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**Hope is a Discipline:
Feminism, Dichotomy, and the Ethics of Transformative Justice**

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**Submitted to the Department of English of Pomona College in partial fulfillment of the
requirements of the Senior Exercise**

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Table of Contents

Introduction:.....	1
Chapter One	14
Introduction	14
Why Fruit? Frameworks Of Analysis	15
Janie The Hypothesis: Hurston’s Experiment and Hegel’s Science	19
Nanny’s Story and the Interruption of Ambiguity	24
Bitter Fruit: Reciprocity and Janie’s Marriages	28
Injustice and Bad Faith.....	38
Conclusion.....	42
Chapter Two.....	44
Introduction: Reading Jazz in the Age of Transformative Justice	44
Harm: Naming the Cycle of Trauma.....	48
Conflict: Interrupting the Cycle of Trauma.....	55
Transformation: Beginning the Cycle of Healing.....	61
Conclusion: Narrative Voice, Jazz Music, And Emergent Love	69
Bibliography	75

Introduction:
Feminism, Dichotomy, and Ethics of Care and Justice

In 1979 Audre Lorde delivered “The Master’s Tools will Never Dismantle the Master’s House” at the International *Second Sex* Conference in honor of the thirtieth anniversary of the publication of Simone de Beauvoir’s book. As this speech, along with Lorde’s other works featured in the *Sister Outsider* collection, enjoy a prominent cultural renaissance we might ask what chord Lorde’s work strikes with a contemporary audience? “Master’s Tools” articulates a critique of white feminist exclusion of poor women of color: “I agreed to take part in a New York University Institute for the Humanities conference a year ago, with the understanding that I would be commenting upon papers dealing with the role of difference within the lives of American women: difference of race, sexuality, class and age. The absence of these considerations weakens any feminist discussion of the personal and the political” (110). As Lorde’s comments highlight the postmodern, in Beauvoir’s case the existentialist, feminist project falls short in its continued maintenance of strict, often binary, categorization of identity and exclusive attention to white femininity. This “either/or model of nurturing,” Lorde writes, “totally dismissed my knowledge as a Black lesbian woman” (111).

In the 1970s, Carol Gilligan popularized the terms “ethic of care” and “ethic of justice” within feminist discourse: “One voice speaks of connection, not hurting, care, and response; and one speaks of equality, reciprocity, justice, and rights” (“Mapping the Moral Domain” 55). In addition to its significance within Gilligan’s field of psychology, the subject of an ethics of care today concerns theorists of philosophy, gender and women’s studies, disability studies, legal studies, and business ethics, among other disciplines. Gilligan’s work

exemplifies the oppositional quality of mainstream philosophy in the dichotomy of care and justice; she notes in “Reply” her observation of a feminine bias towards a care-based ethics but distinguishes this from the claims of essentialized femininity leveled at her theory by critics. “My work focuses on the difference between two moral orientations - a justice and a care perspective rather than on the question of whether women and men differ on Kohlberg's stages of justice reasoning” (Gilligan 329). While Gilligan protests the gendering of her categorization, her work solidified the oppositional orientation of care and justice ethics.

Certain theorists, notably within the strain of feminist conversations arising from the work of Enlightenment philosopher Georg Wilhelm Hegel, have since posed the question of reconciling these two seemingly opposite ethical stances. Kimberly Hutchins wrote in 2010, “...Hegel’s critique rests on the unsustainability of rigid distinctions between identity and difference, and between nature and culture...” (88). Alongside scholars such as Martha Nussbaum, Alice Ormiston, and Seyla Benhabib, Hutchings represents a more radical interpretation of Hegel which reads his works as a call against oppositional thinking. However, dominant conversations continue to oppose care and justice ethics, and if they, like Hutchins, do not, they often further perpetuate the bias towards white experience.

In 1980, Sarah Ruddick connected an ethics of care to her concept of “maternal power” (347) and “mother’s thought,” evoking an ethics of care as empowerment. However, she also notes, “I will be drawing upon my knowledge of the institutions of motherhood in middle-class, white, Protestant, capitalist, patriarchal nuclear family in which I mother and was mothered...I principally depend upon others to correct my interpretations and to translate across cultures” (347). Ruddick’s call for a broader interest in ethics of care and

justice has been met to an extent by Black feminist theorists yet is also one of the few instances of acknowledgement of bias on the part of white feminist scholars.

Mekeda Graham's article "The Ethics of Care, Black Women and the Social Professions: Implications of a New Analysis," usefully summarizes some of the intersections between Black feminist theory and care ethics. While "Black women's experiences of caring have remained on the outer edges of feminist research and this neglect reflects the prominence given to sexism as the only oppression in women's lives" (199), it is also true that care forms a central part of many Black American women's professional and familial lives. Graham writes, "[for Black women] caring, mothering and family life can be the site of women's cultural and social agency through which they have mobilized resistance to racism and sexism" (199). One of the central ways, according to Graham, through which Black women reclaim care ethics is by challenging binary opposition: "First, black feminist thought critiques oppositional thinking and the use of both/and categorizations to embrace the different ways of being female and black. Second, this way of thinking avoids add-on approaches which miss the social and structural connections between gender and race to exert the simultaneity of oppression" (199-200). This critique of binarism and rigid identity categories finds its roots in a long evolution of Black feminist thinking.

In "Practicing Love: Black Feminism, Love-Politics, and Post-Intersectionality," Jennifer Nash provides more context as to how second-wave Black feminist ideology challenges rigid categorization of identity. She writes of a "black feminist tradition of love-politics, a tradition marked by transforming love from the personal... into a theory of justice" (2). While she notes that love-politics has formed a crucial pillar of black feminist thought in different ways at different historical moments, including the contemporary one, she focuses

largely on mid-to-late twentieth century Black feminist activists and scholars. “This particular moment [second-wave] has long been celebrated for its advocacy of love as a resistant ethic of self-care” (3). In my analysis, in addition to the consistent Black feminist resistance to separating the ideals of love and justice, I also take interest in their attention to the self and an ethics based in “self-work”. Nash explains “that black feminism’s recurring interest in love can be interpreted as an advocacy of a particular kind of self-work, one that encourages the black feminist subject to transcend the self” (7). Graham further provides a useful analysis of Patricia Hill-Collins, author of *Black Feminist Thought*, who “employs the ethic of caring as a central feature of black feminist sensibility which is expressed across the primary value of spirituality, the common spirit/energy force flowing through all aspects of life and the capacity for empathy as a way of knowing...ethics is employed in the practical outworking of personhood and the freedom to develop fully one’s human dispositions through interaction with others” (200). Thus, we see that Black feminist ethics have long relied on the principles of self-knowledge and self-transcendence, through a positive understanding of the interdependence of humankind, with one another and with nature.

The tense relationship with human interdependence marks Western philosophy going at least as far back as Hegel . For instance, Hutchings responds to Hegel’s treatment of Antigone ¹ :

“In my view, the ethical significance of the character of Antigone is twofold. First, she constantly reminds us of the impossibility of understanding the meaning of justice in any way relying on a ground above or beyond that of heteronomies inherent in ethical life...Secondly, Antigone’s ethical significance lies in the way she reminds us not only that self-certainty is not knowledge but also that there are limits on the

¹ Hegel writes on Sophocles’ *Antigone* in the *Phenomenology* and the *Aesthetics*; the significance of Antigone in Hegel’s work has, in particular, attracted debate among 20th century feminist scholars (Pulkkinen)

extent to which any of us are transparent to ourselves in any capacity, including that of ethical judge or actor...it is because of our 'contamination' by a range of factors that transcend our individual being that we are never fully able to grasp who we are" (96).

Hutchings thus argues it is a mistake to interpret Hegel's reading of Antigone singularly as either the triumph of universal moral reason over individual, subjective ethics, or vice versa. While her call for a heteronomous ethics may at first glance seem compatible with a Black feminist project, she also articulates skepticism both towards self-knowledge, and towards human interdependence as anything other than "contamination." The notion of interdependence is of critical importance to Beauvoir and her treatment of ethical romantic love; it is also closely related to the ethical works of scholars such as Benhabib and Gilligan (Lundgren-Gothlin 43). For Beauvoir, human interdependence is opposed to autonomy, though the two are not necessarily mutually exclusive (Lundgren-Gothlin 43). "Freedoms, she [Beauvoir] suggested in *Pyrrhus et Cineas*, are not autonomous but interdependent. For "[o]nly the freedom of the other is able to give necessity to my being" (Kruks 112). Kruks illustrates how interdependence has both a liberating and oppressive potential in her work: "If, however, my freedom depends on that of others, then it is also vulnerable to their attack: 'It is this interdependence [of freedoms] which explains why oppression is possible and why it is hateful'" (112). Despite Beauvoir's attempts to reconcile the tension between autonomy and interdependence, it seems she does escape the fearful, "contamination," mindset towards the collective and communal. Perhaps in imagining that there must necessarily be tension between autonomy and interdependence, Beauvoir exacerbates a conflict which need not exist at all.

For Beauvoir, and many other feminist thinkers, this recurring challenge of overcoming mistrust of interdependence and their subsequent tendency to favor autonomy as an ideal, stem from their continued reliance on the dualisms which underline Western thought. Kathryn Pauly Morgan describes three gender-polarized dualisms which Beauvoir works with in *The Second Sex*: Life vs Spirit, Immanence vs Transcendence, and Men vs Women (120). Here I focus on the first two of these dualisms, as Morgan argues that Beauvoir's final analysis of the difference in life situation of men and women results from women's exclusion from the halves of these dichotomies patriarchally determined as masculine. Firstly, Life vs Spirit. Morgan writes, "For an individual committed to life and life processes, life-giving and life-sustaining are the dominant values" (120). According to Beauvoir life-oriented actions include childbirth, nursing, and preparing food; for Beauvoir these do not constitute "a genuinely creative, properly human life" because they reduce women to level of animals, or the biological (Morgan 120). "Contrast this individual with a person who thinks of the water as a domain to be mastered, and of fish as alien species to be conquered" (Morgan 121). Beauvoir thus defines a life committed to Spirit by its commitment to "rising above" the biological. "Since Beauvoir regards the life of the Spirit as the only genuinely human life, one of her primary goals in *The Second Sex* is to fight for women to have full legitimate access to this life" (Morgan 121). Thus Beauvoir favors the typically masculine qualities of mastery and conquest, concluding that a life-giving life is not "creative" enough to be fully human.

The second necessary condition, according to Beauvoir, for women to achieve 'fully human' lives is transcendence which she opposes to immanence. "Psychologically, the life of immanence is a life in which one thinks within predetermined limits, within already

established conditions and conventions, submitting to identity-determining roles which are perceived as necessary and given” (Morgan 122). Beauvoir argues that patriarchal oppression frequently reduces women’s condition to that of immanence. In contrast, “Transcendent subjects invent, act, make choices. They view the future as something indeterminate to shape and bring into existence rather than as a fate to which one can only submit...Again it is clear that Beauvoir regards only the life of transcendence as worthy of human respect” (Morgan 123). This quality of agency present in Beauvoir’s notions of Spirit and transcendence closely aligns with the idea of self-authorship.² For women to achieve humanity, they must gain validate their existence according to the principles of mastery and domination of the self and the world, as do students according to proponents of self-authorship. “Foundationally, self-authorship curtails its potential to meditate on, take up, or theorize about the Black body because its authority is predicated on the subject–object principle. This dichotomous relationship omits epistemic and ontological knowing that minoritized bodies broadly and Black bodies in particular have made distinct” (Okello 530). Proponents of self-authorship, most often in educational settings, assert the separation of mind and body and call upon students to master themselves, idealizing executive function over feeling as the mark of intelligence. Yet this presumes that there *is* a distinction between thought and feeling; as we have seen, this reliance on dichotomy and self-mastery, rooted in Western patriarchy as these concepts are, remains at the foundation of white feminist ethical scholarship from Beauvoir to Gilligan to Hutchings. While Okello returns to the Black feminist concept of self-

² Self-authorship refers to our internal generation of beliefs and values rather than accepting to ‘be authored’ by the external. Okello writes, “Self-authorship curtails its potential to meditate on, take up, or theorize about the Black body because its authority is predicated on the subject–object principle...Implied in this focused discourse on the individual is that Western notions of citizenship—synonymous with conformity to neoliberal politics—are desirable.”

definition as an alternative to self-authorship, in this thesis I will explore turn to the model of activist selfhood offered by transformative justice (TJ).

I am interested in how Black feminist scholarship and activist work, particularly in the last few years, has turned towards practices of self-knowledge and self-love, as well as a positive conception of interdependence, or emergence, to theorize, practice, and redefine social justice. For TJ activists, an ethics and practice of care become one of justice. “These discourses are evidenced in the popularity of books and self-development programmes and workshops by Iyanla Vanzant and others which advocate self-knowledge, choosing engagement with education for living, nurturing the internal world (spirit), holism, embedding process in life, seeking support through collaboration with others, perspective transformation and change” (Graham 201). Here Graham writes of late twentieth century Black feminists who found empowerment by repurposing care ethics. While she considers an earlier iteration of practical Black feminist knowledge, for this thesis I will turn primarily to two writers and activists who have risen to prominence in the last decade: Mariame Kaba and adrienne maree brown. I argue that these two writers, among others,³ have conceptualized TJ as a reconciliation of care and justice, forgoing the traditional feminist opposition of the two and instead putting forth an ethics of emergent love which unifies care and justice.

It is first important to note that TJ is not new, nor does it claim to be. It arises both out of a critical need left unaddressed by previous reform movements and out of the wisdom of decades of Black and Indigenous activists, writers, and leaders. To understand the significance of the TJ movement, it is first essential to understand the restorative justice movement (RJ) from which it distinguishes itself. At its simplest, the difference between

³ Other prominent transformative justice writers include Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, Sarah Shulman, and Ruth Morris

transformative and restorative approaches lies in RJ's advocacy for the maintenance of existing state structures and belief that such structures can be adjusted, or 'restored,' to bring about justice. On the other hand, Kaba writes in *We Do This 'Til We Frees Us* :

“Transformative justice is not a flowery phrase for a court proceeding that delivers an outcome we like. It is a community process developed by anti-violence activists of color, in particular, who wanted to create responses to violence that do what criminal punishment systems fail to do: build support and more safety for the person harmed, figure out how the broader context was set up for this harm to happen, and how that context can be changed so that this harm is less likely to happen again. It is time-consuming and difficult work done by organizations like Generation 5, Creative Interventions, and the Bay Area Transformative Justice Collective. It is not grounded in punitive justice, and it actually requires us to challenge our punitive

impulses, while prioritizing healing, repair, and accountability” (63).

As Kaba further explains, TJ practices arise from survivors of sexual and domestic violence, often poor women of color and sex workers, for whom the existing system of justice did little or nothing to address the harms they faced. “Black women are (more often than not) targets of state violence, and when or if ever they are protected by the punishing state, the costs are very high indeed (Kaba 113). It is also a framework that has developed alongside prison abolition activism. TJ advocates promote trauma-based approaches, centering the harm done to survivors, perpetrators, and their community, and finding flexible solutions which promote change for the better. brown writes:

“Transformative Justice:

1. Acknowledges the reality of state harm
2. Looks for alternative ways to address/interrupt harm, which do not rely on the state
3. Relies on organic, creative strategies that are community oriented and sustained
4. Transforms the root causes of violence, not only the individual cause” (132).

For Black women, community-oriented practices of justice which focus on harm and which place care at the heart of resolution have a long history. “Noble (2005) suggests that these empowerment strategies are responding to the multiple caring responsibilities which many black women undertake and as a mark of resistance to negative stereotypes which seek to blame them for the ills within black communities.” (Graham 201). For Black women, white supremacy has systemically weaponized both care and justice in ways that dominant white feminist discourses on these subjects often fail to recognize. The economic demands of white households have often created pressure for Black women to assume caregiving roles, yet mainstream media has also denigrated Black women for this same caregiving from the Mammy stereotype to the Moynihan report⁴. Thus, from the margins of the conversation, Black women have redefined their relationship to these principles in ways which address their problems of essentialism and oppression. Kaba references Saidiya Hartman’s quote, “Care is the antidote to violence,” writing, “Her words offer a potentially powerful feminist frame for abolition. Effective defense campaigns provide thousands of people with opportunities to demonstrate care for criminalized individuals through various tactics (including letter writing, financial support, prison visits, and more) ...defense campaigns guided by an ethic and practice of care can be powerful strategies to lead us toward abolition” (111). TJ activists thus acknowledge an ethics of care as one framework for understanding aspects of their work, however, they have also avoided the pitfalls of an essentialism in their multifaceted framework in which straightforward caregiving is one strategy among others.

⁴ Completed in 1965, Assistant Secretary of Labor Patrick Moynihan’s report on the economic conditions of Black families focused heavily on family structure and the high-prevalance of single-parent households. Critics hold that the report was an instance of victim-blaming Black women (Geary 1).

Transformative justice is a living process: “When we set about trying to transform society, we must remember that we ourselves will also need to transform. Our imagination of what a different world can be is limited. We are deeply entangled in the very systems we are organizing to change. White supremacy, misogyny, ableism, classism, homophobia, and transphobia exist everywhere...Being intentionally in relation to one another, a part of a collective, helps to not only imagine new worlds, but also to imagine ourselves differently” (Kaba). This awareness of the deep ‘entanglement’ of all life is one hallmark of TJ writing. Explaining the title of her book, *Emergent Strategy*, brown writes, “This juxtaposition of emergence and strategy was what made the most sense to me when I was trying to explain the kind of leadership I see in Octavia’s books” (20). brown describes, and herself practices, an activist leadership modelled after patterns in nature sometimes called ‘emergence.’

Though descriptions of emergent phenomena in scientific literature date back to the 19th century, “The revival in the 1970s of the use of the term ‘emergence’ in scientific literature coincided with renewed interest in chemical and neurological complexity (see Sperry 1969, 1991; Campbell 1974). It became widespread with the rise of what is now known as complexity science” (Mitchell, 2012, p. p. 174). Complex systems, scientifically and philosophical, are systems in which phenomena occurring at the ‘upper’ level cannot be reduced, or explained, solely by the properties of its’ composite, ‘lower’ level, parts. Examples in nature include weather patterns which form hurricanes, migration behaviors in flocking birds, and the formation of crystals. The observation of emergent patterns has long posed a challenge to Enlightenment principles of science, such as those found in Hegel’s works: “Attributing emergent properties to a system means establishing that some of its global properties are not reducible to the properties of its elements...Emergentist descriptions

of nature cannot aspire to the classical - "strong" - status of objectivity, a traditional emblem of scientificity” (Damiano 275). For traditional models of science, the difficulty lies in the seemingly chaotic patterns of emergent systems, defined by their characteristic nonlinearity and randomness which, nevertheless, often produces highly functional and ordered systems. For those who have long studied emergence, it is clearly “identified with the epistemic marks of non-explainability and non-reducibility” (Mitchell 173). Thus, “unless they try to avoid the problem by neutralizing the heterodox character of the notion, they have to propose to the scientific community new standards of admissibility, which constitute, in final analysis, new visions of science” (Damiano 274). However, this incredible potential complexity theory holds for reevaluating the foundations of science is not limited to the laboratory. As discussed in chapter one, the preference (more often, the demand) for objectivity and the subject/object opposition which underscores this, are deeply embedded in virtually all Western institutions. How might a broader understanding of human interaction as an emergent process change how we understanding what it means to be married, to raise a child, to commit a ‘crime,’ or to be tried and incarcerated?

Firstly, I trace the roots of the conversation on subjectivity, love, and justice, reading Zora Neale Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God* as I explore Hegel’s foundational dialectic as it is symbolized by fruit. I show how Hurston’s consideration of a Black woman’s experience with institutionalized love and justice, via the marriage and the legal system, highlights the limits of both Hegel and Beauvoir’s models of dialectic consciousness. For Janie, these ideals do not account for the significance of the complexity which produces the fruit: the branches, the roots, the soil, and the elements. Huston demonstrates how such an oversight presents a systemic challenge to Black women in love and citizenship.

Secondly, drawing from the principles of transformative justice, in chapter two I turn to Toni Morrison's *Jazz* centering three pillars: harm, conflict, and transformation. In my reading of *Jazz*, I aim to investigate the extent to which transformative justice, as theorized and practiced by Black women activists, offers a useful critique of feminist theorists' longstanding reliance on binary opposition, exemplified by the debates surrounding ethics of care and justice, and ethics of romantic love. As the scope of this thesis reaches back, examining evolutions in Black feminist love from the height of Black modernism to present, I am reminded of Mariame Kaba's words to activists who have long fought for justice: "Hope is a discipline." For many Black women, and above all those who have fought for change, the road has been long and paved with injustice. As much as Hurston and Morrison's texts remind of this reality, they also remind that while the fight for justice will never be over, it is the love we find along this road for ourselves and for our communities which gives us the strength to persevere.

Chapter One

Love and Justice: The Motif of Fruit in Hegel and Hurston

Introduction

“*Their Eyes Were Watching God* is the prototypical Black novel of affirmation; it is the most successful, and convincing, and exemplary novel of Black love that we have, period,” wrote June Jordan in “Notes on a Balancing of Black Love and Hatred” in 1989 (3). *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston tells the story of the protagonist Janie’s three marriages. Following a moment of sexual and romantic awakening, Janie first marries a wealthy older man her grandmother chooses then leaves this marriage only to find herself once again trapped in the confines of a stifling middle class ideal of womanhood. In her third relationship with Tea Cake, a younger man, Janie first establishes a marriage whose volatility and nomadic nature at first seem to offer a different path, but which ultimately prove unsustainable when Janie is forced to kill Teacake and she ends the novel alone, having left her quest for desire within marriage unfulfilled. In this chapter, I will highlight the work that Hurston’s novel does to challenge an ideal of rational harmony between reason and being, between self and otherness, that I will outline through Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Mind* and subsequent feminist discourses on love and justice.

Since Alice Walker’s revival of Hurston’s novel (“Feminist Fantasies” 105) critics have long debated whether the culmination of Janie’s story represents an ideal of empowered womanhood or a cautionary tale about trauma and dependence. Glynnis Carr’s 1987 analysis of *Their Eyes...* notably draws comparison between Janie’s progressive romantic journey in this novel and structure of the bildungsroman, the archetypal coming-of-age story associated

with the development of consciousness; Hurston's novel is also mentioned often in discussions of the bildungsroman(e) in Black American literature (Williams). Previous analyses, such as Carr's, have largely used the bildungsroman framework to assert that by the end of the novel Janie has reached a transcendent state of empowered subjectivity. Later work influenced by developments like Patricia Hill Collins' concepts of self-definition and self-valuation in *Black Feminist Thought* (1990), such as Jennifer Jordan's article "Feminist Fantasies: Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*" argued Janie's inability to rise to consciousness results from her distinction from "...the black feminist demand that a heroine achieve both self-definition and social commitment" (108). Regardless of their orientation towards Janie's subjectivity, or lack thereof, most works addressing the topic of subjectivity and community in this novel address what is either a post-modern or black feminist subject whose consciousness is achieved, or not, through speech (Brigham, Scott). In this chapter I will diverge from such analyses in two ways: firstly, by focusing on the motif of fruit in this text; secondly, by drawing attention to the affective level of the novel primarily centering two emotions, love and fear.

Why Fruit? Frameworks Of Analysis

By selecting the motif of fruit for my analysis I draw on elements of the bildungsroman approach, namely concept of ripening as it applies to Janie's subjectivity. The concept of *bildung*, alternately translated as formation, maturation, or cultivation, is also one Hegel himself applied to the progression of the 'protagonist' of the *Phenomenology* – Spirit. Amanda-Lynn Feeny writes in her article on *Phenomenology* and the bildungsroman: "In the 'Introduction' to the *Phenomenology*, Hegel explains that it is a 'Bildung of consciousness up to the standpoint of science...Moreover, the *Phenomenology* is a Bildungsroman because

Hegel maintains that this educational transformation occurs insofar as the text nurtures a potential for philosophical education that is already present in the reader” (15-16). The *Phenomenology* is thus a text in which both Spirit and the reader are educated in the dialectic process of self-consciousness that forms the basis of Hegel’s science in *Encyclopedia*. Hegel writes: “...it is only in absolute knowledge that the separation of the subject matter from the certainty of itself is completely resolved: truth has become equal to certainty and this certainty to truth. Pure science thus presupposes the liberation from the opposition of consciousness” (Feeney 17). In Feeney’s words, “Science presupposes the work that has been done to reconcile the subjectivity and objectivity, the opposition characterized by consciousness that is increasingly mediated at each stage of the *Phenomenology*” (17). Hegel’s conception of science is useful to this chapter insofar as it thus represents a presupposed reconciliation between subjectivity and objectivity; I argue Hurston’s text contains two institutions, marriage and the justice system, which for Janie’s life likewise signify preordained mediations between the desire for and the fear of otherness.

Gregory Phipps’ “The dialectic of love and the motif of fruit in Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*” provides a literary analysis of fruit in Hegel’s text from which I likewise draw inspiration.

“The most poignant metaphor for the dialectic is the fruit plant that Hegel describes in the opening pages of the Preface. In its first appearance, the growth of the plant depicts the organic interaction of oppositions in philosophical thought, with the fruit representing the form of Absolute knowledge – that is, the full flowering of a knowledge that is unified and yet contains otherness (earlier and even contradictory systems of thought) within itself... these latter associations are connected, in a sexist manner, to Hegel’s conception of femininity” (100)

In bringing a literary analysis to *Phenomenology*, Phipps thus highlights Hegel's usage of fruit as a metaphor for science as he theorized it. "The motif captures examples of the kinetic relationship between love and Absolute knowledge. The fruit represents a unity that contains otherness within itself, but it also represents contingency, seduction, and sensuality" (Phipps 106). In this article, Phipps also provides useful context into how philosophers, notably Slavoj Žižek in *Less than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism* and Alice Ormiston in *Love and Politics: Re-interpreting Hegel*, have brought "creative" approaches to Hegel's text which employ abstracted readings of such metaphors. "For them, love has symbolic value insofar as it provides a framework for understanding Hegel's structural and formal strategies. There is, in fact, a self-reflexive dimension to their readings" (Phipps 101). In this way, concentrating on Hurston's use of fruit, especially the pear tree, allows us to view the major institutions named in the text, marriage and the justice system, as extensions of the logic of Hegel's dialectic at work.

Placing a Black woman whose quest for knowledge through desire *is interrupted* at the center of the bildungsroman's progression, Hurston highlights the limitations of Hegel's ideal of the rational pursuit of science, or more generally the institutionalization of an objective Absolute, as it applies to a life under oppression. I aim to present Janie's final condition considering her inability to integrate desire into a sustainable romantic relationship as an inability to act to bring being in accordance with reason as does Hegel's subject – to come to fruition. By taking Janie's ultimate failure to rise to consciousness as romantic issue, tracing the symbolism of desire and fear as they relate to subjectivity throughout the novel, I will set up the framework for my next chapter by highlighting specifically the role of major

cultural institutions, marriage and the justice system, as constraints to the realization of black female subjectivity.

This affective approach also works against a critical tendency to separate romance and oppression, both specifically regarding *Their Eyes...* and more broadly. For instance, in the article “Old Roots, New Branches” Cristina Cheveresan states, “The aim of the present paper is to go beyond the love-story, into the controversial territory of prejudice, discrimination and the double bind” (2). This paper also highlights Richard Wright’s comments on *Their Eyes...* at the time of its publication: ““Miss Hurston seems to have no desire whatsoever to move in the direction of serious fiction [...] Miss Hurston can write; but her prose is cloaked in that facile sensuality that has dogged Negro expression since the days of Phillis Wheatley. Her dialogue manages to catch the psychological movements of the Negro folk-mind, but that’s as far as it goes”” (Cheveresan 2). I argue that Wright’s denial of Hurston’s ‘seriousness’ and Cheveresan’s counter of “going beyond” romance in her analysis both constitute a positioning of romance and racism as disassociated which does not do justice to Hurston’s portrayal of the intimate relationship between the two. June Jordan chooses *Their Eyes...* to illustrate this subject in “Notes Toward a Black Balancing of Love and Hatred” writing, “As I reread this essay, tonight, what seems to me as pressing as the need to honor both Hurston and Wright is the need to abhor and defy definitions of Black heritage and Black experience that suggest we are anything less complicated, less unpredictable, than the whole world. We should take care so that we will lose none of the jewels of our soul. We must begin, now, to reject the white, either/or system of dividing the world into unnecessary conflict” (1). Previously mentioned approaches to the text which center speech as the vehicle for Janie’s subjectivity similarly have not put as much emphasis

on how the act of love itself may in fact be the condition for consciousness. If the bildungsroman is the journey to maturation, or consciousness, then by framing Janie's struggle in terms of romantic love *Their Eyes...* serves to underline the significance, even the ultimate importance, of desire which remains frequently marginalized in philosophical discourse (Butler, Ormiston). In this chapter, I take June Jordan's call as inspiration for a close textual reading of how Hurston does indeed balance supposedly opposite sentiments. Although Janie professes throughout *Their Eyes Were Watching God* to be in search of a love-filled marriage, I argue Hurston considers in this novel primarily desire (to the extent that love and desire can be separated), fear, and their inevitable potential for irrationality.

Janie The Hypothesis: Hurston's Experiment and Hegel's Science

The 1937 novel opens with an adult Janie reflecting on the experiences that have brought her back to Eatonville, Florida following the three marriages which comprise the resulting plot. Janie opens her story with reflections on the racism she experienced as a small child raised by her Nanny in West Florida. Janie recounts a moment when upon seeing a photo of herself alongside her white classmates she realizes: "Aw, aw! Ah'm colored!" (*TEWWG* 9). The moment of realizing one's own Blackness is prominent across Black literature of the early twentieth century from James Weldon Johnson to Nella Larsen to Franz Fanon, who explicitly evokes Hegel's master-slave dialectic⁵ in *Black Skin White Masks* (1952). "Man is only human to the extent to which he tries to impose himself on another man in order to be recognized by him... One day the white master recognized *without a struggle* the black slave. But the former

⁵ For all Hegel all consciousness arises from violent-conflict between self and other; from this conflict results death which negates consciousness, or the triumph of one consciousness over the other resulting in the master and slave. However, Hegel concludes the master's position is not truly free due to the dependence on the slave (Dege).

slave wants to *have himself recognized*. There is at the basis of the Hegelian dialectic an absolute reciprocity that must be highlighted” (Fanon 191). Fanon’s challenge to this dynamic is to initiate the struggle, or “conflict,” against objectification; he highlights Hegel’s quote, “It is solely by risking life that freedom is attained” (Fanon 192). Fanon’s treatment of the master-slave dialectic thus allows us to see Janie’s progression in the novel as not merely a journey to consciousness in the typical sense of a bildungsroman, but instead a *struggle* to consciousness from the position of objectivity, which proves a crucial distinction from the presumed subjectivity of Hegel’s Spirit who is only threatened upon encounter of the other. However, “Fanon’s effort to racialize the master and slave dialectic in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952), a reading almost contemporary with the interpretation of Hegel elaborated by De Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* (1949), has not influenced nor interested later feminist engagements with the *Phenomenology of Spirit*” (Mascot 338). Fanon’s singular attention to the experience of Black men, as Simone de Beauvoir’s to white women, leaves little room for consideration of any gendered or racialized aspects respectively – an omission Hurston’s centering of a Black woman may thus remedy. If Janie is a “model for female development” as Carr argues (192), we may already begin to see it is a model which differs from the typical structure of a bildungsroman.

Quickly, Janie brings the reader to the moment which Hurston states begins her struggle for consciousness: “She thought awhile and decided that her conscious life had commenced at Nanny’s gate. On a late afternoon Nanny had called her to come inside the house because she had spied Janie letting Johnny Taylor kiss her over the gatepost” (*TEWWG* 10). The scene that follows, in which Janie describes an idyllic Florida afternoon lounging under a “blossoming pear tree” with imagery rich in connotations of sex and

fertility (“blooms” “bees” “blossoms” “virginity” “barren”), is an erotic awakening prompted by the first experience of desire which catalyzes Janie’s very existence as a subject. It is also where Hurston introduces the language surrounding fruition which recurs throughout the novel:

“She was stretched out beneath the pear tree soaking in the alto chant of the visiting bees, the fold of the sun and the panting of the breeze when the inaudible voice of it all came to her. She saw a dust-bearing bee sink into the sanctum of a bloom; the thousand sister-calyxes arch to meet the love embrace and the ecstatic shiver of the tree from root to tiniest branch creaming in every blossom and frothing with delight” (*TEWWG* 11).

The moment of conception for fruit occurs in the pollination of a flower; like Hegel’s Spirit, Janie thus seems poised to search for the Absolute. “For Hegel, science brackets the progression of dialectical logic, forming both the impetus of his investigation and the inevitable content of Absolute Knowing” (Phipps 101). Andrew Fiala explains that for Hegel’s system to function there must be an impetus for Spirit’s quest, “...an urge or desire impels history to unfold... Hegel indicates that the movement from implicit to explicit is an impulse or desire. He says of the seed for example, that ‘the germ cannot remain merely implicitly, but is impelled towards development, since it presents the contradiction of being only implicit yet not desiring to be so’ (57). For Hegel’s ethical concerns this desire must be rationalized; thus, desire *is* science, the impetus and product of this quest for the Absolute. Throughout this analysis, I will show how Hurston undermines this logical notion of desire.

From this moment in the text, desire becomes Janie’s primary affective concern. This is not to say that Janie exists in a perpetual state of desire, certainly her desire for each of her three husbands fluctuates throughout the text, but from this moment Hurston makes it clear that Janie enters a state of questioning, or incompleteness: “She felt an answer seeking her

but where? When? How?” (*TEWWG* 11). This characterization of Janie’s very existence being that of a question does suggest connections to speech as a condition for consciousness. However, it is also the first instance of desire associated with rationality, as a question is the linguistic process by which we seek causality, or reason. As Judith Butler writes in the introduction to her first book on Hegel, *Subjects of Desire*: “When we desire, we pose the question of the metaphysical place of human identity-in some prelinguistic form and in the satisfaction of desire, the question is answered for us. In effect, desire is an interrogative mode of being, a corporeal questioning of identity and place” (9).

Butler’s quote further supports the idea of Hegel’s conception of desire as a pursuit of rationality. “For Hegel we are self-sufficient, unified, autonomous subjects travelling upon a linear, teleological path to knowledge. We come to know our world through self-reflection and by internalizing everything that we encounter” (O’Shea 927). As Anthony O’Shea writes in his article on desire as a dialectic between lack and affirmation, Hegel’s theory and responses from scholars such as Simone de Beauvoir, Jean-Paul Sartre, Jacques Lacan, and Judith Butler have been crucial to Western understandings of desire. In *Subjects of Desire*, Butler describes the troubled and avoidant relationship between Western philosophy and desire; in fearing “...losing sight of pattern, coherence, generalized and regular truth,” (1) philosophy has attempted to negate, appropriate, and ignore desire alternately. According to Butler this often occurs as a reconfiguration of desire to conform to rationality: “If the philosopher is not beyond desire, but a being of rational desire who knows what he wants and wants what he knows, the philosopher emerges as a paradigm of psychic integration” (2). The refrain of the pear tree scene in *Their Eyes...* “What? How? Why?” recalls this constant effort to rationalize desire. Yet, the initial tone of the scene is curious, reflecting not the

certainty of Spirit's single-minded march towards the Absolute. Hurston captures the fearless tone of Janie's curiosity – at least initially.

Feeney writes of Hegel's speculative propositions, outlining the following example:

“In the ‘Preface’ to the *Phenomenology*, Hegel writes: ‘Some examples will clarify what has been said. Take the proposition: “God is being.’ Then, Hegel proceeds to explain how this proposition defies the usual, unscientific way in which it is initially read because, having moved from the subject to the predicate in the usual way, the reader is thrown back into the subject. Yet, thinking through the subject moves the reader back into the predicate. This is because, within this proposition, God is being and Being is god—thinking through the subject or the predicate produces its other through the movement of speculative thinking... The *Phenomenology* needs to be read because this act of speculative reading provides the movement of science's coming-to-be. That is, the act of reading both provides the objectivity of Hegelian science and breathes life and subjectivity into the text” (21-22).

In other words, the basis of science is the speculative proposition (a question or *hypothesis*) which in its inversion proves true. In making Janie's very state of being into a question, Hurston poses her protagonist as a hypothesis, allowing the reader to ask whether the avenues for self-realization as Hegel envisioned are viable for Black women. “The absolute substance is everything there is, and this everything is, ultimately, a subject that thinks, moving from concept to concept. In other words, all that is, is a self-reflexive thinking process, which is simultaneously all reality shaping itself and on its way to fuller self-recognition itself as a conceptual process” (Pulkkinen 20). This self-reflexive moment, this reaching towards science, becomes the basis of Hegel's universe. Hurston seems to ask if this so-called universal system of rationality put forth by Hegel *is* reasonable from a Black woman's perspective?

As Janie thus searches, she is promptly confronted by “a glorious being coming up the road. In her former blindness she had known him as shiftless Johnny Taylor, tall and lean. That was before the golden dust of pollen had beglamored his rags and her eyes” (*TEWWG* 12). In

this initial scene, Hurston thus establishes the framework for the novel to come: the struggle for consciousness *through* the fulfillment of desire in marriage. Hurston's use of "being" to describe Johnny Taylor immediately suggests this moment as an encounter between consciousnesses as one being meets another. Before Janie enters the state of questioning, she had "known" Johnny; Hurston does not give much detail into the depth of any preexisting relationship, but I suggest the "knowledge" that she insinuates poses a relationship in which Johnny did not previously challenge Janie's self-hood. Lifting the veil of "pollen" thus allows Janie to recognize Johnny as truly other than herself. "Importantly, Hegel associates these latter 'plant-like' attributes with femininity. Thus, while the image pattern expresses a tension between erotic love and the concept of an Absolute, it also brings to light Hegel's sexist characterization of a more emotive (and aesthetic)" (Phipps 106). In this scene, Hurston thus inverts the gendering of Hegel's motif in posing the masculine as other. This moment of recognition sets Janie on the path to recover consciousness from her objectification, coming to fruition, via an inversion of Hegel's own logic.

Nanny's Story and the Interruption of Ambiguity

However, Janie's shining moment is rudely interrupted in the next line with an abrupt shift to Nanny's perspective: "...she bolted upright and peered out of the window and saw Johnny Taylor lacerating her Janie with a kiss" (*TEWWG* 12). The following conversation reflects another clash of consciousnesses as Nanny imposes the institution of marriage onto Janie's budding personhood. "Ah can't be always guidin' yo feet from harm and danger. Ah wants to see you married right away," says Nanny. "Who Ah'm goin' tuh marry off lak dat? Ah don't know nobody," replies Janie (*TEWWG* 12). If we recall the earlier instance of "knowledge" as the kind of relationship which does not threaten one's subjectivity, then

Janie's protest takes on the added layer of her will to establish her subjectivity through a relationship that aligns reason and being. Like Hegel's Spirit, and the prototypical hero of the bildungsroman, Janie is thus on a quest for knowledge. However, in placing marriage as a restriction to knowledge, as Hurston does in this scene, she offers a challenge to Hegel's concept of knowledge as best achieved through a formalized dialectic.

Nanny's assertion that marriage will protect Janie from "harm and danger" (*TEWWG* 13) is interesting insofar as it construes Janie's burgeoning potential for subjectivity as a threat. While this scene immediately presents consciousness as a threat to Janie herself as Nanny abides to protect her, in the analysis to come I think about how this Black woman's rise to consciousness might indeed present a larger threat to the dialectic system which the pear tree scene establishes as the societal context, or culture, of Janie's world. If Janie is a piece of fruit, Hurston pushes us past the limits of Hegel's metaphor in the opening of *Phenomenology*, to the tree as it happens, to consider the elements which in their nurturing or neglect determine the quality of a plant's fruit. Here I recall the translation of *bildung* as "culture" (Ormiston 41) to highlight how Hurston's sentiment of individual formation as deeply connected to societal formation, or culture, moves beyond Hegel's individualistic approach. As we will see in Janie's first relationship with Logan Killicks, marriage becomes the vehicle which represses Janie's consciousness, thereby maintaining her objective position. At this point, I would however like to linger momentarily on the figure of Nanny and her role in determining Janie's first relationship.

Carr writes of the story Nanny tells Janie (*TEWWG* 16-20) regarding the sexual violence that has marked their family history: "It is a story of the sexual use and abuse of women. In Nanny's story, women are trapped by their sexuality and by men's desires. Danger

is ever present, for if black women are powerless to make sexual decisions (both Nanny and Janie's mother are raped), they are nonetheless held morally accountable for the consequences of their victimization” (194). While Carr goes on to analyze the rhetorical value of the many stories in *Their Eyes...*, I am interested in how Nanny’s story especially reintroduces desire as linked to fear of the unknown, an intricate coupling which I will show Janie never manages to fully extricate. O’Shea explains what he calls “desire-as-lack”: “For Hegel...we progress towards an historical end by reflexively recognizing something as different before we internalize it in order to understand it. Desire thus becomes a movement of negation whereby the subject fixes its other in order to objectify it, know it and then negate it. Desire both starts from and is experienced by the conscious subject who continually negates others that it encounters but never negates itself; it pushes back its boundary of self-knowledge without ever attempting to rupture it completely; to go beyond” (927). In recognizing this difference, we also recognize our own incompleteness. This can only be temporary, however, as we must negate the object, or come to ‘know’ it, in order to remain Hegel’s “coherent, conscious, rational being” (O’Shea 928). Desire-as-lack seems thus to be characterized by a fundamental anxiety regarding difference and a will towards negating it.

The most recent anthology of Hegelian feminist criticism, Kimberly Hutchings’ and Tuija Pulkkinen’s *Hegel’s Philosophy and Feminist Thought: Beyond Antigone*, shows desire-as-lack is not the only interpretation of Hegel’s work. Hutchings’ chapter argues that Hegel called “for a fundamental heteronomous ethics that rejected the exclusive opposition between identity and difference, nature and culture, which have underpinned traditional accounts of moral authority, moral agency, and moral judgement” (88). However, for

existential phenomenologists such as Beauvoir (Tidd) and Sartre (O'Shea) desire-as-lack is essentially reformulated and complicated. Among the many thinkers who have found inspiration within Hegel's work, I am particularly drawn to Beauvoir who, in addition to her groundbreaking revision of the master-slave dialect in *The Second Sex*, used this theory as the basis of her writings on love and ethics (Mills 2). Beauvoir's contributions to feminism both comes under critique for her privileging of white women's oppression (Gines 254) and are foundational to ongoing feminist conversations on ethical love, influencing scholars such as Alison Stone, Kimberly Hutchings, and Luce Irigaray. One concept I will pull from Beauvoir's work is the existentialist notion of 'ambiguity'. Ursula Tidd explains, "It {ambiguity} constitutes a fundamental characteristic of human existence that resists easy definition. It involves 'an irreducible indeterminacy and multiple; inseparable significations and aspects'" (38). It is the phenomenon which arises from the human's position as both subject and object, free and factic.⁶ While Beauvoir specifically considers white women's experience, all conditions of oppression are prone to this anxiety.

Turning back to Nanny's story, by concentrating on the affective level – the fear which is coupled with desire in this scene – we see that ambiguity marks Janie's life, from her very conception, imbued with a particular quality which like Beauvoir's is gendered (Tidd 38), but into which Hurston incorporates generational and racialized components. Nanny begins her story, "You know, honey, us colored folks is branches without roots and that makes things come round in queer ways" (*TEWWG* 16). Hurston once again expands Hegel's fruit metaphor to the level of the root system through Nanny's fearful story, "Ah don't see how come mah milk didn't kill mah chile, wid me so skeered and worried all the

⁶ For Sartre and Beauvoir, facticity refers to all concrete and unchangeable aspects of human life from which limitation of human freedom arises.

time” (*TEWWG* 18). It seems the very soil in which Janie grows is imbued with a particular racialized and gendered ambiguity which she both inherits and experiences. In a chapter entitled “Love” in her autobiographical work *Dust Tracks on a Road*, Hurston concludes her experiences with love and the relationship which inspired *Their Eyes...* with this: “So, perhaps nobody knows, or can tell, any more than I. Maybe the old Negro folk rhyme tells all there is to know: Love is a funny thing; Love is a blossom; If you want your finger bit, poke it at a possum” (*DTR* 7). This citation serves to further underscore Hurston’s insistence on the ambiguity of love – its resistance to reason and to a singular definition.

Bitter Fruit: Reciprocity and Janie’s Marriages

In each of these cases, Janie tries to establish dialectic relationships in which her self-consciousness is created and sustained by a simultaneous recognition of subjectivity and otherness. In her essays on ethical love, Beauvoir outlines another concept, ‘reciprocity,’ which I find useful in this analysis. “{Reciprocity} refers to a mode of relating to oneself and to others as both subject and object and as equal freedoms in the world” (Tidd 34). While Fanon also poses a similar notion of reciprocity (192), Beauvoir characterizes reciprocity as “authentic love,” (“Phenomenology and the Ethics of Love” 98) considering romance in way that is highly useful for reading *Their Eyes...* Beauvoir defines reciprocity as a relationship between two partners engages in a mutual recognition of self and otherness, as opposed to one of conflated identity. Her first novel *She Came to Stay*’s depiction of such a conflated relationship’s disruption in the event of an affair leads Ellie Anderson to argue that what essentially characterizes reciprocity is this “irreducible epistemic gap between self and other” sustained between two partners (“The Other Woman” 1). While Anderson is interested in the distinction between conflation and differentiation, for the purposes of analyzing Janie’s

relationships I am drawn to the role which ambiguity necessarily plays in a reciprocal marriage. Though reciprocity aims to find balance in the subject/object dichotomy, Janie's marriages highlight the variety of problems which arise from the dialectic model itself.

Janie's loveless first marriage to Logan Killicks does not result in her freedom from the object position. In the arranged marriage, Janie's efforts to find desire mirror what Seyla Benhabib calls the "the teaching of the good father" (26). Benhabib's article in *Feminist Interpretations of G.W.F. Hegel* criticizes feminists who adapt philosophical "greats works," particularly Hegel, through a willful ignorance towards the elements which do not align with goal of women's liberation. Benhabib writes, "...these theorists seek in the classical texts for those moments of insight into the quality and dignity of women. They are disappointed when their favorite philosopher utters inanities on the subject, but essentially hold that there is no incompatibility between the Enlightenment ideals of freedom, quality, and self-realization and women's aspirations" (26). In this reading, I show Janie's first marriage to be a cautionary tale to those invested in raising Black women's consciousness about following the advice of our foremothers, whose wisdom often bear the scars of decades of lived experience with anti-Blackness and misogyny. I look at the affective qualities of disgust and fear which become Janie's orientation to her first husband and grandmother.

"There are years that ask questions and years that answer. Janie had had no chance to know things, so she had to ask. Did marriage end the cosmic loneliness of the unmated. Did marriage compel love like the sun the day? ... before she went to Logan Killicks and his often-mentioned sixty acres, Janie asked inside of herself and out. She was back and forth to the pear tree continuously wondering and thinking. Finally, out of Nanny's talk and her own conjecture she made a sort of comfort for herself. Yes, she would love Logan after they were married" (*TEWWG* 21).

In this passage, Janie's pairing of the concepts of knowledge and completion, the act of questioning and love, demonstrate how from her first relationship the longing she feels is not merely a longing for a voice, but for consciousness realized through desire. The pear tree as Janie references it here, and throughout the rest of the novel thus represents the sole moment of affirmative desire she experiences with Johnny Taylor before Nanny's story. Janie describes Logan's house: "It was a lonesome place like a stump in the middle of the woods where nobody had ever been...but anyhow Janie went on inside to wait for love to begin. The new moon had been up and down three times before she got worried in mind. Then she went to see Nanny..." (*TEWWG* 21-22). In deciding to follow Nanny's advice and "wait" for love to come to her, Janie unknowingly reassumes the passive position that the pear tree scene had momentarily distanced her from as she seemed poised to start a quest, or an active journey. This waiting for a desire which may never arrive is thus the first way Hurston shows marriage as a systemic constraint to Black women's subjectivity.

When Janie does confront Nanny about the lack of love in her relationship, Nanny first assumes Janie is pregnant: "You ain't got nothin' to be shame of, honey, youse uh married 'oman. You got yo' lawful husband same as Mis Washburn or anybody else!" (*TEWWG* 22). For Nanny, the shame of desire is only negated by the "lawful" context of marriage; while this is not an unsurprising point of view in the novel's setting, it does serve to underscore the ingrained relationship between shame and desire. "Long before the year was up, Janie noticed that her husband has stopped talking in rhymes to her. He had ceased to wonder at her long black hair and finger it" (*TEWWG* 26). Throughout the novel, Janie's hair is a symbol of what Lorde might call her erotic power (55). Conversation is as necessary to the love which Janie seeks as sex, if not more so. For Hurston, "When a man keeps beating

me to the draw mentally, he begins to get glamorous... His intellect got me first for I am the kind of a woman that likes to move on mentally from point to point, and I like for my man to be there way ahead of me.” (*DTR* 2) Logan’s ceasing his rhymes and attention to Janie’s hair thus represents the end of his efforts to elicit desire, mentally or physically, from Janie.

During Nanny and Janie’s conversation about Logan and the failing state of the marriage, Nanny states, once Janie denies her pregnancy: “You and Logan been fussing”? Lawd Ah know dat grassgut, liver-lipped nigger ain’t done took and beat mah baby already!” (*TEWWG* 22). Nanny’s assumption is thus that at some point Logan will likely beat Janie. Despite her outrage, it seems this is already foregone conclusion for Nanny, further highlighting the complex intersections of desire and fear in the perspective on love Janie inherits. This is also significant as domestic violence comes to figure prominently in Janie’s later marriages. Jordan writes, “Hurston's warning in the novel to a black middle class that had expanded dramatically during the twenties was that black women should not covet the seemingly privileged roles of middle-class white women” (“Feminist Fantasies” 108). What Hurston’s text also serves to highlight is this “coveting” finds its roots in formative figures in black women’s lives, such as mothers and grandmothers, and their willingness to overlook the problematic aspects of such seemingly privileged roles. Just as Benhabib states that “mainstream liberal feminist theory...essentially hold{s} that there is no incompatibility between Enlightenment ideals of freedom, equality, and self-realization and women’s aspirations” (26), Nanny seems likewise enchanted by the promises of marriage.

This scene is one of several references to sex in *Their Eyes*... yet of the few mentions of pregnancy – a somewhat conspicuous absence given Hurston’s detailed attention to marriage and family; aside from Janie’s traumatic formative relationships, motherhood is not

a role she demonstrates interest in assuming. Here, I turn to Hegel's treatment of women, maternity, and family, and feminist responses especially Beauvoir and French feminist philosopher Luce Irigaray. "In opposition to Beauvoir, Irigaray argues for feminine difference to be understood as positivity rather than negativity...Irigaray has noted in *Speculum of the Other Woman* that woman's exile from subjectivity begins with her exile from the pre-Oedipal relation to her mother...therefore to speak woman into subjectivity is to invoke the plentitude of the fluid relationship" (Mills 10). While Beauvoir, like Hurston in this novel, seems largely to consider maternity as a detriment to women's liberation, Irigaray's concept of matriarchy is central to her conception of female subjectivity itself.

Alison Stone's article "Irigaray and Hegel on the Relation Between Family and State," provides context: "... for Hegel, marital relationships do not wipe out spouses' sexual feelings but draw out and reinforce the proto-rational element of mutual respect and commitment which is immanent within those feelings" (162). Phipps further adds, "The marriage ceremony serves to concretise this unity, but this process of externalisation can only ever be partially successful" (102). Hegel's ideal, or 'fruit,' like Nanny's is thus the accordance of reason and being in the framework of marriage. Irigaray emphasizes familial ties as the basis of ethical societal relationships: "Although blood relationships are ethical, they can only arise from natural – sexual or parent-child – relationships, relationships which arise from 'the passion "of the blood", ...the carnal act'. Only these relationships bring individuals into the close physical proximity which allows them to appreciate and interpret the corporeal manifestations of one another's desires" (Stone 170). Irigaray also argues that at present, "Citizen identity is constituted through a dramatic repudiation of natural corporeal relationships" (Stone 173) especially the maternal (Mills 10).

This is indeed the picture which begins to form looking at Nanny and Janie's situation as Janie's following marriages are deeply influenced by this formative relationship. "She often spoke to the falling seeds and said, 'Ah hope you fall on soft ground,' because she had heard seeds saying that to each other as they passed...She knew now that marriage did not make love" (*TEWWG* 25). In this reflection towards the end of her first marriage, Janie's invocation of "soft ground" is a reminder of the many environmental factors needed for seeds to come to fruition. This concept of soil, or fertilization, and the wish that it might be "soft" further recalls a desire for a nurturing parental figure. Hurston's text highlights how such a longing for the parental may play out romantic relationships. In Nanny's death and her decision to leave Logan, Janie thus enacts the metaphorical killing of the 'good Nanny' and her bad advice. Yet in this reactionary gesture, Hurston suggests she does not remove herself as far as it may seem.

In "Love" Hurston writes of her first relationship, "For the first time since my mother's death, there was someone who felt really close and warm to me" (*DTR* 1). Following Nanny's death, Janie likewise takes comfort in Joe Starks, whom she marries after fleeing her failing marriage to Logan. The two relocate to Eatonville, establishing a thriving predominantly Black town as mayor and wife. In adopting her own strategy to use marriage as a means to reciprocity, I argue Janie might here move into what Benhabib calls "the cry of the rebellious daughter" (26). Janie's striving towards "fellowship" (*TEWWG* 35) in Eatonville, insofar as it is a reaction against the fearful notion of desire Nanny instills, also foreshadows Irigaray's critique of modern citizenship as based on repudiation of blood ties. As Janie attempts to claim citizenship, literally in founding a town, it also in Eatonville that she reflects she "hated her grandmother and had hidden it from herself all these years under a cloak of pity" (*TEWWG* 89). Viewed in this light, Janie's inability to achieve consciousness has as much to do with her

exile from the pre-Oedipal relationship⁷ with her mother figure, as with the dynamics of her marriage itself. “She hated the old woman who had twisted her so in the name of love. Most humans didn’t love one another nohow, and this mislove was so strong that even common blood couldn’t overcome it all the time” (*TEWWG* 90). Hurston’s neologism “mislove” and its connection to “common blood” recalls both Beauvoir’s descriptions of “inauthentic love” (“Phenomenology and the Ethics of Love” 98) and Irigaray’s focus on blood and fluid relationships (Mills 10-12).

It is not long before Joe begins to restrict Janie’s speech and actions, which Hurston writes “takes the bloom off things” (*TEWWG* 43), once again recalling the pear tree. Joe’s repression of Janie not merely through speech as previous analyses have emphasized, but also through actions— the covering of her hair and other symbols of erotic power – arises from the threat he feels in response to her ability to engage with others, or jealousy. Jordan highlights how this prevents Janie’s formation of consciousness sustaining relationships in the Eatonville community outside of Joe (“Feminist Fantasies” 109), but I will here return to Beauvoir’s notion of ambiguity to see how it is *the fear of otherness* first introduced by Nanny and temporarily resolved by Joe, which returns to prevent Janie achieving either postmodern speaking subjectivity through a Beauvoirian dialectic, or what Jordan calls the “black feminist demand” for subjectivity at the level of community. Jealousy of a partner’s erotic appeal to others is rooted in fear of a partner’s otherness, their freedom, and it is an expression of this fear, attempting to control this unknown and to keep one’s partner factic. Janie is trapped in this marriage by its binary definition, as her isolation highlights, and thus

⁷ During this phase, the mother is the exclusive love object of both sexes and the father is not yet considered either a rival or a love object.

one emotion at the root of this failure of reciprocity with Joe is resentment. After a fight Janie and Joe “didn’t talk too much around the store either. Anybody that didn’t know would have thought that things had blown over, it looked so quiet and peaceful around. But the stillness was the sleep of swords” (*TEWWG* 81). Hurston explicitly ties this unhappy marriage, and the lack of communication, to a lack of fruition: “She had no more blossomy openings dusting pollen over her man, neither any glistening young fruit where the petals used to be. She found she had a host of thoughts she had never expressed to {Joe}” (*TEWWG* 72). Hurston here suggests a plant past its prime, one whose fruit as already fallen and spoiled. This small instance of the fruit motif thus supports the suggestion that if Janie had temporarily achieved a state of reciprocity, allowing her to blossom, it is now passed due to Joe’s jealousy.

This underscores one flaw in Beauvoir’s reciprocity – if a third party can always enter and engage reciprocally with a partner, then the subjectivity we have constructed in our static balance between self and other is always in mortal peril. What Hurston demonstrates in Janie’s second two marriages is that no happy relationship exists in a vacuum, whether in Logan’s jealousy or in the mad dog who bites Tea Cake, irrationality, petty and catastrophic, must be reckoned with. Ormiston argues the dialectic is Hegel’s response to the philosophical positioning of being as opposed to reason in the modern era (7); we are taught to be cautious of our desires as they cannot always be rationalized with those of the people we are in community with. “While consciousness may have attained a unity within itself, with its own being, it still stands over against other self-consciousnesses and the world around it. It still has not attained a unity with these. Once again, then the drive to unity that Hegel depicts here, the drive the realize its truth in the world, through action, presupposes that conscience has a prior

conviction of its unity with that world” (Ormiston 49). Hegel thus seeks to contain this potential for irrationality through science by imagining desire as a state of lack that once fulfilled may restore rationality at the individual and communal levels. Whether in Beauvoir’s reciprocity or in Irigaray’s maternal citizen, the white woman returns to rationality, but as the conclusion of this novel demonstrates, for a Black woman this is never safe.

I now turn to Janie’s third relationship to first argue that she does reach Beauvoir’s demand for subjectivity through reciprocity. The first period of Janie’s story where readers see her truly independent of a binary definition is after Joe’s death before she meets Tea Cake, allowing for this reciprocity. “Years ago she had told her girl self to wait for her in the looking glass...She went over to the dresser and looked hard at her skin and features. The young girl was gone, but a handsome woman had taken her place. She tore off the kerchief from her head and let down her plentiful hair” (*TEWWG* 87). Two things stand out about this moment, firstly, that Janie is once again confronted by her own image. Whereas at the beginning of the novel, this self-consciousness pushed Janie to a position of objectivity, via a photograph, here Janie is doubled by her own reflection, a living, subjective moment of self-recognition. This recalls Hegel’s process of consciousness as a reflexive gesture, yet one curiously achieved by Janie alone in this moment. Secondly, Janie’s removal of the handkerchief further signals her embracing of her own erotic power. Janie’s brief establishment of individual consciousness allows her to meet Tea Cake as an equal subject rather than entirely defining herself against him at first. “He looked like the love thoughts of women. He could be a bee to a blossom – a pear tree blossom in the spring...He was a glance from God” (*TEWWG* 106). It is here that Hurston most explicitly connects Tea Cake to the

fruit metaphor, as the impetus for Janie's process of maturation – the reference to God, like novel's title, signals Hurston's attention the Absolute which I will return to in the conclusion.

This initial reciprocity is interrupted by a betrayal when Janie believes Tea Cake has robbed and left her. "In the cool of the afternoon the fiend from hell specially sent to lovers arrived at Janie's ear. Doubt. All the fears that circumstance could provide and the heart feel, attached her on every side...If only Tea Cake could make her certain!" (*TEWWG* 108). The fear that accompanies desire throughout the novel thus returns. In their reconciliation I argue that Janie does achieve Beauvoir's notion of reciprocity as she and Tea Cake agree to a code of ethical communication. This recalls Anderson's statement that, "Beauvoir especially emphasizes that lovers should invent their own rules of commitment that work for them personally, rather than adopting ready-made values from the world" ("Phenomenology and the Ethics of Love" 96). However, critically the moment also reintroduces ambiguity, alongside the fear of that which is other, or unknowable, in a romantic partner. Thus, we see that Beauvoir's reciprocity is fundamentally created to mitigate the tension between love and fear of our beloved; though reciprocity aims to allow one to be simultaneously subject and object of desire and maintain free will, its continued limitation to the dialectic arises from fear of this very otherness, cementing fear and desire into a binary. "All those signs of possession" (*TEWWG* 110) do indeed begin to infiltrate Janie's third marriage – forming a toxic relationship.

Hurston summarizes this kind of relationship eloquently in "Love," writing of the man who inspired the character of Tea Cake: "He was so extraordinary that I lived in terrible fear lest women camp on his doorstep in droves and take him away from me. I found out later on that he could not believe that I wanted just him. So there began an agonizing tug of

war” (*DTR* 3). Janie and Tea Cake resume their relationship in this cycle of reciprocal love and fear of ambiguity and Janie does realize subjectivity during their two year stay in the Everglades: as she gazes at Tea Cake sleeping, “her soul crawled out from its hiding place” (*TEWWG* 128). However, this consciousness is also marked clearly by fear: “Janie waited until midnight without worrying, but after that she began to be afraid. So she got up and sat around scared and miserable. Thinking and fearing all sorts of dangers...It was a part of him so it was alright” (*TEWWG* 125). Thus, as much as Tea Cake is the cause of Janie’s soul at last coming to fruition, he also the source of a great otherness, a “part of him” that Janie cannot understand but tries to rationalize. As they move to the Everglades, their dynamic is sustained by a ritualized practice of domestic violence and lovemaking, in which Janie is a subject but also falls into the patterns of dominance and ownership that Beauvoir sought to end. Though conceived as an alternative to the institution of marriage, reciprocity nevertheless traps Janie.

Injustice and Bad Faith

In the conclusion of Hurston’s novel, Tea Cake is bitten by a rapid dog and Janie is ultimately forced to kill him before standing trial for his murder and returning to Eatonville alone to recount the story to her last remaining friend Phoebe. Critics have variously read this ending as Janie’s triumph over her oppressor and realization of subjectivity alone or her inability to do so on the grounds of her pariah-like status in the community (“Feminist Fantasies” 108). I draw from both these perspectives to finally argue that Janie’s killing of Tea Cake does save her from the toxicity and dependence of a reciprocal and mistrustful marriage; however, she also does not achieve subjectivity, as instead her reliance on dialectic

reciprocity left her consciousness in a position whose precarity is quickly revealed by the injustice of Tea Cake's death and its aftermath.

After a mad dog transmits rabies to Tea Cake (*TEWWG* 166-167), his faculties for reasoning quickly decline. The dog bites Tea Cake during a hurricane which leaves destruction in its wake. Jordan describes this as a "kind of mad cow/dog/monster" moment ("Feminist Fantasies" 110); I argue that this setting captures irrationality, which Hurston has shown on an interpersonal level throughout the novel, on the grand scale of natural disaster. In the titular moment, "six eyes were questioning God" (*TEWWG* 159) as they wait out the storm, exemplifying Hurston's formulation of nature as the ultimate force of ambiguity – despite mankind's persistent efforts to master, or objectify, the natural world. After the storm "Tea Cake went out and wandered around. Saw the hand of horror on everything. Houses without roofs, and roofs without houses... The mother of malice had trifled with men" (*TEWWG* 168). The version of God which Hurston presents in this novel is deeply ambiguous, or chaotic. Ormiston shows how Hegel's concept of God arises from a Christian tradition in which the Absolute represents a unity which we all strive towards because we know the feeling of absolute unity already, having experienced love (47). Hurston shows that the presumption of having experienced such unity is privilege in itself; the characters in her novel question and fear the Absolute. This moment is also an interesting contrast to Hegel's use of speculative propositions (Feeney), as Hurston's inversion of "houses" and "roofs" here works to demonstrate the basic incomprehensibility, or lack of causal reason, in the devastation Tea Cake witnesses. As opposed to a kindly father figure, nature is a "mother of malice" who recalls the twisted maternal figures in this text.

As Tea Cake begins to get sicker, he and Janie squat in the wreckage of the hurricane in Palm Beach. Janie remarks, “This sickness to her was worse than the storm” (*TEWWG* 175). Tea Cake is forced to work by two white men after being profiled as a loiterer despite his protest of having “money in mah pocket” (*TEWWG* 170). Tea Cake is thus unable to explain his absence to Janie which sends her into another state of jealous panic. Both the romantic and racialized aspects of ambiguity arise as Janie’s romantic possessiveness is mirrored by the white men who exercise their right to a legal possession of Tea Cake’s body and labor. As Tea Cake’s sickness progresses, Janie begins “to feel fear of this strange thing in Tea Cake’s body” (*TEWWG* 182). Tea Cake’s “delirium” (*TEWWG* 183) thus comes to crystallize the irrational presence, this otherness, which lurks in the beloved. Janie’s fear and her desperation to keep Tea Cake alive culminate in the novel’s denouement when Tea Cake comes for Janie’s life with a rifle in a jealous fit of rage and Janie kills him in self-defense. Beauvoir’s reciprocity relies on effective communication between partners to align their sense of the rational and the ethical to nullify ambiguity or remove the fear of being unable to understand (and to an extent control) a romantic partner. Reciprocity thus finishes in the experiment, like Hegel’s science and the institution of marriage which it aims critique, as another formulation of rationality which does not always account for the subjectivity of injustice. When Tea Cake’s capacity to reach such a rational alignment is diminished by rabies and Janie is forced to kill him, because their subjectivities are so exclusively determined his death is the beginning of her own.

The paragraph after Tea Cake’s death, Hurston writes, “So that same day of Janie’s great sorrow she was in jail” (*TEWWG* 184). There is not a moment for the reader, or for Janie, to process what has happened before Janie is confronted by the external image of

herself that will cement her objectivity – the image of herself in eyes of “the State” (*TEWWG* 186). During the trial, as “twelve more white men had stopped whatever they were doing to listen and pass on what happened between Janie and Tea Cake Woods,” this image of Janie is dominated by the otherness these “twelve strange men who didn’t know a thing about people like Tea Cake and her” (*TEWWG* 185) perceive. This recurring theme of lack of ‘knowledge’ is further represented when the court refers to Tea Cake as “Vergible Woods” (*TEWWG* 188), presumably using Tea Cake’s given name, and showing how the perception of the jurors is that of an entirely different man than Janie, or the reader, ever knew. The judge states before the jury deliberates that it is for these “gentlemen” to decide if Janie is “a cold blooded murderer” or “a poor broken creature,” as there is “no middle course” (*TEWWG* 188). After Hurston’s demonstration of the deeply ambiguous circumstances surrounding Tea Cake’s death, this startling insistence on an objective and one-sided conclusion on the part of the justice system shows the problematic nature of such an institutionalized, ‘scientific,’ morality.

By the conclusion, Janie has not recovered her subjectivity and is left alone with ‘bad faith’ towards herself, her Nanny, and society, as well as a misplaced nostalgia and longing for Tea Cake. For Beauvoir, bad faith characterizes the situation of those who refuse to recognize their innate capacity to change their situation. Tidd explains that, for Beauvoir, bad faith is often applied to women whom she argues choose not to realize their own capacity for self-realization (26). I argue this term is useful as far as considering Janie’s final condition as a parallel to Nanny’s at the start of the novel. If Nanny’s assertion that Black women are “mules of the world” in their double oppression is an instance of bad faith, Janie’s final protest of self-imposed isolation might be equally so. While by the strictest existential

definition bad faith does not necessarily refer to any particular communal orientation, I here want to highlight the deep mistrust which characterizes Janie's final state. By the end, Janie is certainly alienated from Irigaray's ideal of "'excessive' matriarchal identification where generations of females spiral through a genealogical ebb and flow" (Mills 10). As Janie returns to Eatonville, she seems to embody Hurston's stranger returning from the unknown country of Love: "Anyway, it seems to be the unknown country from which no traveler ever returns. What seems to be a returning pilgrim is another person born in the strange country with the same-looking ears and hands. He is a stranger to the person who fared forth, and a stranger to family and old friends. He is clothed in mystery henceforth and forever" (*DTR* 7). Likewise, in the final scene Janie concludes her story to Phoebe and reflects on the present conditions of her life as a pariah figure in Eatonville.

Conclusion

Thus, Lorde's critic of the exclusion of poor women of color also strikes at the heart of Beauvoir's philosophy itself: "Difference must not be not merely tolerated, but seen as a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialectic. Only then does the necessity for interdependency become unthreatening" (111). Beauvoir's notion of reciprocity is one predicated as much on fear of the "irreducible unknown" presented to us by other people, as it is on attraction or appreciation of this otherness. When this is established in solely in binary terms it runs the risk of creating toxic cycles of fear and desire which ultimately leave subjectivity dependent, despite Beauvoir's insistence on ethical communication as a solution. Janie's final condition is one in which she is left with nothing but bad faith; we may also observe here that Nanny's bad faith, caused by her experiences with injustice, is transmitted through Janie to each of her relationships and reignited by the

trial, where it is cemented as her final affective state. I also have shown how Irigaray and Beauvoir's respective treatments of maternity do not reconcile the potential of mother figures as perpetrators of trauma *and* sources of wisdom. Upon her return to Eatonville, Janie gives away all possessions of her life with Tea Cake except for "a package of garden seed that Tea Cake had bought to plant...now she was home she meant to plant them for remembrance" (*TEWWG* 191). I draw attention to fruit motif for a final time to assert that Janie's final state is, like the seed, fundamentally ambiguous, in contrast to the conclusions of previous scholars who, like the twelve white jurors, attempt to definitely categorize her. Although Hegel writes of the seed's great potential and inherent drive towards growth, Hurston's consideration of Janie's upbringing and the effects of institutional oppression complicate this metaphor; she seems to remind us that a plant cannot grow to fruition without nurturing conditions. In the next chapter, I turn to Toni Morrison's *Jazz* through the framework of transformative justice to ask how institutionalized love and justice might be reimagined.

Chapter Two
New Visions of Justice in Toni Morrison's Jazz

Introduction: Reading *Jazz* in the Age of Transformative Justice

As numerous scholars have documented, Morrison's interest in her 'trilogy' (*Beloved*, *Jazz*, and *Paradise*) found its catalyst in the photographs of Harlem Renaissance patron Carl Van Vechten; in the case of *Jazz*, the image of a murdered young woman from Harlem inspired the character of Dorcas. In this chapter, I argue that Morrison's treatment of justice in *Jazz* (1992) – a story of this young woman's death unaddressed by the legal system – as a deeply subjective, yet also communal, process warrants consideration through the lens of transformative justice. As I continue to pull the interwoven threads of love and justice, I am also interested in where in this novel we see how generations of Black feminists have strategized an awareness of humanity's interconnectedness. In 2017, adrienne maree brown coined the term 'emergent strategy,' writing, "Emergent strategies are ways for humans to practice complexity and grow the future through relatively simple interactions" (20). Octavia Butler's work, particularly *Parable of the Sower* (1993), and her Black female leaders, are cornerstones of brown's formulation of emergent strategy. While brown, like Kaba, is primarily an activist and facilitator, I find her concept of emergent strategy, and her work more generally, useful in her explicit pairing of complexity theory with Black feminist theory, notably the works of Audre Lorde. It is this focus on positive interconnection which I argue both distinguishes TJ from traditional, or even reformist, approaches to justice and offers a new vision to feminist struggles to reconcile autonomy and interdependence. While Butler's speculative works lend themselves more readily to consideration of emergence itself, and how characters might *use* it to organize people, they arise from the same moment as *Jazz*

in which works like Margaret Wheatley's *Leadership and New Science* (1992) began attracting interest beyond the strictly scientific in complexity and chaos theory (brown 26). In the following analysis, I have created from the teachings of TJ facilitation strategy three main pillars, harm, conflict, and transformation, to examine how the variations in Morrison's text result in a transformation of the ideal of justice itself, one rooted in a complex understanding of human interconnectedness.

While recent papers from Erin Marie Herbst, Jacob Hubers, and Andrew Scheiber are all recent instances of attempts to map frameworks of criminality and justice onto *Jazz* and other later Morrison novels, this analysis will differ by naming and considering the recent wave of activism surrounding the American justice system as TJ, allowing a fuller consideration of this cultural moment as it *emerges* from centuries of thinking on love and justice, and decades of Black feminist strategy. Furthermore, I will extend my consideration of ethical love to expand on the relevance of Morrison's work to ethics of care and justice. As Herbst notes, "This new subset of Morrison studies, focused on new pathways to justice and the importance of care as an essential part of Morrison's overall literary project, is emerging at the same time as the recent uptick of abolitionist monographs and anthologies which seek to understand and expand the public's ideas of the abolitionist movement" (13). Notably Farah Jasmine Griffin considers Morrison's ethics of care in her later works. While Herbst analyzes Morrison's work primarily through the lenses of prison abolition and RJ, in considering TJ activists brown and Mariame Kaba, I address both their broader critique of the notions of objective justice itself and their proposed alternative which finds its roots in Black feminist ethics of love.

Following *Jazz*'s publication, literary critics paid extensive attention to Morrison's treatment of her protagonist Violet and her intersections with Black modern and postmodern subjectivity. Elizabeth Cannon wrote in 1997 on Black female desire in the novel:

“Morrison suggests that the desire of this historical moment was to be ‘more like the people they always believed they were’ (35) to find, in other words, the subjectivity they always knew they possessed. Historically, Morrison's view that subjectivity was the object of this desire is accurate. A great driving force of the Harlem Renaissance was to present a new subjectivity for the ‘Negro.’ This ‘New Negro,’ as he was called, was not the supposedly intellectually and spiritually inferior being that whites had built their systems of first slavery and then racism upon nor the brutal animal that they claimed emerged after WWI. He was a ‘man.’” (238)

Cannon's interest is in examining the role Black female desire played in constructing New Negro womanhood, a subjectivity rooted in Black modernist principles of individuality and freedom (238). She tracks Violet's journey to subjectivity through “violence,” or her figurative double killing of herself in “the creation of the subject me” (242). After killing the “object” Violet, “The second stage of Violet's development into a “subject me” is represented by her killing this violent part of herself...How does she know that the “killing me” doesn't represent the “subject me” she desires? This prompter is her female desire, emerging from the depths of her psyche, a desire for a subjectivity different from what she's already seen” (Cannon 242). Cannon argues that Morrison's conception of this new subjectivity “... can be read as an extension of Patricia Hill Collins's conviction that ‘the struggle for a self-defined Afrocentric feminist consciousness occurs through a merger of thought and action’ (28)” (Cannon 244). Thus, Cannon situates Morrison's text within a second-wave Black feminist

moment when, for thinkers like Collins, the ideal of Black female consciousness entailed a reclamation of the power to self-define.⁸

Carolyn M. Jones writes on the motifs of Violet's cracks and Joe's traces, placing *Jazz* contextually in Morrison's trilogy: "The story begins with the fracturing of human psyches, souls, and bodies in slavery. This fracture causes one to devalue the self, to displace the self and to locate the best of the self in an "other": the beloved" (481). Jones concentrates on Violet's love for Dorcas: "As Audre Lorde reminds us in 'Eye to Eye: Black Women, Hatred, and Anger' in *Sister Outsider*, behind the object of attack, another black woman, lies "the face of my own self, unaccepted" (146). In essence, in violating Dorcas's corpse, Violet disfigures her own self." (Jones 486). She also writes of Violet's emotional reconciliation with her mother and grandmother; citing June Jordan's poem "Gettin Down to Get Over," she writes, "Without this love-and all these characters lose Mama-the human is in a place of negatives, a vast, dark, featureless place" (486). Thus, for Jones the desire which animates Violet's journey to subjectivity is the maternal and romantic.

In this chapter, I will bring together the concerns of critics like Griffin and Scheiber on reading Morrison at present, with earlier conversations on love and subjectivity in *Jazz*. Throughout this analysis, I read the character's journey through a transformative justice framework to argue that the character's evolutions of identity can also be seen as transformations of the ideal of justice itself. There is at this moment a culturally pervasive disillusionment with the ability of institutions to address harm. Whereas previous justice

⁸ For Collins, "Self-definition involves challenging the political knowledge-validation process that has resulted in externally-defined, stereotypical images of Afro-American womanhood" (3) allowing for the assertion of authentic Black feminine identity.

system reform movements, like RJ, concentrated on the harmful effects of policies on especially on Black and brown communities as resolvable, transformative justice generates and reflects the growing sentiment that institutionalized justice itself is the problem. Thus, culturally poised as we are to address this issue, in this chapter I propose to heed Morrison's call for reflection. In this analysis of *Jazz*, I ask where in this novel – a Black woman's quest to reconstruct her husband's murdered lover set in the heart of the Harlem Renaissance – do we see the principles of transformative justice and emergent strategy at work? Morrison's choice to revisit the height of Black modernism reveals the underlying presence of emergence as a process which Black women have, to a degree, understood and have *already been shaping*. In the first chapter I demonstrated how Hurston's work can offer a critique of the limits of dialectic consciousness for romantic and legal ethics; here, I find within Morrison's text an alternative rooted in the emergent love of Black women.

Harm: Naming the Cycle of Trauma

Drawing on Brown and Kaba's writings, I will examine how a process of transformative justice emerges primarily centering Violet and Joe. While processes of TJ resist singular definition, reflecting the movements' commitment to versatility, certain threads reappear. Kaba writes, "We are talking about a process of construction and creativity, for all peoples whose systems of justice were upended or eradicated by the American political project," citing an 1824 act allowing the federal government to assume jurisdiction over Native reservations on the grounds that Indigenous practices of justice were "insufficiently punitive" (65). The notion of a single objective measure of justice is at the root of the very problems TJ seeks to address – its facilitators seek practical and flexibility solutions. Allowing for communities of different shapes and sizes to develop practices of justice which suit their

need is key. This is unsurprising given TJ's broad lineage; advocates recognize the need for different processes for different forms of interpersonal violence. For instance, why should sexual assault be addressed by the same process as wage theft, fraud, and traffic violations? However, despite popular misconception, TJ is not an 'anything goes' philosophy – far from it. Rather than attempting to define a single facilitation style or organizational approach, TJ teaches a trauma-informed understanding of why violence occurs and encourages individuals to find meaningful ways to implement this understanding in the prevention and resolution of injustice.

For the purposes of this chapter, have distilled these teachings into three pillars: harm, conflict, and transformation. With its awareness of the complexity of human interaction, TJ does not offer pre-defined stages or order; like the plot of *Jazz*, and complex systems, TJ often happens nonlinearly. As brown remarks, "Transformation doesn't happen in a linear way...It happens in cycles, convergences, explosions...we are faced with so much loss, and because we have to learn to give each other more time to feel, to be in our humanity" (105). Although I present the categories sequentially, they often overlap, as they do for this novel's characters and in reality. The American legal system is a clearly linear process: arrest, charging, trial (or not), sentencing, and serving time; each of these stages having their own defined linear protocol within. Of the single digit percentage of legal cases that receive trial by jury, more than 95% of those appealed are upheld; what little opportunity this system offers for self-reflection or revision is systemically suppressed. TJ recognizes that the human experiences of grief, remorse, accountability, and change do not always, or even often, progress linearly. It offers a path which, though certainly less straightforward, may lead more directly to justice. With transformation, as with any cycle, it is a challenge to choose a

starting point. In the spirit of jazz music, I begin with harm – the dark heart of trauma from which improvisation and collectivity offer freedom.

Jazz begins: “Sth, I know that woman. She used to live with a flock of birds on Lenox Avenue. Know her husband, too. He fell for an eighteen-year-old girl with one of those deepdown, spooky loves that made him so sad and happy he shot her just to keep the feeling going” (3). The opening is perhaps the closest thing Morrison provides to an objective account of the events that form the novel’s refrain: Violet’s husband Joe Trace’s murder of his young lover, Dorcas. In the opening section of the novel, aside from the occasional interjection of “I suppose (4) or “I can’t say” (5), Morrison conceals the narrator’s influential perspective. Transformative justice begins by reframing an interaction from the objective to the subjective by recognizing the perspective of trauma, or harm. Kaba states, “A truly transformative justice would mean...we would immediately focus on addressing the harms perpetrated, centering on the concerns and experiences of the person who was harmed. Next, we would also focus on the person responsible for the harm-but without disregarding their humanity. This means we have to acknowledge the reality that often it is hurt people who hurt other people” (63). TJ first asks of a given situation, “Has harm been perpetrated or exacerbated? By who? What allowed for these harms to occur?”

Doing so for Dorcas’ murder, immediately obvious is harm done to Dorcas and to Alice. However, “helpless lawyers” and “laughing cops” fail to resolve, or even address, this harm. Thus, harm results from the murder itself *and* from the resulting state negligence, compounding with the trauma these women have already experienced. Kaba states that “harm originates from situations dominated by stress, scarcity, and oppression” (63). It can, and often is, also systemic, created by “the institutions and structures that perpetuate, foster,

and maintain interpersonal violence” (Kaba 63). In the absence of systemic justice, Alice “found out that the man who killed her niece cried all day and for him and for Violet that is as bad as jail” (4). *Jazz* is a repeated refrain with improvisations, or ‘transformations’, on each variation. From a TJ perspective, to understand these variations as transformations, it is crucial to understand the changes in each character’s understanding of what justice is and how it can be realized. It seems true that, as Herbst notes, “Alice Manfred’s rationale for not involving the criminal-legal system...can be seen as Morrison’s interest in imagining a possibility outside of our traditional prison culture, to the extent she can do so” (53). At the same time, at the novel’s start, Alice’s actions do not represent a transformative act as Alice equates Joe and Violet’s pain with incarceration. Though from the beginning she chooses to forego the formal system of justice, Alice remains in the punitive mindset, as do many people formed in the normative reality of what Kaba calls “our punishment system” (64).

Kaba calls attention to numerous counterexamples of the criminal justice system supposedly “working” due to convictions of high-profile offenders, notably Larry Nassar’s 2018 sexual abuse conviction. Responding to an article labelling the judge’s decision “transformative justice,” she writes, “Gilbert’s article highlights how this moment challenges those committed to transforming our carceral system—including people like us who are committed to justice for survivors of sexual assault and who also believe that prisons are the wrong answer to violence and should be abolished. We decry the system and advocate for change that is long overdue. Yet when that system snares people we loathe, we may feel a sense of satisfaction” (63). Kaba’s essay on Nassar strikes at the heart of what occurs when ethics of care and justice are opposed; even for those dedicated to fighting oppression, it becomes difficult to escape the carceral mindset that offenders do not merit care. “Over the

years, however, the contradictions of demanding protection from the state that also targets and kills us have proved irreconcilable. It's easy to understand why the oppressed and marginalized want the criminal punishment system to apply its laws equally. Everyone wants accountability when they experience harm...But we have to contend with the fact that the system will never indict itself and that when we demand more prosecutions and punishment this only serves to reinforce a system that must itself be dismantled" (113). As this contradiction shows, it is easy to conflate further state harm with care after a life lived under a system in which brutality is labelled protection. A core tenet of TJ is the idea that harm cannot resolve harm: "Understanding that harm originates from situations dominated by stress, scarcity, and oppression, one way to prevent violence is to make sure that people have support to get the things they need" (Kaba 63). There is the harm generated by a particular incident, a murder in this case, and the harms which make up the experience of all parties involved, their trauma, which TJ would argue are also integral. TJ is a practice of justice insofar as it not only responds to immediate causes of harm, but also seeks to prevent to occurrence of future harm through care.

As we thus broaden our notion of what harm is and how it reproduces, we might identify Violet and Joe as other parties with relevant harm. When Violet disrupts Dorcas' funeral to "[face knife quote]," she faces the judgement of the community. "Regardless of the grief Violet caused, her name was brought up at the January meeting of the Salem women's Club as someone needing assistance but it was voted down because only prayer—not money—could help her now...The Club mobilized itself to come to the burnt-out family's aid and left Violet to figure out on her own what the matter was and how to fix it" (4). While this moment could be perceived as an outright rejection of Violet and Joe by their community,

Scheiber offers that, “After considering whether Violet “needs assistance,” they conclude that she does not—not because her and Joe’s acts have placed her beyond the bounds of the community’s concern and charity, but because the needs of others (including a family that has lost its home in a fire) are more urgent” (202). While I agree that Violet and Joe are never “beyond the bounds of the community’s concern,” I am interested in the conception of “charity” as it represents a key moment of distinction from an ethics-of-care-based approach. Whereas mainstream feminism seems to swing between the opposing poles of care and punishment when it comes to perpetrators of harm, for Black women this has often been approached with a balancing of the two. Joan Morgan writes, “As black women, we’ve got to do what any rational, survivalist minded person would do after finding herself in a relationship with someone whose pain makes him abusive. We must continue to give up the love but from a distance that’s safe” (Nash 12). As this quote illustrates, situations of abuse are not always (or even usually) helped by the binary approach that criminalizes all abusers, and labels all those who stay apologists, or helpless victims (Kaba 65). What the Club recognizes with “only prayer – not money,” is that while Violet and Joe are both coping with unresolved harm, each must address their residual trauma and take accountability⁹ for their actions, with which charity will not help. As long as they continue to avoid accountability, lashing out, in Violet’s case, or withdrawing, in Joe’s, they further perpetuate harm to their community, and the love must be “given up.”

⁹ A central tenet of TJ practices, “Accountability includes naming the behavior and impact of our actions, issuing an apology, and taking specific steps towards reconciliation or restitution (Piepzna-Samarasinha 25). It is thus both a state of individual reflection and mode of action towards others.

This instance catalyzes Violet's journey to transform justice, "to love—well find out about—the eighteen-year-old whose creamy little face she tried to cut open even though nothing would have come out but straw" (5). Violet begins by amassing information on Dorcas. Earlier efforts to track Violet's development of subjectivity describe how, in Violet's reconstruction of Dorcas, "this conspiring connection between two 'objects' is the first step in destroying the female object position as it disrupts the dominant ideology that casts women as rivals. Additionally, Violet is at first attracted to Dorcas's apparent power, but then recognizes it as the part in both of them that lives to please men. She finally sees her violent attack on Dorcas's dead body as a metaphorical attack on the patriarchal object that both are supposed to be" (Cannon 242). However, while Violet's journey does allow her to find compassion for her perceived "rival," merely "finding out about" Dorcas, overcoming the object position, does not result in her empowered subjectivity. "For Violet, who never knew the girl, only her picture and the personality she invented for her based on careful investigations, the girl's memory is a sickness in the house...there is nothing for Violet to beat or hit and when she has to, just has to strike it somehow, there is nothing left but straw or a sepia print" (28). Violet continues to displace her anger, in other words, she remains entangled in the 'punishment system' as long as she continues to manifest her pain as violence towards Dorcas. It is this 'eye for an eye' mentality which Kaba notes, and which form the carceral mindset. As she does when she states, "Women wear me down. No man ever wore me down to nothing. Its these hungry little girls acting like women" (14). Scheiber writes "Violet, like the other "women with knives" in the newspapers, is acting out a learned response to the predations of a racist social order that includes the order of the law itself" (204). While critics sometimes draw comparison between TJ and vigilante justice, what

Scheiber calls attention to in Morrison's treatment of Violet and "armed women" (77) is that such responses are both harmful and result from the harm of systemic negligence to Black women's needs. TJ's call to localize justice, to bring it back to the community, is not a call for unsanctioned violence, rather it pushes us to consider what justice might mean beyond perpetuations of violence. To realize the transformation from Violent to Violet, escaping what Kaba might label the carceral mindset, that retributive impulse, she must go further to confront the underlying traumas which lead her to displace her pain as when she tried to cut Dorcas' face. Whereas Cannon is interested in Violet's shift from the object to subject position, to read Violet's change in the context of the transformation of justice requires consideration of how the subject-object binary itself is at the root of the harm in the text.

Conflict: Interrupting the Cycle of Trauma

One key difference between restorative and transformative philosophies lies in the attitude towards conflict. With its focus on harm-reduction, it may seem incongruous that TJ thinkers put as much emphasis on conflict as they do. However, TJ considers two fundamentally different kinds of conflict in their outlook: punitive and generative. For instance, one of the four principles of the Alternative to Violence Project: "We can start out realizing a violent reaction is only one way of responding in a conflict. Somewhere in every conflict situation there is the possibility for a nonviolent solution." (Nocella, Anthony J. 5). For Kaba, "riots" in New York City in 1935, 1943, and 1964, are all instances of conflict caused or aggravated by police violence. Police brutality and other manifestations of systemic violence are explicitly the target of TJ activism. Yet, whereas RJ poses itself against conflict, TJ recognizes the generative potential of some forms of conflict. The one-sided view of conflict holds that, "Marxist iterations that include critical theory, social justice,

distributive justice, structural justice, and intersectionality characteristically engage in retributive practices that, consistent with Hegelian-Marxist philosophy, intentionally exacerbate conflicts and are incompatible with restorative justice principles and practices. The seduction for engaging in conflict appeals to the anger experienced in outrage that prompts participation in organized activism” (Culpepper, p. 5). Thus RJ holds the belief that organized activists are capable only of angry retribution, maintaining the logic which has suppressed decades of Black and Indigenous practices of justice. “The author [distinguishes] the differential modus operandi of exploiting conflict in contrast to that of resolving conflict through restorative justice practices. Discernment of the distinct core differences preserves restorative justice practices and protects against the inadvertent assimilation of restorative justice into a retributive agenda and practices that in theory and strategy expressly intend to promote conflict” (Culpepper 4). Thus, we see that RJ defines itself as seeking to resolve conflict, which it imagines can only ever be retributive. TJ, however, considers the harm that may result when conflict is only resolved.

Anthony Nocella writes, “Conflict resolution has begun to look at conflict not at as an opportunity, but as a problem to solve. Conflict management, on the other hand, is more concerned with process than with figuring out how to come to a contract agreement or resolution” (7). Conflict management and conflict transformation offer alternative approaches grounded in a belief in the generative potential of some conflicts. brown writes, “Transformative justice, in the context of emergent strategy, asks us to consider how to transform toxic energy, hurt, legitimate pain, and conflict into solutions” (14). Whereas Herbst states, “I would characterize the discussions between Alice and Violet as examples of restorative justice rather than transformative justice, because Morrison does give examples of

how these Criminal Justice systems are set up to harm nonwhite people, neither character is directly interested in changing those systems” (59). I highlight this quote to draw attention to limits of approaches such as Herbst which situate transformative justice as a subcategory of the abolition movement, approaches which assume that transformations of justice can only occur in the absence of the federal justice system. Rather, as brown’s reflections on emergent phenomena reminds us, the transformation of justice is a slow, even generational, process that involves the transformation of billions of individuals over time. TJ was formulated in part by many communities who have not had the option to rely on police protection such as sex workers and undocumented survivors who have relied on alternative practices to find healing after trauma. Morrison’s choice to return to Harlem offers an excellent case of how transformative practices occurred, and occur, even while state justice has and continues to inflict violence. As *Jazz* progresses, I argue that Morrison’s characters find themselves in the depths of conflict, internal and external; in this section, I will focus on naming these conflicts and examining how they begin to generate change in each character’s carceral mindset. For the Violet and Joe, I track their motifs of trauma, cracks and traces, and examine how these lead each character to generative conflict.

Violet’s doing “the dance steps the dead girl used to do,” collecting knowledge of Dorcas and her life, at first does nothing to improve the conditions of Violet, Joe, Alice, or the community at large (6). Instead, it is “like watching an old street pigeon pecking the crust of a sardine sandwich the cats left behind” (7). Even Morrison’s narrator is skeptical: “Maybe she thought she could solve the mystery of love that way. Good luck and let me know” (5). With trauma unresolved, the quest proves fruitless. As the chapter progresses, Morrison introduces the motif of Violet’s trauma, her cracks. “I call them cracks because that

is what they were. Not openings or breaks, but dark fissures in the globe light of the day” (22). These cracks lead to Violet’s eccentric public behaviors including street sitting, baby stealing, and funeral crashing. For Jones, “This crack, I think, is like Cassandra's in the Oresteia; Violet sees too much that she cannot explain... She is given an image of perfection, Golden Gray, by her grandmother True Belle. Violet is overweighted by this image” (482). Scholars of Morrison seem to concur that these cracks represent the challenge to Violet’s subjectivity, the division between Violet and Violent: “One Violet is the silent woman who fears her cracks and who never names and cannot answer back the ‘I love you’ of even a bird, who is another kind of mirror in the text, much less her husband. The other is ‘That Violet,’ Violent – the one who claimed Joe Trace, the one knows where the knife is, who has hips, and who knew there was no shame [and] no disgust (94). Violet must realize that “that Violet” is she. Only then can she become the true Violet: bring the two kinds of knowledge together through the process of mourning her losses” (Jones 485). I argue that the Violet/Violent dichotomy provides an illustration of the problematics of care ethics defined in opposition to an ethics of justice. Violent represents the retributive, carceral approach, and Violet is reduced to a fearful weakness, trying to suppress the cracks and the other Violet. This Violet could be said to be the care ethics Violet, the restorative Violet, who seeks only repair the cracks and does not look beyond, for their source.

We further see her cracks as they represent the punitive mindset when the narrator recounts the events that led to the other Violet’s disruption of Dorcas’ funeral. “She’d been looking for that knife for a month. Couldn’t for the life of her think what she’d done with it. But that Violet knew and went right to it” (90). As Violet approaches Dorcas’ casket, the usher’s let her by, “...thinking maybe this was some last-minute love” (90) but they see the

knife before Violet, herself does. Thus, the knife comes to be a motif of violence, or threat of violence, which provokes fearful retribution. While “*that* Violet, unsatisfied” after “hardly” disfiguring Dorcas, displaces her pain to enact a retributive justice, Morrison also highlights the responses of the ushers. “Young men the same age as the deceased,” (90) these boys represent another facet of the community, and become, in the presence of the knife, enforcers of a violent justice, as they “forget the lessons of a lifetime, and concentrated on the wide, shining blade, because who knew? Maybe she had more than one cutting in mind” (91). Thus, Violet’s actions at the funeral provoke the response of “hard hands,” even in the those with a lifetime of “lessons learned from old folks whose milky-light eyes watched everything they did” (91). The boys “had to forget right away that this was a fifty-year-old woman in a fur-collared coat and a hat pulled down so far over her right eye it was a wonder she saw the door to the church not to speak of the right place to aim her knife” (91). Thus, Violet’s cracks represent not only an internal conflict, but are also the source of her estrangement from the community.

Joe’s internal conflict takes the form of traces: “The trace marks an ‘irreducible absence’ (Gasche 45), ‘an original non-presence and alterity’ (Krell 166) at the heart of all systems of expression. It marks the absence of presence and the beginning of binary thinking” (Jones 483). I, like Herbst, am interested in the extent to which Joe’s traces, like Violet’s cracks, may signify the binary thinking which underscores the justice system. For Herbst, “Joe’s complex character also serves as an important entry point for readers to begin questioning the “violent” and “nonviolent” binary that our criminal-legal system creates. Much of the current movement for Criminal Justice reform is conditional on an offender’s status as either violent or nonviolent. However, as John Pfaff points out, this imposes binary

opposition is often a distraction from any true structural change rather than a meaningful distinction (54).” Yet, where Violet seeks to repress Violent, expressing the struggle between two consciousness actors, Joe’s acts of violence arise from his avoidance of emptiness, a lack of agency: this emptiness, “the inside nothing he traveled with from then on, except for the fall of 1925 when he had somebody to tell it to” (29). The absence begins with Joe’s fail effort to track his mother, Wild, “He begged, pleaded for her hand until the light grew even smaller. ‘You my mother?’ Yes. No. Both. Either. But not this nothing” (179). Whereas Violet’s internal conflict causes her acts of violence, Morrison frames Joe’s emptiness a lack of conflict, one he addresses by creating harmful conflict, by loving Dorcas and then by killing her. “He had struggled a long time with that loss, believed he had resigned himself to it, had come to terms with the fact that old age would be not remembering what things felt like... That you could replay in the brain the scene of ecstasy, or murder, of tenderness, but it was drained of everything but the language to say it in” (29). In the stagnant absence of conflict, harmful or healing, Joe withdraws. “Now he lies in bed remembering every detail of that October afternoon when he first met her, from start to finish, and over and over. Not just because it is tasty, but because he is trying to sear her into his mind, brand her there against future wear” (28). This is both what allows him to connect with Dorcas, who also possesses this characteristic instability, or emptiness, as Jones notes when she remarks that “Dorcas is only alive when she is a mirror of someone else” (Jones, 1997, p. 484). This empty, miserable Joe thus becomes the ‘other Joe’, as opposed to the hunting Joe. Thus, for Joe the hunt is as much an escape from nothing, as it is a pursuit of something.

Violet and Joe’s internal conflicts may therefore signal the dichotomy between a communal, care-oriented, ethics, and one of violence, as represented by a retributive or

withdrawn mindset. “Even those of us who critique these punitive methods, who are committed to justice, practice our own versions of prisons, blacklists, takedowns, and public executions. When we don’t agree with each other, we destroy each other. When we feel competitive with each other, we splinter and...destroy the other. We say we don’t care, and then invest time and energy into cultivating conflict with each other. When we feel scared, we destroy each other instead of working to get to the root of our fear. How do we shift into a culture in which conflict and difference is generative?” (brown 82). It is this shift – this transformation –from the harmful conflict which dominates these characters’ lives to a new way of engaging in conflict and with that the freedom to heal, that I explore in the following section.

Transformation: Beginning the Cycle of Healing

For the characters in *Jazz*, Morrison represents this transformation in two intersecting timelines: firstly, she recounts the characters’ backgrounds, allowing them to review their own trauma; secondly, she demonstrates each character’s path to healing after the murder. Only through the conflicts which arise from the history of trauma that has shaped the novel’s events, are the characters able to take accountability and begin to heal. In this section I want to draw attention to two ongoing conversations in the text, between Alice and Violet, and between Violet, Joe, and Felice. For Herbst, the conversations between Alice and Violet also represent sites of justice-making. “I believe this [Alice and Violet’s relationship] serves as Morrison’s reminder that no harm just contains the two subjects and that often families or social connections are involved as well. This is similarly true when a person is incarcerated; they are not the only ones who feel the effects of this cruel and punitive system” (60). Yet, in categorizing these conversations as predominately restorative and focusing almost

exclusively on this particular dialogue, Herbst misses the opportunity for a more nuanced reading of the novel's conclusion. As Nocella writes, "Transformation is larger than two individuals, stressing that all are connected in a complex relationship of oppressors and oppressed, only able to become free if we address and challenge all systems of domination and violations toward the individual" (7). Similarly, brown's work speaks to not only recognizing the complexity of human interaction but its great potential: "Conversation is a crucial way to explore what we believe and to make new understandings and ideas possible" (168). For TJ, the phenomenon of justice is not limited temporally as with a conviction and sentencing; rather, justice *is* the process of harm resolution and accountability, which are grounded in human interaction, conversations of mind and body, rather than the isolation of carceral justice. In this section, I argue that the Alice/Violet conversations represent a process of healing, while the Violet/Joe/Felice conversations allow Joe to take accountability; in separating these two aspects of the transformative justice process, we further see Morrison's separation of punishment and accountability.

Firstly, Alice and Violet's conversations take place between the two most obvious injured parties: the guardian of the deceased and the scorned wife. Yet, as Scheiber writes, "Perhaps counterintuitively—even in the context of more "restorative" models of justice—gestures of apology and forgiveness are not on the table, either. Violet has not approached Alice to make amends, either for herself or on Joe's behalf; and Alice notes that if "forgiveness" is what Violet is after, "I can't give you that. It's not in my power" (110)" (205). Thus, we see the beginnings of the transformation of the carceral mindset, as the characters stop thinking of Dorcas' murder as a debt which could be repaid. Instead of punishment or payment, what Alice and Violet find is healing. "Like disordered clothing,

disordered behavior is often the fruit of starved, even traumatizing circumstances, and in Alice's hands, the motifs of sewing and mending point toward a restoration of psychic and moral coherence that the wider world continues to undermine and degrade at every turn" (Scheiber 206). It does indeed seem to be Alice and Violet's growing friendship, becoming "so easy with each other talk wasn't always necessary," (112) which begins to heal Violet's cracks.

With this healing, comes a new subjectivity for Violet. Cannon writes of Black female desire and attributes this subjectivity to the direction of this desire towards other women: "First, women must recognize each other as subjects, and, second, the new subjectivity must be cemented through action... This process of forming a subject through recognizing an other as subject is what Jessica Benjamin calls "intersubjectivity" (Cannon 243). For Jones, Violet's newfound empowerment "is the assertion of the true, authentic self that is not a "present taken from whitefolks, given to [one] when [one] was too young to say No thank you" (211) but a recovered, remembered, and narrated self" (490). However, I am interested in examining how Violet's new self might be viewed beyond the subject and other dichotomy. To examine Violet's subjectivity by the principles of TJ is to ask whether the carceral mindset is transformed and how?

While Violet and Alice's conversations thus begin the process of healing that is critical for TJ, I argue that it is primarily the final conversations between Violet, Joe, and Felice in which Morrison offers justice. The notion of the objectivity of state justice arises often in conjunction with concept of truth. Yet with the multiplicity of perspectives *Jazz* offers, Morrison challenges the presumption of a single objective truth: "Truth for her is what we reach when we move through the imaginative process, and this achievement may not be

one with accepted fact” (Jones 491). The present-day conversations bookend flashbacks which recount Joe and Violet’s lives, and their move to the City. These portraits of the characters formations constitute the “imaginative process” which yields a transformative truth: that Joe, like every other character in the novel, and most people, is a complex being whose actions reflect his history. While Herbst is correct, writing of Alice and Violet’s conversations, that “Joe does not partake in these discussions even though he is the primary driver of harm in the situation” (51), I argue that a transformative rather than restorative approach to reading *Jazz* further opens the possibility of justice. Joe’s story interwoven with the others, provides context for his actions, allowing a reader to ask by the end of story whether a new subjectivity has emerged and what accountability might look like.

We learn of Golden Gray the beloved boy who filled Violet’s young mind, and the early suicide of her mother Rose Dear, beginnings of Violet’s cracks. For Violet, the cracks result from the violence enabled by systemic racial structures, as when Rose Dear’s is left irreparably harmed by the cruelty of white men. As True Belle, Violet’s grandmother arrives she “fills Violet’s head with stories about her whitelady and the light of both their lives – a beautiful young man whose name for obvious reason was Golden Gray” (139). True Belle’s relationship to Golden Gray, the son of her mistress is “choiceless” (143) exemplifies the potential difficulties of caregiving for Black women, for whom care is so often demanded rather than offered. Thus, in the twisted care and violent justice of Violet’s childhood, the Violet/Violent dynamic finds its’ roots.

Yet, as Felice arrives on Violet and Joe’s doorsteps, it is clear something has changed. As Felice describes Violet’s recounting of her transformation: “I ran up and down the streets wishing I was somebody else...Now I want to be the woman my mother didn’t

stay around long enough to see...the one I used to like before” (208). Violet expresses her desire to return to the version of herself from “before” True Belle’s care and the violence of white men. Felice asks, “How did you get rid of her?” Violet replies, “Killed her. Then I killed the me that killed her,” leaving only “Me” (209). If the Violet/Violent dichotomy represents the divide between an ethics of care and one of justice, then what might this new “me” entail? When Violet asks Alice whether she should leave Joe, she replies: ““You want a real thing?” asked Alice. ‘I’ll tell you a real one. You got anything left to you to love, anything at all, do it’” (112). Freed from the choice between care and justice, a third new Violet whose love, for herself and community, informs her choices. She tells Felice, “If you don't [change the world], it will change you and it'll be your fault cause you let it" (208). The transformation is thus not limited to Violet alone but instead motivates her actions to change the world, by changing her relationship towards her husband.

Joe, on the other hand, lives a childhood marked by absences of both care and justice. Morrison recounts how Joe’s mother, widely considered insane, abandoned him, and details his adoption and persistent efforts to find her. The source of Joe’s internal conflict, the trace, is his learning of his adoption and of parents who “disappeared without a trace” (124). While Joe’s adoptive parents are not negligent in the care of his basic needs, the absence of his mother and of roots for his identity creates a lack of another sort of care. In his frustration after tracking his mother, Wild, to no avail, he thinks of her as “a simple-minded woman too silly to beg for a living. Too brain blasted to do what the meanest sow managed: nurse what she birthed” (179). Morrison thus attaches significance to wound created by the absence of maternal attachment, via the caregiving act of nursing. It is this absence, the lack of a trace, which gives Joe his shape-changing nature. It seems that mystery of parentage also results in

his hunting skill, as he searches for the care of a mother. As he recounts his “changes” and relationship with Violet, a picture of injustice also forms: “Then old man Ricks got fed up and sold the place along with our debt to a man called Clayton Bede. The debt rose from one hundred eighty dollars to eight hundred under him. Interest, he said... Took us five years but we did it” (127). In this case, as when “those whitemen took that pipe from around my head... almost killed me” during a riot, it is the lack of intervention by the state which promises ‘liberty and justice for all’ that is glaring.

Each of Joe’s changes reflects his quest for care and justice, a pursuit which ultimately leads him and Violet to the City. In a sense, it is this lack of parentage and justice, which draws Joe and Dorcas, whose parents were killed in the St. Louis riots, together when he remarks on their shared emptiness: with Dorcas, Joe “was fresh and new again” (123). Yet, like his past changes, the persona he constructs with Dorcas does not finally produce either the care or the justice Joe searches for. Felice remarks that “she [Dorcas] was doing for Acton what the old man was doing for her—giving him little presents she bought from the money she wheedled out of the old man and from Mrs. Manfred” (203). Dorcas and Joe’s relationship is thus founded on the physical care which he provides, everything from the gifts to the apartment he rents, which Dorcas initially reciprocates by “mirroring” Joe’s feelings. “She cries and again and Joe holds her close... By that time she has pushed back his cuticles, cleaned his nails and painted them with clear polish. She has cried a little talking about East St. Louis, and cheers herself up with his fingernails” (39). While Joe calls Dorcas ‘the neediest creature’ he ever saw, we see in her painting of his nails that she also met his unfulfilled need for care. When Joe sets out “hunting” on the day he kills Dorcas, Morrison writes, “He isn’t thinking of harming her... She is female. And she is not prey... He is hunting

for her though, and while hunting a gun is as natural a companion as Victory” (180). While traditional and restorative approaches might search for intent as the determining factor of ‘guilt,’ TJ might ask where a person learned the harmful behavior, in this case the hunt, or how they accessed to the tools that allowed them to enact their harmful impulse, such as the gun. Likewise for Morrison, Joe’s motivation seems to be less important than how he enacts learned behavior; Morrison draws attention back to his childhood with the mention of Victory. As he sets out to “tell her [Dorcas] I know she didn’t mean what she said” (181) we might imagine that Joe, having learnt to hunt in place of receiving parental guidance, in response to learning that Dorcas has betrayed his care in her relationship with Acton, sets out to find justice and care in the only way in which he has experienced these things. While Morrison allows us the room for such a compassionate reading, as a TJ approach calls for, there is also the question of accountability. “Don’t get me wrong. This wasn’t Violet’s fault. All of it’s mine. All of it. I’ll never get over what I did to that girl. Never. I changed once too often. Made myself new one time too many...not one of those changes prepared me for her” (129). In this passage, Joe’s reflection on the events represents his understanding of how his history, his “changes,” was an important factor, yet he does not seek to escape accountability. The significance of Joe’s final transformation. The question, for both him and Violet, becomes what this accountability might look like?

With TJ, “We are looking at a kind of justice, one in which injury and poverty are repaid with acts of affirmation and healing grace and through which the shared bonds of community, often frayed by isolation and fear, are proclaimed in the open air” (Scheiber 210). I argue the final conversation between Joe, Violet, and Felice does reach the standard of such a transformative justice because it reflects the understanding that, “Even when

committed by identifiable individuals, such individual acts are symptomatic of complex social forces that extend deeper and further than the crime-and-punishment model's frame of individual responsibility" (Scheiber 202). Joe's acceptance of the "fault," beyond the goals of carceral or restorative justice, becomes true accountability as only he transforms this into a practice of love. As at the start of the novel when the Club concludes "that Joe simply 'needed to stop feeling sorry for himself'" (4), implying that an attitude adjustment, not a prison sentence, is what Dorcas's killer most urgently requires" (Scheiber 202).

Felice observes this attitude adjustment in the new love found between Violet and Joe: "I really believe he likes his wife...When my father says thanks, it's just a word. Mr. Trace acts like he meant it" (206). Their relationship has transformed because rather than perpetuate the twisted dynamics of care both Violet and Joe learnt at a young age, they have learned to love. This love is not binary as it becomes their motivation for community engagement, as represented by Felice, not in the altruistic sense of caretaking but with an emergent understanding that the care one gives to others is also beneficial to oneself. As brown writes "to feel this interdependence, this of community and humanity" is to know "how incredible it feels to have a need met, to be loved and cared for, and also know how incredible it feels to meet an authentic need" (97). When Felice first has dinner with the Traces, she cries over Dorcas' death for the first time, "I hated crying over all over myself like that. They didn't stop me neither. Mr. Trace handed me his pocket handkerchief" (210). Felice, who has neither processed the trauma of Dorcas' death nor mourned her, expresses her need in this moment – and is met with compassion from Joe and Violet. They cannot undo the past, as Joe again recognizes when he responds to Felice's accusation, "Even if you didn't kill her outright; even if she made herself die, it was you," with, "It was me. For the

rest of my life it'll be me" (213). Notably the notion of fault is absent from Joe's final reflection on the events, instead he has accepted responsibility while preserving his own humanity. His accountability, like Violet's, becomes the love they express to one another, "We working on it" (213) and the outpouring of this love into the world. This is manifest in the relationship they build with Felice; Joe and Violet dance, at first making Felice uncomfortable with their love, but she is quickly swept into their dynamic as Violet offers to cut her hair, and Felice nags Joe to buy a Victrola (215). Ultimately, what Joe and Violet both offer Felice is their wisdom, the story of their transformations, which catalyzes her own transformation as she recognizes "the trick" in the stolen ring her mother gave her, "Reminds me of the tricky blond kid living in Mrs. Trace's head. A present taken from whitefolks," (211) and decides to tell her mother the truth (215). Though Felice is most clearly a stand-in for the figure of Dorcas, her "mirror image" as the narrator remarks, her absent parents and the stolen ring represent the same struggles with care and justice which touch each character in *Jazz*. However, with the guidance of Joe and Violet, Morrison shows how Felice becomes "nobody's alibi or hammer or toy" (222). Thus, by the end of the novel, Dorcas' death is no longer a debt to be paid, either by caregiving or punishment, rather Morrison demonstrates how the harm from such events are communal and can begin to be transformed through acts of love.

Conclusion: Narrative Voice, Jazz Music, And Emergent Love

The transformations that fill the pages of *Jazz* reflect the complexity of human experience, and thus begin to challenge the underlying assumptions of mainstream conversations on justice in which caregiving and penalization are the only options. Instead, Morrison demonstrates how for each character the wounds of such a binary approach find

healing a new vision of justice rooted in love, where care and accountability are not mutually exclusive. Instead, as we see in the final interactions between Joe, Violet, and Felice, accountability, or justice, for acts of violence may take the form of a practice of love in which human interdependence is central; acts of love for other people *are* acts of self-love, and vice versa. The final transformation which I would like to address in this conclusion, is that of Morrison's narrator, who embodies this emergent process.

For Griffin, the narrative voice in *Jazz* functions as a blending between the experiences of the South and the North, "the ancestor" and "the migrant," to borrow her terms for characters in migration novels. She writes, "It is a voice that is playful, unreliable, appearing to be all-knowing yet constantly undermining itself. It is a voice that embodies oral culture, instrumental jazz arrangements, paintings, photographs, and history" (Herbst 44). Other critics have likewise noted the themes of modernity, presenting the case for the narrator as the City itself: "I offer a reading of the city of the narrator as the City itself...I do not mean that her voice is the collective voice of the City's inhabitants but rather than she is the material city – the city of concrete and brick" (Wyatt 46). While these readings broaden the focus from the novel's central plot, I argue that a TJ approach to analyzing *Jazz* opens the possibility of examining how the collective narrative interplays with the individual characters.

At the novel's start, the narrator professes their love for the City, yet recounts the absence of love. "I like the way the City makes people think they can do what they want and get away with it. I see them all over the place: wealthy whites, and plain ones too, pile into mansions decorated and redecorated by black women richer than they are, and both are pleased with the spectacle of the other" (9). The modernist paradox of alienation is evident,

as the narrator observes how the proximity of other people in fact motivates inconsiderate behavior. Later they remark, that in the City people “are not so much new as themselves: their stronger, riskier selves...they love that part of themselves so much they forget what loving other people was like...Little of that makes for love, but it does pump desire” (34). Desire is the form of attraction by which the beloved becomes the object of desire; thus the “love” the City inspires for the narrator at the beginning of the text is that which relies on the subject/object binary which we have traced through feminist discourses on love and care such as Beauvoir’s reciprocity and Gilligan’s ethics. This position of object of desire, and the problems associated, are reflected when the narrator states, “I loved a long time, maybe too much, in my own mind. People say I should come out more. Mix. I agree that I close off in places, but if you have been left standing, as I have, while your partner overstays at another appointment, or promises to give you exclusive attention after supper, but is falling asleep just as you have begun to speak—well it can make you inhospitable if you aren’t careful, the last thing I want to be” (9). When one’s identity becomes that of being another’s object of desire, the negligence of a partner begins to erode the very sense of self – Morrison here defines isolation, the narrator “too much in my own mind” rather than “mixing,” as the loss of identity, of subjectivity.

As the novel’s transformation of justice begins, so too does the narrators. Scheiber also notes the City and village dynamic of these transformations: “The police and the courts are not an extension of “the village” but a colonizing, even alien presence whose authority and power need to be mitigated or supplemented (if not actually resisted) by the community” (208). In returning to individual conversations as the site of justice-making, Morrison indeed demonstrates how this resistance entails restoring the “village” mindset. As brown writes in

her chapter on fractals, “There is a structural echo that suggest two things: one, that there are shapes and patterns fundamental to our universe, and two, that what we practice at a small scale can reverberate to the largest scale” (52). True TJ is not about abolishing every manifestation of systemic justice overnight, rather it, like *Jazz*, offers us a chance to imagine what justice made at the “small scale” might look like.

Furthermore, Scheiber connects the making of this new justice with “another kind of “making”—specifically the making of music, particularly the music that gives the novel its title. Olly Wilson once asserted that the music of the African diaspora—not just, but perhaps especially, jazz—is distinguished by “a conceptual approach,” a “way of doing something, not something that is done”” (206). Drawing from Morrison’s own reflections on the text, he writes, “Her phrasing here implicitly emphasizes the importance of intra-community meaning-making, the kind that occurs in spaces not associated with the workings of institutional power—the kitchen, the church basement, the apartment-building stoop, or even (as in the case of music) the dance hall or the speakeasy (as opposed to the conservatory or the concert hall)” (206).

If we revisit the characteristics of emergent phenomena, the connections to jazz music appear. “The vee pattern that emerges in a flock of geese or the more complex patterns of flocking starlings are not predictable by an aggregation of behaviors of individuals in solo flight, but only from the non-aggregative interaction or self-organizing that derives from the local rules of motion plus feedback among the individuals in group flight” (Mitchell 180). This example of birds flocking highlights how complex natural patterns arise not from a simple collection of unified behavior of individuals, but in fact that group and individual actions interplay, resisting linearity. “Thus a second condition for emergence is met by the

complexity studied by contemporary science: There is causal influence of higher-level properties on lower-level behaviors. Feedback loops are opera” (Mitchell 183). While jazz is perhaps most famous for its improvisatory nature, it is also a deeply collective music; the interplay between musicians who freestyle but produce collective sound is much like this “feedback loop opera.”

In *Jazz*, likewise, “Justice-making is improvisatory and open-ended” (Scheiber 207). Throughout the descriptions of the past, Violet, Joe, Dorcas, and Felice, each have their opportunity to ‘speak into mic,’ to assume the first-person narrative voice. Yet, in accordance with Morrison’s project to represent “Black vernacular values and practices asserting themselves both within and against the constraints of dominating, even hostile, cultural institutions” (198), I suggest that these moments signal a break with the carceral notion of testimony. Rather than offering each individual the chance to ‘plead their case,’ so to speak, each of these reflections offers the character a chance to join the chorus, thereby transforming the narrative voice itself. “Justice is seen not just in terms of the fate of individuals; rather, it must proceed from a standpoint that is “we-focused” rather than “I-focused,” with an emphasis on “community values and ... community morale” (Scheiber 207). It is this ‘we-focus,’ that allows the characters, the reader, and ultimately the narrative voice to question the binaries, whether subject/object or care/justice, in the text.

In the narrator’s final reflection, their transformation is evident. “I started out believing that life was made just so the world would have some way to think about itself, but that it had gone awry with humans because flesh, pinioned by misery, hangs on to it with pleasure. Hangs on to wells, a boy’s golden hair; would just as soon inhale sweet fire caused by a burning girl as hold a maybe-yes maybe-no hand. I don’t believe that anymore.

Something is missing there. Something rogue. Something else you have to figure in before you can figure it out” (228). From the narrator’s starting point, valuing desire over love, they have been transformed by each additional voice and the elements of their stories which Morrison here recalls. “Figuring in” further suggests the transformative mindset insofar as the narrator here criticizes the objective notion of “figuring out” from a distance, reminding of importance of interdependence. It also supports the reading of the narrator’s internalization of each character’s so that, by this point, we hear a collective – jazz music emerging. This transformed narrator concludes the novel with a description of love beyond desire, wherein “the body is the vehicle, not the point;” in which lovers remember, “The pears they let hang on the limb because if they plucked them, they would be gone from there and who else would see that ripeness if they took it away for themselves?” (229). The fruit becomes a collective experience, like brown’s emergent ideal insofar as its value lies not in the either/or of individual/communal but in challenging the notion that individual or communal benefit must necessarily come at a cost to the other. Instead, the narrator’s ultimate statement, “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,” (229) reflects the freedom to make justice through love. The narrator understands this process is not instantaneous: “I’ve been waiting for this all my life and that being chosen to wait is the reason I can” (229). Yet, far from the cynicism of their initial observations, the narrator seems to have found hope. Transformative justice, likewise, is a movement with a long road ahead, but as Kaba writes, “To the young people who have taken to the streets across the country and are agitating for some "justice" in this moment...Don't let a non-indictment crush your spirit and steal your hope. Hope is a discipline” (63).

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