The Changed and Changing Manhood and Motherhood in *Jazz*

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*Jazz*, the second book of Toni Morrison's projected trilogy which begins with *Beloved*, is filled with gestures of romantic love between men and women. The heterosexual matrix, influenced and promoted by the industrialization and urbanization of the City and its theme music or jazz, basically works in *Jazz* to make the story possible. Yet it seems that this matrix does not reinforce the old-fashioned sort of manhood or motherhood but puts them into question.

The woman who churned a man's blood as she leaned all alone on a fence by a country road might not expect even to catch his eye in the City. But if she clipping quickly down the big-city street in heels, swinging her purse, or sitting on a stoop with a cool beer in her hand, dangling her shoe from the toes of her foot, the man, reacting to her posture, to soft skin on stone, the weight of the building stressing the delicate, dangling shoe, is captured. And he'd think it was the woman he wanted, and not some combination of curved stone, and a swinging, high-heeled shoe moving in and out of sunlight. He would know right away the deception, the trick of shapes and light and movement, but it wouldn't matter at all because the deception was part of it too. (34)

The note of jazz surrounding the City necessarily sounds cacophonous rather than harmonious. To discuss the cause of cacophony we may refer to the historical and thematic connection of *Beloved* with *Jazz*. Both *Beloved* and *Jazz* take the difficult material of a collective trauma and transform it into "an encounter whereby the narrative becomes a ‘medi-
um of historical transmission’ and ‘the unsuspected medium of a healing’ (Grewal 134). Not only that, there are also a few topics that some critics have paid attention to, such as the man/womanhood or motherhood of women and men in Beloved that hold true in Jazz. Deborah Sitter Ayer, for instance, argues that, in Beloved, Morrison “orchestrates meanings in a dialogue about fundamental human problems: the meaning of manhood, of womanhood, and of love” (201). It is also significant that Marianne Hirsch finds Beloved challenging “the hierarchy of motherhood over selfhood on which her [Sethe’s] life had rested until that moment [holding Paul D’s fingers, Sethe tentatively says ‘Me? Me?”]” (7). Moreover Jacqueline de Weever brings up the topic of the androgyne as its embodiment of “the reality of the racial system of twentieth-century America” and insists that, in Morrison’s novels, “it is not the men who develop a feeling, feminine side, but the women who develop male attributes” (31). Or is it? In Jazz, it is very likely that the men also develop a feeling, feminine side, as the women do male attributes.

We like to think that, in Jazz, Morrison devises a noteworthy dialogue about the meaning of manhood, motherhood and love as she does in Beloved. The aim of this paper is to deal with the question of manhood, motherhood and love and observe how men and women cope with the trouble of their own motherlessness, childlessness and selfhood. In Jazz, this question has a great deal to do with the background of the novel, namely the migration of black people and Harlem Renaissance. So, to make an analysis of the way their manhood and motherhood change and are changed in Jazz, we need to turn our attention to the relation of the City with a special figuration and its titled music.

Aspiring to be jazz itself, Jazz portrays the chaotic, euphoric and optimistic atmosphere of the City. According to Hazel V. Carby, it would mean that the fiction of Morrison, unlike the romantic evocation of the
rural and the folk, contends with "some of the most crucial and urgent issues of cultural struggle" or a struggle that Morrison and other writers recognized would have to be faced in the cities, "the home of the black working class" (175). That is, as indicated by Eusebio L. Rodrigues, Jazz "dramatizes what happened to those born after Emancipation who migrated from the rural South to the industrial cities of the North to seek both refuge and a new way of life" (248). Nancy J. Peterson further asserts that Jazz does not simply attempt to present one clear picture of the Harlem Renaissance or the Jazz Age from a monolithic black perspective, but "self-consciously re-presents the past in order to emphasize that historical understanding must be dynamic and constantly reworked" (215). To make it happen, Morrison "transposes into another medium the music that sprang out of her people and expressed their joys, their sorrows, their beliefs, their psyche" (Rodrigues 248). Jill Matus also stresses the cultural significance of jazz in the 1920s as an integral part of the novel's concern with the painful aspects of African American history: "The music is in the history and the history is in the music" (137).

Hence the significance of writing about the city cannot be separated from that of embodying its music, and they are also related with the presence of an anonymous first-person half-omniscient narrator and the attractive and puzzling end of the novel. Roberta Rubenstein regards the convention of the particularized identity of the narrator as one of the first literary ones that "Morrison discards in order to 'align' her narrative structure with the improvisatory form of jazz," and maintains that the narrating voice of this novel is "intentionally 'without sex, gender, or age'" (155). Similarly Katherine J. Mayberry pays a distinctive attention to the lessened omniscience of the anonymous first-person narrator, because its use allows Morrison to "stretch our credulous acceptance of the convention of the narrator so far that the mask finally slips, and we
recognize that a narrator's authority is only a pretense, his or her omni-
science a logical impossibility that we pretend to believe in for the sake of
the story" (303). Truly the narrator supposedly “without sex, gender and
age” throws out her/his own credibility and admits that she/he yearns for
love in the last chapters. We may figure out that the presence of the nar-
rator with the logical impossibility of omniscience midwifes the optimi-
istic and positive possibility of creativeness and improvisation. It seems
certain that such an act of narration corresponds to the process by which
a couple confronts motherlessness, childlessness through adultery and
murder, and reaches a reconciliation to the City and its music.

I. The Lost Manhood of Feminized Men

In this section, we will examine the manhood of two feminized men in
Jazz, Joseph Trace and Golden Gray. One is a cosmetics salesman
around fifty years old living in New York of the 1920s, while the other is
a thirteen-year-old narcissistic boy, who appears within a story-within-a-
story of the 1870s. Joseph is the husband of Violet, a fifty-year-old unli-
censed beautician, while Golden Gray is the boy of her dream based on
the telling of True Belle, her grandmother. Deeply related with Violet
whether actually or imaginarily, the two men come to be deprived of
their manhood.

As indicated by The Oxford English Dictionary, the definition of man-
hood would be first “the state or condition of being human; human
nature,” second “the state of being a man: a. as opposed to childhood; b.
as opposed to womanhood” and third “the qualities eminently becoming a
man; manliness, courage, valour.” More specifically, Philip M. Weinstein,
by comparing the fiction of Faulkner with that of Morrison, shows us
that Mister or manhood can be reduced to “property, propriety, the prop-
er” and clarifies a racial differentiation implied in the question of man-
hood: "All three of these notions . . . are intertwined components of the mastery that stands behind Mister, and they point to those aspects of manhood reserved for the white Master, denied explicitly to the black male slave and implicitly to the black freedman" (275). The fiction of Morrison, as Weinstein asserts, sets in motion the reconception of the gender economy geared to the patriarchal notions of propriety, property and the proper, possibly nourishing disenfranchised black subjectivity. If it is to be expected that such a redemption works in Jazz too, it remains to be seen how it happens in the case of Joe Trace and Golden Gray.

First we will begin with Joe Trace and see how his manhood comes to be traumatized and disabled by the failure to communicate with his mother. Joe is born, raised as the orphan by Rhoda and Frank Williams with six other children including Victory, his bother and best friend. At birth Joe Trace is rejected by Wild, his biological mother. Wild denies her motherhood and continues to dwell in the cave, uncultivated and wild. The being of Wild haunts Joe until he reaches manhood, marries Violet and leaves Vesper. Henry Lestory, "a hunter's hunter" inculcates Joe the direction "that woman is somebody's mother and somebody ought to take care" (175). In his youth, Joe is picked out by Henry and "trained to be a man" (125). Meanwhile, Joe finds the nest of Wild and visits her three times with his wish to capture any sign that encourages him to believe that he meets, feels and at least smells his mother: "All she had to do was give him a sign, her hand thrust through the leaves, the white flow­ers, would be enough to say that she knew him to be the one, the son she had fourteen years ago, and ran away from, but not too far" (37). Though he attempts to obey the instruction of Hunter's Hunter so as to be a man, the efforts of Joe prove vain. Joe fails to meet Wild, much less protect her. Joe disremembers his traumatic loss of his mother until he "rose in"
(135) love with Dorcas, an eighteen-year-old girl in the City. Thirty years later Joe perceives that he only recuperates his manhood by choosing Dorcas as his woman and even imagining her as his mother.

After his failure to approach Wild, Joe learns a gesture of femininity and practices it in the City. Thanks to the training of Hunter’s Hunter, Joe loves woods but, delighted with the news of dinner that Booker T. Washington had a sandwich in the President’s house in 1901, agrees to move together with Violet from Vesper County, Virginia to the City. While he has mastered hunting in the country, it happens that Joe gets well adjusted to the city life. Joe survives the life of “a new Negro” and attains a relatively comfortable city life by abandoning the skill of hunting and selling cosmetics to women. Joe is flexible so that he could continue changing into new seven times and remain “a new Negro all my life” (129). Motherless and feminized, Joe is totally disconnected from his manhood.

Joe Trace, once an ingenious hunter and woods man, becomes a civilized and sympathetic sample-case man. Joe is regarded as “a nice, neighborly, everybody-knows-him man” (73) by his neighbors. Joe does not even drink, smoke, gamble or tithe. Far from being a masculine and rugged man, he looks feminine enough to socialize with women, especially girls: “Felt not only safe but kindly in his company because he was the sort women ran to when they thought they were being followed, or watched or needed someone to have the extra key just in case you locked yourself out” (73). So that, when he delivers Shelia’s order of her cosmetics, Joe is easily invited to a luncheon meeting of the Civic Daughters:

They laughed, tapped the tablecloth with their fingertips and began to tease, berate and adore him all at once. They told him how tall men like him made them feel, complained about his lateness and insolence, asked him what else he had in his case besides whatever it
was that made Sheila so excited. They wondered why he never rang their doorbells, or climbed four flights of double-flight stairs to deliver anything to them. (70)

Among those women his age mostly, Joe finds Dorcas Manfred, a girl with long hair and bad skin, and asks her for a date. Making an excuse that Violet sleeps with a doll and speaks to only birds, Joe tries to flee from the anxiety of living with her. Joe comes to be “a Thursday man” (49), tells Dorcas “things he never told his wife” (36) and shares “the inside nothing” (37) with her. Joe has an affair with Dorcas, an eighteen-year-old girl, in an attempt to “regain unconditional maternal love in Dorcas’s arms” (Beaulieu 348).

The fascination of the City and its music may not cross out the humiliation of black people exposed to racism but obviously strengthens their anticipation. After joining the history of black migration Joe strives to work “everything from whitefolks shoe leather to cigars” (127), wait tables and then do hotel work in the still racially hostile environment. In the riot of 1917 Joe almost gets killed by the white men who take “that pipe from around my head” (128). Yet the charm of the City makes him brand-new and ready to “lighten my life a little with a good lady” (49). Dorcas, though she bears the burden of a distressed child who has lost her parents to the violent racism of the riot, is also enchanted by the atmosphere of the City. Both Joe and Dorcas eat the forbidden apple or the City itself and fall in fatal love with each other. Jazz and the city life function as the temptress of new love between Joe and Dorcas and stir the hankering to make the gesture of heterosexual and romantic love. With the presence of Dorcas, Joe comes to know “a loneliness I never could imagine in a forest empty of people for fifteen miles, or on a river-bank with nothing but live bait for company” (129). The City and jazz
certainly pump their desires and even transform them into their new “stronger, riskier selves” (33).

After Dorcas leaves him, the City and its music then reawaken the damaged hunting instinct of Joe, incite the symptoms of his depersonalization and turn him against the lesson of Hunter’s Hunter to “never kill the tender and nothing female” (175). In the same manner that he has tracked Wild in Virginia, Joe tracks Dorcas in the City. Joe recollects that he “wasn’t looking for the trail,” but “It was looking for me” (130). Though he resists saying that “the sooty music the blind twins were playing wasn’t the cause,” Joe also confesses “the guitars—they confused me, made me doubt myself, and I lost the trail” (132), which he picks up again the next day.

The damaged instinct of Joe as a hunter is comparable to the lack that the dysfunctional beauty of Dorcas embodies. Dorcas, for her part, misses something both inside and outside:

Dorcas should have been prettier than she was. She just missed. She had all the ingredients of pretty too. Long hair, wavy, half good, half bad. Light skinned. Never used skin bleach. Nice shape. But it missed somehow. If you looked at each thing, you would admire that thing—the hair, the color, the shape. All together it didn’t fit. (201)

Like Joe, Dorcas is detracted and seduced with the music of the City. By the time she gets acquainted with Joe, the whole life of Dorcas has been “almost unbearable” (67). The flesh of Dorcas has held secret “the love appetite soaring inside it” (67) which can be attributed to wood chips that, on her beholding the ignited house back in East St. Louis, “must have entered her stretched dumb mouth and traveled down her throat because it smoked and glowed there still” (60-61). Despite the stern reeducation of her aunt, the City already influences Dorcas so that she readi-
ly yields to “a City seeping music that begged and challenged each and
every day” saying “Come and do wrong” (67).

Intoxicated with the atmosphere of the City and its music, the couple of
Dorcas and Joe must make up for their mental and physical deficiency
and enjoy the romantic and temporary love. The affair only ends up with
his shooting of her, but, even when he murders her, Joe is instantly for­
given by Dorcas. The episode of Dorcas confiding the message “just one
apple” (213) makes her relation with Joe more than an adulterous impul­
sive love. Joe is not charged with the murder of Dorcas and not forced to
serve his time. Later Alice Manfred thinks about the impunity of Joe and
concludes that he “knew wrong wasn’t right, and did it anyway” (74).
Invited by the magic of jazz, Joe violates the rule of “a man’s man” and
murders her only to reconcile himself to the present situation and is
given the life-giving and forbearing sign of Dorcas. Apparently Joe fails
to recover his manhood and yet afterwards he will find a way to survive
the hardships of living as a black sample-case man in the City and the
fakeness of “a new Negro.”

Turning now to Golden Gray, his case shows how the racial origin dis­
 turbs his manhood more intricately than in that of Joe Trace. Golden
Gray is the hero of the anecdote Violet repeatedly has heard from True
Belle, her grandmother and his servant. In this story-within-a-story,
Henry Lestory makes an appearance as the father of Golden Gray and he
also happens to meet Wild bearing Joe. On his journey from Baltimore to
Vesper County, Golden Gray encounters Wild, the pregnant Black forest
dweller, finds her knocking herself unconscious and rescues her. Instead
of killing his father, Golden Gray helps at the childbirth of Wild. Yet the
unexpected course of events does not affect the handicapped manhood of
Golden Gray that derives from his fear of being treated as a black male
with the status equivalent to that of a slave and his lack of self-esteem as
a perfect white Master/Mister.

Golden Gray is the illegitimate son of Vera Louise Gray, the disinherited daughter of a Southern aristocrat and Henry Lestory the Black slave. Golden Gray, with blond hair and gray eyes, is comfortably brought up as the adopted son of Vera by True Belle, his black nurse:

How they bathed him three times a day, and how the G on his underwear was embroidered with blue thread. The shape of the tub and what they put in the water to make him smell like honeysuckle sometimes and sometimes of lavender. How clever he was and how perfect a gentleman. The hilarious grown-up comments he made when a child and the cavalierlike courage he showed when he was a young man and went to find, then kill, if he was lucky, his father.

(142-3)

True Belle recognizes Golden Gray as a perfect "gentleman," but the information that he is a mulatto annoys him noticeably. Golden Gray is to be told lies about almost everything and never be sure of his racial origin until he becomes thirteen years old. At that time Golden Gay presses True Belle for the truth, detects the deception of his mother, and, with the "cavalierlike courage," sets off on a patricidal voyage of discovery. For it is possible that the discovery of the truth about his racial origin deprives him of the privilege of white manhood.

Curiously, despite his attempted patricide, Golden Gray gives us the impression that he is sophisticated and feminine. During the trip to Virginia, Golden Gray exhibits his version of femininity by caring about his clothes all the time. Even when helping Wild, Golden Gray thinks first of his clothes, not her. Golden Gray is, by the narrator, even considered "the vain and hincty pinchnose worrying about his coat and the ivory buttons on his waistcoat" (143) or "a hypocrite" or "a knight errant
bragging about his coolness” (154). On his first sight, Henry also finds that the clothes of Golden Gray would “make a preacher sigh” and he knows from “the ladylike hands” that “the stranger had never made a fist hard enough to smash a melon” (169).

While markedly anxious about his ambiguous racial origin, it is evident that Golden Gray clings to his manhood. Here Golden Gray brings us back to the Faulknarian theme, namely “the re-imagining of the Oedipal.” To borrow the words of Weinstein, “If in Western culture the Oedipal crisis is the ordeal the male child must go through in order to emerge as a candidate for paternity and its perquisites—property, propriety, the proper—then Golden Gray, like the figures of Faulkner’s fiction, could remain “arrested on the threshold of that journey, dancing around a wound that precedes the Oedipal” (280). Golden Gray is apparently scared of meeting his other half (blackness) and yet seeks for reunion with such a shame of his own. Golden Gray uses the metaphor of arms and makes the following monologue: “When I see him, or what is left of him, I will tell him all about the missing part of me and listen for his crying shame. I will exchange then; let him have mine and take his as my own and we will both be free, arm-tangled and whole” (159). Far from sympathizing with Golden's haughty complacent and nonsensical indignation, Henry tells him to make a choice: black manhood or white. Yet, since he is not totally black-skinned, Golden Gray notices that to choose a black manhood is to abandon his self-ownership. The dilemma of Golden Gray lies in his willingness and hesitance to choose a white manhood or his bad conscience of concealing his mulatto blood: “I don’t want to be a free nigger; I want to be a free man” (173).

On the contrary, Henry Lestory’s manhood seems unshakable: “Be what you want—white or black. Choose. But if you choose black, you got to act black, meaning draw your manhood up—quicklike, and don’t bring
me no whiteboy sass" (173). Henry is a full-blooded Negro, who dwells in Virginia, and has the talent of becoming what the whites call a witch doctor. Golden Gray, doubtful of his racial origin, does not have any sort of confidence or requirements to build up his manhood and be a manly man. Golden Gray only dreams of patricide but he cannot find a resolution of his anxiety. The episode that a mulatto boy is on the verge of killing his own black father turns out an anticlimax and yet leaves the question of his selfish, proud and race-conscious manhood. The sudden childbirth of Wild and the unexpected reprimand of Henry Lestory betray the scenario of Golden Gray, mock his inappropriate seriousness and work as an antidote to his excessive concerns with manhood.

Thus the questioned and tried manhood of Joe and Golden Gray indicates that their manhood is reduced and even lost through the history of migration and that of interracial intercourse. Joe and Golden Gray are free of the suffering of a black slave like Paul D in *Beloved* and yet still incapable of choosing a black/white masculinity and believing in it. Both of them cannot maintain their manhood but find it threatened for their own reasons. We can safely say that Joe and Golden Gray are the opposite of Black Macho of the sixties and yet they make us aware of their symptomatic complexes concerning manliness. Compared with the steadfast manhood of Henry Lestory, the hang-ups about that of Joe and Golden Gray are not resolved. Nevertheless it seems that such an indefiniteness of manhood is what the City and jazz make possible and celebrate.

II. The Changing Motherhood of Motherless and Childless Women

In the former section, we have argued that motherlessness, ambiguous racial origin and city life are important factors in that they deform and invalidate the manhood of Joe and Golden Gray. This section will deal
with the problem of motherhood of women in *Jazz* and demonstrate that motherlessness, miseducation repressing femininity and city life make it difficult for them to grapple with their own motherhood. Here we need to recall the important question of Hirsch, who acclaimed *Beloved* for undermining the hierarchy of motherhood over selfhood: “The greatest tragedy that can occur between mother and daughter is when they cease being able to speak and to listen to one another. But what if they inhabit the same body, what if they are the same person, speaking with two voices?” (199) This question bothers all women in *Jazz*, and, especially in the case of Violet Trace, it can be said that her trouble comes from that of being in a dilemma concerning “the same person, speaking with two voices,” namely motherlessness, matrophobia and motherhood. The statement of Adrienne Rich seems still relevant as a resolution to this question: “any radical vision of sisterhood demands that we reintegrate them [both the daughter and the mother in ourselves]” (253). Rich refers to *Jane Eyre* and the relation of Jane with “nonbiological mothers” (252) and prescribes its effect for the impasse of trouble with motherhood. The hopeful vision of Rich is likely to be achieved through the novel with the improvisational sound of jazz: “In breaking this taboo [women are not allowed to unite with women not only sexually, but as comrades, co-creators, coinspirators], we are reuniting with our mothers; in reuniting with our mothers, we are breaking this taboo” (255).

The history of Violet Trace begins with the loss of her mother and the subsequent symptom of matrophobia. In her childhood Violet experiences the suicide of her mother Rose Dear. Rose Dear marries the man mixed up with the Readjuster Party, who returns only once in a while, and one day drops herself down the well, leaving her daughters to True Belle, her own mother with “good hands, better hands than her own” (102). Rose Dear becomes “free of time that no longer flowed, but stood stock-still”
(102) and misses all the fun brought by her husband's occasional return. Here it is presumed that, under the too helpful and destructive presence of True Belle, Rose Dear herself finds it difficult to cope with her own motherhood. Violet gives a voice to the question of Rose Dear on her behalf: "What was the thing, I wonder, the one and final thing she had not been able to endure or repeat?" (101) Violet starts with this question and makes up her mind to "never never have children" (102).

For this reason Violet does not get disappointed when she undergoes three miscarriages (two in the field, one in her bed), which are only "more inconvenience than loss" (107). Surely city life is supposed to be so much better without children and yet later Violet comes to be driven crazy with the reasonless and heightened desire for her own child: "By and by longing became heavier than sex: a panting, unmanageable craving" (108). Violet is "limp in its thrall or rigid in an effort to dismiss it" (108) and begins to sleep with a doll and speak to her parrot, not Joe: "I love you" (24). Not only that, Violet becomes obsessed with the idea of having her own child and almost kidnaps a baby of a stranger, laughing "the laugh—loose and loud—that confirmed the theft for some and discredited it for others" (20).

Interestingly, such a hunger of Violet for her own child merges with the desire for Dorcas, her rival in love for Joe. Both being jealous of Dorcas and failing to check her own daydreaming, Violet frees the birds she has kept, sits in the middle of the street and attends the funeral to cut her corpse with her knife.

When she woke up, her husband had shot a girl young enough to be that daughter whose hair she had dressed to kill. Who lay there asleep in that coffin? Who posed there awake in the photograph? The scheming bitch who had not considered Violet's feelings one tiniest bit, who came into a life, took what she wanted and damn the conse-
quences? Or mama's dumpling girl? Was she the woman who took the man, or the daughter who fled her womb? (108-109)

After the death of Dorcas, her picture, borrowed from her aunt, comes to be the object of desire for not only Joe but Violet/Violent. The dysfunctional beauty and personality of Dorcas attract, repulse and make Joe and Violet desperate. The beauty of Dorcas apparently misses something and thereby mirrors what Violet and Joe seek for and fail to attain despite the rewarding and satisfactory life of the City:

The cream-at-the-top-of-the-milkpail face of someone who will never work for anything; someone who picks up things lying on other people's dressers and is not embarrassed when found out. It is the face of a sneak who glides over to your sink to rinse the fork you have laid by her plate. An inward face—whatever it sees is its own self. You are there, it says, because I am looking at you. (12)

It is probable that the still picture of Dorcas reflects the dysfunctional manhood and motherhood of Joe and Violet. If Joe has needed the encounter with Wild to protect her and be a man, Violet has yearned for the connection with Rose Dear to affirm the possibility of her own motherhood, namely having a child and protecting it, and still be herself. The photograph of Dorcas with her unbalanced beauty represents the image of Wild, Rose Dear and even the unseen one of the unborn child of a couple, Joe and Violet. So that the relation of Violet with Dorcas is as crucial as that of Joe with her.

Alice Manfred, a woman of fifty-eight years with no children of her own, is another one that suffers from the lack of relationship with her mother and from childlessness. Alice has been taught to repress her femininity and she finds herself reraising Dorcas, the bereaved child of her
sister, in the same way. The parents of Alice have spoken to her firmly and carefully about her body: “sitting nasty (legs open); sitting womanish (legs crossed); breathing through her mouth; hands on hips; slumping at table; switching when you walked” (76). When she gets breasts, their care for her even turns into “a resentment that increased to outright hatred” (76) of her pregnant possibilities without marriageability. “Growing up under that heated control,” Alice comes to be a middle-class sophisticated woman and “swore she wouldn’t, but she did, pass it on” (77). Alice attempts to reraise Dorcas, correct her and make her “her own prisoner of war” (77) which black armed women continue to fight and for which she chooses surrender. Now Alice hates the idea of pregnancy without marriageability and the sound and lyrics of music more severely than her parents:

It was the music. The dirty, get-on-down music the women sang and the men played and both danced to, close and shameless or apart and wild. Alice was convinced and so were the Miller sisters as they blew into cups of Postum in the kitchen. It made you do unwise disorderly things. Just hearing it was like violating the law. (58)

Here Alice regards music as “something hostile that disguised itself as flourish and roaring seduction” (59) and detests its “greedy, reckless words, loose and infuriating” (60).

In spite of her consistent and hidebound abhorrence, Alice still cannot dismiss the drums she has heard at the Fifth Avenue march. When reading the explanatory leaflets about the riot, written by the Colored Boy Scouts, Alice Manfred is soothed by the drums “like a rope cast for rescue” (58) that “put Fifth Avenue into focus” (60). It seems to her that the drums span the distance, “gathering them all up and connected them: Alice, Dorcas, her sister and her brother-in-law, the Boy Scouts and the
frozen black faces, the watchers on the pavement and those in the windows above” (58). Though it seduces and devastates them, Alice realizes that music sometimes complements the connection between people. On the other hand, it is shown that the drums sound, for Dorcas, “only the first part, the first word, of a command,” not “an all-embracing rope of fellowship, discipline and transcendence” (60). Dorcas makes a different reaction toward music against the education that Alice passes on to her. Enticed with the beat of drums, Dorcas waits to be tempted by Joe, the beloved murderer, and led anywhere but the apartment of Alice.

It seems that Alice begins to think about the vainness of her life and the undomesticated resistance of Dorcas only after her death and by discussing it with Violet. After a short-termed hesitance Alice welcomes Violet the wife of her niece’s murderer and cutter of her corpse. Violet visits the house of Alice repeatedly and asks a lot of questions about Dorcas. Alice becomes “impolite,” “Sudden,” and “Frugal” and simply requires “The kind of clarity crazy people demand from the not-crazy” (83). Without Joe and Dorcas, the two women become very intimate and consider their womanhood, motherhood and selfhood together. Women, born around the same time, suddenly begin to talk about the deepest things by excluding men:

“We women, me and you. Tell me something real. Don’t just say I’m grown and ought to know. I don’t. I’m fifty and I don’t know nothing. What about it? Do I stay with him? I want to, I think. I want. . . well, I didn’t always. . . now I want. I want some fat in this life.”

“Wake up. Fat or lean, you got just one. This is it.”

“You don’t know either, do you?”

“I know enough to know how to behave.”

“Is that it? Is that all it is?”

“Is that all what is?”

“Oh shoot! Where the grown people? Is it us?”
"Oh, Mama." Alice Manfred blurted it out and then covered her mouth. (110)

In the utopian room of women without men, Alice and Violet pronounce the word "Mama" and ponder the significance of her love and being her. The word "Mama" reminds them of "the place of shade without trees where you know you are not and never again will be loved by anybody who can choose to do it" (110), namely the difficulty of growing up, the absence of children, and the barrenness of love and life. This is the scene where men are also supposed to participate, yet somehow Joe is actually gone.

Notwithstanding the absence of Joe, Violet learns the way to reconcile with the City and its music, exchanging the real words with Alice. From the conversation with Alice, Violet comes to understand how her life with Joe is, how she longs for her baby, and how she love-hates Dorcas, the murdered rival of love. Alice finally gives advice to Violet about the reunion with Joe: "I'm sayin make it, make it" (113). Laughing together at the burned yoke of the cloth that Alice is ironing, Violet remembers the memory of laughing together with her mother and grandmother and recognizes the lesson that laughter is "More complicated, more serious than tears" (113). Violet, reflecting on her act at the funeral of Dorcas, can laugh at "The sight of herself trying to do something bluesy, something hep, fumbling the knife, too late anyway" (114). This is the moment of jazzy revitalization when Violet gets rid of the ghost of blues and goes back to her real life.

Moreover, Felice, an eighteen-year-old girl and friend of Dorcas, appears as an indispensable presence in that she helps to reconcile Violet with Joe. Felice is less frivolous than Dorcas and sensitive enough to judge the Traces accurately. Felice admits that there is nothing crazy
about Violet against her disrepute and that she is pretty despite her darkness. Felice also secretly admires Joe, for he looks handsome with nothing flabby on him and has a way about him. Yet Felice seems highly critical, when she evaluates Dorcas thinking that all the ingredients and the recipe of prettiness do not work in her and that “Everything was like a picture show to her, and she was the one on the railroad track, or the one trapped in the sheik’s tent when it caught on fire” (202). Since she sufficiently appreciates the attractiveness of Joe, Felice even thinks that Dorcas has not been suitable for him. Felice, a witness of the suicide that Dorcas dares to choose and commit by not calling for an ambulance, does not attribute her death to only the deranged act of Joe shooting her but tries to encourage the Traces. The mission of Felice is to intimate the reason for the silence of Dorcas that “Mama won’t tell” (193) and convey the message to Joe that she has left: “There’s only one apple” (213). Felice is a key person in convincing Joe of his impunity and his unhappily ended and yet unimpaired love with Dorcas and then supporting his re-settlement with Violet.

Felice, with regard to her relationship with her mother, is luckier than Dorcas, Violet and Alice in that her parents are at least alive and reliable. Though they have been forced to live separately by working in Tuxedo and return to the City for thirty-four days a year, the family of Felice keep a strong bond between them and struggle to live as a respectable African-American family. Felice loves her mother and prizes the opal ring that her mother has presented to her. Though she knows that it has been stolen by her mother, to revenge the white man who has treated her as a burglar at Tiffany’s when shopping for her lady boss, Felice understands that her mother has broken the rule of honesty just once and approves her robbery. It turns out that Felice lends the ring to Dorcas and loses it when she is buried with it, and yet this ring is still
the proof of such a love between mother and daughter. The lost ring further brings the association of Felice with the Traces when Violet invites her to supper after her hopeless search for it. The communion of Violet with Felice brings about a sublimation of the repressed and perverted motherhood of the former. The trouble with the motherhood of Violet beginning with the well of Rose Dear is rewarded by the verity that Felice sympathizes with her mother and takes care of her. In a sense, the trauma of Violet experiencing the suicide of Rose Dear is to be replaced by the reciprocal love of Felice and her mother.

Furthermore, the relation of Felice with Violet as well as her mother compensates for the lost or distorted affinity between daughters and mothers. Felice may well be taken for "another true-as-life Dorcas" (197) or a substitute daughter of Violet. Joe aptly points out that the name "Felice" means happiness. Felice brings a true sense of reconciliation and belonging to both Joe and Violet and by listening to her and telling her what she bears in mind about messing up her own life and not making sense after she comes North:

" ‘Forgot it was mine. My life. I just ran up and down the streets wishing I was somebody else.’ . . .
‘How did you get rid of her?’
‘Killed her. Then I killed the me that killed her.’
‘Who’s left?’
‘Me.’ (208-9)

Felice understands Violet in her way and remembers how she and Dorcas have made up loves scenes, described them, seeing themselves as "somebody I’d seen in a picture show or a magazine" (209). This must be counted as the establishment of a relationship of a nonbiological mother with her daughter. Violet is telling, to Felice, one of the newer generation,
about both the fantasy of whiteness, beauty and youth and the courageous act of killing "her" or somebody else "White," "Light" and "Young again" (208) to revitalize "Me." Here Violet herself finds a solution to her own quest, restarted by the murder of Dorcas, and gets reconciled with Joe. At the same time, Felice reaches a deep understanding of the connections between her generation and those of migratory people such as the Traces and her parents. Felice bears witness to the accomplished reconciliation of Violet with "Me," living in the City and its music.

Thus, in the City, the presumably disreputable story of a threesome is turned into the quasi-family or even quite another relationship. That is, the narrator contradicts her/himself and abandons her/his credibility, for she/he introduces them as the "scandalizing threesome on Lenox Avenue" in the beginning (6). Though denouncing the meticulousness of Golden Gray about his clothes and mocking the erratic acts of Violet and Joe, the narrator admits as well that she/he fails to illustrate their thoughts and actions. What is more, the thinking of Felice and even the way she walks make the narrator nervous: "She thinks that way she can trick me again—moving so slow people nearby seem to be running. Can't fool me: her speed may be slow, but her tempo is next year's news" (222). The adulterous love of Dorcas with Joe may be within the understanding of the narrator, but the pace of walking of Felice only unnerves her/him.

The innovative individuality of Felice can be just like the figure she tries to distinguish in the tree on the corner of the 143rd Street. That is the tree that Violet, explaining about living in the country, says for Felice to go and see if it is a man or a woman or a child: "It's not a man tree; I think it's a child. Well, could be a woman, I suppose" (216). Seen from the eyes of Felice, the significance of manhood, motherhood and love must be differentiated from what the older generation, including the narrator, cherish.
Likewise it is not too much to say that the term "jazz" was considered synonymous with novelty by the younger generation in the 1920s. The acceptance of jazz by the contemporary people is well illustrated, by Mark S. Harvey, as follows:

A typical critique was published in the August 1921 *Ladies Home Journal*—"Does Jazz Put the Sin in Syncopation?" Of course, the younger, modern generation took a different and decidedly affirmative view of this new social force and typically would have given an enthusiastically affirmative answer to the Journal author's question. For youth of the 1920s recognized jazz as a musical expression of a more general trend toward liberation of feeling and life-style away from traditional strictures. (134)

The Okeh records that Felice buys for her mother at Felton's, even though the lyrics might reinforce manhood, motherhood and heterosexual love, sound definitely different to her. The significance of jazz in line with the atmosphere of the City has a lot to do with the interpretation of the ending of the novel. Here the argument of Jeffrey J. Folks seems accurate: "There is no restoration of the authority of elders or of traditional wisdom; Violet and Joe, and the novel's implied reader as well, are impelled to reshape ethical knowledge and structures, not to recover them" (177). From the same viewpoint we may be allowed to conclude that Jazz starts a dialogue about manhood and motherhood and makes it endlessly open. The invigorating, slippery and floating nature of the City, accelerated by its music, changes the narrator's introvasive temperament and enlivens her/him. In the final chapter the narrator confesses that she/he envies lovers "their public love" and wants to imitate it: "If I were able I'd say it. Say make me, remake me. You are free to do it and I am free to let you because look, look. Look where your hands are. Now"
Unsatisfied with her/his improvisational play, the narrator wishes to have her/his story undone and remade recurrently. The story of manhood, motherhood and threesome based on heterosexuality will be improvised, mixed without adjustment and reshuffled into the numberless brand-new stories of “Me.” The ending of the novel must be where the narrator leaves and the newer voices join now and here.

Notes
1. For the historical background of this age, see Quarles 224-250.
2. Peterson points out that “While the historical content of novels like Beloved and Jazz should be taken seriously, it also seems clear that Morrison strategically emphasizes narrative patterns in her novels that work against the construction of a new, monolithic black history” (215). This seems in accord with the view of Jill Matus: “... Morrison is sceptical of accounts of the period that focus solely on its literary and artistic productions and in Jazz she avoids mention of the ‘renaissance’ altogether. She has expressed the view that this awakening was not really an African American enterprise because ‘in some ways it was somebody else’s interest that made it exist’; she chooses to write about the ordinary folk rather than the Harlem intellectuals and poets. What was ‘ours’ about Harlem at that time, she implies in Jazz, was something altogether less glamorous” (127-128).
3. Rodrigues classifies not only Jazz but also Beloved in terms of music: “In Beloved she [Morrison] used the blues mode of fiction to conjure up and exorcise, to expiate and to pass on, the ‘disremembered’ dark world of slaves and of slavery” (248).
4. There are opposite remarks about the qualities of the narrator. Jan Furman, for example, refers to the narrator as “she” and does not hesitate to define her sex: “All of the facets of New York... coalesce in the personality of Morrison’s unidentified narrator. She (slight textual clues and strong intuition points towards the narrator’s identity as feminine) is the voice of the city: sassy, gossipy, prescient, and more” (97).
5. Weinstein makes a vivid comparison between Faulkner and Morrison: “This
critique of the Oedipal seems as profoundly Morrison's intention as the re-imagining of the Oedipal seems Faulkner's" (288). Accordingly the interpretation of Beloved is stated as follows: "Paul D eventually comes to see—in washing Sethe's feet rather than counting them, in nursing rather than judging—that male and female are massively interdependent realms, and that a black man cannot sustain a model of white manhood" (289).

6 There are certain correspondences between Beloved and Wild. According to The Toni Morrison Encyclopedia, Morrison has suggested some connections of Wild with the murdered newborn who emerges as the ghost-like presence in Beloved and called Wild "a type of Beloved, who lives in the same era, moves within the Ohio-Virginia region, and also is pregnant" (380). Interestingly both Beloved and Wild fail to recognize themselves as mothers, despite their pregnancy.

7 Dorcas Manfred is "based on an actual homicide victim who refused to name her assailant, suspected of having been her boyfriend; the original woman, still unidentified, was captured by James Van Der Zee, the Harlem Renaissance-era photographer" (Beaulieu 202). With the motif of the silenced casualty, "Jazz offers healing to those who survive the violent confrontation with the repressed past" (Grewal 134).

8 The Penguin Historical Atlas of North America describes the urban experience that shaped the "New Negro" who emerged in Harlem: "In Harlem there was a remarkable self-discovery out of which the Harlem Renaissance was born. Jazz, parties and show business—as well as alienation, anger and rage—were ingredients in the urban pressure cooker from which new struggles and new self-definitions were born" (107).

9 Weinstein discerns the symptom of re-imagining of the Oedipal in the fiction of Faulkner as follows: "Insecurely gendered, incapable of separating internal from external, resolutely untrainable, these boychildren [Benjy, Quentin, Darl, Joe Christmas] careen across the Faulknerian canvas, revealing fissure and contradiction wherever they touch down" (280).

10 Michele Wallace blasts the masculinist bias of the black politics that emerged from the sixties: "Come 1966, the black man had two pressing tasks before him: a white woman in every bed and a black woman under every heel."
Out of his sense of urgency came a struggle called the Black Movement, which was nothing more nor less than the black man’s struggle to attain his presumably lost ‘manhood.’ And so America had tightened the noose, although it did not know it yet; by controlling the black man’s notion of what a black man was supposed to be, it would successfully control the very goals of his struggle for ‘freedom’ (31-32).

11 The symptoms of motherlessness and matrophobia are described by Rich in *Of Woman Born.* As to the former, it reads: “The woman who has felt ‘unmothered’ may seek mothers all her life—may even seek them in men. In a women’s group recently, someone said: ‘I married looking for a mother’; and a number of others in the group began agreeing with her. I myself remember lying in bed next to my husband, half-dreaming, half-believing, that the body close against mine was my mother’s. Perhaps all sexual or intimate physical contact brings us back to that first body. But the ‘motherless’ woman may also react by denying her own vulnerability, denying she has felt any loss or absence of mothering” (242-243). As to the latter, it says: “‘Matrophobia’ as the poet Lynn Sukenick has termed it is the fear not of one’s mother or of motherhood but of becoming one’s mother. Thousands of daughters see their mothers as having taught a compromise and self-hatred they are struggling to win free of, the one through whom the restrictions and degradations of a female existence were perforce transmitted. Easier by far to hate and reject a mother outright than to see beyond her to the forces acting upon her. But where a mother is halted to the point of matrophobia there may also be a deep underlying pull toward her, a dread that if one relaxes one’s guard one will identify with her completely” (235).

12 Philip Page points out that the well of Rose Dear or “the deepest breach” works as the starting point of the continuous process of identity formation, because “Cracks or breaches are disruptive, but the disruption allows us to know the entities being separated and to refocus on the gap itself and on the structure of the breaching (which is the structure of the trace, of the *difference*) and therefore to continue the constructive process of identity formation” (165).

13 According to Aoi Mori, “The lack of supportive mothers in *Jazz* emanates
from a feeling of urban insecurity and rootlessness which displace maternal desire and behavior" (106). Mori further explains that Jazz “explores the destructive influence of negligent mothering and delineates how it hampers children from developing their own identities” (108).

14 Linden Peach calls the narrator “she,” evokes the image of flappers and makes a contrast of her narration with the new morality of the Jazz Age: “In the final page of the novel, the narrator reveals herself as someone who has experienced only the kind of secret affairs promoted in the films and the advertising which constructed the independently-minded and rebellious ‘flapper’. But she envies the way in which legitimate lovers are able to express their feelings in public by touching each other across a table and straightening or brushing each other’s clothes. Her own improvisation on love celebrates monogamy and faithfulness; a counterpoint to the so-called new morality of the Jazz Age. Conversely much of the novel, the difficulties, anguish and frustrations of love in the twenties, acts as a counterpoint to this final piece—as we would expect in a jazz composition” (127).

**Works Cited**


