

RESEARCH ARTICLE

SEPARATION BASED ON PATRIARCHAL ALLIANCE AND THE
UNDERLYING NEED FOR FEMALE COMPANIONSHIP IN THE NOVEL
LOVE BY TONI MORRISON

Dr. S. Pushpalatha

Associate Professor of English

Sree Vidyanikethan Engineering College, Andhra Pradesh

Abstract

Love is a discovery into the ardent feelings of human emotions. Culture and society are the significant sources that convey how the human being attempts to comprehend the attraction between two people and to diminish the spirit of passion and romance. In the novel *Love* Morrison typically presents the themes of the African American characters who were struggling in the hands of class consciousness, where racial discrimination and sexism are indisputable. Heed, who is once best friend of Christine, of her age, marries Christine's wealthy grandfather, in her childhood and becomes an enemy of Christine. At the end of the novel Heed and Christine complain against their own families. Final they realize that their lives would have been different if this hadn't happened. Morrison includes that the change from separation to integration is more intricate and exciting than the history of the Civil rights movement.

Keywords: Separation, struggle, class consciousness, integration

Love is an untamed force. When we try to control it, it destroys us. When we try to imprison it, it enslaves us. When we try to understand it, it leaves us feeling lost and confused. (Paulo Coelho *The Zahir: A Novel of Obsession*)

Indeed the word Love has several notions it is romantic, fanatical, marital, courteous, admirable, devotional, affectionate, sentimental, eternal and truthful seductive. The other forms of Love are vague, vulnerable, unreciprocated, deceived, wretched, unfaithful, critical, prohibited, and envious which turns into hate. Love and hate appear to be inexplicable "characters" instilled by their intrinsic mystery. This provoked Morrison to produce the novel *Love*.

Love is a discovery into the ardent feelings of human emotions. Culture and society are the significant sources that convey how the human being attempts to comprehend the attraction between two people and to diminish the spirit of passion and romance.

RESEARCH ARTICLE

According to Morrison, betrayal is not irrevocable, though this healing may be hard to attain, particularly for female characters whose individuality has been endeavored to love one another in the face of desertion. Desertion as a form of betrayal characterizes the prominent female figures—Heed the Night, Christine, and Junior — in *Love*.

In spite of evolving to a critical approach of these explicit problems, it would be beneficial to regard Morrison's observations on the Civil rights movement of the sixties, which structure the milieu of *Love*. In an interview with Carolyn Denard, Morrison firmly states: "I don't think this generation knows at all what was going on in 1947 as far as Civil rights are concerned. They think it all began in the 60s. It's interesting to me to re-examine that period - 50s, 60s, and 70s era." (7)

Morrison includes that the change from separation to integration is more intricate and exciting than the history of the Civil rights movement. *Love* deals with the intricate issues that Civil rights movement raised, and the strong force, that the characters faced in the personal lives and in the relationships. Glenn Eskew, reviewing the scenarios of transformation during the sixties, asserts: "Clearly the Civil rights movement failed to solve the problems experienced by many black people. The movement . . . gained access

for a few while never challenging the structure of the system."

In *Love*, a young woman, Junior, chooses her own path which in her opinion freedom just as Christine views, but it results in only strained relationships, a kind of prostitution. Then Junior realizes that she had nowhere to go other than the miserable paternal kingdom. She also realizes the front of separation based on patriarchal alliance and the underlying need for female companionship.

Heed, who is once best friend of Christine, of her age, marries Christine's wealthy grandfather, in her childhood and becomes an enemy of Christine. Morrison conveys a vivid and exciting description of the chaos, that happens when young women are deprived of the parental love and guidance which is their birthright. Junior, currently freed from Correctional joins as "assistant" to the aging Heed, who needs help with an evil plan.

At the end of the novel Heed and Christine arrive at the mutual understanding that Cosey was certainly an illusion, "everywhere and nowhere" (219) that each had "made him up". (219) however they reach the greater realization that they "could have been living (their) lives hand in hand instead of looking for Big Daddy everywhere". (219) In search of "possess" Cosey and then his material legacy, these earlier friends forget that they once "belonged"

RESEARCH ARTICLE

to the other, “sharing stomachache laughter, a secret language, and knew as they slept together that one's dreaming was the same as the other one's”. (155)

In *Love* the center of the emotions is the fascinating Bill Cosey, inherits his wealth from his father, a courthouse informer and lover of money. Extravagant, delightful, sentimental and morally questionable, at the age of 52, Bill Cosey marries Heed -- an uneducated 11 year-old child “with fire ants for family.” May who is jealous and emotionally unstable influence her own daughter, Christine to stay aloof from Heed. Christine's father dies of walking pneumonia is itself an issue of her own. Cosey is known through the memories of five women who survive and love him: his granddaughter, his widow, two former employees, and a homeless young girl known as Junior, who is drawn into the Coseys' orbit.

Consequently, when a local black young girl, age of her granddaughter, illiterate, from a minor class family becomes Bill Cosey's second wife, it is the beginning of the end. L comments: “It was marrying Heed that laid the brickwork for ruination” (123). May's life not only illustrates the traumatic impact of integration and the lapses of the Civil rights movement on blacks, but also the division of their everyday life. Morrison clearly presents the conflict between the 60's and 70's social values by describing the emotional uncertainty of May.

Cosey family symbolizes a distinct class division of the dominant upper class black bourgeois over the lower class poor blacks. May and Christine could not admit a poor girl from the ditch, captivating as the mistress. However, May was ready to accept Heed only as her daughter's lower class friend, but not as her father-in-law's child bride. May and Christine became furious that Bill Cosey had chosen a girl who didn't own a nightgown for his second wife.

On the other hand Heed also endures the lowliness, and questions herself: “How, she wondered, how had it happened that she, who had never picked a crab, handled crawfish or conch, ended up with hands more deformed than those of the factory workers who had” (79-80). She assumes that people have a bad notion on her and gossip about it with others.

The catalogue of humiliation they visited on her as soon as she appeared in her wedding gown make up a great deal of her memories in the novel. She did not give him an heir, and eventually his protective love evaporated and he took to other women. Heed recalls:

“Both of them, mother and daughter, went wild just thinking about his choice of an Up Beach girl for his bride. A girl [...] who slept on the floor and bathed on Saturday in a washtub full of the

RESEARCH ARTICLE

murky water left by her sisters. Who might never get rid of the cannery fish smell". (84)

Heed recalls all the humiliations she had encountered due to her poor class background. It was not only inside the house of Bill Cosey that she had to fight with all these odds; but the upper class society people, especially women who used to come to the hotel, had been equally mean to her.

Although it was not the wish Heed to marry Cosey, her marriage left an indelible memory on her. Heed's parents sold her to Bill Cosey however they were not permitted to be present at her wedding ceremony.

Though she was Cosey's wife people did not pay any deference to her, as she hailed from the poorest class of society, which made her ultimately an astringent shrewd old woman with a heart. May and Christine who were present there, burn her with inexorable criticism.

Heed becomes an ultimate victim of class conflict, which exists within the black community. At first heed thinks Bill Cosey had supported her and was thankful to Bill Cosey, but she was unable to realize that Cosey had simply demeaned her. He just wanted to prove his superiority and greatness to society, by accepting a poor girl, but not her family. W.E.B. Dubois realized the need for more government involvement in changing economic conditions, which

exploited blacks. Cosey had frankly rejected her family by not allowing them to attend the wedding of their own daughter with this he had drawn a distinct line between the two classes. Through this Bill Cosey clearly expresses that he is from the upper class of community and is able to afford to support a poor girl and not her family.

However this kind of communal hypocrisy has always been acknowledged in the society. Yet Heed was ignorant of it. She was embarrassed of her family when they seeking help from Cosey. Cosey became furious with their irritating nature and eventually asked them to stay away from his house. Cosey the great, a thriving role model for the black community, did not have time for poor blacks, even though they were his in-laws or relatives. Heed not only tried to be aloof from her family but also tried to be submissive to her domineering husband's command.

Junior Viviane runs away from her offensive uncles, half brothers, and cousins. As she was being chased by them she tried to run away a car ran over her which left her crippled. They were responsible for her crippled foot. They claimed that she was injured of a hit-and-run driver, and she didn't deny them.

Many characters in the novel are in one way or another offended or marked by the patriarch Bill Cosey's power in the society even after his death also. Parents can be negligent or harsh,

RESEARCH ARTICLE

timid or certain, it doesn't matter. Whether they say yes to any whim, or spend days assuring the child is right or to be corrected. Whatsoever their situation and place is, they are next to a child's first chosen love.

Heed's parents, Wilbur and Surrey, used to work in row boat as they lost their two children in the seabed they wanted to recuperate from the loss of their two sons. Now they got the opportunity to sell their child to a fifty-two-year old millionaire. As L puts it, "so why not let their youngest girl marry a fifty-two-year old man for who knew how much money changed hands". (163)

At the end the disturbed relationship of Christine and Heed's is resolved, but immensely they had to pay for it, indeed, they spent all their lives on it. Their sudden reunion is a heart touching one. Finally, the two old women think of their long elapsed love. Indeed, there is a beauty and revelation in their love.

They never wished to be enemies it happened because Cosey married Heed by offering her father two hundred dollars and a pocket book to her mother. Though this led her step into a relationship, she was only benefited with a box of candied popcorn. Christine was everything in the world to her so she desired to be with her.

She admits, "I wanted to be with you. Married to him, I thought I would be" (224). Besides May was the one who

inflamed their enmity. She even did not consider Heed as a human being:

"[...] little Heed with a man's undershirt for a dress looked to her like the end of all that – a bottle fly let in through the door, already buzzing at the food table and, if it settled on Christine, bound to smear her with garbage it was born in" (160).

Heed and Christine started complaining against their own families. Christine complains, "You know May wasn't much of a mother to me. [...] she gave me away" (213). On the other hand Heed, blames her parents for selling her to Cosey: "At least she didn't sell you". (213) Two young children ill-treated by their parents and even by the society, could not make out their true love. Their relationship did not develop beyond the tip of rivalry because a triangular relationship with Bill Cosey as the individual framework from which they can achieve completeness. Each cannot view the other woman as an object of desire because the women do not realize the existence of a family structure that depends on friendships with other women.

Though these two women were victims of similar circumstances, they developed enmity on each other rather than acknowledging the love that once united them. Either of them wanted to depend on each other, but the conditions

RESEARCH ARTICLE

around them did not support to do so. Their lives would have been different if this hadn't happened.

References:

- Du Bois, W.E.B. *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches*. Greenwich, conn.: Fawcett p, 1961.
- Glenn T. eskew, *But for Birmingham: The Local and National Movements in the Civil Rights Struggle* Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997. 31.
- *Love*. United States of America: Vintage Books, 2004.