CHAPTER 2

Narrating the Black Experience: Slavery, Migration and Freedom

In all her fictional works and particularly in the novels of her trilogy, *Beloved, Jazz* and *Paradise,* Morrison narrates the black experiences in America since the days of slavery. The black experiences that Morrison narrates in these novels produce a history of the racialised American society, which create the fragments of those parts of American history which remained overlooked in the nation's white history; and these histories are produced with active rememory of the community's racial experiences in different periods of time. The knowledge she gathered from the racial experiences in her cultural surrounding, helped Morrison build up her narrative; and it is the narrative that she feels is one of the ways in which knowlwdge is organised. As a creative author, Morison says, "My compact with the reader is not to reveal an already established reality (literary and historical) that he or she and I agree upon beforehand" (See. "Memory, Creation and Fiction", *Mouth Full of Blood*, p.331). All through her fictional works, Morrison has displayed a zeal for revealing those aspects of African American realities which she feels have remained unfocused. In these three novels, we see a gradual development of the African Americans' struggles with the nation's deliberate intent of keeping the Blacks under the white political hegemony; and all through her fictional works, there is a stunning historical record of the community's racial experiences over the ages.

Slavery and the Racial Experience in *Beloved*

The black experience in America is narrated throughout the fictional creations of Toni Morrison, and her fiction retells the stories of black sufferings in the nation since the days of slavery to the contemporary period. As a champion of "Black Racism", Morrison exposes the racial hatred and the malice of racial hegemony in the American society; and her commitment to her community is reflected in the author's dedicatory note, "Sixty Million and more", the African Blacks who were lost in the colonial triangle of Africa, America and Europe; since they remained untraced during the colonial process of slave hiring. The trilogy of Morrison's novels constituted with *Beloved, Jazz* and *Paradise,* together unearths the raw vision of the complex issues of the identity and community life of the African Americans under different historical conditions and in various path breaking socio-political happenings. As part of a

trilogy each of the novels narrates the black experiences in the American society from a historical perspective beginning with the time of slavery through Reconstruction to the condition of freedom and modernization. The first novel of the trilogy *Beloved* narrates the black experiences under slavery, and comments on the white brutalities in the name of slave hunting and slave possession. The second novel of the trilogy *Jazz*, on the other hand narrates the racial experiences that the Blacks got after coming into freedom which they had achieved through large scale migration from the southern tropical areas to the northern cities; the novel's narrative here makes a beautiful observation on the new cultural behaviour of the Blacks after coming out of the grip of slavery. The third novel, *Paradise* brings back the memories of some remarkable socio-political conditions such as Abolition, Disallowance, Desegregation and Reconstruction, and narrates the social conditions of the freed Blacks, their fear and anxiety out of the racial experiences, and their persistent efforts to ensure development of the community.

The novel *Beloved* is based on the true story of a black slave woman named Margaret Garner who escaped from a Kentucky plantation (1856?) along with her husband and their children to take refuge in Ohio. But the family's hope for living in a free world did not last long, because the owner and the law officers soon found out them and deployed the slave hunters to get them back forcibly into slavery in their former position. Before they were recaptured and enforced to join slavery again, the bereaved and psychologically affected mother killed her young daughter in order to prevent her from going back to slavery; for her, the sting of slavery was so great an wound that she considered death to be a more acceptable condition than slavery. This real story about the darkness and horrible experience of slavery makes the central narrative of the novel *Beloved*. Through this novel, Morrison not only provides a raw vision of the harsh world of slavery in America but also produces a black history of the nation's racial conflict.

In the novel, the protagonist, Sethe is depicted as a passionately devoted mother who flees from a Kentucky plantation named Sweet Home to live in her mother-in-law's residence, 124 at Bluestone Road, Ohio. In a similar situation that Mrs. Garner of the true story had experienced, the family of Sethe was recaptured by the slave hunters of her owner Schoolteacher. The natural love of the passionate and psychologically haunted mother rose to such a height that she got in herself an inexplicable energy to resist the state of forceful slavery. Out of such an excessive motherly love and passion Sethe forgot all civility, fear and compassion; before the men of Schoolteacher could get her children in their possession, she

tried to take the lives of all of her children, so as to keep them away from the cursed world of slavery in which she had to live in an utterly dismal situation. Fortunately, the unwilling and unplanned sudden attack of the mother could not take the lives of all her kids; only a two years old daughter died in her hand and the rest of her children survived the tragic incident by chance. Schoolteacher, the hard-hearted slave owner was also perturbed and moved by the sudden and unimaginable act of Sethe so much that he thought her to have become insane; so he gave up the idea of taking Sethe and her children back to Sweet Home and left the place instantly. Thus Sethe and her remaining children escaped slavery at the cost of the life of her daughter, which she could never wipe out from her grief-stricken heart. This grief of Sethe makes the prime narrative of the novel which showcases the miserable plight of a slave mother.

Slavery was such a condition that people could never be sure of their lives; it was very unlikely that a wife would live under the loving care of her husband or the children would live with their mother in a happy home. Sethe could never meet her husband Halle, after she escaped Sweet Home, and used to live with her mother-in-law Baby Suggs, whose 'freedom' had been bought by her son and Sethe's husband Halle, at the cost of all his Sundays. The novel's narrative brings to us a picture of slave life, where slavery is narrated as such a condition that naturally descends to the next generations. Baby Suggs the first generation in the novel's etymology of slavery, is found to have lived fully under slavery sacrificing all the natural blessings of motherhood to the darkness of slavery, where she had no access to the opportunities of caressing and keeping her children in her possession; all her children either died or escaped in different situations. Sethe belonging to the second generation of slave woman in the novel lives in a condition between slavery and freedom. Sethe's daughter Denver lives in a rather freed condition with the horror of slavery still haunting the black psyche. Sethe, who could never come out of the sense of guilt, was badly haunted by the phantom appearance of her dead child; in fact the whole neighbourhood was greatly moved by the trauma of Sethe's infanticide.

In the novel, Morrison makes use of memory and 'flashback' to narrate the slave experiences of Sethe and her family. When the novel opens in the year 1873, Sethe and her younger daughter Denver experience the ghostly appearance of the dead child, "124 WAS SPITEFUL. Full of a baby's venom." The narrator says that "The women of the house knew it and so did the children" although at the same time the narrator gives a hint at the history of the event by mentioning the year of its occurrence,"Sethe and her daughter Denver were its

only victims until the year 1873" (*Beloved*, p.4). In fact Sethe felt this trauma until the arrival of Paul D, a man who had all the bitter experiences of slavery in the Kentucky plantation; he used to live with Sethe and the two developed a relation on the basis of their former acquaintance and identical experiences as slaves. Arrival of Paul D brings a kind of recess to the traumatic environment of the family, but the temporary calmness that the family has received from his arrival is disturbed by the arrival of another unexpected member to the family; it is an unfamiliar young girl whom Sethe finds on the bank of the Ohio River and who introduces herself as Beloved. This mysterious young girl relates numerous things about Sethe's experience with her dead child, which makes Sethe take this girl to be an incarnation of her dead child. This girl in spite of being quite a stranger to Sethe, takes the opportunity of Sethe's obsession with her sinfulness and manages to live with her almost as her own home; she even seduces Paul D, the man who always expresses his aversion to Sethe's excessive concern for Beloved. Thus the character of Beloved, though not a major character of the novel, remains ambiguous throughout the narrative; and reveals the psyche of a slave mother after killing her own child at the fit of anger against the state of slavery.

Although Sethe hopes to regain her lost happiness with the arrival of Beloved, it does nothing good to the family; it rather worsens the situation of her family. After losing the job, Sethe begins to devote all her time in caressing Beloved, but contrary to Sethe's love and care, Beloved pays little hid to the happiness of Sethe; she even later becomes pregnant because of her physical intimacy with Paul D. Even Sethe's daughter Denver who initially approves the company of Beloved with an assumed belief to be her sister later begins to be haunted by an inexplicable fear and anxiety. She can neither remove Sethe's obsession nor can she come out of the gloomy environment of her home. So with the passage of time and being fatigued with the alienated environment, Denver begins to feel the sense of belonging for herself and goes out to be in the community rather than living in the gloomy environment of 124.

While narrating the black experience in *Beloved*, Morrison has given the readers the visionary documents of all the cruelties and inhumanities meted out to the African Americans, who were treated by the white masters no better than the animals during the time of slavery. In this novel Morrison uses the memory of the characters to show the brutal side of slavery. The novel's narrative uses the memory of the plantation life of the central character Sethe, who is brought to the plantation of Kentucky called Sweet Home. Here she has got the mixed feelings as a slave, because initially she receives a considerably kind and

affectionate treatment from its first owners Mr. and Mrs. Garner, against the usual inhumanly treatment meted out to the slaves. But the loveable approach of the masters is changed to more cruelty and inhumanity with the change of the master at Sweet Home. When Schoolteacher, the nephew of the Garners following their death, becomes the new owner of Sweet Home, he displays all sorts of brutalities in the name of slave possession for his plantation farm. Morrison has beautifully exploited the dichotomy of master/slave in the presentation of the relation of Sethe/ Mrs. Garner and Sethe/Schoolteacher in their respective approaches towards master-slave relationship. Sethe remembers every detail of her days with Mrs. Garner, as she got married to Halle Suggs a year after her arrival at Sweet Home. In *Beloved*, we get another dark side in the history of slavery where the body of the slave is turned into the private property of the masters, a commodity that could be wasted or sold out whenever they felt necessary. For instance, after the death of Mr. Garner, Paul F is sold off by Mrs. Garner to meet her fiscal deficiency; thereby making a display of the lack of rights of the slaves even on their own lives. On the other hand the other slaves of Sweet Home, being fatigued with the harsh realities of slavery under the merciless master Schoolteacher, make a secret plan to escape together in the darkness of night. This time Sethe, being pregnant with her fourth child Denver, is unable to accompany them; so she sends off her two young sons along with her daughter to her mother-in-law's house in Cincinnati before the master comes to know about their secret plan and beats them quite mercilessly. Sethe, after being brutally beaten by Schoolteacher, escapes with her swollen body, and gives birth to her fourth child, a baby girl whom she gives the name Denver as a gratitude to Amy Denver, a white girl who meets her on the way and assists her in delivering the child. Thus after troublesome experiences in sweet Home, Sethe gets a reunion with her mother-in-law and her children; but the happiness of this reunion does not last long. Schoolteacher along with his nephew arrives at their place with a slave-catcher and a sheriff, and forces Sethe and her children to go back to their plantation in Kentucky. This is where Morrison's narrative reaches the maximum height of the tragedy of a slave tradition, where she has dramatized the tragic sight of slave catching. Sethe, unable to resist her children from going down to the chaotic darkness of the world of slavery, slits the throat of her first daughter and injures the two boys, who later run away; and this offence of getting involved in an event of infanticide leads Sethe towards an imprisonment of three months.

Sethe's infanticide reveals the grim realities of the age of slavery, and through this fictitious story, Morrison in fact recreates the history of slavery. The historicity of *Beloved*

lies in the realistic picture that the novel gives about the naked ugliness of slavery. We get a visionary documentation of the slave/master conflict, which virtually turns out to be the racial conflict of Black/White. What follows next is more self-revealing about the black psyche, in terms of racism and sexuality. After being released from the jail, Sethe becomes so much conscience stricken about the unpardonable folly or rather the offence she had committed by taking the life of her beloved daughter that she begins to feel the haunting sense of sinfulness in her heart; she cannot take rest as she is always haunted by the memory of her dead child. In order to repel the offence of killing her child, Sethe manages to hire an engraver to inscribe the word "Beloved" in the tomb stone of her daughter, by offering ten minutes of sexual intercourse to him, and later reproaches herself that she could have inscribed "Dearly Beloved" too for ten minutes of more sexual intercourse with the engraver, though she resisted the temptation. Morrison's narrative makes it a pathetic display of the psyche of a black mother in a "racislised and a genderised society", who in order to mark an identity of her dead or rather murdered daughter, has to sell out her body as a commodity:

> "Ten minutes for seven letters. With another ten could she have gotten "Dearly" too? She had not thought to ask him and it bothered her still that it might have been possible—that for twenty minutes, a half hour, say, she could have the whole thing, every word she heard the preacher say at the funeral (and all there was to say, surely) engraved on her baby's headstone: Dearly Beloved." (*Beloved* p.5)

Through this narrative, Morrison not only focuses the violence and atrocities of slavery, but also includes the dynamics of natural love amidst the grim world of slavery; and at the same time creates a feminist discourse on the sexual abuse of women in the patriarchal world. It is the passion of a motherly love that leads the mother towards nihilism; and she forgets all sorts of rationality when a crisis on the existence of her motherhood arises. Thus Morrison shows the universality of her fiction, where she talks about the identity question of a woman rather than a mere black woman. Together with the fictional representation of an acute sense of realism in the documentation of racism, Morrison has recreated the history of the nation's fight against the evils of injustice to a section in the form of social inequality.

In the novel *Beloved*, Morrison has narrated the black experience not only as a fictional story for the reader's pleasure, but she has also inserted into the incomplete canon of American literature a very essential part of the American history mostly overlooked in the

mainstream history, as Caroline Rody points out, "the very chapter of American history it had long lacked: the story of the African Americans who survived slavery."[1] Rody's observation about *Beloved* asserts the historical significance of the novel, where she refers to it as a historical novel, although she finds a number of elements in the novel which are excessive for a historical novel proper:

> "A reading of the novel as a recuperation of unrepresented history does not begin to account for its cultivation of the bizarre and uncanny; its revival of gothic conventions—the haunted house, the bloody secret, the sexually alluring ghost; its obsessive, claustrophobic plot focus; and an emotional climate that changes from pained repression to volcanic fury to suspended lover's swoon." (Rody, 1997, p.98)

As it has been already stated, *Beloved* is written in the realistic strain of a historical event of a slave mother Margaret Garner, and regarding her initial approach to such an unlikeable part of a history, Rody quotes Morrison, "It was an era I didn't want to get into—going back to and through grief'(See Rody, 1997, p.98), and points out that the fictional representation of the grief of racial exploitation is historically documented. This grief, as Rody reiterates, "seems almost a palpable atmosphere; in the personal psychological return required to write *Beloved*", it was not history that Morrison had to go "back and through", but an intensity of "hovering emotion attributed neither to the ancestors nor to herself but filling the space between them" (p.98). Setting the metahistorical struggle between "a maniac mother and a ghostly daughter" (Beloved), at the centre of the novel's thematic concern, Morrison makes an epic reimagining of a crude ancestry; and Morrison's history centrally dramatizes the problem of "imagining, writing, and publishing—"witnessing"—a story about her own daughterly heritage" (p. 99). Such an imagination makes the prerequisites for the fictional depiction of an event, as Morrison says, "The imagination that produces work which bears and invites rereadings, which motions to future readings as well as contemporary ones, implies a shareable world and an endlessly flexible language" (*Playing in the Dark* p.xii).

Although Morrison has not followed the well accepted and established norms of a traditional historical novel, it has several historical elements to assert the historicity of the novel's narrative. The novel makes a realistic portrayal of the great historical events of slavery with all approaches of a historical novel, the presentation of the events of slave acquisition, life under slavery in the plantation of Sweet Home, the remorseless efforts of the

slaves to get freedom and the plot of the ghostly appearance around 124 and the mysterious identity of the character of Beloved together bring the novel closer if not to a historical novel proper, at least to a historical romance.

In *Beloved* Morrison focuses the history of slavery and the event of slave catching in such a touching way that the novel becomes the fictional rendering of the historical events of slavery; where we see how a bereaved mother tries in vain to protect her kids from the cruel hands of the slave hunters. Sethe looks on how the savage child pickers snatch away the children from her; she is totally helpless in such situations. Under such circumstances, what Sethe does with her child is a kind of passive resistance and it can be said to be her silent protest against the racial exploitation. The history of slavery that Morrison tries to record is mingled with the experiences and atrocities of the black communities. Paul D talks about the damages the black people have been meted out and remembers his time with Sethe's husband Halle; and all his memory about life surrounding him makes a part of black American history:

> "During, before and after the War he had seen Negroes so stunned, or hungry, or tired or bereft it was a wonder they recalled or said anything. Who, like him had hidden in caves and fought owls for food; who like him stole from pigs; who, like him slept in trees in the day and walked by the night; who like him, had buried themselves in slope and jumped in wells to avoid regulators, raiders, paterollers, veterans, hillmen, posses and merrymakers. Once he met a Negro about fourteen years old who lived in the wood and said he could not remember living anywhere else. He saw a witless woman jailed and hanged for stealing ducks she believed were her own babies."(*Beloved*, p.78)

Sethe, the central character of the novel, together with her mother-in-law Baby Suggs, is the witness to all the miserable plights that the black women in America had experienced during slavery. Through the character of Sethe, Morrison has depicted black life under slavery, their persistent efforts to live in freedom, and the ways they were forced to embrace slavery even after coming into their desired freedom. Sethe, who has been depicted as the worst victim of slavery is always found to be in search of freedom. We may say that Sethe's desire to get every last bit of sap off her body (or rather off her mind) represents the sense of a soul searching for space to live in freedom. Sethe's reference to the past slavery life expressed through the words "Messed up my legs back yonder. Chamomile", makes Paul D so betrayed with the past that he does not like even to listen to its name. He made a gesture

with his face, as though he were tasting a teaspoon of something bitter' and said, "I don't want to even hear about it. Always did hate that stuff" (*Beloved*, p.7). This is the frustration of a community that has been fed up with the hateful experience of slavery, and the height that the weeds had grown on the way of Sethe is symbolically set as synonymous to the point of being fed up with the system she found herself. In Morrison's narrative memory is used as the dialectics of remembering; and it is through memory of the wounds of slavery that history has been resurrected from forgotten graves when Morrison continuous to probe deep into Sethe's inner self. The memory of the plantation life was so overwhelming for Sethe that everything about it was just a curse and she hates even her memory that could take her back to those hateful days. Her hatred is best expressed in these lines where Morrison talks about the past life of Sethe,

> "The plash of water, the sight of her shoes and stockings awry on the path where she had flung them; or Here Boy lapping in the puddle near her feet, and suddenly there was Sweet Home rolling, rolling, and rolling out before her eyes, although there was not a leaf onthat farm that did not make her want to scream, it rolled itself out before her in shameless beauty. It never looked as terrible as it was and it made herwonder if hell was a pretty place too. Fire and brimstone all right, but hidden in lacy groves. Boys hanging from the most beautiful sycamores in the world" (*Beloved*, p.7).

Sethe's frustration at the plantation life reaches to such a height that she begins to think if life in "hell," could be prettier than that of slavery in America; and her thoughts show how people have become spiteful to the state of being in slavery of one or the other kind. Considering the overwhelming effect of racism on the black mindset, it can be pointed out that throughout the history of African American community life race, class, and gender have come to intersect to confound and restrict Black women's lives so severely that all stories, gossips and dreams of the coloured folk are filled with the memory of racial exploitation; and it is only memory that can crystallize the secret, unspoken experiences in their lives and narratives of this sort can take these experiences near to the reader. It becomes a very difficult task for the authors to represent the real experiences through their literature, that is why on receiving her Nobel Prize for Literature in 1993, Toni Morrison said, "My work requires me to think about how free I can be as an African-American woman writer in my genderized, sexualized, wholly racialized world" (Swedish Academy, 1993).

The novel is all about the slavery experiences narrated through the family of Sethe. It relates to Baby Suggs's struggle with her children, eight in all that she gave birth with six different men and her silent and tolerant witnessing the events of their escape, death and survival. It is about Sethe's consistent fight against the racial injustice she had witnessed throughout her life. Baby Suggs, after her freedom is bought by her son, turns into a holy preacher in her society gathering people in a clearing in the surrounding forest. For her the events of slave haunting, recapturing and submitting to the slave owners are as natural as the rising and setting of the sun. She is quite upset with Sethe's act of killing her child, because she has overcome many such brutal experiences. She argues, "I had eight." Against Sethe's one child that she has lost to slavery, Baby Suggs lost all her eight children in different occasions, as she reminds Sethe, "Every one of them gone away from me. Four taken, four chased, and all, I expect, worrying somebody's house into evil" (p.6). It gives Sethe a lesson that she should try to forget about what happened to her in the past, and she should try to live in the present taking all bitter experiences as the change in weather. But the question is whether the mother can forget and ignore what happened to her. Hence the end of the novel is very interesting, as it reads, "This is not a story to pass on. Down by the stream in back of 124 her footprints come and go, come and go." This footprint of the dead child is permanent imprint in the heart of the mother who can never wipe it out, but the society will forget it with the passing of time, as the narrator at the end of the novel says, "By and by all trace is gone, and what is forgotten is not only the footprints but the water too and what it is down there. The rest is weather. Not the breath of the disremembered and unaccounted for, but wind in the eaves, or spring ice thawing too quickly. Just weather" (*Beloved*, 323).

It seems after reading Morrison's narrative in *Beloved* that the African Americans are born with the belief that they are never to forget the assault upon their race but rather to carry on the suffering they had been meted out through fresh memory of their ancestors. Morrison admits that the first thoughts for writing *Beloved* came to her mind from her complicated relationship with history. This relation was wary and alert, but Morrison was away from doubt; because she says "It was a caution based on my early years as a student, during which time I was keenly aware of erasures and absences and silences in the written history available to me—silences that I took censure."[2] Thus Morrison has narrated the black racial experiences in *Beloved* with commitment to her race as well as to the American society at large, and her narrative in this novel primarily revolves round the experiences of the American Blacks as slaves during the age of slavery.

Migration and the Racial Experiences in *Jazz*

Jazz, the second novel of Morrison's trilogy can be said to have written as a follow up of the black racial experience narrated in *Beloved*. If *Beloved* is composed around the maternal love of Sethe, *Jazz* is composed around the marital/extra-marital love triangle of Violet, Joe and Dorcas; and like the first novel, in the narrative of this novel also Morrison uses memory of certain events that help her rewrite a segment of black racial history in America. Since these novels—*Beloved, Jazz* and *Paradise*—constitute a trilogy, the thoughts in the first novel will obviously be carried forward to the subsequent ones; and there are certain commonalities in the thematic concerns of the novels. This commonality in these three novels is marked in Morrison's way of narrating the black experiences in America. The novel *Beloved* ends with a note that the spirit of *Beloved* is expiated, not destroyed; 124 is haunted by the constant existence of *Beloved*, "Down by the stream in back of 124, her footprints come and go, come and go". Furthermore the novel ends with the author's note that "This is not a story to pass on"; and the critics like Karla F.C. Holloway finds a double meaning of Morrison's phrase. He says that "*Beloved* is a story that must not be passed on, told again; it is a story that cannot be passed on but must be told."[3] The double meanings that Holloway finds out can be explained in terms of the fact that the story of the curse of slavery revealed in *Beloved* must not be forgotten, but to be refreshed by retelling it somewhere else; again such story/stories must not be left unrepresented and unfocused but reiterated in order to keep the issues of racial exploitation alive until the desired goal of bringing social equality is established in the nation. In order to retell the story of *Beloved*, Morrison enters the realm of the history and the silent personal narratives of the African Americans narrated mostly through their oral narratives. In terms of the representation of black racial experience, Morrison narrates the conditions of slavery and the subsequent black aspiration for freedom in *Beloved*, which she brings to them in *Jazz*, but the long projected freedom and the social condition of a free black society is also problematized by Morrison in the novel's narrative.

In continuation of the spirit of racial presentation of the first novel of the trilogy, the subsequent novel *Jazz* creates a narrative strategy that combines the elements of music and tragedy that relate to the racialized history of the American Blacks. It will be worthwhile to mention that Morrison was inspired to write the novel after seeing a photograph of a pretty girl in a coffin and reading the photographer's note on it. In the book *The Harlem Book of Dead*, the photographer James Van Der Jee commented on the death of the girl:

> "She was the one I think was shot by her sweetheart at a party with a noiseless gun. She complaint of being sick at the party and friends said, 'Well, why don't you lay down?' And they took her in the room and laid her down. After they undressed her and loosened her clothes, they saw the blood on her dress. They asked her about it and she said, 'I'll tell you tomorrow, yes. I'll tell you tomorrow.' She was just trying to give him a chance to get away"[4]

The novel *Jazz* narrates the tale of a black couple living in an apartment in Harlem; it is a story through which Morrison comments on the black cultural life in a rather freed condition. The marital life of Joe and Violet remains unhappy because of certain individual and common social problems affecting their conjugal relation. As is commonly seen in most of the black society, the couple is troubled by a financial hardship, which affects their domestic environment; but the thing that affects the normal life of the couple is an extra-marital affair of the husband. This is where the narrative of the novel makes use of the trend of a fictional romance narrating a love triangle, thus bringing into the novel's historical trend, an added beauty of a love romance in order to focus the resultant outcome of black freedom. As narrated in the story, after migration to the North, when the couple was living in the apartment, Joe fell in love with a young girl named Dorcas. Joe came into contact with Dorcas in the apartment of Dorcas's aunt when he came to sell them cosmetic items. The casual acquaintance between the two soon developed into a deep physical love, and this adulterous relation was going on without any obstacle neither from Joe's wife Violet nor from Dorcas' aunt Alice Manfred; in fact the extra-marital love was being well-arranged by Joe who hired an empty apartment so as to make space for their meeting. Thus the affair continued for several months without being noticed or suspected by Violet or Alice Manfred, who brought up her as the sole guardian after the death of her parents.

Although Joe tried to keep Dorcas in the grip of his love by offering her lovely gifts every time he visited her, he failed to keep the young heart of his beloved in his love for a long time. Soon Dorcas began to feel tired and upset at the love making of the old lover, and she began to search for new young lover. She was found attending parties with her friend Felice, and by degrees, she began to avoid Joe, showing one or the other excuse. One day, when she came across him, to his astonishment, she announced that his company made her ill and he should forget her; this made Joe quite upset and restless. The disgusted lover tried to find out the reason behind the sudden change in Dorcas, and soon discovered that she had begun to share her love with a popular black young man named Action. This unexpected act

of cheating in love filled the lover's heart with jealousy, and his jealousy soon transformed into hatred when Joe noticed Dorcas dancing with Action in a party. The indomitable spirit of jealousy and love-hatred prompted Joe to shoot his cheating beloved with a silent gun; although the attack did not kill the girl instantly. A sudden hue and cry took place in the hall and the injured girl was taken to the hospital with the help of her friend Felice; but to the utter surprise of everybody present, Dorcas refused to tell the name of her attacker; thus giving her hateful lover an opportunity to escape; and she died in the hospital the next day. The hatred caused by the adultery of Dorcas and the rumour spread in the society had such an adverse effect upon the family of Joe that his wife Violet, who had been greatly disturbed by the affair in her otherwise happy conjugal life, took immense grudge upon the girl even though she was no longer alive; and she visited the site of her funeral with a knife in her hand with an intent of slashing the head of the dead girl but she was prevented and thrown away by the people over there. Doras, the orphaned girl that she was, did not create any further hatred either in her family that consisted of only her aunt Alice Manfred or in the neighbouring community, since they lived in an apartment house. A few months after the death of Dorcas, Violet paid a visit to Alice Manfred, the mourning aunt of Dorcas, who neither showed any reaction to this unexpected visit nor expressed her suspicion over the involvement of Joe's husband in the cold blooded murder of her niece.

While narrating this love triangle, the narrator brings in certain associated and digressive events for creating a complex web of the black cultural life in the late nineteenth century. The memory of the birth and parental history of both Joe and Violet reveals numerous things about the nineteenth century American black society. We are reminded that Violet was brought up in her parental house at Virginia by her mother Rose Dear. When her father abandoned the family leaving Rose Dear quite helpless with her new born baby, her mother and Violet's grandmother True Belle, who was serving a white lady, came from Baltimore to help Rose Dear in her trouble so as to assist her daughter nurturing her grandchild. Rose Dear, the frustrated woman found it difficult to manage her household affairs and committed suicide. Thus the life of Violet was full of tragic incidents all through her life, and she found it very difficult to come out of the trauma of filial disturbances. It however, shows the universality of Morrison's narrative where she talks about some common human problems. The struggles and conflicts of Joe and Violet should not be limited to just black experiences, because the jealousy and hatred roused in the hearts of Joe and Violet are the feelings of every serious lover. Hence their experiences should not be judged merely from

a racial point of view, they are rather to be described as universal love experiences. Like Violet, Joe also became an orphan at a very tender age; and he was brought up in Virginia by his adoptive parents, of course with as much love and care as they showed towards their own children. His mentor Henry LesTroy, also called Hunter's Hunter, gave him an idea that his mother was a crazy homeless rover named Wild. Joe went out in search of the source of his identity and finally tracked Wild down in the woods, whom he earnestly asked if she was in deed his mother. Wild replied to him in a gesture, but Joe could not understand, thus remained uncertain about his own identity; this uncertainty of Joe is the enigma of cultural identity for many Blacks in the nation. Afterwards Joe came in contact with Violet while working in a town called Palestine and the two got married to live in the City (Harlem) everafter.

Morrison brings the issue of 'Racism' and 'Racial existence' into her narrative wherever she has the scope of doing so. In *Jazz*, while narrating the story of Joe and Violet, the narrator recounts the story of a white mother Vera Louise Gray and her black son Golden Gray (in fact a Mulatto) showing the perspective of racial mixture in the American society and the subsequent birth of a hybrid generation. In this story, Golden Gray is born as a mix-raced child because of the interracial physical relation between the white girl Vera Louise Gray and the black slave Henry LesTroy. But the racial prejudice of Vera's father Colonel Wordsworth did not allow her to keep her child in the white society. So, the proud white father of Vera Louise sent his daughter to Baltimore with a slave True Belle. There she gave an impression to her white neighbours that Golden Gray was not her own child, but an adopted white orphan; Golden Gray also believed himself to be a white child until the truth was revealed to him by True Belle. As soon as he was revealed the truth about his father, Golden Gray set out for Virginia in search of his father Henry LesTroy. When he arrived at a place near Vienna, Virginia, Golden Gray noticed Wild, a pregnant black woman hiding behind a tree. As he approached towards her, she turned quickly and fell unconscious. Seeing the woman in such a critical condition, he decided to take her to his father's home. When they reached Henry LesTroy's house, Wild who had been fully pregnant, gave birth to a child who was later named Joe; as we come to know that in an ironical situation, at the time of his admission into a school, he mentioned his name as Joe Trace without knowing what his name signified. After this incident, Golden Gray never returned to his mother in Baltimore but lived with Wild in the woods, keeping himself away from the complex world of modern civilization. These stories are recapitulated by the narrator throughout the novel in the form

of flesh back to make the novel an interesting historical document of black reality in America.

It can be said that as the second novel of the trilogy, and as a follow up of the first one, *Jazz* is a retelling of the story of *Beloved* which narrates an essential history of the black racial experience in America. In the novel, there is the display of a fracturing of human psyches, souls and bodies in the Blacks under slavery, and this fracture remains with them even after freedom. The novel is built up around the romantic love of the black couple, replete with the events of psychological conditions, in the type of Freudian psychoanalysis that affects the couple's minds. In the story of the novel, the peaceful conjugal love of Violet and Joe is disturbed by the interference of the young girl Dorcas. The novel focuses the love, hatred and violence of the distressed wife and her psyche around the irresistible happenings. The story begins with the betrayed wife's intent of killing her rival. In the origin plan of the novelist, the story would begin with the sentence, "She stood there licking snow flakes from her top lip, her body shaking everywhere except the left hand which held the knife…"; which she changed later on to befit her interest in rendering a period in African American life "through a specific lens—one that would reflect the content and characteristics of its music (romance, freedom of choice, doom, seduction, anger) and the manner of its expression."[5] The author's note as Foreword to the Vintage text gives us a hint at the historical context of the text where the author shows the influence of the Great Migration[6] that brought about drastic change in the cultural behaviour of the African Americans. Morrison very clearly expresses her observation about the historical significance of the plot of *Jazz*,

> "an older couple born in the South; the impact on them of a new urban liberty; the emotional unmanageableness of radical change from the menace of post Reconstruction South to the promise of post-World War I North. The couple would be forced to respond to a girl who introduces into their lives a new kind of risk—psychological rather than physical."[7]

In the narrative of Morrison, there are plenty of symbols that reveal the psychological condition of the characters. In the novel *Jazz* for instance, Violet's cracks and Joe's traces are symbolically used to talk about this fracture in the black psyche. In the novel Morrison brings these cracks and traces represented through Violet and Joe, together as an assertion of black psyche in the story of Golden Gray and Wild, the common myth that they share. The story, as stated by Carolyn M. Jones, "this myth of the primordial parents which Joe and Violet have

in common but do not share to each other, reveals essential aspects of each of their characters and of Morrison's narrative strategy in the novel."[8] Thus the story of Violet and Joe is a reconstruction of the story of Golden Gray and the Wild, that the novelist exploits to focus certain aspects of love in the African American community, such as the racial mixture in the form of youthful love. Morrison makes use of memory in order to reconstruct those aspects of history that have been frequently disturbing her and thereby she tries to revisit those areas of black history which are forgotten or left unexposed by the earlier authors of her race. In fact the wounds, she has been suffering for the inhumanities faced by the Blacks in America, make her tell the stories by remembering all the scars she has witnessed or heard in her society.

In *Jazz* Morrison develops a different approach to the memory of different scars caused by the wounds of violent racial atrocities. The story of Joe and Violet showcases how an action persistently leads towards its consequence, which may not come out in the form of a result or punishment. The wound caused by the love triangle of Violet, Joe and Dorcas is never allowed to be finished with the murderous action of Joe; it is rather persistently connected with them, and the family is haunted by the frequent existence of Dorcas in their psyche. The memory of their past strongly influences their present and every time the trace of the dead girl comes to their memory, they are moved by the wound they have caused to Dorcas; just as we see in the psyche of Sethe in *Beloved* being affected by the memory of her murdered daughter. Morrison intermingles the present effects of sexual love in the Joe-Dorcas story with the memory of the myth of the Golden Gray and the Wild. This fusion of memory and myth makes the novel a part of the black tradition enriched by their common social history. The sexual love relation in the Golden Gray-Wild story is shifted to the city in Joe-Dorcas story as a sign of their response to the social change the community has begotten over the years.

In this novel, Morrison displays the progressive attitude of the Blacks towards modernity in a freed condition, and their trouble in getting adjusted to the social freedom that they have accessed through the new urban liberty after coming out of the grip of slavery; the new urban experience is beautifully visualized through the black characters migrated to the northern towns. Taking the memory of a dead girl in a coffin, visualized in the collection of a photographer, Morrison tries to focus on the new urban liberty that the American Blacks enjoyed after the Harlem Renaissance and the Great Migration. It reveals the transit momemts of the African American racial history, as Morrison points out, "the

unmanageableness of post-reconstruction South in view of the promises of the post-World War-1 North." The novel, set in the Harlem of the 1920s, recreates an essential aspect of the American history—the revolutionary cultural development of the African-Americans called Harlem Renaissance—that made possible the socio-cultural emancipation of the community after ages of struggle to come out of the grip of racial exploitation. This emancipation at the same time brought about certain changes in the community life of the Blacks, which are presented with realistic observations. The Joe- Violet couple in *Jazz*, in such a changing social atmosphere, would be forced to respond to a girl (Dorcas), who introduces into their lives a new kind of risk, which according to Morrison is "psychological, rather than physical" (p. x). The motherly love of *Beloved* is shifted to marital love in *Jazz*, where the inevitable change in the social condition is showcased as a vital force pulling the conjugal relation of Joe and Violet, towards a new crisis, making Violet retaliate her loss of happiness in her blissful couple love. Thus in *Jazz*, Morrison visualizes the cultural changes in the African American community after the great migration and the Harlem Renaissance. In fact the novel produces a history of the black new generations who are lost in the system of the social change after the end of slavery. Joe, Violet, Golden Gray and Wild are all the members of such lost generations who are struggling to adjust with the changing social and cultural environment.

Disallowance, Racial Segregation and Reconstruction in *Paradise*

The third novel of Morrison's trilogy *Paradise* narrates the black experiences during the Reconstruction times.[9] The novel structured in nine chapters named after nine women belonging to two categories—six from the Convent who are in perpetual conflict with the psyche of the townsmen and the rest three, including a baby from the town—narrates the black social construction through the depiction of an isolated all-black town, its establishment, management and eventual failure at the end. While retelling the history of black social construction through the course of the narrative, the novel brings back the memory of the establishment and failure of another former black town. Thus the novel showcases the consistent black efforts to come out of the bitter experience of segregation by constructing a society of their own, and thus the narrative produces a history of the black uplift through Desegregation.[10] The novel begins with the chapter "Ruby", which is an isolated 'all-black' town in Oklahoma named after a woman from one of its founding families. The novel's narrative has two parallel story parts in its plot; one part centres round

the city and the other narrates the happenings around the Convent, the safe haven for a group of distressed women. The narrative develops through the depiction of nine women characters each of whom is given a chapter in the novel belonging to both of the two groups having close relation either to the town or the Convent, makes a coherent feminist discourse that articulates the position of woman in a patriarchal society. Morrison focuses the dominance of patriarchy, a sexual hierarchy under which women have to live as the 'sexual others'; no matter whether it is the narrow African American society or the wide universal society of mankind, the language of patriarchy is alike, irrespective of race or class.

The town Ruby was established by a small African American community of dark skin, with a utopian concept of getting their own version of the Garden of Eden or Paradise. The narrative of the novel gives a detailed account of the foundation of the town with the rememory of the foundation and subsequent ruin of another former black town Haven following the humiliating experience of Disallowance; and shows the failure of the leaders in ensuring the smooth running of the present town. When the novel begins, we are informed that nine men of the community, especially belonging to the families associated with the foundation of the town, gather in a secret meeting and discuss the issue of the city's losing moral depth; in fact they have failed to ensure the peace and harmony that they had expected while setting up the isolated city; and they make the Convent women responsible for certain scandalous events and many bizarre things happening in the city. Without making any rational consideration of their thoughts, they instantly decide to take action against the women boarding the Convent as if they were the root of all evils, and at this point the narrative makes a display of the community's racial approach. The novel opens with a very remarkable statement of racial hatred, "They shoot the white girl first" (*Paradise*, p.3). This opening line of the novel narrates the black psychology revealed through the events associated with the establishment and management of the black community life. Being humiliated over the ages, this community has developed a kind of intolerance against any outsider; hence the massacre in the Convent can be said to be prompted by such type of a racial intolerance. After the hateful incident of genocide in the Convent, the leaders are found scattered in their stand, as everyone seems to be engaged in debates over the issue and throwing the responsibility to one another. The narrator reveals the hopes and fear of the community in exercising the racial hatred they have displayed while attacking the Convent women, and at the same time it also shows the trauma of falling prey to white political hegemony. The novel brings back the history of the events and characters time and again

during the course of the narrative. And the histories relate to the construction of two black towns: Haven and Ruby as a resistance to the racial discrimination and oppression that the Blacks had been experiencing over the ages. As part of such history, we are informed that "Haven was founded by 15 black families in 1890 as is mentioned in several places in the novel" (*Paradise,* p.6, 89&193); they had to do it as a reaction against the humiliations they faced when they came from "Mississippi and Louisiana to Oklahoma in search of a happy home" (p.188). They built a large oven with bricks and the mouth of the Oven was specially designed and they cast a special message on the mouth, "Beware the Furrow of His Brow". This narrow confinement of the community used to develop within themselves a distrustful approach towards any outsiders; and this sentiment of the "Old Fathers (founders of Haven) descends to the New Fathers who managed to construct another black town Ruby after the failure of the former town."[11] The whole narrative makes a historical observation of the transition of the American Blacks that has been perceived from the dark age of slavery to the establishment of a 'Black Nationalism' within the vibrant demography of 'American Nationality'.

Together with the memory of the foundation of black towns which had been done by the African Americans in pursuit of peaceful settlement, Morrison also comments on the remarkable changes in the cultural behaviour of the community. After entering into the northern city life imbued with the modern facilities they had so far been deprived, the Blacks easily adopted the habits of new urban life, which are reflected in the cultural practices of the town's citizens as well as the Convent women. Such a sense of change is depicted in the chapter entitled "Mavis", where Morrison narrates the tale of a woman named Mavis Albright living as a housewife in Maryland with her husband Frank Albright and five children—Sal, her daughter, Frankie James and Billy James, the two sons, and the twin babies Merle and Pearl—who suffers a trauma after the accidental death of her twin children who had died by suffocation when she left them inside her parked car as she went for a shopping. After the unfortunate incident, Mavis suffers the trauma of domestic violence, loses faith in her husband and children; and in fact she begins to feel insecure at her own home, for she thinks that the other members of the family make her responsible for the tragic death of her children, and hence they have made secret plans to kill her. Out of fear and anxiety, one day she steals the car of her husband and goes out at midnight without having any specific destination. Looking for a safe shelter, at first she goes to her mother Birdie Goodroe, who gives her only a temporary shelter but neither takes her complaints seriously nor shows any sympathy for

her traumatic condition. Instead, her mother telephones her husband Frank stealthily and asks him to take her back home. When Mavis overhears the conversation between her mother and her husband, she escapes and moves west towards California; and incidentally arrives at the Convent where she meets Connie by chance. After coming into close contact with Connie (Consolata) who receives and accepts her as a member of the Convent, Mavis becomes a regular boarder of the Convent along with the other residents. Mavis is only an example, and like her, the Convent gives shelter to a number of such distressed women who are neglected by the harsh materialistic world. Thus the novel shows the impact of the new urban liberty that the African Americans used to enjoy after coming out of the grip of slavery.

The fifteen families that have established the town with the obvious hope of living in a happy home centering round the Oven, fail to maintain the social integrity that should have been found primarily as a distinguished society. All persons having any connection with the power structure, from the founding social leaders to the religious heads, are found to be engaged in one or the other type of internal conflicts. The chapter "Grace" narrates the conflict between two leading families of Ruby, the Morgans and the Fleetwoods who were actively associated with the establishment of Ruby and even with the former black town Haven, hence having the rightful claim for the respective share of their hegemonic position in the town's social hierarchy. This conflict problematizes the mechanics of organisation in the community. The girl who occupies the central focus in the title of the chapter is Gigi (Grace), an outsider who comes to the Convent, flirts with K.D. and thus adds to the Convent's ill-reputation. In fact the provocative and appealing gesture of Gigi not only draws attention of the young men of Ruby who were hanging around the Oven, but also disturbs the peaceful environment of the Convent. Through the relation of Gigi and K.D., Morrison shows the dark side of black liberty, especially among the young generation who have hardly any commitment to their cultural root, as we see in the approaches of Billie Delia's daughter Patricia. It is in fact K.D., the spoiled nephew of the Morgan brothers who first responds to the lustful appeal of Gigi, and it affects his affair with his girlfriend Arnette, who was already pregnant with his child. When Arnette scolds K.D. about his growing intimacy with Gigi, K.D. slaps her, and it brings about a serious conflict between the two families. The conflict, however, is settled by the active mediating role of Reverend Misner, the town's main religious authority. The Morgans are quite unhappy about K.D.'s relation with the Fleetwood family because of the perpetual illness of the Fleetwoods. Arnette's brother Jeff, who has just come home from the Vietnam War, and his wife Sweetie give birth to four sickly children.

The sickness of the children of Jeff showcases the average health condition of the community, and the miserable ways of their standard of living even after coming into freedom. Gigi's living naked inside the Convent's garden showcases the moral degradation of the young generation in the long projected urban liberty that the community has perceived.

In rememorizing the days of foundation of the city, Morrison narrates the trouble of the city people with the Convent women as well as a generation conflict of the Ruby citizens within themselves. While talking about the foundation of the Black town, "The women who were in their twenties when Ruby was founded, in 1950", the narrator shows the tremendous progress they had achieved, "watched for thirteen years an increase in bounty that had never entered their dreams" (*Paradise,* p.89). Dovey Morgan, the wife of Steward Morgan rememorizes the day she and her sister Soan got married to the twin brothers in 1949, and how much the situation of the town has worsened after twenty four years. She worries about the futurity of the town. Everything that she found delightful at the time of marriage is now turned into bitterness one or the other way. Everywhere, from the community life to her personal conjugal relation is now filled with bitterness. The thing that makes her most unhappy is that she has never had any children because of her egoist and provocative husband. The young people have become addicted to drinking, and the town has become quite unruly. Under such deteriorating social environment of the town, Reverend Misner conducts a meeting with the citizens where the issue regarding the young people's intent of changing the Oven's message, the slogan of the town "Beware the Furrow of His Brow" is seriously discussed. The meeting shows the difference between the old and the young generations of the Ruby citizens. The young have no respect for the old and they display no commitment towards the city's history. The city's declining state is showed by the distress of the young generation. For instance, Arnette returns from college and never leaves home after being pregnant with K.D. On the other hand K.D., the sex hunter continues his lustful pursuit of Gigi, despite his persistent quarrel with his wife Arnette about it. The young generation of the town's residents adopt the slogan "Cut me some slack", which they want to nail on the Oven. On the other hand, Billie Delia who reads the psyche of the young folks proposes a change in the Oven's message, but the narrator as the mouthpiece of the author reiterates that it does not make any sense if the message is retained as "Beware the Furrow of His Brow" or "Be the Furrow of His Brow". Therefore, Dovey Morgan feels that "Furrow of His Brow" alone was enough for any age or generation, because "Specifying it, particularizing it, nailing its meaning down was futile" (p.93). In fact the young people of the town do not understand

"what it took to build this town, what they were protected from and what humiliations they did not have to face" (93). The quarrelsome situation of the town takes the leaders back to the days of their migration to this place after the failure of Haven, and reminds them how the old fathers began searching for new settlements. As the narrator says, the first trip for such enquiry had been done in 1910, before the twins had been born. At that time, Big Daddy along with his brother Prior and his first born son Elder started on their journey across the state to examine, review and judge other coloured towns such as Boley, Langston City, Rentiesville, Taft, Clearview, Mound Bayou, Nicodemus etc. (p.108). The Morgans, who could never admit the failure of some of the coloured towns, and who "carried the rejection of 1890 like a bullet in the brain" (p.109), after some years decided to take the young twins on a second journey so as to look for a suitable place and finally decided to establish the town at the present location.

When people of the bottom lines quarrel, it is criticized as their cultural backwardness, but when people of the higher position in the social hierarchy, are found to be engaged in quarrel, the critics remain silent. Morrison narrates the ideological and intellectual conflicts of the two religious heads of Ruby, Senior Pulliam and Reverend Misner, who are found to be in perpetual clash with each other in their views regarding the idea of love, while reading out their gospel speeches at the marriage ceremony of K.D. and Arnette. Against the hope cherished in the chapter "Grace" that the marriage of K.D. and Arnette should finish the clash between the two important founding families of Ruby, it turns into a battle ground, involving the clergymen on the one hand and the family heads of the Morgans and the Fleetwoods on the other hand. At first Senior Pulliam, who attends the ceremony as an invited guest preacher from the Methodist Baptist church, gives a long and pessimistic view of love. He reiterates that love without the will of God and not done according to the rule of God leads only to failure and doom. The mass of people who have been waiting for the last three years to this day are frustrated over Pulliam's words. Reverend Richard Misner, who is also greatly hurt by the words of senior Pulliam; when his turn comes, instead of making an encouraging and eloquent speech, he stands at the back of the church holding on a cross and remains silent. This increases the frustration of the awaited audience; they however, accept the ideological conflict of the preachers quite indifferently; for they know that such matters are beyond their reachable height. It shows the psychological state of an oppressed community. The Ruby citizens are either afraid to respond to the conflict between the two religious heads, or they are adept in a tradition to remain silent over such big issues which

they think too high to participate. The folks who remain silent over the quarrel between Senior Pulliam and Reverend Misner, of course, create uproar against the Convent girls. The presence of the Convent women, who were invited by Soan Morgan, adds fuel to the gloomy environment in the party; and these events together increase the public discontentment over the role of the clergy. Seneca enters the city as a stow-away in a passing truck and comes forward to help a girl in trouble. At this time Pallas Truelove, another stranger girl joins the Convent; Mavis attends the marriage party along with Gigi, Seneca and the newly arrived Pallas. After being despised and humiliated at the party, Mavis and Gigi starts quarreling with each other inside the car, and Seneca stops them before causing much bloodshed. Through the characters of the Convent women, Morrison does not make a feminist discourse on male supremacy; she is rather showing how unruly these women have become after getting accessed to the new urban liberty. Thus the novel reveals the social instability in the town and its resultant impact upon the Convent as well, which shows the weakness of the community in the skill of social construction.

Morrison produces a historical narrative through the chapter "Patricia", where the narrative relates to the Ruby girl, the daughter of Billie Delia and Roger Best, who is despised by the conservative black citizens of Ruby because of his marriage with an outsider light-coloured girl. Patrica Best, the well-educated and rational young girl, who assists Reverend Misner in his history classes, is tired of the monotonous Christmas celebration of the town, where Nathan DuPres, the oldest man of the town would tell the same story every Christmas time. She is preparing a genealogy project, where she tries to record the family tree of each of the founding families of Ruby, by which she tries to compose a history of the town. For her project Pat collects the stories she heard over the years, the information that she gathers from the ordinary gossips and rumours, and different anecdotes that she finds in the students' note books. While collecting the family stories, past and present, Pat takes into account certain personal information. Thus Morrison shows the oral resources that she has used in her narratives. An interesting thing that Pat brings to her historical project that she put a symbol "8-Rock" before the family trees of the eight most important founding families of Ruby, that symbolize the dark skin of the founders. She picks up this symbol from the layers of coal mine, the deepest layers that gives blue black coal. Thus the colour symbol takes a predominant role in the novel's narrative strategy. A society where her father is hated because of his marriage with a girl of lighter skin, the sentiment of a 'colour line' obviously affects the cultural behaviour and social construction. Reverend Misner who plans to educate

the young citizens of Ruby about their African root, is rejected by all the young people including Patricia. Patricia argues that it is futile to think of their ancestral root, since they prefer to see themselves only as American, not as African Americans; the attitude of Patricia Best is reflective of the attitude of the young generation of the African Americans towards their cultural root.

While narrating the black experience, Morrison has made a commentary on the essential elements of black culture, such as the superstitious elements, the local myths about certain happenings etc. In the chapter "Consolata" Morrison reveals the local myth of Piedade, a magical woman believed to be a goddess who can change people by her miraculous presence and her magical power. Piedade plays an important role in the spiritual teaching of the convent. Such stories are abundantly found in the black narratives. In the chapter, we are informed more about the Convent and the town's relation with it. The Convent woman after whom the chapter is named is Connie who was taken up at the age of nine years by a nun who later became the Mother Superior at the Catholic school for Indian girls, and she grew up there to live till the end of her life. She developed an intimacy with Deacon Morgan and their relation grew up to a secret love that they enjoyed at a half burned farm house. Despite loving each other, they could not think of marrying each other, since it would be a breach of the law on which Ruby was founded. Deek's brother Steward also approaches Connie and it greatly disturbs the mental piece of Deacon Morgan who cares more about the town's laws. Another important connection that the chapter brings is Soan's visit to the Convent to abort her child.

Against the modern advancement noticed in the American white towns, the black towns are still using the age old systems of health and hygiene. For instance, in the chapter "Lone" which is named after the oldest Ruby woman Lone DuPres, the town's only midwife and who works as a bridge between the town and the Convent, Morrison comments on the town's dependence on midwife on the matter of child birth instead of the development of modern medical facilities available in all towns meant for white folks. This practice of using midwife descended to Ruby from their predecessors of Haven. Lone Dupress is the adopted daughter and disciple of Fairy DuPres, the midwife of the former black town Haven; though the role of midwife is becoming insignificant with the growing importance of modern medical facilities that are easily accessible to them, Lone is still performing the role of a midwife despite her unwillingness to use this age old skill in a medically advanced age. It is Lone DuPres who overhears the secret discussion of the Ruby men and drives fast to reach

the Convent before the attackers, but the women over there does not take her words seriously; she returns to the town hastily but very few of the people in her neighbourhood, except Soan and Dovey Morgan came forward to do the needful to save the women. Lone brings back thoughts of her past, her childhood in Haven, and the ongoing events in Ruby that depresses her mind. The narrator gives a detailed description of the massacre at the Convent.

Morrison reveals the racial egotism even among the black leadership, which is marked as one of the prime reasons for the repeated failures of the black towns in ensuring the desired 'safe home' for the Blacks haunted by the humiliation of Disallowance. The last chapter of *Paradise* narrates the internal conflict of the townsmen over the funeral site after the death of the youngest of the four sickly children of Jeff and Sweetie Fleetwood. The chapter opens with the funeral of the dead baby, the first funeral in the history of the town; for she is the first Ruby citizen to die in the town, though Patricia's mother Billie Delia was the first to have died earlier, her death and burial (done at the backyard of their house) is not counted officially. The funeral is attended by almost all the citizens, where Stewart Morgan offers his ranch for the burial place, though Sweetie rejects and expresses her aversion to the Morgan brothers for their arrogance in giving trouble to her husband and father-in-law; hence she decides to bury her dead child at their own land as was done in case of Billie Delia. Pat, the town's historical observer, considers the attitude of Sweetie as the "new", and accepts the modification in the Oven's message, already fixed by the young citizens as "We are the Furrow of His Brow" as an agreeable gesture, although Dovey Morgan observes that "Be the Furrow of His Brow" would have been more applicable. A few months after the brutal massacre at the Convent, the town wears a complete silent environment. These days, people are found to be engaged in hot debate about their involvement in the unnecessary incident of malice, and the inevitable result that they will have to face. Lone DuPres prays for the mercy of God to rescue the citizens, though she can do nothing to save them from the hands of the law formulated by the nation's white supremacists. But nothing such happens as feared by the people of the town. All remains in the town without being arrested or taken to prison, except Deacon Morgan, who suspects his brother Steward Morgan to have shot his beloved Connie, goes far away from the town as well as from his brother. Thus the narrative continues the common and inherent black tendency for running away, prevalent since the days of slavery.

Thus Morrison reveals the Black participation in the development processes after coming into the state of freedom; nevertheless, there has been perpetual fear and anxiety among them regarding the 'raced condition' they have been suffering. Morrison has

visualised the growing social consciousness in the community; and the narrative makes powerful discouses on racial sensitization where the novelist iterates the civil rights of the 'Racial Others'.

Racial Hybridity and the 'New Negro'

In her trilogy Morrison has presented the changing scenario in the African American cultural tradition. This change is marked in their social and cultural behaviour that Morrison has presented throughout her trilogy in terms of their lives under slavery through the Great Migration to freedom after the Civil War. The process of the black endeavor to come out of the darkness of slavery is depicted in *Beloved*, where Morrison has shown the persistent efforts of the slaves to escape or buy freedom at the cost of money, extra labour and other affordable means. In her *Beloved*, Halle Suggs buys the freedom for his mother by offering all his Sundays to his master at Sweet Home, but could not manage to buy it for himself because he lacked the money he would need for it. Likewise, the slaves at Sweet Home made a secret plan to escape the estate of Schoolteacher together, though they failed because of their lack of the skill of doing any intrigue and maintaining secrecy. As has been stated earlier in this chapter, the novel presents three generations of slaves and ex-slaves in three different states of affair. Baby Suggs who wrought all her life is freed by her son at her old age, Sethe tries to resist forceful slavery for children and finally triumphs in her resistance though she has to sacrifice one of the kids for the purpose; her daughter Denver lives in a rather freed condition as she is brought out of slavery since her birth and yet she experiences the traces of slavery in her social surrounding. Here, Morrison narrates racial experiences under the social condition of slavery, and her narrative gives us a raw vision of a slave society. After all, the slaves as depicted in *Beloved* were always found to be in search of a change in their cultural identity, which we see in the other two novels of Morrison's trilogy.

In *Jazz*, Morrison narrates the social status of the freed Blacks after the Great Migration, and shows the humiliating condition they had to confront in a rather freed environment. The picture that Morrison gives about the lives of the free Blacks after achieving the advantages of modernization may seem pessimistic, but the novel gives us quite realistic picture about the changing social scenario in the African American socio-cultural life. Together with the blessings of modernity that the Blacks have provoked, they have also adopted some of the negative practices of modern liberty. The urban liberty they have acquired has changed the cultural behaviour of the Blacks; now they have learned the use of

modern facilities in their day to day affairs. The African Americans who lived in conditions no better than the animals during slavery, now live in the apartment houses, with all the modern amenities. There has been racial mixture which happened by means of love and sexual habits, bringing about the elements of hybridity in the racialised people. In the novel we see progenies of mixed blood, who are made to suffer the crisis of identity in the society motivated by racial feelings. Under such an orthodox social set up Vera Louise Gray has to hide the identity of her mixed blooded child in the white social surrounding. Even among the black people of the blood of racial purity, various elements of white culture have been intruded, thus producing racial hybridity in all sphere of a black society. The manners and habits of Joe and Violet are much influenced by the urban life of America. They are no longer confined to the tropical life, the blacks had passed and there have been persistent efforts in the black people of the South to come out of the monotonous life in the midst of tropical nature. Joe recalls his bitter experience of living in the South, so does his wife Violet, "Before I came North I made sense and so did the world. We didn't have nothing but we didn't miss it" (*Jazz,* p.207). Like every other southern Black, she was fatigued with the tropical life and fond of the city life in the North, "Living in the City was the best thing in the world" (207). Coming North and witnessing the white sophistication, she too longed for a life as blessed as that of the Whites. Hence she replies to the narrator's question, "Who? Who'd you want to be?" We see the sense of longing for whiteness in her desire, "Not who so much as what. White. Light. Young again" (p.208). These sorts of tendencies no doubt, cannot change the colour of their skin, but they can at least make the Blacks borrow the white cultural habits; thus the cultural tradition that the Blacks have developed in the city life lead them towards cultural hybridity. These reformed coloured folks may not fully form the orthodox New Negroes[12] but they are the Blacks who are born out of cultural hybridity; and in the depiction of their cultural life Morrison has showcased how much they have been polished in their cultural habits under the influence of the urban white cultural habits.

In the novel *Paradise,* Morrison represents the black experience she has observed and witnessed around her social surrounding; and at the same time, it seems to be her attempt to write several concentric histories of the American experience from a distinctively African American perspective. In other words, her *Paradise* is a history of the black population in America from a time as early as 1775, as mentioned in the novel. While narrating the black history, Morrison has tried to move the concentration from the traditional white history to the black social and cultural lives. In an interview with Carolyn Denard, Morrison declares how

she actually tries to deviate her novels from the common interest in the white subjects to the black ones. She says, "[…] for me, in doing novels about African Americans, I was trying to move away from the unstated but overwhelming and dominant context that was white history and to move into another one" (Denard 1998: 4-5). Morrison mentions in her critical work *Playing in the Dark* that "there is a four-hundred-year-old overwhelming presence of black people in the United States, and it is very important for the recognition of the black identity in the nation" and her observation about this novel asserts the black experience in its cultural narrative as she says: "*Paradise* ... draws that black presence forward from the margins of imagination to the center of American literature and history." Regarding the Black existence in Morrison's narrative as an identity marker, a critic on Morrison, Widdowson says that in place of the expected story of specifically black experience as "a shadowy adjunct to the 'real' normative story of national life, the official national founding myth of America's white 'Fathers' is a shadow of African Americans' own, in a community where shadows are not dark, but white" (2001).

Theoretical Perspectives in Narrating the Black Experience: Hybridity and the Third Space

The novels of Toni Morrison and her fictional narratives can be interpreted in different perspectives pertaining to a number of theoretical aspects. The most important theory that has been taken into account for this purpose is the Third Space theory of Homi K. Bhabha. Bhabha's theory inculcates the possibility of looking into the hybrid conditions of the postcolonial society from a new perspective which opens up a new space for cultural location rather than looking into the stereotyped tradition of using Derridian binarism or dichotomy of polar oppositions such as Black/White.

As a part of postcolonial study, the novels of Toni Morrison embrace a number of post-colonial theories in the interpretation of her fictional recreation of the racialised world. Not only in her trilogy but all through her novels, Toni Morrison deals with the themes of racial difference and the racialised experiences that the people of African descent in America have been gathering since the days of slavery even till today. The novels of this trilogy narrate the black experiences in America and focus on the memory of the African root that the African American community inherited, brought forth by racial exploitation they have been suffering in the American soil. In her novels Morrison shows the transition of the American Blacks from a pure race to a hybrid cultural group. Therefore, the prime theoretical

concern that becomes pivotal in this area of study is the theory of Third Space propounded by Homi K Bhabha, who assimilates the ideas of Frantz Fanon, whose critical thoughts are instrumental not only in the study of the novels of Morrison but also in the study of the whole body of any coloured literature. Without referring to Fanon's widely read books *The Wretched of the Earth* and *Black Skin White Mask*, any discussion on Bhabha's theory seems incomplete. Bhabha's critical ideas also embrace a number of some other Western critics and theoreticians like Edward Said, Stuart Hall and many other post-colonial theorists; hence they automatically inrtude as corelated ideas in the discussion of African American identity.

As a Postcolonial theory of hybridity in identity and cultural location, the Third Space theory of Homi K Bhabha has acclaimed worldwide popularity among the scholars and critics; and the theory has emerged as a new approach to cultural study against the tradition of resting upon western theories in acceptance to the western hegemony in critical thoughts. Like any other branch of postcolobial literature, African American literature also deals with the notion of cultural hybridity; and Bhabha's Third Space bears great significance in the interpretation of African American cultural text.

The term hybridity, as *The Routledge Dictionary of Literary Terms* defines, "emerged within post-colonial studies as a response of identity of race and nation promoted by colonial discourses, and also such anti-colonial discourses as Nationalism and Negritude" (p.112), embraces a wide range of cultural studies. In fact 'Hybridity' as a prime critical word for study of multiculturalism got currency "when Bhabha introduced it within the colonial sphere of cultural identity, and transported it to other fields of analysis in post-colonial context, where it has achieved the central focus in discussions of multiculturalism and diaspora studies" (112). Bhabha uses the term 'hybridity' in close connection of the terms like 'mimicry' and 'ambivalence', and develops the idea of his theory of Third Space that allows us "to conceive of the identities of cultures in terms that transcend the binary dialectic 'us/them' 'insider/outsider', 'inclusion/ exclusion'(113)."

Against the conventional way of resting on a prior theory to talk about a new phenomenon in a cultural context, which in most cases seems to be restrictive on the matter of finding out the meaning of a text, it is the point of view of the notion of 'beyond' that Bhabha brings forth for the present theory of his cultural location in literary representation. He says that today our existence is marked by a tenebrous sense of survival, living on the borderlines of the present age which has no other proper name to refer to it, than using the

current "magical prefix 'post'—such as postmodernism, postcolonialism, postfeminism, poststructuralism—and many other such –isms" (*The Location of Culture*, "Introduction", p.2), that are commonly in vogue in the theoretical practices that are widely influencing the critical discussions of the present days. Therefore, Bhabha urges to take a position 'beyond' such restrictive environment and look into the textual representation of culture in a literary text from an intermediate space. Elaborating his idea of the 'beyond', Bhabha says that the 'beyond' is "neither a new horizon, nor a living behind of the past." He locates the present in the moment of a 'transit' "where space and time cross the borderlines to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion" (2). This notion of a 'transit' brings forth the notion of an 'in-between' position that makes the basic foundation of Bhabha's theory of space. According to Bhabha, the act of moving away from "singularities of 'class' or 'gender' as primary conceptual and organizational categories has resulted in the awareness of the subject positions such as race, gender, institutional location, geo-political local etc that inhabit any claim to identity in the modern world" (2). Bhabha argues that we need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities which are limited by preoccupations or even prejudices. In certain cases, in order to trace out the real picture of cultural identity of a race or a community such stereotyping approach may lead towards misinterpretation, hence we need to come out of the straightjacket of the politics of theorization; because the propagandist view of a text always creates a restrictive environment in any cultural representation. Hence, Morrison does not like to depend upon any recorded history for her fictional project; and her works, therefore, should be analysed with new approaches such as Bhabha's theoretical ideas of Third Space. At the same time we need to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences, and try to locate an 'in-between' space apart from the polar oppositions of the traditional identity marker. These in-between spaces, according to Bhabha, "provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood—singular or communal—that initiates new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself."[13] As for the African American cultural identity, the binaries of tradional identity marker such as Black/White, may lead towards misinterpretation. In this regard Bhabha points out that the inter-subjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated in the emergence of the interstices, such as race/ class/ gender etc. He further argues that despite shared histories of deprivation and discrimination, the exchange of values, meanings and priorities may not always be collaborative and even incommensurable. Hence there is a gap

or a hiatus between the real existence and cultural representation in the textual delineations or even in the interpretation of a cultural text. In such conditions it becomes very problematic to formulate the strategies of representation or empowerment in the competing claims of communities about their cultural base. For the interpretation of such a transit cultural context, Bhabha brings forth the idea of "Space", an in-between place of cultural observation.

The focal point of Bhabha's concept of 'space' is the condition of being in the 'beyond'. Bhabha uses the term 'beyond' to talk about the prospect of bringing cultural representation out of Eurocentric theoretical stereotype. He says that "being in the 'beyond' is to inhabit in an intervening space" from which we can have an impartial view of a culture. But to dwell in the 'beyond' is "to be part of a revisionary time, a return to the present to redescribe the cultural contemporaneity; to redescribe human, historic commonality" (*The Location of Culture*, p. 10). In that sense the intervening space 'beyond', according to Bhabha, becomes a "space of intervention in the here and the now" (10), rather than resting on an allusive event of the past. Regarding this idea of space, Fanon says that "There is a zone of nonbeing, an extraordinarily sterile and arid region, an incline stripped bare of every essential from which a genuine new departure can emerge."[14] Regarding the cultural location of the coloured folks Fanon, however, admits that in most cases, the black man cannot take advantage of this descent into a veritable hell.

With a view to narrating the cultural identities of societies, nations or races which in many cases remain neglected in the so called mainstream literature, Bhabha makes use of another term 'borderline' which focuses the literary predicament of such a cultural position. Bhabha calls this situation and the work related to it as a 'borderline work' that reveals the problematics of the dilemma of living in a non-confirmist social environment. He says that "the borderline work of culture demands an encounter with 'newness' " which according to him is the breach of the "continuum of past and present." Bhabha further points out that such a work of art does not merely recall the past as a "social cause or aesthetic present; it renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent 'in-between' space that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present."[15] In most of her novels Morrison negotiates the boderline conditions of the racial environment in America, where Pecola Breedlove (*The Bluest Eye*) longs for a white standard of living, Patricia Best (*Paradise*) rejects the African heridity and Joe and Violet (*Jazz*) tries to keep pace with the changing social environment.

While talking about his notion of 'space' Bhabha joins the idea of Stuart Hall on the matter of 'hegemony' and the role of 'imagining' in the formation of hegemony. According to Stuart Hall, "the notion of hegemony implies a politics of 'identification' of the imaginary" (qt. in *The Location of Culture*, p. 32). Such imaginary identification, according to Bhabha, "occupies a discursive space which is not exclusively delimited by the history of either the politics of the right or the left. It exists somewhere in-between these political polarities, and also between the familiar divisions of theory and political practices" (Bhabha, p.32).

The perspectives that the critics take up in the interpretation of a text has much to say about the meaning of it, and the theories presumed to have connectedness also influence the representation of a culture in the literary texts; because the leaning towards any political ideology influences a text by pulling the authors towards a political propaganda. Therefore, the authors need to come out of the straightjacket of theory and the politics of theorization so that the text can have an impartial view of society's inherent culture. Bhabha says that in the politics of theorization there is an undeclared tendency of polarization; and a kind of conformity towards a political ideology automatically gets intruded into their thoughts. Therefore, the theoretical dimension of Bhabha occupies a position in-between the polarities of the perceptions like right/left, black/white, orient/occident etc. Following such polarities, there intrudes a kind of negation in the representation of a culture in the text. Therefore, while talking about the notion of theoretical practices, Bhabha approves the idea of 'negotiation' rather than 'negation'. In this connection Bhabha refers to J. S. Mill's essay "On Liberty of Thought and Discussion" where the British author has attempted to define political judgment as "the problem of finding a form of public rhetoric able to represent different and opposing political 'contents' not as a priori pre-constituted principles but as an ideological discursive exchange; a negotiation of terms in the on-going present of the enunciation of the political statement."[16] Textuality as a matter of cultural representation is, as Robert Young points out with reference to Manichean allegories about "the dualities of the 'colonizer' and 'colonized', of the 'Self' and the 'Other', mirrors the ways in which today's racial politics work through a relative polarization between black and white."[17] Morrison on the other hand, refers to the black/white cultural difference in terms of their preoccupied ideas of racism. Morrison observes that the Europeans or the whites need not worry about the existence of racism in their works; and they can take it for granted that there is a "race free society", because the Others are "raced" whites are not. In Bhabha's observation, "textuality is not simply a second order ideological expression or a verbal symptom of a pre-given political subject" (*The*

Location of Culture, p.34). Bhabha observes that "J.S. Mill in his idea of the liberty of thought reserves in the society an unreal neutral space of the third person as the representative of the 'people' who witnesses the debate from an epistemological distance' and draws a reasonable conclusion" (35). Thus, from Mill's point of view of representation, Bhabha points out that "politics can only become representative, a truly public discourse, through a splitting in the signification of the subject of representation; through an ambivalence at the point of enunciation of a politics" (36). Regarding the politics of theorization, Bhabha again says that a critical discourse does not always yield to a new political object, or aim, or knowledge, which is simply a mimetic reflection of a priori political principle or theoretical commitment. According to him "the language of critique is effective not because it keeps forever separate the terms of the master and the slave, the marcentilist and the Marxist, but to the extent to which it overcomes the given grounds of opposition and opens up a space of translation; a place of hybridity" (p.37). His concern in this context is the 'place of hybridity', a state of being in the in-between position rather than in any polar oppositional state.

Bhabha's theory of Third Space deals with his notion of cultural hybridity, and the hybridity in the postcolonial society receives the prime concern of his theoretical perceptions. For interpretation of his idea of hybridity, Bhabha refers to various historical events, like the socio-political conditions of Britain in the nineteen eighties and African Americans' struggle in the United States since the days of slavery. For instance, in order to offer his interpretation of the movements in Britain during the 1980s, Bhabha expresses his idea of hybridity. He says that his illustration of such movements attempts to display the importance of the hybrid moment of political change, where the transformational value of change lies in the "rearticulation, or translation, of elements that are neither the one (unitary working class) nor the other (the politics of gender), but something else besides, which pertains to neither but connects both" (*The Location of Culture*, p. 41). In his notion of hybridity, "there is a negotiation between gender and class, where each formation encounters the displaced, differentiated boundaries of its group representation and enunciative sites in which the limits and limitations of social power are encountered in an agonistic relation" (41). Hybridity occurs in almost all the colonized nations, because the elements of the imperial culture got mixed with the ethnic cultures in order to form a new hybrid culture which is neither of the purely ethnic culture nor of the absolute master's culture. The Indians for instance, after two centuries of imperial rule, allowed so many western habits to enter into their culture in their

efforts to achieve the European standard, which they could not remove even after freedom. Similarly the Blacks in America, in their attempts to obtain the white standard in their living lost most of their origin culture, thereby making their culture a hybrid one which is neither black nor white in the true sense of a pure race, which is rather a mix-up of both. The culture of such a society can only be identified with the condition of hybridity that Bhabha formulates in his idea of 'space'.

According to Bhabha, "the terms of cultural engagement, whether antagonistic or affiliative, are produced performatively rather than imaginarily", therefore the black experiences that we see in Morrison's novels comes from the subtle observation of her society rather than her imagination. In terms of hybridity, for instance, the textual representation of a social history, the processes that lead towards the mix-up of two races, and the elements creating the hybrid situations, have to be focused in a text. In his opinion, there appears a sense of hybridity in the cultural representation of a transitional period and it becomes very difficult to reflect such hybrid moments in the pages of cultural texts. On the matter of cultural difference and literary representation, Bhabha points out that "the representation of difference must not be hastily read as the reflection of pre-given ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition." And the social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, "is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation" (Bhabha, "Introduction" *The Location of Culture*, p.3). Regarding Morrison's commitment to history in her fictional documentation, Bhabha points out that "Racial violence is invoked by historical dates—1876 for instance—but Morrison is just a little hasty with the events 'in themselves', as she rushes past 'the true meaning of the Fugitive Bill, the Settlement Fee, God's ways, antislavery, manumission, skin voting" (22); and there is planty of such historical events throughout her fiction.

While talking about the need of reinterpretation of a cultural text in terms of identity in a hybrid situation, Bhabha points out that Fanon's observance 'culture as political struggle' becomes instrumental, because it provides a new vision towards the description of cultural identity. Fanon juxtaposes constant national principle with his view to describe the phenomenon of cultural struggle, which he refers to as 'the zone of occult instability' where the people dwell. In this connection Bhabha says that "Cultures are never unitary in themselves, nor simply dualistic in relation of the Self to the Other" (*The Location of Culture*, p. 52), which are used as the identifying marker, and which become primary concern in the

Western critical and theoretical world. Bhabha observes that this is not because of humanistic nostrum that beyond individual cultures we belong to the human culture of mankind"; it is also not because of "an ethical relativism which suggests that in our cultural capacity to speak of and judge others, we necessarily place ourselves in their position in a kind of relativism of distance" (52).

In his opinion a cultural text or system of meaning cannot be sufficient unto itself, it is because the act of cultural enunciation, that is the place of utterance, is crossed by the difference of writing. Bhabha says that this difference is found in the process of language that is crucial to the production of meaning and ensures that meaning is never mimetic and transparent. Bhabha reiterates that the enunciation of a cultural process becomes crucial in the production of a cultural text to signify a meaning. From the interpretation of linguistic difference and the process of enunciation, Bhabha formulates the idea of Third Space that gives a way to the interpretation of a text, as he states in the chapter "Commitment to Theory":

> "The linguistic difference that informs any cultural performance is the common semiotic account of the disjuncture between the subject of a proposition (enonce) and the subject of enunciation, which is not represented in the statement but which is the discursive embededness and address, its cultural positionality, its reference to a present time and specific space. The pact interpretation is never simply an act of communication between I and the You designated in the statement. The production of meaning requires that these two place be in the passage through a Third Space which represents both the general conditions of language and specific implication of the utterance in a performative and institutional strategy of which it can not in itself be conscious."(p.53)

Thus Bhabha asserts that the interpretation of a cultural text calls for a third space of observation which is in-between the two traditional boundaries of identification. It is a kind of unconscious strategy of revealing or representing one's cultural identity in a transformed environment. Bhabha says that this unconscious relation introduces an ambivalence in the act of interpretation of a cultural text dealing with the transit moment of cultural history. The intermediate position is found in between the two selves, the 'I' (the Self) and the 'You' (the Other). Bhabha however, says that the pronominal 'I' of the proposition cannot be made to

address the subject of enunciation, for it is not personable, but remains a spatial relation within the schemata and strategies of discourse. The implication of the utterance in the discourse may be different from what is intended to be meant. According to Bhabha, the meaning of the utterance is literally neither the one nor the other, but between the two selves, somewhere in an in-between space. Bhabha observes that this ambivalence is emphasized when we realize that there is no way that the content of the proposition will reveal the structure of its positionality; no way that the context can be mimetically read off from the content.

As an implication of his notion of enunciative split for cultural analysis, Bhabha reveals that he emphasizes its temporal dimension. He feels that "The splitting of the subject of enunciation destroys the logics of synchronicity and evolution which traditionally authorize the subject of cultural knowledge" (*The Location of Culture*, p. 53). Bhabha denies the common materialist and idealist problematic that "the value of any analytic activity that is considered cultural, lie in a capacity to produce a cross-referential, generalizable unity that signifies a progression or evolution of ideas-in-time" (53). In this connection Bhabha refers to Marshall Sahlins's passage in *Culture and Political Reason* where the author rejects the Western expectation of culture as a disciplinary practice of writing. Quoting Sahlins passage, Bhabha says that "there is a distinctively different structures of symbolic integration, and this difference brings about difference in the symbolic performance" (p.54). According to Bhabha, the difference between various societal identities, such as big society and small, developed and under-developed etc. are easily found by the enunciative split in the cultural representation.

Bhabha points out that the intervention of the Third Space of enunciation, which makes the structure of meaning and reference an ambivalent process, destroys this mirror of representation in which cultural knowledge is customarily revealed in literature as an integrated, open expanded code. Such an intervention quite properly challenges "our sense of the historical identity of culture as a homogenizing, unifying force, authenticated by the originary past, kept alive in the national tradition of the people" (p.54). In this way Bhabha asserts that the disruptive temporality of enunciation displaces the narrative of the Western nation. This observation of the Western hegemony made by Benedict Anderson where he calls it a homogenous narrative written in serial time, reveals the Western indictment towards the so called Others. Bhabha elaborates the idea of enunciation and Third Space by saying:

> "It is only when we understand that all cultural statements and systems are constructed in this contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation, that we begin to understand why hierarchical claims to the inherent originality or 'purity' of cultures are untenable, even before we resort to empirical historical instances that demonstrate their hybridity. Fanon's vision of revolutionary cultural and political change as a 'fluctuating movement' of occult instability could not be articulated as cultural practice without an acknowledgement of this indeterminate Space, of the subject(s) of enunciation. It is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistorisized and read anew."(Bhabha, 1994, p.55)

Bhabha reiterates the need of critical theory with new perspectives and says that Fanon's moving metaphor 'fluctuating movement of occult instability' to talk about the revolutionary cultural and political change, can be taken for a theory of cultural signification, that enables us to see the restrictive notion of cultural identity with which he led our vision of political change. He observes that the masses whom Fanon considers the liberatory people, who initiate the productive instability of revolutionary cultural change, are themselves the bearers of a hybrid identity. Showing the example of Algeria, Bhabha says that "in the moment of liberatory struggle, the Algerian people destroy the continuities and constancies of the nationalist tradition which provided a safeguard against colonial cultural imposition" (p.55). After freedom, these people can negotiate and translate their cultural identities in a discontinuous intertextual temporality of cultural difference. These people are now identified with a kind of "dialectical reorganization", and the changed political and historical site of enunciation "transforms the meanings of the colonial inheritance into the liberatory signs of a free people of the future" (p.56).

Regarding the idea of his Third Space of enunciation, Bhabha again says that "the productive capacities of this Third Space have a colonial or postcolonial provenance" (*The Location of Culture,* p. 56) and the theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation, according to him, may open the way to conceptualizing an international culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity; which "is 'inter'—the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the in-between space—that carries the burden of the meaning of culture. It makes

it possible to begin envisaging national, anti-nationalist histories of the 'people'. And by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of ourselves" (56).

Bhabha finally defines the term 'Third Space' as events of temporality which cannot be defined in terms of any cultural terminology. In the words of Bhabha, the Third Space of cultural temporality can be figured out as, "The non-synchronous temporality of global and national cultures opens up a cultural space—a third space—where the negotiation of incommensurable differences creates a tension peculiar to borderline existences." (p.312)

Thus we can say that in the interpretation of the black cultural history revealed in the literary texts of the race, and in locating the transit moments of the African American cultural history, Bhabha's theory of Third Space, since it talks mostly about racial hybridity provides a reliable theoretical framework.

Notes:

1. See Rody, Spring, 1995
2. See Morrison, "On Beloved", *Mouth Full of Blood*, p. 280
3. See Karla F.C.Holloway 1990
4. Toni Morrison, Forward to *Jazz*,(p.x), Vintage Books, 2004.
5. Ibid.,
6. African American migration from the South began surging when immigration restrictions created labour shortage in the nation. The job prospects offered by the Jim Crow system during World War I, sharecroppers, farmhands, and domestics began to migrate towards the northern cities like Atlanta, Chicago and New York. As stated by Gavins, between 1910 and 1930 an estimated 1.75 million moved to the North. See Gavins, p.118.
7. Toni Morrison, Forward to *Jazz*, (p.x), Vintage Books, 2004.
8. Carolyn M. Jones. "Traces and Cracks: Identity and Narrative in Toni Morrison's Jazz", African American Review, Vol.31, No.3,Autumn, 1997, pp.(481-495)
9. The period between 1865 and 1877 is marked as the Reconstruction Times in the African American history, which is marked by abolition of slavery, black citizenship and suffrage, and restoring the Union sorely strained post-Civil War society. See, Gavins, p.232.

10. According to Raymond Gavins, Desegrgation originated before World War II and continued with mixed progress through the Second Reconstruction (1945-82) to the present. See, Gavins, p.80.
11. These fictitious black towns remind the foundation of some of the black towns in America such as Freedom Hill (founded 1865) in North Carolina, Nicodemus in Kansas (founded in 1887), and Mound Bayou in Mississippi (founded in the early 1900s). See Gavins, p.37.
12. The term "New Negro" was used by the black press as early as 1895, applauding a generation who refused to be kept in the "Negro's place". Against the campaign of Booker T. Washington for black service in the US Armed Forces, the African American newspapers popularized the image of an "assertive race-proud New Negro at home." See Gavins, p.212.
13. Homi K. Bhabha, "Introduction" *Location of Culture*, p.2
14. Fanon, Frantz. "Introduction" *Black Skin White Masks*, p. xii
15. Homi K. Bhabha, "Introduction" *The Location of Culture*, p.10
16. Homi K. Bhabha, 'The Commitment to Theory' in *The Location of Culture*, p.34
17. Robert J.C. Young, "The Cultural Politics of Hybridity" from *Colonial Desire*, Ashcroft et al. (eds.) pp.161-162

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