis point in his life Joe realizes that his mother left him “without a trace”, there by accepting the fact that the Williams adopted him. This self-realisation is similar to Violet’s realization of “that Violet” who is “Violent” in nature. Wild has committed a brutality by abandoning and leaving Joe in uncertainty regarding his identity. Thus lack of love and security deteriorates him emotionally. By adding the surname “Trace”, Joe tries to epitomize the depth of Violence that he has endured. Abandoned by parents he has been a victim of domestic violence. When Joe obscured the reality of having an affair with Dorcas, his love for Violet seems to be “fading”. Joe’s search for his mother is dedicated by the “hunt” that has brutal indication. His “hunt” aims at being a “complete” person by choosing and picking her out. Though a lover, Dorcas appears to Joe as his mother image. He feels “complete” in her presence. The same Joe who fell for Dorcas, exposed her to the world of brutality and gave her up in the wilderness of death. Joe reiterates to Dorcas “I choose you. Nobody gave you to me” His deep quest to attain completion thereby establishing his identity lies underneath. Not only to Violet, Joe’s domestic atrocity extends in treating Dorcas. He affirms Dorcas to be as he wanted her to be and thus questions her individuality. Joe’s control over Dorcas is indistinguishable to the white’s control over the coloured community in America. Personal life of Joe, Dorcas and Violet represent a miniature form of cultural violence. Dorcas repeats the words “he is coming for me” symbolizes the in-depth feeling of fear and violence. But the exact “coming for me” eventually figures out the overwhelming love, comfort and companionship that Joe expects from Dorcas. Joe’s love for Dorcas is not for her to be happy but for himself to become a

“complete” man. It’s Joe who decides how Dorcas “fix hairs” and he needs her to “eat it all up and want more”. Joe’s words “you want me to leave my wife” can be read in different concerns. He is ever ready to ditch his wife for Dorcas there by committing domestic violence. At the same time these words clearly expose his deep desire to “hunt” his mother and love at same time, projecting him to be “savvy self”. Joe lets Dorcas “to draw lipstick pictures” in place he had to have a mirror indicates Joe’s priority in expressing himself. This goes parallel with the mirrors at the Joe’s apartment which is a symbolic representation of all the wickedness he poses.

Joe, Dorcas, Violet are all victims of social violence and mirror is suggestive of social atrocities they faced. In 1917 Joe has brutally been beaten by white men and was almost killed. Dorcas’s father was martyred in a 1917 east St. Louis Riot and hence she struggled hard to get relieved from its outrageous after effects. Violet’s intension of protecting a baby fell wrong on her when the white society claimed her as an abductor. Toni Morrison aims at creating a mirror that exposes the social violence of the white society towards the oppressed community. The “savvy self” attitude of the white society is not at all sympathetic towards Dorcas. The nameless narrator attributes Joe to be “Hawk-eyed tireless and a little cruel” epitomizing all his evils, hurdling the good spirit inherent in him. His evil deed is not at all intentional. Dorcas’s words “sick of you” utterly demolished him and the hidden emotional traumas escalates with her stony hearted words. Driven by sadness and fears of losing Dorcas, Joe circumstantially commits the murder. Joe’s act of desolation towards Violet proclaims that violence engenders further violence. Violet always wants “to keep him in tidy handkerchiefs” but his love for her keeps “fading”. His love for Dorcas, a before supper feeling when someone wants to eat cannot be coupled out but goes collateral and is juxtaposed with theme of violence and recklessness. This is replayed when Dorcas rejects Joe at the party and it prompts him to criminality. The “hunt” for his mother entangles with the “hunt” for his love. As violet realizes her self after accomplishing the wicked deed, Joe himself realized that that period of three months is not real love. Rather it is “more than a state of mind” that rose and drop regularly but after a span of three months, he drops it forever through brutality.

Plato in his *Dialogue: Phaedrus (section 246a- 254e)* uses the chariot allegory to explain his view on human soul. He does this in his *Dialogue* through the character of Socrates who uses it in a discussion of the merit of love as “divine madness”. Violet’s offensive act towards the dead body of Dorcas during her funeral service is just out of her “divine madness” of love for her husband. It is equivalent to Joe Trace’s deadly movement

towards Dorcas by pointing his gun towards her. He is madly in “divine” love with Dorcas, the abode of his comfort and companionship. Their ghostly deeds are the result of the “divine madness”. Plato through his work highlights the merit of love as “divine madness” but in the light of her own experience, Toni Morrison stands in for the demerits of love as “divine madness”. Borrowing Plato’s view the souls of Violet and Joe is as pure as that of the holy spirit earlier but is drenched with stains of sin, blood and revenge.

This study makes ahead with the story line of Dorcas to justify the pathways of violence. Dorcas is an indiscreet girl to whom “every thing was show”. She is impudent and she regards love for action as the notion of love; love is just a matter of vanity for her. The eighteen year old lover of Joe theorizes the nature of desire particularly the African-American female desire through her life. The throughfare to violence is considered at an individual level that includes internal characteristics of perpetrators, their immediate circumstances and the type of violence committed. Dorcas the one, Joe tries to “sear into his mind” is just expressed as “calm”, “generous” and “sweet”. Dorcas’s significance is highlighted when the unnamed narrator says that “a dead girls face has become a necessary thing” for the nights of Joe and Violet. Their lives are so deeply knitted with Dorcas that the mantel over the fire place at Joe’s apartment accessorize the photograph of a “bold unsmiling” girl in a “silver frame”. This very scene is notably an inevitable thing for the nights of Joe and Violet. The decorations on the mantel with “shells and pretty coloured stones” symbolizes the harm and deterioration that transpires the life of the couples. This downturn is the result of Dorcas’s endeavor of having an illicit relation with Joe that shepherds her to breath her last at Joe’s hands. Dorcas once provided “what Joe needed, companionship excitement and connection”.

The cream at the top of the milk pail face of Dorcas whose lips don’t turn down in judgment captivated Joe and his eye’s burning look at Dorcas is evocative and goes side by side with the theme of violence. This is suggestive that even mental harm can well explain and expose brutality.

Dorcas like Violet and Joe is a victim of lost childhood and is exposed to betrayal of love caring and protection. Her aunt Alice Manfred has taken great care and collected her from the miller sisters. Dorcas never felt the warmth of security and individuality. As a young girl she sits at the funeral of her parents and “looks on only thinking of her dolls” just as her friend. The feeling of isolation and insecurity prompts her to get attached to the world of dolls similar to Violet who at one juncture starts sleeping with a “doll”, making Joe isolated

and banished. Both Violet and Dorcas share identical emotional traumas of isolated selves that they never exposed.

Dorcas parents are also victims of violence. They have been crushed to death in the East St. Louis riots. The violence to her father is vividly pictured, “he was pulled from a trolley car and trampled to death”. Her mother has witnessed this scene. She was panic stricken and ran back to her apartment which was “there after set ablaze”. She thus attends “two funerals in five days” and has never spoken up about her mental somberness. The trauma created in her mind due to her parent’s murder made her silent, bold looking and without smile. To get relieved out of the psychological impact, she compressed her attention on her “wooden dolls” and imagines how they must have burned in the fire. In spite of Alice Manfred’s hard struggle to “privatize her niece” violence penetrated into her life in the form of Joe Trace during an “October lunch in Alice Manfred’s house” in which “something was off”. Dorcas has once been Joe’s “personal sweet-like candy”. It instigated ‘Violet’ to commit a ferocious deed. Joe’s love for Dorcas is lampoonic of the snakes that “go blind for a while before they shed skin for the last time”. This imaginary is quiet satisfying as it uncovers the violence of Dorcas herself, Violet and Joe. The nameless narrator brings up story of Eve to “as you saw so shall you reap” that crops up in the violent death blow. Joe couldn’t take his eye off from Dorcas because he loves the “hoof marks” on her cheeks. This is indicative of the violence in love that Joe had. Joe’s first glance at Dorcas with his burning eyes is evocative of her fourth coming destiny. Joe’s word “I don’t fall in love, I rose in it” and “that is the one for you” projected this. “I picked you out” adds on to the fact that Dorcas has been mentally tormented under the hands of Joe. It can critically be analysed in a broader aspect of White folk’s attitude and the ways of terminating the Blacks. Thus mental harassment severely coextends the theme of violence.

Alice Manfred enquires Violet about her husband’s cruel nature “does he hurt you?” but Violet’s reply is sarcastic of the inner qualities of Joe that contrasts the nature of Dorcas by knitting his violent concerns very beautifully. Violet’s response, “He never hurt nothing except Dorcas and squirrels and rabbits too” symbolizes that Dorcas is as vulnerable and soft as a rabbit. Primarily rabbit deals with comfort and is associated with desire and sentiments. Dorcas is so vulnerable that Joe attacked her mentally and emotionally and this hysterical trauma goes to the extend of killing her. Dorcas’s sentiments and desire leads her to sacrifice her life. “Squirrel” is symbolic of Dorcas’s individuality and dignity that got distorted by the violence of her parent’s brutal death and is a victim of ferocity when Joe “the husband shot” and Violet, “his wife stabbed”. Dorcas’s “terrible and nasty closeness” is ferocious which

inturn attacked her so brutally denying her right to lead a happy and peaceful life. Thus, closeness prompts Joe to abandon Violet for a span of three months. Hence Violet feels that “the girl’s memory is a sickness in the house everywhere and nowhere” and decides to cut that “mess” her dead face. Dorcas’s deceptive act of keeping away from Joe and humiliating him intensely demolished Joe when she says “I want you to leave me”. She don’t need Joe neither to be inside her not beside her and hence he hates him to be there is her presence. Her words “don’t come looking for me” that “you make me sick” totally disintegrated Joe.

Alike Violet who begets a boyfriend to punish her husband, Dorcas too begets Acton to take revenge on Joe, who illterated her mentally. He never accepted her as a person devoided of individuality. Betraying a person is really an execution of violence but the reasons for Dorcas’s betrayal of Joe is valid and for that act of treachery she reaped death at Joe’s arms.

Violet knows about Dorcas’s death by her husband but her revenge is still set about. Out of anger and frustration “that violet did the dance steps the dead girl used to do”. Before the murder Violet used to keep the picture of the girl’s smile less “face for a few weeks” just to kindle her anguish. Violet the victim of various junctures of her life is not at all pitiful towards Dorcas. Out of range caused by the “violence of love” she goes to the funeral to see the girl and to out her dead face. Dorcas has deeply been humiliated and tortured by slashing the face of the dead Dorcas with a knife. Dorcas is equally responsible as Joe in her violent deed against Violet in causing intense sufferings by grabbing her husband for a period of three months. But she did “nothing or tried that could equal the violence done to her”

Alice Manfred, the aunt of Dorcas is another character through whom the theme of violence is accomplished. Her concern and love for her niece goes to the extent of standing by her side for her sinful and brutish act saying “because she was young and pretty and took your husband away from you” to Violet. Alice is deeply been “mistrustful of young people and the sinful lives they seem to be leading”. Her overprotectiveness, care and concern for Dorcas tend her to Shelter her from her misdeeds. She safeguards her niece by blaming Violet that she “picked up a knife to insult a dead girl”. All these instances clearly focus on camouflaging the violence of her niece. Rather she tries to expose the violence shown towards a “young and pretty girl” by a wife and her husband. But Dorcas had already been incapacitated with a “bullet”. Alice institutes that Joe and Violet is “the kind of negro couple”, “the embarrassing kind” and unappealingly “dangerous”. Alice hates and blames “the smooth new music”. She is afraid and sought to escape the tunes of

soulful female music. The violence and atrocities created in the 1917 riots tormented her emotionally. This portrays the after effects of violence that totally ruined her very nature. Also she is being betrayed by her husband similar to violet's betrayal by her husband Joe. The traumas of violence created in the mind of Alice forced her to rethink. Joe, appeared to be "cold and silent and dignified" and had come to her living room and destroyed her niece. Her words suggests the extend of violence and its impact on a collective outlook is "truly unsafe because of the brutalizing men and their brutal women". The word brutal is intriguing. It is for Alice that Jazz music symbolises violence and cruelty. For her Jazz is the music that "drops down to places below the sach and the buckled belts" that induces fear. Alice being afraid of the atrocities of the whites not only struggled herself to remain hidden and anonymous but also helped to teach her niece Dorcas to "crawl along the walls of buildings, disappear into doorways, cut across corners in choked traffic". Alike Jazz music Alice divergently suggests the cruelties and violence of the white folks. Hence she disappeared into the cracks and shadows of the city without being bothered by "hateful whites".

After witnessing the violence on the death of Dorcas's father and her mother's "ablize" made her distrust the "cops whites or blacks". Alice reads Newspapers for hours that detailed "rapes, murders and beating of unknown women, men's brutality towards women and children" segregated her from the main stream of life, out and out. Aware of this she struggled hard to safeguard Dorcas from the hidden ferociousness of the society. But she betrayed Alice by her very act of trusting Joe Trace. But he corrupted her and was thrown out to death later. Out of her scepticism on cops, she never complains about her niece's murder. Violet's humiliating act of cutting the face of dead Dorcas disturbed her but the inner pain of violence is alleviated in a different way. In contrary Violet is cruel to the girl having a love relation with her husband; ignoring the actuality that he is an offender alike Dorcas.

Violet's question towards Alice "you wouldn't fight for your man" take shape like the "pop of a toy gun". This query is an eye opener for her and reminds her of the traumatic long-lost struggles that violently affected her long back. Alike Violet she is being betrayed by her husband but unlike Violet, "she had never picked up a knife". Alice's husband abandoned her for seven long months. He left Alice for other women but died after seven months. Her revenge for him is expressed through her words "just the teeth exposed now nothing like the smile that had made her say choose". Her words "maybe she would have done something wild" suggests that the lady love of Alice's husband might have shown violent deeds towards him. Out of exasperation, Alice expresses her grief and anger through "you don't know what loss is".

This study will surely be incomplete if we ignore Golden Gray, his mother Vera Louise Gray, her slave True Belle; Violet's grand mother and Rose Dear; Violet's mother. They are also victims of violence in one way or the other. Rose Dear is brutally been abandoned and tortured mentally and physically by her husband. He isolated the family for long stretches of time. He squanders their money and pushed Rose Dear to great debts and drove the family to utter poverty. In this long stretch of time, he returned four times and made six quilts and as a result of his misdeeds and violence, she has to make thirteen shifts to make her livelihood. The robbery in Violet's family in 1888 made her stop speaking and after four years she has thrown herself in a well. Rose Dear's husband has signed a paper that gives "collectors the right to repossess everything that his wife and children have left the family in utter squalor after he disappeared". Women are rarely passive when faced by violence; even if their deeds are against themselves. But frequently their acts are against others, their own children, the men who abuse them and women who betray them. Betraying one's own children can be an assured act of violence. The line from T.S Eliot's *The Waste Land*, "voices singing out of empty cisterns and exhausted wells" is an implication of Rose Dear's drowning herself in a well leaving her children to poverty, destitute, hardships and lamentation. Wild too committed the same violence by desolating her child Joe soon after his birth.

Golden gray has been victimised by both his parents. His paternal abandonment totally deteriorated him, when he realized that he was born to a coloured man who left him high and dry even long before his birth. His mother Vera Louise Gray has been abandoned both by her family and by Henry LesTroy, the person she trusted a lot. Vera Louise pampered him all these years but ruthlessly hid his son the reality that he has "black blood". This led him believe that he was born an "orphan". She also denied her own claims as his biological mother. The father of Golden Gray, Henry LesTroy is popularly known as "Hunters hunter". As the name suggests, he is symbolic of the violence shown towards a helpless woman and her son. The son has mentally been tormented from the fact of being an orphan is exceedingly inconceivable. Tony Morrison presentably gasped Golden Grays's torments and its repercussions led him slip away by deserting his mother. Vera Louise could have easily explained something about Golden Gray's missing father without obscuring her relation with her son. Anita Desai's *Fire in the Mountain* and Toni Morrison's *Jazz* echo similar thought provoking queries with ravenous eyes to go deep in to the real female subject. Both of them exhibit the status of women, their emotions, feelings and realisation of their own individuality are keenly scrutinized to observe the universality of female psyche. Anita Desai's narration

“It was all a lie. He had lied to Raka, lied about everything. Her father had never been to Tibet..... Nor had her husband loved and cherished her and kept her like a queen - he had only done enough to keep her quiet while he carried on a life long affair with Miss David”. This passage is apt and significant when considering the life and living in Toni Morrison's *Jazz*. The collective violence against almost all the characters mirrors their self on Anita Desai's fictional piece. The indication of the fathers of Golden Gray, Joe Trace and Violet who betrayed their families and never returned home is similar to the situation in *Fire on the Mountain*. Alike Raka, Golden Gray had also been “lied about everything” especially about his ancestry. Neither Alice Manfred nor Rose Dear had been “loved and cherished” by their husbands. Joe Trace also failed to protect his wife Violet “like a queen”.

The dark lady named “wild” is the mother of Joe Trace. As her name signifies, she is wild by nature and her darkness signifies that she has brutally been attacked and abandoned by some “bloody minded” men. Both Golden Gray and Joe Trace were born father less and illegitimate. The narrator suggests that Joe Trace has been born out of rape and Golden Gray out of love but later proved to be fake. But Vera Louise’s upper class white attitude is evident when she says “he is golden, completely golden”. Lindsey Collen, the Mauritian novelist in *The Rape of Sita* presents a strong woman with great leadership qualities remembers her own history and her experience as a rape victim. It symbolises the collective feelings of the suppressed community including violations and colonization. The effectiveness of revenge is questioned by Collen where Sita considers killing the rapist but wonders “would it end rape”, “would the murder help anything or anyone at all? Will it even help me? Would it help woman kind?”. Collen’s protagonist Sita is revengeful to kill the rapist. It can be jointly read with Toni Morrison's character Wild in *Jazz*. When she is first pictured in the novel her face and body is smeared with thick blood, which adds beastness to the very dark skinned lady. Her very appearance suggests that she had either been raped brutally or murdered the rapist who seduced her. Out of her revenge for the rapist, she bites Henry LesTroy’s arm as he helps her to deliver her child. The birth of Joe reminds her of the pathetic memory of she being raped and helplessly out of mental agony goes to the extent of hurting Henry LesTroy.

## CONCLUSION

This study penetrates deep when justifying Violet, Alice Manfred, Rose Dear, Trace Bell and Vera Louise. They are all victims of violence as a part of ignorance dejection, abandonment, betrayal and cheating by husbands, lover and parents. It is through Vera Louise, Tony Morrison fact fully asserts that whoever it may be the pain of dejection and being victimised by violence is the same; whether Blacks or Whites the “pain remains sill”.

The attitude, emptiness, sufferings and brutality experienced by all characters including Alice, Dorcas Violet, Vera Louise, the nameless dark lady is expressed through Vera Louise's mother who is "so full of repulsion the daughter could taste the sour saliva, gathering under her mother's tongue, filling the insides of her cheeks". *Jazz* from the very beginning to the end displays indications of Violence through each and every characters and through the author's recurring use of words like "terrible" "nasty" "bloody minded" "violence" "tormenting" "harm" "evil" "aggression" etc.

Each and every synonyms of violence is purposefully included so as to express that human beings are "very busy being original, complicated and changeable" and it is the solitude that matters in arising treachery, arrogance, wicked deeds of rivalry and finally as the nameless narrator suggests one would kill the others but violence is not raised as a part of human nature. If one don't know how to be defensive and welcoming at the same time, that person can end up out of control or controlled by some external forces. Eliot's voice, "I had not thought death had undone so many" is very much appropriate to Toni Morrison's *Jazz* and is clearly an indication of violent deaths in *Jazz*.

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