Received: April 2024 Revised: May 2024 Accepted: June 2024

Dio: https://doi.org/10.3126/jpd.v5i1.67545

Double Consciousness: A Subject Formation in Toni Morrison's *Tar Baby*

Khagendra Neupane, PhD*

Abstract

This paper based on Toni Morrison's "Tar Baby" delves into the intricacies of race, identity, and belonging. It explores the expressions of double consciousness in Morrison's work and its significance in understanding the characters' motivations and relationships. It employs W.E.B. Du Bois's concept of double consciousness as a literary tool to describe the internal conflict experienced by African Americans. Double consciousness refers to the psychological experience of African Americans who perceive themselves both as individuals and as members of a racially marginalized group. This duality arises from the social construction of race and the historical context of oppression, leading to a fragmented identity. The female protagonist, Jadine Childs, embodies the struggle of double consciousness as a young, educated black woman. She gets divided between her African heritage and the allure of white culture. Her relationship with Son, a male protagonist, serves as a catalyst for her exploration of self-awareness and cultural identity.This study examines how Morrison portrays the internal conflicts faced by her characters. Additionally, it navigates the reasons behind the formation of split personality of the characters. It also discovers the role of history and memory in shaping the characters' perceptions. Over all, this research contributes the readers to comprehend how double consciousness acts in order to formulate fragmented personality of the black characters.

Keywords: Identity, intra-racial conflict, class distinction and African-Americans.

Introduction

Toni Morrison's "Tar Baby," portrays the dynamics of intra-racial conflict resulted from disharmonious relationship between the protagonists, Jadine and Son. They represent contradictory forces within the black community and make a journey from the island to New York in pursuit of wealth and success. Their discordant relationship exposes their deep-rooted divisions stemmed from class hierarchy. Jadine, a fashion model, and Son, a fugitive, find their love shattered by the irreconcilable differences fueled by societal expectations and personal aspirations.

Jadine stands for the complex interplay of cultural identity and acts as a tar baby—a metaphor for her engagement in modern white culture at the expense of her African-American heritage. Morrison highlights Jadine's cultural degeneration as she embraces

**Dr. Neupane is a Lecturer at the Department of English, Patan Multiple Campus, T. U., Lalitpur, Nepal. Email : kpsharma26@gmail.com*

European values, elevating them above her own ancestry and contemporaries. Her rejection of black cultural heritage distances her from her roots, and thus perpetuating a cycle of self-denial and cultural erasure within the black community.

Morrison's narrative scrutinizes the corrosive effects of internalized racism and the insidious influence of Eurocentric ideals on individual identity formation. Through Jadine's journey, she underscores the pervasive impact of societal pressures and historical legacies on the construction of black identity. By exposing the tensions between tradition and assimilation, "Tar Baby" invites readers to confront the complexities of race, class, and cultural authenticity, urging a reevaluation of the forces that shape individual and collective perceptions of self within the black diaspora.

Methodology

This research employs W.E.B. Du's double consciousness as a literary tool to explore how Morrison employs this concept to depict the complexities of racial identity and cultural dislocation within the narrative. Through close textual analysis, the research reveals how characters negotiate their identities in the context of racial oppression, migration, and societal expectations. Ultimately, it illustrates the various natures of subjectivity in the novel.

Review of Literature

Critics offer diverse perspectives on Toni Morrison's novel "Tar Baby." S. Krishnamoorty Aithal, in his essay "Getting out of One's Skin and Being the Only Person Inside: Toni Morrison's 'Tar Baby'," contends that Morrison breaks away from typical minority literature by portraying characters with empathy. Jane S. Bakerman, in "Failures of Love: Female Initiation in the Novels of Toni Morrison," delves into themes of black identity and self-discovery. Terry Otten's "The Crime of Innocence in Toni Morrison's Tar Baby" explores biblical parallels and the nuanced portrayal of innocence in the narrative. Laurence Lepow, in "Paradise Lost and Found: Dualism and Edenic Myth in Morrison's Tar Baby," highlights the novel's utilization of binary oppositions and intricate characters. Morrison, in conversation with Nellie McKay, discusses conflicting ideologies among black characters. Cynthia Dubin Edelberg, in "Morrison's Voices: Formal Education, the Work Ethic, and the Bible," scrutinizes the contrast between characters Jadine and Son as emblematic of broader questions regarding black identity.

W.E.B. Du Bois, in "The Souls of Black Folk," elucidates the notion of double consciousness, delineating it as the internal strife encountered by African Americans owing to their dual existence as both American citizens and members of the Black community. This concept forms a fundamental framework for examining Morrison's literary endeavours, as evidenced by her intricate integration of this theme throughout the novel. The characters wrestle with the conflicting demands of assimilation and the preservation of their cultural roots. In "The Blackness of Blackness: A Critique on the Sign and the Signifying Monkey," Henry Louis Gates Jr. emphasizes Morrison's critique of racial stereotypes and colorism in

"Tar Baby." Morrison uses characters like Jadine and Son to reveal the harmful impacts of internalized racism and societal pressures to adhere to Eurocentric beauty norms.

In "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color," Kimberlé Crenshaw suggests that the text uses symbolic elements to delve deeper into the concept of double consciousness. This prompts readers to think about the mental challenges of managing different aspects of one's identity at the same time. In "Ain't I a Woman? Black Women and Feminism," Bell Hooks highlights Morrison's portrayal of female characters such as Jadine, who struggle with the societal pressures placed on them because of their race and gender. This examination of intersectionality broadens our comprehension of double consciousness and it intersects with various facets of identity. In her article "The Generation of Postmemory," Marianne Hirsch suggests that this narrative approach reflects the fragmented aspect of double consciousness, encouraging readers to connect with the characters' complex and layered experience.

After reviewing all these comments by critics, the researcher still believes the role of double consciousness for subject formation the protagonists in the novel “Tar Baby” has not been explored so far. However, these comments on “Tar Baby” point to the same possibility. So, this research will focus on how double consciousness plays key role to create fragmented identity in the text. The research begins with the curiosity regarding what could be the fundamental causes for the creation of split personalities. The researcher assumes that Jadine’s adherence to European values, forgetting her own African root could be a possible answer to the question raised. The rational of the study is justified because the role of double consciousness could be applied to other fields, including the very often seen social conflict between Brahmin and Dalit in Nepal. It is hoped that after the research completes, it will be a guiding path to comprehend how double consciousness acts to divide social solidarity and cohesion. Considering t comprehensive nature of the theme in the novel, the research will basically confine to focus on major characters Jadine and Son. Double consciousness as developed by Du Boi would be utilized to analyse the text.

Analysis and Discussion

Jadine rejects both African and American cultures, terming them as white-folks-black-folks primitivism. Her denial of black values reflects a nuanced perspective that transcends conventional racial dichotomies. Her stance is not concerned over the black-white binary. Rather, she perceives the construction of such hierarchies as indicative of primitivism and backwardness. Despite her status as a well-educated African-American woman, Jadine appears to be influenced by the prevailing modern capitalist ethos. She prioritizes personal gain and success over adherence to ancestral norms and values. She seeks to forge her identity through the exaltation of individualism rather than a strict adherence to her cultural heritage: "I want to get out of my skin and be the only person inside–not American–not black–just me" (Morrison 45). Jadine's celebration of individualism can be interpreted as a

manifestation of capitalist ideology that champions the pursuit of self-interest above collective identity.

African-Americans get entangled between two distinct domains. On the one hand, they get dictated by their own native African culture, on the other, they are dominated by individualism and capitalism. They become the prey of divided self. The very concept fits into the context of Jadine who suffers from what Dubois calls double consciousness:

> After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world - a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a particular sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (Dubois 2-3)

Dubois argues that African-Americans have lagged behind because they constantly seek to define themselves through the lens of whiteness. Jadine epitomizes the concept of "double consciousness" prevalent in the African-American psyche. Rather than embracing her African heritage, she finds validation in her successful modeling career. Jadine internalizes white cultural norms and perceives herself through a white perspective. In a conversation with Charles Ruas, Morrison acknowledges, "The problem is to distinguish between those elements in ourselves as human beings, as individuals, and as a culture, that are ancient and pure or primitive that are there because they're valuable and ought to be there—and those that are primitive because they are ignorant and unfocused" (Morrison 113). Morrison stresses the importance of African-Americans not disconnecting from their ancient past, highlighting the significance of integrating both primitive and valuable cultural elements.

> Jadine, torn between the worlds of her affluent patrons and her black community, strives to break free from conventional black identity, aiming to carve out a new sense of self and cultural belonging. She champions freedom and individualism, finding solace in the vibrant atmosphere of New York while grappling with the traditions of the black community in Eloe. For Jadine, New York symbolizes a sense of belonging and liberation, a place where she can revel in joy:
>
> > New York made her feel like giggling, she wanted to giggle, she was so happy to be back in the arms of that barfly with the busted teeth and armpit breath. New York oiled her joints and she moved as though they were oiled. Her legs were longer here; her neck really connected her body to her head. After two months of stingless bees, butterflies and avocado trees, the smart thin trees on Fifty-Third Street refreshed her. They were to scale, human-sized, and the buildings did not

> threaten her as if the hills of the island had, for these were full of people whose joints been oiled just like hers. This is home, she thought with an orphan's delight; not Paris, not Baltimore, not Philadelphia (Morrison 223)

Eloe stands as a powerful symbol of the racial, cultural, and sexual limitations that Jadine is determined to break free from. These limitations are embodied by the night women of Eloe, who, in Jadine's eyes, represent a force bent on stifling her independence: "They were all out to get her, tie her, bind her, grab the person she had worked hard to become and choke it off with their soft loose tits" (Morrison 262). Choosing to reject this cultural confinement, Jadine decides to cut ties with the past and pursue a brighter future. In her final words to Son, she reaffirms her resolve to move forward: "You stay in that medieval slave basket if you want to. You will stay there by yourself. Don't ask me to do it with you. I won't. There is nothing any of us can do about the past but make our lives better" (Morrison 271). Jadine refuses to prolong her stay with Son if it necessitates embracing the traditional values of African-Americans. Instead, she prioritizes her sexual freedom as an expression of individualism and autonomy associated with white culture. Jadine seeks out unconventional spaces for intimacy, such as "sheds and orchards" and even an open window in a schoolhouse, envisioning them as romantic settings: "I am stuck here with a pack of Neanderthals who think sex is dirty or strange or something and he is standing here almost thirty years old doing it too. Stupid. 'Stupid,' she said aloud" (Morrison, 259). In this instance, Jadine denigrates black culture and its adherents, characterizing their attitudes towards sex as primitive. Her vocal rejection of these perspectives underscores her disdain for traditional African-American values and her embrace of the perceived liberation associated with white cultural norms.

Jadine receives an opulent Christmas gift from her French white fiancé, a coat crafted from "the hides of ninety baby seals stitched together so nicely you could not tell what part had sheltered their cute little hearts and which had cushioned their skulls" (Morrison, 86). Despite the controversial origins of the coat, she accepts it with appreciation. Mary Lupton critiques this gesture as an "efficient commercial slaughter of innocence" (Morrison, 417). Immersing herself in its darkness, Jadine sprawls on the fur, finding solace in its embrace: "Sinking into its blackness, she lay spread-eagle on the fur, nestling herself into it. It made her tremble. She opened her lips and licked the fur. It made her tremble more" (Morrison, 112). Symbolically, the coat captivates Jadine, representing a fascination with the dead black hide. Elizabeth House suggests: "Jadine's lack of altruism is demonstrated through her choice of attire (Morrison" (199). This coat becomes an extension of Jadine's own identity, embodying her essence as it is both black in color and manufactured by white Europeans. It serves as a tangible expression of Jadine's persona, aligning perfectly with her character.

Despite her racial identity as black, Jadine's behaviour aligns more closely with that of white individuals. She exhibits a reluctance to form friendships with other black individuals, viewing them as inferior and uncivilized. This behaviour hints at an unconscious racial self-loathing. Gideon refers to Jadine as "yalla," alluding to her light skin, a term typically

considered derogatory within the African-American community. He contends that "it's hard for them not to be white people. Yallas don't come to being black natural-like. They have to choose it and most don't choose it" (Morrison, 156). Gideon's statement resonates with Morrison's lament over the contemporary reality where Black individuals have the agency to choose their blackness.

Jadine's physical appearance may be black, but her mentality aligns more with whiteness. She grapples with conflicting thoughts, reminiscent of Frantz Fanon's assertion that "the black man has two dimensions: One with his fellows, the other with the white man. A Negro behaves differently with a white man and with another Negro" (Fanon, 13). Jadine experiences a form of double consciousness, leading to a split personality, as described by Hill Collins as an "outsider within status" (Collins, 526). She rejects her black culture and heritage, distancing herself from her roots by eschewing traditional practices such as straightening her hair and showing disdain for ear hoops, symbols of blackness. This rejection of her natural attributes underscores her internal conflict.

Jadine's internal turmoil is evident in her contemplation of marriage. She questions whether her fiancé truly desires her or merely a black woman who resembles her. She ponders the consequences of revealing aspects of herself that deviate from stereotypes associated with blackness:

> I guess the person I want to marry is him, but I wonder if the person he wants to marry is me or a black girl? And if it isn't me he wants, but any black girls who looks like me, talks and acts like me, what will happen when he finds out that I hate ear hoops, that I don't have to straighten my hair, that Mingus puts me to sleep, that sometimes I want to get out of my skin and be only the person inside – not American – not black – just me (Morrison, 45) ?

Jadine exhibits a sense of superiority over other black women in her community, boasting about her physical appearance and intellectual capacity. These contradictions are common among educated black individuals who struggle to identify with either whites or blacks. Jadine outright rejects her association with blackness:

> You mean the hair in her armpit? Jadine asked. She was uncomfortable with the way Margaret stirred her into blackening up or universalizing out, always alluding to or ferreting out what she believed were racial characteristics. She ended by resisting both, but it kept her alert about things she did not wish to be alert about (Morrison 62).

Jadine endeavors to forge a distinct identity separate from her native black culture, yet her efforts are ultimately unsuccessful. A pivotal dispute arises between Jadine and Son regarding the relationship between the individual and the community to which they belong. Jadine, in referring to herself and the Street household collectively as "us," prompts Son to question her belongingness: "Us? You call yourself 'us'? . . . But you . . . you're not a

member of the family. I mean you don't belong to anybody here, do you?" (Morrison 118). Jadine's response underscores her prioritization of individuality and autonomy: "I belong to me. But I live here" (Morrison 118). Her sequence of priorities clearly highlights the paramount importance she assigns to her own selfhood, aligning with the Anglo-American culture in which she is deeply entrenched.

Jadine envisions her future within the realm of white society, aspiring to European sophistication where her experiences with Son could be relegated to mere anecdotes at dinner parties. However, her adherence to American values incites animosity within her black community. A pivotal moment occurs when Jadine is confronted by an African woman in a yellow dress who symbolizes Jadine's native culture and heritage. The woman's act of spitting on Jadine represents a visceral rejection of her rejection of black culture. Despite her success, Jadine grapples with an underlying discontent. She longs for the respect and approval of the African woman, but instead, she feels isolated and inauthentic. Jadine's struggle stems from her lack of understanding of authentic blackness. She perceives blackness solely through outdated stereotypes, failing to grasp its true essence.

Jadine grapples with confusion regarding her lack of acceptance within her black community. Reflecting on the incident, she ponders, "She couldn't figure out why the woman's insulting gesture had derailed her – shaken her out of proportion to incident. Why she had wanted that woman to like and respect her" (Morrison 44). When one's sense of self is founded on the denial of one's ethnic roots, it inevitably leads to psychic chaos and alienation. Consequently, the woman's gesture punctured the fragile shell of her self-esteem, exposing her vulnerability to narcissistic wounds. The origins of this vulnerability, we argue, lie beneath the color line in the experience of parental loss. This experience left Jadine with a triad of painful emotions: doubts about her own value, uncertainty about her true identity, and the conviction that she has no one to depend on but herself. Therefore, the woman's insult to Jadine had a profound impact, challenging her life choices:

> Her relationship with her white boyfriend, her association with trendy friends, her social engagements, her status as a cover model for Elle magazine, and the overall trajectory of her life. As Sandra Paquet observes, "It triggers an identity crisis at the moment when [Jadine] ought to have felt most secure as a successful model and student – her marketability assured by beauty and education. (Paquet, 507)

This crisis arises precisely at a time when Jadine should have felt the most secure, given her accomplishments and societal validation. Jadine acts on a desire to feel better about self, ideally, obtaining positive feedback from her near ones of the black community. There is a positive aspect to unabashedly celebrating who a person is and feeling proud of that person. Jadine is confused and even questions her plans to marry Ryk, her white boyfriend. The same incident tormented her and forced her to re-think and ruminate further about her life as a whole, not only the good support and positive note of her white friends and her relatives as depicted in the following lines: 'Up over the downstairs kitchen. Right. Up over the

downstairs kitchen. Jadine sleeps up there. With them. Jadine? Now I am through. You comparing Jadine to a . . . a . . . stinking ignorant swamp nigger?" (100). As a black woman, Jadine grapples with a profound struggle to embrace her own identity, facing significant hurdles in achieving self-acceptance. She finds herself ensnared within the confines of Eurocentric education, which perpetuates the dominance of white culture. This cultural hegemony fosters a mind-set that exalts whiteness while denigrating blackness, leaving Jadine emotionally and physically enslaved by white values. Trapped within this paradigm, she is hindered from exploring alternative perspectives or modes of expression.

The introduction of Son, a black male character, at the outset of the novel addresses Jadine's underlying need for affirmation and guidance. Son emerges as a mysterious figure, clandestinely infiltrating a luxurious Caribbean estate where he clandestinely resides for an extended period, subsisting on meager provisions scavenged from leftovers. His presence signifies a departure from the Eurocentric norms that have constrained Jadine, as he endeavours to unravel the complexities of her inner turmoil and lead her back to a place of authenticity. Son's character embodies a defiance against the Eurocentric education system that perpetuates the very societal norms confounding Jadine. His unconventional approach challenges the status quo, offering an alternative narrative that prioritizes black empowerment and self-realization. Through his pursuit of Jadine, Son confronts the deeply ingrained biases and prejudices ingrained within her, advocating for a reclamation of her true identity. Jadine's narrative arc serves as a poignant exploration of the enduring legacy of racial oppression and cultural subjugation. Son's intervention symbolizes a beacon of hope amidst the darkness of Jadine's internal conflict, offering a pathway towards liberation from the shackles of white supremacy. Their interactions underscore the imperative of dismantling Eurocentric frameworks and embracing a more inclusive worldview that honors the richness and diversity of black experiences. Son stands against the Eurocentric education system that helps create people like Jadine:

> The truth is that whatever you learned in those colleges that didn't include me ain't shit . . . If they did not teach you that, then they did not teach you anything, because until you know about me, you do not know anything about yourself. And you don't know anything, anything at all about your children and anything at all about your mama and your papa. (227-8)

Son articulates a compelling argument against the Eurocentric educational paradigm, highlighting its propensity to perpetuate harmful stereotypes and binary oppositions that dehumanize black individuals. Within this framework, blackness is often portrayed as inherently wild, aggressive, and lacking in sophistication, perpetuating a narrative of subjugation and exploitation. Son implores Jadine to recognize the insidious influence of these entrenched biases and to reject the distorted self-perception imposed by white perspectives.

In positioning himself as a champion of authentic black identity, Son challenges the notion that legitimacy can be conferred solely through the lens of white history and culture. He advocates for a reclamation of black agency and self-determination, emphasizing the importance of viewing oneself through a lens untainted by the distortions of Euro centrism. In doing so, Son underscores the imperative of embracing a multifaceted understanding of blackness that transcends the narrow confines of racial caricature. Son's critique of the flawed American educational system resonates with the sentiments expressed by figures such as Asante, a black public school official mentioned in Obama's autobiography. Asante, like Son, calls attention to the systemic biases inherent within the educational apparatus, which perpetuate harmful stereotypes and marginalize black voices. Their shared perspective underscores the urgent need for educational reform that acknowledges and affirms the diverse experiences and contributions of black individuals within the broader tapestry of human history:

> Noting that the American educational system is racist and therefore deficient, Asante states that it — is not about educating black children. Never has been. From the very start, the black child is learning —[s]omeone else's history. Someone else's culture. Not only that, this culture he's supposed to learn is the same culture that's systematically rejected him, denied his humanity. (258)

The same view is shared by Gloria Anzaldúra and notes,"cultural–[i]gnorance splits people, creates prejudices. Misinformed person is a subjugated people" (2219). Her Eurocentric education system nurtures individualism and capitalistic society that foster personal benefit. Jadine rejects the ancient properties of African people that Son, the African woman, and the night women embody. It is all because of her brought up in white environment that always stereotypes the blacks as inferior and of low status. It is the result of Jadine's love of white capitalistic values and culture and her reluctance to be associated with her own native culture that led to the loss of identify and she becomes unauthentic and blood traitor in the eyes of black community that surrounds her. Jadine, because of her having more American than African sensibility, considers Blacks as inferior and savage. Apart from Jadine, her uncle and aunt, Sydney and Ondine Childs, the Cook and Butler in the house of Valerian Street also feel superior to the local black populace. Sydney remarks twice on how he is ,"a genuine Philadelphia Negro mentioned in the book of that name" (284). Part of this feeling of superiority might be class-related as Jadine as well as her uncle and aunt are very proud of their positions in the Street house–they are industrious and hardworking.

Jadine's encounter with Son is marked by a disturbing moment where she derogatorily refers to him as a "nigger." Her perception of him is tainted by deeply ingrained stereotypes, evident in her immediate classification of him as a criminal based solely on his appearance, particularly his wild and aggressive demeanours. Despite Son's gentle actions, such as quietly observing Jadine and indulging in chocolate, his discovery evokes stereotypical reactions from the women in the household. Son's decision to hide in Margaret Street's bedroom cupboard reinforces prejudiced beliefs held by the women, who associate his

presence with the fixed and racist notion of the black man as a rapist. In Jadine's room, she interprets Son's presence as a potential threat of sexual violence, illustrating the pervasive influence of racial biases and fears ingrained within society. This moment highlights the insidious nature of racial prejudice, wherein individuals like Son are unfairly judged and stereotyped based on their race, regardless of their actual intentions or actions. Jadine's reaction serves as a poignant reminder of the damaging impact of systemic racism on interpersonal interactions and perceptions within society:

You rape me and they'll feed you to the alligators. Count on it, nigger. You good as dead right now. "Rape? Why you little white girls always think somebody's trying to rape you?" "White?" She was startled out of fury. "I'm not . . . you know I'm not white!" "No? Then why don't you settle down and stop acting like it." "Oh, God," she moaned. "Oh, good God, I think you better throw me out of the window because as soon as you let me loose I am going to kill you. For that alone. Just for that. For pulling that black-woman-white-woman shit on me. Never mind the rest. What you said before, that was nasty and mean, but if you think you can get away with telling me what a black woman is or ought to be . . . " I can tell you. (121)

Jadine's description of Son's dreadlocks as, "physically overpowering, like bundles of long whips or lashes that could grab her and beat her to jelly. And with wild, aggressive, vicious hair that needed to be put in jail. Uncivilised, reform-school hair. Mau Mau, Attica, chain-gang hair" (113) reflects a complex mix of arousal and repulsion towards him. These conflicting emotions underscore the typical white responses to black males, portraying them as both a sexual and existential threat. The imposition of the rapist identity on Son by both Jadine and Margaret reveals a white paranoid fantasy of the black other, rooted in the legacy of the black rapist myth.

The origins of this myth can be traced back to the Reconstruction era, where white individuals sought to uphold systems of patriarchy and racism. This mythological construct victimizes black men, reducing their selfhood to that of the brute: untamed, uncivilized, and devoid of rationality or empathy. Within the framework of white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy, black individuals are portrayed as inherently inferior and dangerous, perpetuating harmful stereotypes that perpetuate systemic oppression and marginalization. As Tommy Lott points out, "the Whites' underlying assumption was that "black men are prone to rape because black people as a racial group are bestial" (28). The construction of black bestiality and inferiority is not only an indication of historicized racial relation but emerges as the real of racial antagonism, the irreconcilable difference in racial relations, which will always remain in the symbolic order as a residue, a leftover, a stain of traumatic irrationality. Jadine, since getting assimilated with white culture, becomes white in her thinking and black in skin only. Jadine's way of life and way of thinking pattern is more inclined towards white culture. Jadine considers Son as a rapist and denigrates him by calling him nigger. This conversation between Margaret and Jadine shows the animalization of black people which a few of the white characters do throughout the novel, "Oh, God, he

scared the shit out of me. He looked like a gorilla!" Jadine's neck prickled at the description. She had volunteered nigger—but not gorilla. "We were all scared, Margaret," she said calmly. "If he'd been white we would still have been scared I know, I know'' (129). Son's blackness, when viewed through the lens of whiteness, becomes entangled not only with the myth of the black rapist but also with the dehumanizing Negro-ape metaphor. Margaret, the white hostess of L'Arbe de la Croix, employs this metaphor to articulate the perceived threat posed by Son's presence in their tranquil world. Jadine, influenced by pervasive prejudices, internalizes the notion that black males harbor animalistic passions and pose a sexual threat to white females. This stereotype, crafted by whites to assert dominance over blacks, serves as a weapon of suppression.

The accusation of rape levelled against Son, notably by Jadine, is unfounded and merely a pretext, reflecting her adoption of the white perspective. In her irrationality, she reduces Son to the status of an animal. This underscores the profound impact of internalized racism, where Jadine, despite her blackness, adopts the biases and prejudices of the dominant white culture, resulting in the dehumanization of Son and the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes: "Nice pad you got here, he said smiling, and that was when Jadine felt the first bolt of fear. As long as he burrowed in his plate like an animal, grunting in monosyllables, but not daring to look up, she was without fear. But when he smiled she saw small dark dogs galloping on silver feet" (93).

Conclusion:

The novel portrays the intricate duality of African-American consciousness arising from the intersection of the allure of white culture and the enduring legacy of black heritage. Within this dynamic, individuals find themselves torn between the enticing promises of white culture, steeped in capitalist values, and the profound ties to their African heritage. Jadine, serving as a representative figure of African-Americans, grapples with what Dubois famously termed "double consciousness"—the internal conflict experienced by blacks as they navigate the complexities of self-identity and authenticity. In her quest for self-definition, Jadine succumbs to the seductive pull of white ideology, forsaking her ties to the black community and relinquishing her black roots to serve the interests of white supremacy. Her willingness to conform to white cultural norms is epitomized by Karin Luisa Badt's observation that Jadine has become, quite literally, a cover model for white culture. However, Morrison's narrative serves as a cautionary tale, warning against the perilous consequences of discarding one's black heritage in favor of embracing white culture. Morrison underscores the futility of attempting to assimilate into white culture as a means of achieving acceptance or belonging. Rather than erasing their racial identity, such endeavours only serve to strip individuals of their authenticity and cultural heritage. Ultimately, Morrison contends that true empowerment and fulfilment can only be achieved through embracing and celebrating one's blackness, rejecting the false promises of assimilation into white-dominated society.

Works Cited:

Anzaldua, Gloria. “La Conciencia de la Mestiza: Towards a New Consciousness.” The *Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, edited by Vincent B. Leitch, Norton, 2001, pp. 2208-223.

Appiah, K.A. and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. *Toni Morrison: Critical Perspectives Past and Present.* Amistad Press, Inc., 1993.

Badt, Karin Louise. “The Roots of the Body in Toni Morrison: A Matter of Ancient Properties.” *African American Review*, vol. 29, no. 4, 1995, pp. 567-577.

Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color." *Stanford Law Review*, vol. 43, no. 6, 1991, pp. 1241-1299.

Collins, Patricia Hill. “Learning from the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought.” *Social Problems*, vol. 33, no. 6, 1986, p. 526.

Cowart, David. "Faulkner and Joyce in Morrison's Song of Solomon." A*merican Literature*, vol. 62, no. 1, 1990, pp. 87-100.

Du Bois, W.E.B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. Oxford UP, 2007.

Edelberg, Cynthia Dubin. “Morrison's Voices: Formal Education, the Work Ethic, and the Bible.” *American Literature*, vol. 58, no. 2, 1986, pp. 217-237.

Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin White Masks.* Translated by Charles Lamb Markmann, Grove Press, 1967.

Gates Jr., Henry Louis. *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African-American Literary Criticism*. Oxford University Press, 1988.

Hirsch, Marianne. *The Generation of Postmemory*. Columbia University Press, 2012.

Hooks, bell. *Ain't I a Woman? Black Women and Feminism*. South End Press, 1981.

House, Elizabeth B. “The ‘Sweet Life’ in Toni Morrison’s Fiction.” *American Literature*, vol. 56, no. 2, 1984, pp. 181-202.

Jane S. Bakerman. “Failures of Love: Female initiation in the Novels of Toni Morrison.” *American Literature*, vol. 52, no. 4, 1981, pp. 541-563.

Lepow, Laurence. “Paradise Lost and Found: Dualism and Edenic Myth in Morrison’s Tar Baby.” *Contemporary Literatur*e, vol. 28, no. 3, 1987, pp. 363-377.

Lott, Tommy. *The Invention of Races: Black Culture and the Politics of Representation*. Blackwell, 1999.

McKay, Nellie. “An Interview with Toni Morrison.” *Contemporary Literature*, vol. 24, no. 4, 1983, pp. 413-430.

Morrison, Toni. *Tar Baby*. Vintage, 1981.

Otten, Terry. “The Crime of Innocence in Toni Morrison's Tar Baby to fall.” *Studies in American Fiction*, vol. 14, no. 2, 1986, p. 153.

20. Paquet, Sandra. “The Ancestor as Foundation in Their Eyes Were Watching God and Tar Baby.” *Callaloo*, vol. 13, no. 3, 1990, pp. 499-515.

21. Ruas, Charles. “Toni Morrison.” *Conversations with Toni Morrison*, edited by Danille Taylor-Guthrie, U of Mississippi P, 1994, pp. 93-118.