

Image Of Love In *Meet Me In Green Glen*

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Abstract

The novel *Meet me in the Green Glen* by Robert Penn Warren explores the dynamics of love and its potential to both enhance and undermine an individual's existence. The absence of love is shown as having similar qualities of fairness, aridity, barrenness, and lack of benefits, mirroring the depiction of the protagonist's life before experiencing the transformative power of love, which imbues her existence with electrifying vitality and purpose. This article sheds light on the challenging life experienced by the protagonist of the novel, Cassie Killigrew. It is paradoxical when considering the perspective of an individual who endeavours to find meaning in life, yet eventually encounters a lack of accomplishment in this pursuit. Cassie's life is preserved as a result of her contrived assertion that she had harbored clandestine affection for her throughout the course of past twenty years.

Keyword: love, women, lifelessness, murder, psychological.

Introduction

The novel *Meet Me in the Green Glen* is a story about Cassie, a middle-aged woman who longing to be loved and reveals the inner turmoil of her isolated life. This research article aims to explore the image of love depicted in this novel. Love is an emotion deals both pain and pleasure. Every human needs the warmth of affection and the bliss of companionship but it also brings inevitable tendrils of sufferings. Maya Angelo renowned poet defines love and its anxiety in one of her poems as "Love arrives...old memories of pleasure and ancient histories of pain" (lines 5-8). It shows that love is where joy and pain coexist together and shapes the life of an individual. Likewise, Warren constructs the protagonist Cassie who falls in love with Angelo which gives her both pleasure and pain. According to the critic Gerald Weales, Warren's novel *Meet Me in the Green Glen* is "a familiar iteration of the timeless Southern narrative that explores themes of love and murder" (27), where the protagonist is an outsider, becomes a victim or is rescued from the story's milieu and psychological norms. The story takes a secondary role to the milieu and societal implications.

Warren employs vivid imagery to depict love as a force that transcends time and space, much like the eternal beauty of nature. He uses the landscape green glen as the backdrop of the lover's experiences and symbolizes a place of refuge and serenity where their love flourishes. The novel begins with the love at first sight moment where Cassie stares at Angelo, a young Sicilian comes to the valley. She looks "Out of the distance where bluff, and sky dissolved into the drizzle that made far-off...he was coming. And her inner voice says "I see a man and he is coming down the road" (5). Cassie does not know how long she had been seeing Angelo and her life becomes troubled by him. In her life, love plays crucial part and that becomes the root cause for all her pains and pleasures.

The first love of Cassie emerges during her young days but it breaks down due to her lack of courage. When Cassie is in school, she falls in love with Cy Grinder. Cy's love for Cassie stops him to marry her until he becomes an engineer, which he wants to achieve the social status level as Cassie expects. When Cassie is hospitalized her mother Mrs. Killigrew makes fun of Cy and hurts him in public.

When the truth is revealed by Mrs. Killigrew's harsh words; Cy decides to leave Cassie without saying a word to her. Because he has no high hopes for his future and he leaves the place and does not know what he is supposed to do. Cassie cannot stop her mother from talking ill of Cy's family, and she can only look at his stone faced, never turning to her face and hope: "If he had turned even once and looked at her, she would have risen from the bed, taped and plastered as she was and wearing that hideous white sack the hospital had put her in, and run after him and would never, never have left him" (78). Cassie has lost interest in life and she has no courage to go with Cy against her mother's wish. So, she agrees to marry Sunderland Spottwood, who is already in bed, when she thinks he is Cy and has a moment of delusion.

She lives a robotic way of life in Sunderland's house and in state of shock. For four years, Sunderland has used her as a sexual object. She never has the joy of just being herself. When her mother dies, she breaks her frozen emotions and instead of crying, she laughs out loud in funeral fire. The repressed feelings of hate and anger at her sad, loveless, and meaningless life which leads her to become mad and she stays in a mental hospital until Sunder has a serious brain stroke that leaves him paralyzed.

When she hears about the marriage of Cy and Gladys Peegrum, again she breaks down. And she spends the next twelve years taking care of Sunder's needs while he is bedridden without being aware of herself or anyone else, "in the dark hollowness of the house" (4). Since she has no one to talk about how she feels and it seems her to live in a void where she can't think or feel. In the meantime, Angelo comes into the life of Cassie. She feels that when he was coming down the road, it was like a torch coming through the rain, like a lightwood torch with a flame so faint that he could barely see it in the daylight. She seeks help from Angelo to drag the buck and dress it, and he agrees to stay and help her. Angelo comes to the valley to escapes from his unlawful past life and get rid of his own sense of guilt. So, he accepts to spend his life in valley when Cassie offers him to stay in Spottwood house. He wants to hide himself and his identity to Cassie and this fake world.

Cassie's mind is stimulated by Angelo's arrival, and perhaps his presence eradicates her dreadful loneliness, so she needs a companion to sleep with her. This unexpected occurrence enrages Angelo, and he viciously drags her to the ground, and "angrily drily, joylessly, almost without sensation" (71). They shared their bed and Cassie feels happy and his physical touch causes her to undergo "the pure joy that comes only with the full, free recognition of destiny, which is the recognition of the self" (94). Barnett Guttenberg, a critic also comments in his article *Web of Being*, that true love exists based on the choice of individual. He observes, Warren also tries to prove that the true love can "arises only with selfhood" (139) through the voice of Cassie. In this case, Cassie's sense of identity diminishes during harsh sexual encounters with Sunderland but is restored during similar encounters with Angelo. It is purely based on her choice of self.

Murray Guilfort, friend of old Sunderland and he also loves Cassie. He warns Cassie that Angelo is a convict on parole and sends him away. She argues on behalf of Angelo and tries to prove him to be an innocent convict. She threatens him saying that she would consider him responsible and will never see him again "if they make him go away, or do anything to him" (144). She turns down his offer to move Sunder into the town, and Murray jealously thinks, "she would stay in that falling-down house, just as it was, with Sunder and that criminal" (142). Cassie's realization of the parallels between their lives causes her to feel sympathy for Angelo and wants to know how he was imprisoned and spent the night there. This reminds her of "how all my own life, .it was like that, like being locked up, and lying in the dark," and she says, "I knew, I really knew how you felt. It wasn't till I knew how I had been always locked up that I knew how you had felt ..." (148). She makes him comfort with her sympathy and affection and request him to feel free in the house to do anything and not "to feel caught and locked up" (149). He responds to her sympathy, concern, and assurance that he is innocent. He gives her red shoes, ribbon, and silk clothing. He combs her hair, ties the ribbon, makes her up, and looks in the mirror because he likes her. She never realized she was attractive, gorgeous, and deserving of a man's affection.

Cassie is happy and feels reborn. Rejuvenation despite her age. Her new existence shows that the body has importance. She never learns about being a woman or what her body requires. Her love for Cy dies prematurely. Even she thinks Angelo is unbelievable at first. She understands love as delight after a renewal. Angelo always calls Cassie as gorgeous. When they Sharing their harsh past helps them to understand each other.

In the course of time, Angelo leaves Cassie's house and returning injured and bruised. Cassie is shocked when she knows the love affair between Arlita and Angelo. She forgives Angelo because of her love on him. Murray plans to send Angelo with Arlita, so Cassie loves him back. His compassion for Cassie, whether out of indulgence or otherwise, helps her to rediscover herself. After Cassie knows about Murray's plan, she helps Angelo to escape with Arlita and gives her money and car. At the end of the novel, she tells Cy that she sincerely loved Angelo so she wants to help him to fulfil his desire. She says "I loved him and wanted him to be happy for he had made me beautiful like I never was, and happy ... I was happy for I wanted him to be happy" (312). Because he is the only man who makes her to feel beautiful and happy. As a reward for Angelo's love towards Cassie, she decides to help him to lead a happy life with the girl whom he loved.

After Angelo leaves Cassie feels emptiness and her anxiety makes her to kill Sunder. But innocent Angelo is arrested by the police for the murder of Sunder with the influence of Murray. Because he wants to save Cassie. In the courtroom Leroy Lancaster, the defence counsel, pities her and exempts her from cross-examination despite her fragmentary account. When everyone appears to conspire to blame Angelo, she yells out in court "I did it, I did it — I killed him!" (259). Her revelation transforms Angelo and teaches him love. But her confession fails to rescue Angelo. Judge, jury, Farhill, Murray, and the rest treat her confession as "the hysterical outburst of an overwrought woman" (279). So, she plans to meet Governor with the help of Cy to reveal the truth and want to save Angelo from execution. Bohner in his critical work on Warren, entitled *Robert Penn Warren*, says that Cassie is depicted as the woman who captivates all men in the story. Her appeal does not "comes from passion, wealth, intellect or charm but by love" (18).

Forgetting the unpleasant past, she lives in the illusion of love. When she receives the last letter from Angelo, who is in prison affirming his love for Cassie and his decision to face death without any fear indicate his attainment of selfhood through love. She is happy believing that "He has gone away ... Somewhere far away, and he is happy. And I'm happy

too, because I made him happy, for oh, I loved him” (359). The hardship in their relationship makes them to understand each other’s true love.

In spite of Cy Grinder’s assistance, she fails to meet the Governor. Because of her inability to save Angelo, she becomes mad. She disregards her disagreeable past and lives in the delusion of love. Her love inspires Angelo’s devotion. His declaration of love for Cassie in his final letter from prison and his decision to confront death without dread indicate that he attained selfhood through love. Murray has neither a significant past nor an eventful present, but he wishes for a redemptive future. As a result of Sunder’s insolvency and incapacity, he supports Cassie and Sunder financially, claiming that the funds came from an investment made by Sunder. He visits Sunder every month with the expectation that something will occur, but nothing ever does.

Angelo’s inability to experience and reciprocate love, as well as Cassie’s own understanding of love, prompt him to engage in profound contemplation over the nature and significance of love. “... attempting to comprehend its significance, lacking understanding of its meaning, yet speculating that if numerous individuals traversed the globe with an apparent comprehension of its significance, it must possess some inherent meaning” (370). Murray experiences a profound sense of sadness and emotional distress, as his heart metaphorically laments the absence of individuals who have spoken the truth to him. Murray’s visit to the mental asylum where Cassie is admitted at present who exposes him to the profound void that exists within his life. She enters a state of unreality, believing Angelo is happy elsewhere, which reflects in her joyful expression. Her ringing question “did you ever love anybody, Murray Guilfort?” (357) and her metaphysic of love, he never forgets but till the end he remains a stranger to love. He is unable to find meaning in life and unable to reach out to others in love, so he decides to commit suicide by swallowing sleeping pills.

Cassie’s love ethic has a profound effect on the defence attorney, Leroy Lancaster, judge and Cy Grinder. It makes them aware of the existence of their spouses. Leroy learns the essence of love from Cassie and realizes how poorly he treats his wife, Corinne Melford. He learns the truth from Cassie’s confession, which she delivers with a beaming smile. He begs God for forgiveness, declaring “I have blasphemed against my own life” (278). He realizes that he stared unforgivingly at Angelo along with others “from the thorny shadow of their own deprivations, yearnings, and envies” (275).

Cy Grinder’s inadequacy is highlighted by Cassie’s affection, and he longs to return home to his wife. Mrs. Killigrew deals the fatal strike to Cy Grinder’s affection for Cassie. After eight years of aimless wandering, he returns to the valley of Spottwood. He has no affection for the Valley or Cassie. He marries Gladys Peegrum, but he does not adore her. After nearly twenty years, Cy returns to reality when an unanticipated turn of events compels him to seek Cassie’s assistance. After failing to meet the Governor, they make a pit halt at a roadhouse. Cassie, in a reflective mood, muses aloud about what they would have been if their desires had come true; perhaps, by now, they would have been a joyful couple returning from a visit to their son at college. Cy, unable to endure the anguish, comes out and considers: “...if you could just live now, no backwards and no forwards, you could live through anything” (324).

Cy undergoes a transformation as a result of Cassie’s harping on the murder she committed, her desperate attempts to save her lover Angelo. he understands the deep-rooted love of Cassie gives her confidence and drives her to the Governor’s bungalow, her preoccupation with the thought of Angelo’s electrocution, and her final withdrawal into herself, upon the failure of her frantic efforts to save Angelo’s life. Cy’s initial affection for Cassie was unrealistic and could not endure the realities of life. His marriage to his wife is devoid of affection. He uses her without attempting to comprehend her. He lives in obscurity without any effort to emerge from it. Cassie’s affection for Angelo shines a bright light on Cy’s life of despair. “When the time came, he stepped out of the shadow of the tree. He looked up. There was the moon, with the sky, and the whole world, in its light” (376). This redemptive radiance reveals a new perspective on life. He aspires to lead new existence after emerging from fantasy.

Angelo enters Cassie’s life like a firebrand, revivifying her previously lifeless world. They have shared a bed for a considerable amount of time while enduring an emotional vacuum. She discovers meaning in her existence, which had previously been meaningless, as a result of compassion. She becomes schizophrenic for the second time and lives in the illusion of love, remembering only what she desires, which brings her complete happiness. According to the epigraph of the novel, her love is born of hopelessness and impossibility. It gives her life meaning, despite its rarity and strangeness, as it is the result of the actual union of mind and body between an elderly and seemingly lifeless woman and a youthful man.

In a book *Sleeping with the Boss: Female Subjectivity and Narrative Pattern in Robert Penn Warren*, critic Ferris Lucy compares the life of Cassie with other heroines of Warren and says that Cassie only finds true love in her attempt. In Warren’s other novel *Band of Angels* female protagonist Amantha Starr met a lot of males, but she never found love because she always had too many unanswered questions. In the novel, *Meet Me in the Green Glen* “Cassie Killigrew symbolizes love and sacrifice and emphasizes the need of love for self-knowledge” (113). Warren portrays the image of Cassie is like Hardy’s Tess murders Alec to destroy the masculine ego that enslaves women. The Southern lady escapes from patriarchal society’s chivalric heritage is symbolized by Cassie’s slaying of Sunder.

This research highlighting the dynamics of love in the life of Cassie and profound impacts on her emotional and psychological well-being. By the analysis of image of love, this study examines Cassie’s expectations of love from her

mother, Cy, Angelo and Sunderland and its dual role in her survival and downfall. It also explores the paradoxical nature of love, where its presence nurtures Cassie's spirit while its absence plunges her into emptiness and anxiety, leads to drastic consequences such as murder and turmoil in her relationship with Angelo. Cassie's experiences offer valuable implications for understanding the complexities of human relationships and the profound influences of love on individual lives.

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