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FOUR CRITERIA FOR LABELING BLACK WOMEN AND THEIR COMMUNITY AS 'OTHERS' IN TONI MORRISON'S NOVELS

*Sri Herminingrum**

ABSTRAK

Dinamika kehidupan perempuan Kulit Hitam, mulai zaman perbudakan sampai era Gerakan Hak-hak Sipil Perempuan tahun 1980-an, yang diangkat Morrison dalam *The Bluest Eye, Sula, Song of Solomon, Tar Baby, Beloved, Jazz, Paradise,* dan *Love* adalah ekspresi budaya yang tidak berada dalam wilayah eksklusif. Dengan pendekatan interdisiplin—mengintegrasikan berbagai teori dan perspektif bidang ilmu, termasuk zona persinggungan studi gender, seksualitas, ras, dan etniksitas—yang dipakai untuk meneliti delapan novel ini terungkap bahwa ada empat hal yang membuat perempuan Kulit Hitam dianggap sebagai "berbeda": (1) keterikatan dalam budaya *mother-centered*, (2) kehidupan ganda karena rasisme dan seksisme, (3) dampak invasi budaya Kulit Putih, dan (4) perjuangan menjadi manusia bermartabat.

Kata Kunci: Toni Morrison, interdisiplin, budaya *mother-centered*, kehidupan ganda, invasi budaya Kulit Putih

ABSTRACT

The dynamics of Black women's life, from Slavery Era to Women Rights Movement in 1980-s, highlighted by Morrison in *The Bluest Eye, Sula, Song of Solomon, Tar Baby, Beloved, Jazz, Paradise,* and *Love* is cultural expression which is in a non-exclusive territory. By applying interdisciplinary approach – integrating theories and perspectives of some disciplines, including the intersectional zone of the study of gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity – to research these eight novels, it was discovered that there are four points engendering Black women regarded as 'other'. (1) Mother-centered culture practice. (2) Double lives for racism and sexism. (3) The impact of White culture invasion. (4) The struggle for building self dignity.

Key words: Toni Morrison, interdisciplinary, mother-centered culture, double lives, White culture invasion

* Staf Pengajar Fakultas Ilmu Budaya Universitas Brawijaya, Malang

INTRODUCTION

Discussions of literary works from socio-historical points of view by Henry Nash Smith and Leo Marx led to the conclusion that "literature has a special place in American Studies because literary text articulates its own theory about itself and its time and place. It may not be a reliable guide to what most people were thinking, but it is the best entry into how they were thinking" (Atterbery, 1996: 333). This notion was strengthened by Hoffman's suggestion (Tate, 1973) underlining that literary work will clarify human vision on culture without devastating the important patterns of history or demeaning the other small references. Eventually, the assertions of the relationship between literature and social phenomena make Toni Morrison's novels work as a key to open the understanding about Black women who were labeled as 'others' or 'different' because of their particular culture.

Black women are "caught between two identities, tangled, confused. Sexism and racism melt together, coming at them all at once" (Jones & Shorter-Godden, 2003: 38). They cannot be separated from hard tearful struggle to survive. In relating to literary work, as found out by Kauffman (1989), as far as it is concerned with issues of race and gender, it was not predominated by them but a story of class. Furthermore, class automatically will raise stereotype to justify the other (Kochman, 1983). In the same manner, Black women's complex problem in Morrison's novels is worsened by a social class that causes Black women difficult to repudiate negative stereotypes. And Morrison has consistently worked to create awareness of such women's existence.

Misunderstanding of Black women always stems from a concept in connecting with Black and race because America is perceived as White. In short, it is unavoidable that Black women are also distinguished for their used-to-be slave, social status, and color. Hooks identifies that in Black literature "there is an effort to remember that is expressive of the need to create spaces where one is able to redeem and reclaim the past, legacies of pain, suffering, and triumph in ways that transform present reality" (1990: 147). That is why, in accordance with her experience as a female, black, slave descendant from the South, Morrison admitted that writing novels was her best way to expose Black women who live in "genderized, sexualized, wholly racialized world" (1993: 4). Asking people to apprehend black women with their own identities forced her to place them in isolated territory separated from both white and man. However, 'isolation' here does not mean that she ignored the notion of 'basic fact', as theoretically proposed by Goldmann (1980), Sapiro (1986), and MacFadden (2000), but she used it to concentrate on the attribute of woman as mother, wife, and daughter which is inherent to man as father, husband and son. Likewise, the attribute of Black is inherent to that of White — as on North and South that was analogized by Guitar in *Song of Solomon*: "North exists because South does". By isolating Black women in their own room, Morrison supposed that each of them would be understood as a bona fide human being.

The Bluest Eye, Sula, Song of Solomon, Tar Baby, Beloved, Jazz, Paradise and *Love*, which Morrison called as "simple stories about complicated people" (Taylor-Guthrie, 1994), were created to scrutinize the problems that Black women faced. They make "the invisibility of the African-American women" (Rosen, 2000) visible. By applying interdisciplinary enterprise to research these eight novels, it was discovered that slavery, as the nucleus of racism and sexism entangled by social classes that should be faced by Black women, is like a linkage chain from generation to generation. To be black, women have to cross race borderline by playing an unfair game called 'rules of solidarity'. "For the good race, the culture seemed convinced that struggle to save the black race is really first and foremost about saving the lives of black males" (Lustiq & Koester, 2006: 21). To be female, Black women have to bear 'reality principles' as undertaken well by women in *The Bluest Eye*, *Song of Solomon*, *Jazz*, *Paradise* and *Love*. To regain their self identity, mostly unveiled in *Sula*, *Jazz* and *Tar*

Baby, women tried to detach stereotype and individually empowered their potential. Black women have to battle the current white culture invasion by reintegrating to their own women-centered culture: raising children as black children, willing to be other-mothers and community-mothers, saving mother-children relationship, and overseeing and supporting each other within community.

Morrison's novels showed how Black women year after year endure suffering from the society's racist and sexist misconception. They need one hundred years to reach equality and regain their dignity as human beings. And, more than twenty years aftermath they have to struggle to achieve their identities as woman and Black: an achievement which requires abundant sacrifice.

BLACK WOMAN AND MOTHER-CENTERED CULTURE

If Black cultural pattern is not placed in a whole frame as an independent culture, Black family will be easily judged as 'dysfunctional family' and Black community viewed as 'unreasonable community'. Traditions perpetuated in Black family and community life which involve a great deal of Black women's roles make Black women be seen from distorted lens and their characters close to negation. In a wider perspective this view not only results in miscommunication but also considerable societal value bias that inflicts pain upon Black women. Coupled with their negative stereotypes, they are partially understood as persons: "objects onto which myths and half-truth are projected" (Rothenberg, 2001: 127). Black women are regarded to be dominant, fail to discipline children, emasculate husbands and sons, and make daughters unfeminine.

Through her novels, Morrison shows an inaccurate and unfair judgement given to Black women. She underscores the investigation on "a race of people who were perceived as irrational simply because they did not always see the world as white people did" (Taylor-Guthrie, 1994: 181) that details with traditions in Black family life and Black community life. The traditions in these two lives are most frequently taken as a basis to assign negative stereotypes to Black women. To correct the false notion, Morrison traces the origin of mother-centered culture and Black women's position in Black family. *Beloved* which explored slavery as the root cause of the scattering of Black family and the flourishing of Black tradition to meet the slaves' needs confirmed that slave trades and other slavery practices did damage Black family institution. Though Baby Suggs is a bloodmother of eight children, begotten from eight different fathers, slavery has limited her self-conception by shattering her family and rejecting her opportunity to be a true wife and loving mother. Boundless love and affection of mothers to children often emerge in an 'unthinkable' way. Unwilling to relinguish her daughter, Beloved, to the physical and emotional trauma she has endured as a slave, Sethe murders her. Suggs' and Sethe's experience as woman slaves is passed on to their decendants. How Black women express their devotion to their children, and motherly love and protection may seem difficult to understand. For example, Eva in *Sula* sold one of her legs for saving her children's life, but on the other hand she killed her only son by burning him alive because she believed that he had no future. Pilates nearly killed her daughter's boyfriend because she could not stand seeing her daughter being hurt; "mamas get hurt and nervous when somebody don't like they children. Women are foolish, and mamas are the most foolish of all" (*Song of Solomon*: 94).

Black mother-centered culture which is perceived negatively is particularly demonstrated in *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, *Tar Baby*, and *Jazz*. Living amids complicated problems, Black mothers in these novels take on multiple roles with myriad tasks. They risk 'reality principles': besides being both caregivers and breadwinners for their children, they are to shoulder their husbands' frustration in facing racism (Morrison, 1992; and Jones & Shorter-Gooden, 2003). Pauline in *The Bluest Eye* is not only responsible for providing her children basic need, nurture and guidance

but also for saving Cholly from "being put outdoors". So is Violet. She "keeps her husband in tidy handkerchiefs" (*Jazz*: 142) after he shot dead his girlfriend. To free Joe from being accused, Violet conceals all Joe's misconduct. She shows incredible strength and unflinching loyalty to Joe although he has betrayed and deceived her.

Slavery is a historical event, "a holocaust experience, a tragedy of such ongoing magnitude that folk suffer, anguish it today" (Hooks, 1990: 5), that has moulded Black culture to be characteristically unique. For Blacks, a female-headed family is not a problem and is not an indication of a broken family. Male as the head of a family who brings in money can be replaced anytime by female, but mothering cannot be replaced by male. Because Black women's burden links to racism and sexism, Black mothers raise their children not just as chidren. They have to socialize their children to cope with the reality of racism and be aware of educating their girls about sexism. In mothering girls, Black women use the concept of 'lioness raises young lion' in order to make their girls assertive and self-reliant. With unshakeable physical and mental strength, Black mothers are irreplaceable central figures in the family. However, because of their race consciousness they move from personal self to larger community-self. For hundreds of years they have constructed women-centered network. Children orphaned by sale or death of their parents under slavery, children conceived through rape or children born into poverty have all been supported by other-mothers or community-mothers. *Beloved* demonstrates the extent to which individuals need the support of their communities in order to survive. Suggs is a mother of many children of slaves and Denver needs community-mother when Sethe becomes insane. The same is true with Cholly and Pecola in *The Bluest Eye*, Helene in *Sula*, Joe and Dorcas in *Jazz*, and Jadine in *Tar Baby* who for other different reasons could not remain with bloodmothers and were raised by other-mother or community-mother.

In confronting racial oppression, mothering tradition serves a crucial function in Black communities. Bloodmother, other-mother and community-mother are a symbol of power of Black women enganged in Black women's community work. Black women have to be tough inasmuch as they have to be a family savior and guardian of the future generation. Nevertheless, Black women are not superwomen as commonly perceived. Bitter experiences arising from intertwined problems of racism, sexism, and social classes sometimes makes them exhausted. Jones & Shorter-Gooden found that like other common women, Black women need help, feel sad, disappointed, disoriented, and even frightened. They long to regain "emotional ground lost" (2003). This longing is the theme shared by lots of Black women, mothers in particular, in Morrison's novels.

BLACK WOMAN'S DOUBLE LIVES

"Rejection by Whites is one thing, rejection by Black men is entirely another" (Morrison, 1993; Hill-Collins, 2000) is a formulation of complicated double lives of Black women in America. Their experience as black and female is the best manifest showing that they live at critical juncture. They have price but not value. If in slavery era Black women were commodity of Whites, more than one hundred years aftermath they are commodity of their men. Suggs and Sethe in *Beloved* and True Belles in *Jazz* are traded from one slave owner to another but their purchase price are cheaper than that of men. Blacks of post-bellum generation have strong solidarity when they have to face racial problem. Black women and men are hands-in-hands against white domination and segregation, the racial apartheid of Jim Crow. Designing an isolated place — separate from whites and other suspected as threathening people — like Ruby in *Paradise*, is Blacks' utopia. They want to release the enormity of what had happened to them in the past and enact race dignity. The men from Ruby are very concerned about their role as leaders, in such wise they insist to protect their

women behind their privilege to control them. Conversely, the exclusiveness motivates them to regard the outsider, the Convent women who can manage their own life, as exiles. The massacre executed by Ruby men of women in Convent, some of whom are their former lovers, mirrors the perfect vulnerable women which are deliberately created by superior men. "They are women, just women" (*Paradise*: 288).

In society, Black men need collaborating with Black women on facing racism. At home Black men need Black women to acquire man's pride, that is, they have authority over their women's life. For the sake of race, Pauline in *The Bluest Eye* and Violet in *Jazz* totally sacrifice their life for their husbands. When Cholly raped his eleven-year-old daughter, Pecola, the community concludes that it is because he did not understand how to be a father. "Cholly having no idea of how to raise children, he could not even comprehend what such relationship should be" (*The Bluest Eye:* 160). Baraka's statement: "a Black man is not 'for' his woman as a black woman 'for' her man. The two do not submit to one another; rather, the woman submits to her Blackman" (Hooks, 1990; Hill-Collins, 2000 and Rosen, 2000) confirms that to preserve their superiority, Black men withhold interest to control woman. Because Black women are owned by their men, they have no power to determine their selves.

Law is not for injustices Black inflict upon each other, "Ain't no law for no colored man" (*Song of Solomon*: 82). Owing to Cholly's foolish exploit, in *The Bluest Eye*, Pecola became insane and Pauline had to shoulder physical and emotional burden alone. Joe Trace killed Dorcas and folks witnessed that he "was the one who shot the girl". For the murderer was Black man and the victim was Black girl, Alice, as the other-mother of Dorcas, did not want to spend energy and "throw money to helpless lawyers or laughing cops" (*Jazz*: 11). At the same time, Violet has to prove her self-relinquishment to save her husband. Instead of Joe, she let herself be condemned by her community. "I haven't got any muscles, so I can't really be expected to defend my self" (*Jazz*: 16). Thus, "ain't no law" for Blacks within binary conception cuts both ways: it benefits men but traps women in unfavourable condition.

To establish their power, on one hand, men arrange father-and-son network. Macon tries hard to influence Milkman in order they have solid authority to dominate over all his female family members; he "was delighted. His son belonged to him and not to Ruth" (*Song of Solomon*: 63). Because son should be a husband and a father someday, Hunter reminds Golden Gray that "a son ain't what a woman say. A son is what a man do" (*Jazz*: 176). Black women, on the other hand, frequently become innocent victims as a result of cultural patterns conditioned by Black men. They become Black men's commodity. Macon has absolute right to "first display, then splay" his daughters (*Song of Solomon*: 216) and made his wife a cripple because of a kind servitude stupidity. Fleetwood acts as a conductor for her daughter; "I'm her father. I'll arrange her mind" (*Paradise*: 61). Black folks in Eloe see Jadine like Son's property, "she was a Cadillac he had won, or stolen, or even bought for all they knew" (*Tar Baby*: 252). Jadine's running away from Son is nothing because she is 'just a woman' whose substitute can be easily to get. Since sexism delegates to females the task of creating and sustaining a home environment, caring and nurturing children, Mavis refuses to ask her husband's help in managing domestic household because she knows "that ain't right". It is a primary responsibility of black women to make self-sacrificing a virtue by accepting a husband did: drinking, abusing, womanizing, "it wasn't a good idea to bother him" (*Paradise*: 22).

"If a man don't have a chance, then he has to take a chance" (*Song of Solomon:* 183) reflects how Black man has to create strategy to take the chance in order to be a winner against woman. And men in Morrison's novels always resume to giving tendentious judgement as an ingenious strategy to dominate their women, though Bottom community cannot morally accept either Eva's, Hannah's or Sula's conduct; "It was the men who gave her final label" (*Sula*: 112). Deek admitted

that Soane was a really good wife because "she was beautiful good woman: she kept a good home and did good works" (*Paradise*: 112). Whereas Bill Cosey, in *Love*, mentions May as a good woman because she is "devoted, not calculating". By rewarding certain labels to women, it is not difficult for Cosey to trap and then control women, even since their childhood.

Pecola, Frieda and Pauline in *The Bluest Eye*, Violet and Dorcas in *Jazz*, Ruth and her daughters and Hagar in *Song of Solomon*, women both from Ruby and those from Convent in *Paradise*, Christine, Heed and Junior in *Love* are sexually harrased and abused by men but tragically they remain silent on behalf of race. Christine's long journey as "the disrupting wife, the surplus mistress, the unwanted nuisance daughter, the ignored grand daughter, the disposable friend" (*Love*: 164) and her active participation in *Civil Rights Movement* in 1970s underlines her consciousness that living as Black and female is putting up with the interlocked everlasting problem of racism and sexism. "Only women. Never men. Women dragged their sorrows up and down the road" (*Paradise*: 270).

BLACK WOMEN AND WHITE CULTURE INVASION

White culture, as mainstream culture, intrudes upon the cultural integration of Black people. And, the two main white culture notions — patriarchal and beauty standard concepts — make "gendered racist stereotypes" (Morrison, 1993) inherited from slavery continue to do tremendeous damage to Black women. They are seen as unvulnerable, indefatigable, unfeeling, unintelligent, unafraid and unfeminine. Though the paradigm of nuclear family and man as a breadwinner does not work for Black community, the core of patriarchal culture that man is leader for his family penetrates most of Black family life. Superiority, that implies male domination, oftentimes contributes to sexual harassment and domestic violence. Even if Black men successfully fulfill for heads of households, it does not mean that women will be free from physical and psychological abuses. Black women as subordinator bear overloaded burden because of the risk of 'reality principles'.

Morrison's novels show that in 1960s, 1970s and 1980s — the decades in which *Civil Rights Movement* flared up and many African-Americans participated in — the stereotypical Black women are still alarming. Within the binary thinking that underpins defined gender roles, "woman was created to be a wife and a mother" and their proper place is at home are conceptualized deflectedly by Black men. It is Son in *Tar Baby* who asks Jadine 'to settle for wifely competence, to settle for fertility and nurturing' for her future children. In turn, like Son, most of men in Morrison's novels are not fairly responsible family provider and women are forced to outwork instead. For this reason, Pauline and Mrs. MacTeer in *The Bluest Eye*, women in *Sula*, Pilates in *Song of Solomon*, Ondine in *Tar Baby*, Violet in *Jazz* are tightly engaged in 'space of resistance' in which they have to take particular jobs because of the class of their race. Macon's wife and daughters in *Song of Solomon*, the Ruby women in *Paradise* and all Cosey's women in *Love* are men's prisoners. Along their lives, they have to give self-sacrifice, total servitude, and unquestioned obedience to their men. Without regarding their social strata, women in *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, *Jazz*, *Song of Solomon*, *Paradise*, and *Love* are those who are dreadfully scared of being ignored by their men.

White beauty conventional standards shook not only Black woman physical identity, but in several cases victimized chidren as well. That Black is always associated with 'poor' is commonly acceptable. Poverty that weakens Pauline's and Pecola's spirit in *The Bluest Eye* is not regarded as dangerous as their misconception of beauty, the Breedlove's poverty "was not unique" but "their ugliness was unique". In her afterword to the novel, Morrison explicitly ties Pauline's idol of Jean Harlow, Frieda's adoration to the child icon of beauty, Shirley Temple, Pecola's admiration for her new neighbor "pretty milk-brown lady" and her fatal desire for blue eyes to the politics of

racial beauty and identity in the 1960s. "The assertion of racial beauty was against the damaging internalization of immutable inferiority originating in an outside gaze." Moreover, "an entire race could take root inside the most delicate member of society, a child; the most vulnerable member: a female" (*The Bluest Eye*: 210). Pecola's obsession of the bluest eyes is the cost she has to pay for being female Black child; the attribute which is devalued in White culture.

The unattractive appearance due to the color of their eyes and skin, the size of nose and lips, and the texture of their hair has dragged the Black women to become replicates, "devoid of cultural integrity" (Morrison, 1992). Being raised by a mother who has white ideas of beauty, Nel in *Sula* has to pull her nose every morning to make it "nice" and endure the hot comb every Saturday evening in pursuit of smooth hair. Tragically, Black women engulfed by white ideals of beauty are aggravated by their men who view beauty through the lens of White-dominated culture. They render Black female authentic beauty invisible. Hagar in *Song of Solomon* suffers the maddening effects of lemon-colored skin, silky hair, gray eyes, and thin nose as her boyfriend likes much. Son, in *Tar Baby*, admires Jadine because of her silky bleached skin and her straightened hair. Felice flatters Dorcas for her mulatto physical features: slim, long wavy hair, light skinned, nicely shaped nose and their friends ridicule the difference of both as "kinky, fly — black skin", opposite to "kind, buttermilk light skin" (*Jazz*: 233)

In social system, Black women are locked in the encirclement of race, gender, and class (Hill-Collins, 2000; Pilcher, 2002; Roth, 2005) and to a certain extent, many of them give up to a set of White cultural standards. Unable to protect the intervention of 'race impact', "the most destructive ideas in the history of human thought" (*The Bluest Eye*: 97), Black women's lives are governed by both Whites and Black men.

BLACK WOMEN AND SELF DIGNITY BUILDING

Black women, the people from the very bottom class (Morrison, 1993), are exploited victims and segregrated and stereotyped subjects. Thus, to gain self-dignity Black women need perpetual struggle. The 150-year history, from Slavery Era to the Civil Rights Movement of 1980s, is long anguished journey that should be passed through by Black women to search self. It is a projection reflecting the cycle of human life: born – exist – die which repeat continuously from generation to generation. Ondine admits that slavery is the dark side of Blacks' life, but it has awakened her consciousness of hope, "we have a future, as well as a past" (*Tar Baby*: 101). For younger generations, slavery is their past and "nothing can change" (Paradise, 209). Jadine, in *Tar Baby*, believes that by reconciling terrible past and imperfect present, Black women can seize the better future.

Slavery bequeathed hopelessness, as uncovered in *Beloved*, and its devastating impact makes Black women impossible to think about their dignity as human race. Sethe's ignorance of her future showed that her sufferings as a slave had infused in her everyday's life and led her to contend that past trauma could never be totally eradicated. It continued, somehow, to exist in the post-bellum. Migration to North to seek better life as dignified human race is the second torment (Garraty, 1970) for Blacks who are associated with poor, lazy and unintelligent. But for Black women in *Jazz*, living under the threat of White attack, White reprisal and White humiliation is a stepping stone to seize back their true selves as Black and female. Self-consciousness, which mostly brings individuals to change their idea to positive thinking, can raise healthy self-esteem. However, "interdependence of thought and action suggest that changes in thinking may be accompanied by changes in actions" (Hill-Collins, 2000). The conceptual change, from thinking to acting, is a self-awakening process fostered by the feeling of love self and blackness. When arriving at North for the first time, Alice felt "crazy about the city" and so did to Violet who felt annoyed with the way of the North people behaved toward the existence of Blacks. At the beginning of their new life, they tried hard to

accommodate the differences between Black and White. But, when they realized that they were blinded by their own dream of North, their consideration of self was aroused. Violet and Alice are representation of Black women who practice a sort of subterfuge to ensure their survival in North. Violet had to kill the 'self' co-opted North: hedonistic consumerism, white culture admirer and Black culture betrayal. Violet succeeded "Killed her. Then I killed the me that killed her" (*Jazz:* 234) and Alice regained her identity nearly ten years later, just after Dorcas' death.

For female Black children, self-confidence is a cornerstone to burgeon their selves as female and Black. Because the surrounding adults frequently indoctrinate gender roles, on one side, Claudia is confident enough to be herself; "she has no interest in babies or the concept of motherhood" (*The Bluest Eye* : 20). Her peers, who always label her blackness as dirty and ugly, on the other side, boost her pride of being Black. Like Sula, Claudia does not care with White beauty that was admired mostly by children of her age at her time. For mature women, being unprejudiced, broad minded and consistent approach of positive thinking brings them dare to think of their selves. At first, Jadine was worried about her identity, "... that sometimes I want to get out of my skin and be only the person inside — not American — not black — just me" (*Tar Baby*: 90). She decided to be female without adhering to motherhood concept: daughter of Black family, wife of a Black man, and a mother of Black children. There are many ways to be a woman and the way she chose is different from Ondine's. "Your way is one, but it is not my way. I don't want to be like you!' (*Tar Baby*: 282). Unlike the other women who have sacrificed everything for Bill Cosey, only L is reasonable enough to understand that "he was an ordinary man ripped, like the rest of us, by wrath and love" (*Love*: 199). She is an independent eloquent old woman.

Concerning self-conciousness, Sula is the real winner. Her acceptance of "neither white nor male" since her childhood influenced her close friend, Nel, to gain her true self. "I'm me. I'm not their daughter. I'm not Nel. I'm me. Me" (*Sula*: 28). Sula determined to be herself and consistent with her statement "I don't make somebody else". Meanwhile, Violet in *Jazz* and Christine in *Love* become two of high achieving Black women who are not adept at shifting: they changed their outward behavior and tone, shifting 'white', and then shifting 'black' again. After experiencing as a deceived wife, Christine successively became a fraud, concubine, prostitute, lover of white activist and then reentered her real 'space of resistance' working as a servant in her childhood home.

Black women community in Morrison's novels is not a uniform entity. The damaging problems of racism, sexism, and social class yield various reactions. Claudia, Sula, Jadine and L disproved the negative stereotypes they endured by showing that they are intelligent, lovable, valuable and properly respectable. But, because of the endless quest to prove their individual selves has made some women break down emotionally and physically. They become susceptible to an array of psychological problems. They desperately need balance and greatly need assistance in their lives. Even, some of them have commited suicide or tried to.

CONCLUSION

The depiction of Black women's kaleidoscopic life, from Slavery Era to Civil Rights Movement and Women Rights Movement flaring up in 1970s – 1980s, in *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, *Song of Solomon*, *Tar Baby*, *Beloved, Jazz*, *Paradise,* and *Love* is Morrison's effort to unravel the Black women's intricate problems of racism, sexism and social classes. Black women's lives disarray because of their history, social strata and black skin. Almost none do Black women in Morrison's novels have terrible past but they strive to pursue a better future. They want to be understood as women with their own identities together with their own dreams.

By leaving all her novels 'open-ended' Morrison has built a bridge to avoid

misapprehension. She lets readers to be witnesses for Black women's endlessly anguished experience. She served *past* and *present* and readers 'have to think' the rest for *future*. One hundred and twenty years that should be passed through by women to struggle for unchaining the 'interlocking system of oppression' is historical documentation because 'open-ended method' itself substantively appeals to history. Morrison managed 'usable past'. As Baker postulates (1984) that a continuity between past and present is a stream of history that is still in motion for all histories are, at least theoretically, open-ended—the possible inclusions, limitless.

Living in segregating and discriminating society and bearing many kinds of negative stereotypes have made Black women in Morrison's novels perform exaggerated self-sacrifice. On one hand, they have to be tough to execute multitasking to serve and save their husbands, brothers and sons. On the other hand, they become defenseless victims. They are not strong enough to face against the white culture invation of which Black men prefer to adopt. The entanglement of Black women subjectivity that moves from racism to sexism and social classes brings about multi dimentional crises. Committing suicide, becoming insane and self-demolishing is inevitable manifestation on account of white and male oppression. However, not all of Black women in Morrison's novels surrender to their complicated double lives. Some succeed in empowering their potentials, some hold firmly to Black community culture. Realizing the difficulty to build healthy self-esteem, these women share burdens with others, 'police' one another, and work together to resist white-supremacist thinking and internalize race dignity. They are women who respect mother-centered family tie, believe in the unseparable mother-children relationship and wholeheartedly provide care for both other-mothers and community-mothers for the sake of future generation. They are wives who accept 'reality principles', are always vigilant to the impact of race, and reasonably abide by the rules of racial solidarity. They are mothers who practice 'lioness raises young lions' in educating their daughters. They are those whose 'other culture' has corrected *American Exceptionalism*. Their power to preserve Black culture as a part of heterogeneous pattern is an embodiment of *American Mind*.

As a blend of her imagination and experience — as female and black, and as descendant of slaves who spent most of her life in South — Morrison's novels are Black women historical roadmap. Not only can her novels be used as a tremendeous source of information for humanity studies but also regarded, from 'micro politics point of view', as a significant contribution for Black Civil Rights Movement. Morrison's endeavor to uncover the hidden life of Black women who "crossed the boundaries of race, class, and gender" (Pilcher, 2002), is the woman's voice searching for equal rights. The Nobel Prize that Morrison won in 1993 proved that she was able to open everyone's eyes throughout the world to see that numerous women in America had been subordinated just for their race, sex, and class. She revoked the judgment on 'black women's literature as domestic and apolitical'. Her eight novels have accomplished to promote that literary works as cultural product can function as a political vehicle.

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