CHAPTER 3

Constructing History through Rememory in the Trilogy

Morrison uses Rememory as a tool for her fictional recreation of certain aspects of the American history, so as to tell the tales of racial exploitations that her community suffered in different periods of history, and in her novels we find her using "Rememory as in recollecting and remembering as in reassembling the members of the body, the family the population of the past."[1] In her novels, there is a reassembling of the members of the cultural ancestry that formulates the notion of the present black cultural identity. Morrison in formulating the ideas for her fiction undertook deep research into the cultural root by digging out the storehouse of cultural knowledge from various oral and folk resources and 'Rememorising' them with her imaginative faculty towards recreation of a cultural history of the race she belongs to. Memory plays a significant role in producing a literary text and historicizing the race's cultural heritage; such memory, the act of deliberate remembering which Morrison turns into Rememory by adding her imaginative ideas, makes a powerful discourse on the race's history of exploitation. According to Morrison, "Memory (the deliberate act of remembering) is a form of willed creation. It is not an effort to find out the way it really was—that is research. The point is to dwell on the way it appeared and why it appeared in a particular way" (*Mouth Full of Blood*, p. 327).

Morrison has certain specific reasons for her dependency on memory rather than history written as trustworthy ignition; it is not primarily because she writes autobiographically, rather because of the fact that she writes representatively in a racialised society. As an author belonging to a racially exploited community, Morrison feels committed to appropriating cultures and literary heritages, and she always had the pressure of being critiqued while composing; so she wanted to make her imagination "as unencumbered as possible and as responsible as possible"; in fact Morrison wanted or rather tried to "curve out a world both culture specific and race free" (See. "Rememory", *Mouth Full of Blood*, p.322). The situation in which Morrison begins to write is totally different from the situation of a European or a Western writer; because "they can believe", as Morrison points out, "or choose to believe that their work is naturally 'race free' or 'race transcendent' (322)." But the fact which, according to Morrison, is commonly accepted to be a truth in terms of the African

Americans is that they are always "raced". Morrison agrees in principle that while taking the project of her fictional work, she had three choices in her hand. First, she had either "to ignore race or try altogether to write about World War II or domestic strife without referencing race" (323). But if she had done so, it would be an erasure to most impinging fact of her existence and intelligence. Secondly, "she could become a cool 'objective' observer writing about race conflict and/or harmony" (323). In her intended and deliberate attempt to write about racial conflict and cultural harmony, she would again be "forced to surrender the center of the stage to received ideas of centrality and the subject would always and forever be race." Thirdly, she could "strike out for new territory"; to find a way to free her imagination of "the impositions and limitations of race and explore the consequences of its centrality in the world and in the lives of the people I was hungry to write about" (323).

While commenting on her craft, Morrison justifies her position as a writer of such a "racialised" society, where she does not have as much exposure to express her situations in a raicially bound society as her European counterparts have in their respective areas of literary practices; as for an explanation of her situation, she gives reasons for her inclination to the choices in developing her ideas and translating them into fictional practices:

> "First was my effort to substitute and rely on memory rather than history because I knew I could, should not, trust recorded history to give me the insight into the cultural specificity I wanted. Second, I determined to diminish, exclude, even freeze any (overt) debt to Western literary history."(*Mouth Full of Blood,* p. *322*)

Morrison, as a representative author of a racialised society, admits that it would be quite reckless an act on her part to rely on White resources or prop against white pillers like Conrad, Twain, Melville, Stowe, Whitman, Henry James, Fenimore Cooper or Hemingway; she even considered it to be more devastating to rely on Kenneth Stampp, Lewis Mumford, Herbert Gutman, Eugene Genovese, Monyhan, Emerson, Jafferson or any of the well known figures in the history of the United States for her research on her cultural resources. She rather felt it more comfortable with another source that "she had at her own disposal, that is her own literary heritage, the slave narratives" (*Mouth Full of Blood,* p. 323). As an experienced literary practitioner, Morrison observes that "writing is not simply recollecting or reminiscing"; it is rather creating "a narrative infused with legitimate and authentic characteristics of the culture" (323). Therefore, Morrison allows her imaginative faculty to

enter into the territory of memory and makes it metamorphose into the kind of metaphorical and imagistic associations that she needed for her purpose; as she had done in *Beloved*, which coalesced for her the matters of "history virsus memory and memory versus memorylessness" (323). In all her novels, Morrison has displayed her creative vigour where she fused memory with imagination; and this creative fusion (rememory) makes her fiction an interesting historical reading of her cultural surrounding.

Historical Significance of Morrison's Trilogy

The novels of Toni Morrison in general and the novels of her trilogy in particular, display a paramount effort of the author for the construction or rather reconstruction of the history of racial exploitation faced by the American Blacks over the ages. In her novels Morrison has depicted the changing scenario in the American racial tradition, but she has at the same time documented all sorts of racial exploitations that her community—the Americans of African origin and their descendants—has suffered generations after generations. In her depiction of the coloured life in America, Morrison has not spared the dark shadows of the oppressions that the black people in the US, have suffered over the years in different periods of the political history of America. In fact Morrison historicizes the black oppression in the form of rememory; and her novels as a result have become the fragments of African American racial history. The construction of the history that Morrison formulates in her novels is the act of remembering that she deliberately effects in order to talk about the black identity crisis in America. The fragments of African American history are acutely narrated in the pages of the novels of Morrison, based on her scepticism about the validity and reliability of the historical resources or the vulnerability of the "knowledge" of literary historians and critics regarding the presentation of black culture; and such a knowledge, according to Morrison "holds that traditional, canonical American literature is free of, uninformed, and unshaped by the four-hundred-year-old presence of, first, Africans and then African-Americans in the United States."[2] This shows Morrison's anguish over the so-called mainstream literary historians in the presentation of the Africanist presence in the socio-political scenario through their literary manifestations. Morrison reproaches that "this presence, which shaped the body politic, the constitution, and the entire history of the culture has had no significant place in the origin development of that culture's literature" (Black Matters, *Playing in the Dark* p.5). This historical blank about the Africanist elements in the nation's literary picture, prepared by a set of knowledge which assumes that "the

characteristics of the national literature emanate from a particular 'Americanness' that is separate from and unaccountable to this presence" (5), is primarily responsible for the prolonged historical backwardness of the race.

The politics of history itself is imbued with an inherent tendency of establishing a European hegemony thereby designating Europe as 'modern' in the matter of knowledge formulation and creating an image of treating the non-Europeans as historical "others". The Western or the European world is unacquainted with the racial condition in which the African Americans have to survive, and literature of these racialised authors who reflect the condition of being "raced" in their works; these works, therefore should not be judged by the same measure. "History" as a knowledge system, in the observation of Dipesh Chakrabarty is "firmly embedded in institutional practices that invoke the nation state at every step – witness the organization and politics of teaching, recruitment, promotions and publication in history departments, politics that survive the occasional brave and heroic attempts by individual historians to liberate 'history' from the meta-narrative the nation state."[3] But against such polarization in the Eurocentric practices of historicizing textuality, there has been consistent effort from the historical "others" to find out places for themselves in the field of historical practices. Despite the inherent motif of "race" in every sphere of American culture, it has so far remained as Morrison observes, "a virtually unspeakable thing" for the racialised people (*Mouth Full of Blood*, p. 164). Commenting further on the matter of racial existence, Morrison says that, "For three hundred years black Americans insisted that "race" was no usefully distinguishing factor in human relationship (164)." But it sounds quite ironical that during those three centuries, every academic discipline, including theology, history, and natural sciences, insisted "race" was the determining factor in human development (164). Dipesh Chakrabarty in his opinion of the project of provincializing 'Europe' at the centre of 'cultural relativism', says that "Histories that aim to displace a hyperreal Europe from the centre toward all historical imagination currently gravitates will have to seek out relentlessly this connection between violence and idealism that lies at the heart of the process by which the narratives of citizenship and modernity come to find a natural home in 'history'" (Chakrabarty, 1992; Ashcroft et al. P.343).

The manifestation of history in the novels of Toni Morrison can be analysed in terms of 'racism' and in terms of 'sexuality'; and the historicity of her texts should not be looked through the lens of European theoretical norms. In fact her novels are the historical documents of black racial experiences from the days of slavery, and even much older

experiences of the colonial process of slave acquisition brought back by active rememory of their historical roots; the great treasure of identity which they had kept alive by means of various sorts of important resources like their oral tradition, myths, folk tales and songs. In her novel *Song of Solomon*, for instance, Morrison uses the myth of 'flight' to reveal the spirit of the black community for escaping slavery. Likewise in *Paradise*, the history of the construction of some of the all-black towns following the events of Segregation and Disallowance is actively re-memorised in the construction of Ruby as a reconstruction of the formerly historical all-black town of Haven. The history of the 'great migration' and 'reconstruction' is retold in the second novel of the trilogy *Jazz*, where Morrison reveals the changing scenario in the coloured society after the Great Migration, during which a large number of black people began to migrate towards the Northern American cities looking for means of living and the better ways of life . Together with the exploration of the black racial history, the novels of Morrison also reveal the living history of sexual exploitation that the coloured women had to suffer during slavery and even in the post-slavery 'freed black' condition. After all, in the presentation of a historical overview of the African American society in each novel of her trilogy, Morrison has made use of memory as prime sources of her historical presentation.

Remembering the Experiences of Slavery in *Beloved*

Memory plays a vital role not only in the fiction of Toni Morrison but in the whole body of African American literature. Using the memory of the past throughout her novels, Morrison wanted to comment on some vital social issues like 'black liberty' or 'social equality' in the present society. Morrison as a responsible author of her community shows her commitment to her race in finding out and filling the blanks left by her predecessors, and chose to cover those areas that the early authors, right from the slave narratives left untouched, which they could not reveal under certain social constraints. Morrison has picked up such unrepresented and unfocused areas of the black cultural history, to give them an exposure through her literary creations, thus making her works important discourses articulating the race's historical exploitations. Joining memory or rather rememory with her creative imagination, Morrison has produced all her fictional works that tell an unorganized history of her race, its exploitation, its suffering and its efforts to come out of the dark world of slavery and gain equality in terms of social behaviour. In fact Morrison has used her imaginative power to fuse with her memory in order to invent stories that can reveal the

unheeded and unsaid aspects of African American life and tradition. Thus she began her invention of a new literary tradition in *Beloved*.

If *Beloved* is considered a fictional document of the inhumanities meted out to the African American slaves, this novel at the same time is Morrison's efforts at exposing things too terrible to relate, probing into private and interior lives of people who did not even write their stories; she make them feasible for her readers to enter into those unheard territories of the race. Morrison narrates the stories surrounding her community life, though she never seems to expose herself through her novels. Whatever autobiographical elements we find in the novel, are her rememory of collective life of the black society in America. Therefore, *Beloved*, despite having autobiographical touch, is a social history of African American racial experiences and the movements concerning black freedom and racial equality in the nation.

In her narrative Morrison makes a fusion of memory and history, which are treated to be important resources for the development of African American culture, because they have become essential part of the race's socio-cultural life. Each and every author of the community express their indebtedness to the unrecorded history of the race, so far running as oral traditions, for they provide the authors with ready materials for their works; as Ralph Ellison, a major exponent of African American literature, regards such treasures to be the best when she says in her milestone fictional work *Invisible Man*, "Ask your wife to take you around to the gin mills and barber shops ….A whole unrecorded history is spoken then, Brother." Toni Morrison also confirms the importance of memory and history in the existence of the community's racial identity, "It was not a story to pass on. So they forgot her. Like unpleasant dream during a troubling sleep […] they can touch it if they like, but don't, because they know things will never be the same if they do" (*Beloved*, p.275).

In the narrative of *Beloved*, the novel of slavery life, Morrison has utilized geographical locations of her acquaintance as important sites of memory in the construction of African American culture and identity. This is significant not because it creates a historical setting but also it fosters connection to memory-generating experiences to emphasize the relationship between memory and history. The novel uses the symbolism of plants and trees which indicates the common Black aversion to the plantation lives and slavery under it. The trees and plants are the constant reminders of the past bitter lives for them; in many cases the images of plants are used symbolically to reveal the sorrows and sufferings of life under slavery. There are numerous recollections and remembrances of such places which bear the

mark of slavery and the bitter experiences around slave traditions. The narrator in *Beloved* says:

> "When the last chamomile was gone, she went around to the front of the house, collecting her shoes and stockings on the way. As if to punish her further for her terrible memory, sitting on the porch not forty feet away was Paul D, the last of the Sweet Home men."(*Beloved*, p.7)

Morrison employs these plants symbolically as points of reference in order to present the hardships and sufferings that the slaves at Sweet Home encountered, as well as the pain (the chamomile) that remains in the lives of the former slaves due to continuous remembering of their bitter experiences. Sethe remembers conversing with Baby Suggs, who scolds her children "That's all you let yourself remember" (*Beloved*, p. 6). In the novel at several points Sethe's memory is brought alive with the assumption that she could not stop herself from remembering certain things "She might be hurrying across a field...to get to the pump quickly and rinse the chamomile sap from her legs" (p. 6). It may be taken for granted that the symbol of the chamomile is used to represent the things in her life of which she would like to rid herself, there were also other things so bitter that she could not remember even if she tried "Nor was the faintest scent of ink or the cherry gum and oak bark from which it was made. Nothing just the breeze cooling her face as she rushed toward water" (6).

It is through the remembrance of the characters that Morrison constructs the related history; in *Beloved*, the history that comes to the mind of Sethe about the day of her baby's birth when her husband escaped from Sweet Home, is "Eighteen fifty five. The day my baby was born" (p.9). It is an unforgetable event that had lasting effect in her memory that Sethe can never wipe out; and in the whole narrative, Morrison has recorded many such memories that give us living pictures of the slave experience. As a writer of fiction, Morrison asserts that her fiction would encourage anything that is mindful of and rebellious towards cultural and racial exceptions. It has been already stated that Morrison does not want to reveal anything that is already in the air as an established reality, but wants to tell something new; hence in *Beloved*, Morrison reveals all of those matters that coalesce for her in new and major ways, "History virsus memory, and memory virsus memorylessness" (*Mouth full of Blood*, p. 322). She makes her characters remember the events that have historical connectedness, and those that bear significant relation in remembering their cultural past. In the novel, the central character Sethe remembers,

> "I was talking about time. It's so hard for me to believe in it. Some things go. Pass on. Some things just stay. I used to think it was my rememory. You know. Some things you forget. Other things you never do. But it's not. Places, places are still there. Of a house burns down, it's gone, but the place—the picture of it—stays, and not just in my rememory, but out there, in the world." (*Beloved*, p.43)

Sethe's experience was her persistent struggle, the pitched battle between remembering and forgetting, and this struggle of Sethe is used by the novelist as the device of the narrative, and this effort to remember gives structure to the text of the novel. What Sethe remembers is a picture floating around out there outside her mind; it is in fact her psychological obsession with the sinful act of infanticide that always keeps haunting her mind, thus making her memorise her terrible past. Whenever she remembers or thinks about it or even if she does not think, even if she dies what she did or knew or saw, appears before her eyes with every detail of the place where it happened. "Can other people see it?" Denver asks her mother. "Oh Yes, Oh, yes, yes yes," Sethe replies, "It's when you bump into a rememory that belongs to somebody else. Where I was before I came here, that place is real. Its never going away. Even if the whole farm—every tree and grass blade of it dies" (*Beloved*, p.43). This sentiment of Sethe shows that what she suffers as a slave is possible for every other slave like her, and even if Denver goes there, she will see the same picture in the Kentucky plantation where all mmembers of her family had been captivated.

Morrison, however, points out that nobody in the novel "can bear too long to dwell on the past; nobody can even avoid it" (*Mouth Full of Blood* p.324). Morrison reiterates that this state of conflict is created by the fact that "there is no reliable literary or journalistic or scholarly history available to them", because she feels that "they are living in a society and a system in which the conquerors write their history" (p.324). Therefore, as Morrison asserts, "Not only is the preoccupation of the central character that of reconstituting and recollecting a usable past, but also the narrative strategy , the plot formation turns on the stress of remembering, its inevitability, the chance for liberation that lie within the process" (324). Merely recollecting the past can do nothing good to Sethe or the other characters of the novel; hence they are found reluctant to the situation; Sethe is found reluctant towards knowing what happened to her while doing the violent action, even "Paul D. to stand still and remember what has helped to construct his self; Denver to demystify her birth and enter the contemporary world quite disinterestedly" (324). When Denver went out to the school of

Lady Jones, it was the first time that she felt the sense of love from her community; and it was the word "baby" that Lady Jones said softly and with such kindness that incorporated in her a new sense of belonging and inaugurated her life in the world of a woman. It was contrary to the ghostly environment of her home, it helped her come out of the trauma of psychological obsession that she had been suffering along with her mother at 124.

The final pages of *Beloved* in which memory is insistently used, according to Morrison, "yet become the mutation of fact into fiction then folklore and then into nothing" (*Mouth Full of Blood*, 324). Remembering and brooding over the past too much, Sethe is quite exhausted, "I'm tired, Paul D. So tired. I have to rest a while" (*Beloved*, p.320). This mumbling self reproach of Sethe sounds something strange and shocking to the ears of Paul D. who is standing by her with all compassion and fellow feeling since their last meeting, "Don't you die on me! This is Baby Suggs' bed! Is that what you planning?" (320). What Sethe plans remains vague to the simple mind of Paul D. but it reminds him of Denver's warning. Is frustrated Sethe going to kill herself? This type of bizarre question obviously fills the mind of Paul D. and he tries his best to help her regain her self-possession by bathing her with fresh warm water. Thus thinking about the past, remembering the bygone days in Sethe's life help the novel's intent of resetting the memory of slavery; and this rememory makes a powerful discourse on the history of racial exploitation in the nation. Through the memory of Sethe and the rational justification of them, Paul D. as the mouthpiece of the novelist in many cases, reveals the future hope of the community. Realising Sethe's obsessive attachment with her past, Paul D. comments, "Sethe, me and you, we got more yesterday than anybody. We need some kind of tomorrow" (*Beloved*, p.322). This is exactly the message that Morrison wants to focus through the pages of *Beloved*, which obviously is depicted in the next novel of the trilogy; and the terrible experiences of the days of slavery revealed through the memories of Sethe and Paul D., Morrison recreates the history of slavery in the American society.

Historicising the Black Freedom in *Jazz*

In her novel *Jazz* Morrison narrates the cultural change that the African American community provoked after the Migration and their settlements in the northern cities. The new urban liberty that they have achieved for themselves, have brought to them tremendous changes in their cultural behaviour. The race that so far remained completely alienated from the privileges of urban civilization, began to experience them after the migration and began to

accommodate themselves in the urban set up by adopting the cultural habits that they could see in their white masters during slavery, thereby producing in them a mass of people who can be termed as 'Mimic Men' as Homi K. Bhabha points out in relation to the cultural changes in the Indians after the colonial experience. By using the memory of the days of the large scale migration during World War I, where the Blacks searched for them the new prospects that they could see after coming out of the monotonous southern life which made them quite tired and exhausted.

Violet remembers the domestic situation that probably helped her become a hairdresser; it is the memory of her days with her grandmother True Belle, her listening to the "Blatimore stories. The years with Miss Vera Louise in the fine stone house on Edison Street, where the linen was embroidered with blue thread" (*Jazz*, p. 17). This memory of Violet also relates to the story of her grandmother adoring "the blond boy who ran away from them depriving everybody of his carefully loved hair" (p.17). This boy is none other than Golden Gray, the mixed raced boy that Miss Vera Louise Gray gave birth with her black-skinned Negro lover Henry LesTroy, also known as Hunter's Hunter who used to live in an isolated place; and this boy assisted a wild woman in giving birth to a boy child, Joe Trace, the husband of Violet. Thus in the novel, Morrison rememorises the black experiences during the migration time, and brings up the related events to narrate the tales of the protagonist in connection with the experiences of racism.

In the main plot of the novel, the memory of Dorcas plays a vital role in the domestic life of Joe and Violet. For Violet, who never knew the girl, except her picture and the personality that she got from her careful investigations, the girl's memory is a sickness to the house, that she always tried to overcome at any time, by fair means or fowl. She even thought of deceiving her husband in order to bring him back to normalcy. For Joe, on the other hand, it is totally different. The girl had been his necessary thing for three months of nights. He brings back his memories with her, "how thinking about her as he lay in bed next to Violet was the way he entered to sleep" (*Jazz*, p. 28). This memory of his beloved has so strong an effect in his mental set up that "He minds her death, is so sorry about, but minded more the possibility of his memory failing to conjure up the dearness" (28). The memory that Morrison uses in *Jazz* seems at the surface level to be somewhat more individual than the common and public memory as we see in *Beloved*. Sethe's recollection of her days in Sweet Home, her marriage with Halle Suggs and his eventual escape speaks more about the slave experiences in the Kentucky plantations and other slave engaging sectors. But the memory of Joe or

Violet and her recollections of her past days with Joe Trace are reflective of their personal experiences compared to Sethe's slavery experiences; hence they are short lived than those of Sethe. For instance, when Joe tries to remember the way it was "when he and Violet were married, decided to leave Vesper County and move up North to the City almost nothing comes to his mind. He recalls dates, of course, events, purchases, activity, even scenes" (29). Through these individual memories, Morrison however, rewrites the history of some great events having close connection with the African American black experiences. In the novel for instance, Joe and Violet who met each other in Vesper County, got married and migrated like many other people of their community to the city, looking for a happy home. As the narrator in *Jazz* says, "Violet and Joe left Tyrell, a railway stop through Vesper County, in 1906, and boarded the colored section of the Southern sky" (30). The migration brings to them numerous changes in their hopes and dreams. The hopes that each and every black folk cherishes in his/her heart is revealed in the memory of the constant flow of the black population towards the city of Harlem, "like the city in 1926 when all the wars are over and there will never be another one." The common masses who are fatigued with the bitter experiences of war want to forget the past bitter experiences as a bad dream and want to renew their lives in a new city environment, "Here comes the new. Look out. There goes the sad stuff. The bad stuff. The things-nobody-could-help stuff. The way everybody was then and there. Forget that. History is over, you all, and everything's ahead at last" (p.7). Coming into the new city environment, and getting acquainted with the blessings of city life, they deliberately forget the country life which they have left out; and this happens to all the black folks who have created a trend in their community to move towards the North for their survival. The narrator beautifully relates to the constant flow of them towards the city, "The wave of black people running from want and violence crested in 1870s; the 80s; the 90s but was a steady tream in 1906 when Joe and Violet joined it" (*Jazz*, p.33). Not only Joe and Violet but the whole community shows a tendency of forgetfulness towards the past monotonous country life which made them feel exhausted, "Like others, they were country people, but how soon country people forget. When they fall in love with a city, it is for forever, and it is like forever" (33).

The memory of Joe and Violet about their marriage and the subsequent migration to the city brings to us the picture of the common tendency of the average southern black people towards the city of Harlem. Initially after thirteen years of his marriage, Joe decided to take Violet to Baltimore, where they could have "separate rooms, where water would come to

them not they had to go for water, there coloured men worked for $2.50 a day"; they finally went to the City instead, as was done by many people of his community. In fact his Baltimore dreams were replaced by more powerful dreams about the City where one could earn money in a more comfortable and lighter work. There earning money was so easy that, they could be delighted when "the white people would throw money at them on such easy tasks as—just for opening a taxi door, cleaning the shoes, picking a package and any such trifle works."

Joe's memories of the changes that he provoked over the years in his different stages of growing and making of the Joe Trace as we know him in the story of the novel, reveal the contemporary histories of the community's struggles in the establishment of their cultural identity. In the story, Joe Trace is the son of a wild mother, that is a woman who lived in the wilderness and gave birth to him with the help of Golden Gray, the mixed raced son of a white mother (Miss Vera Louise Gray) and a black father (Henry LesTroy). Joe Trace, who was born of unkown parents and brought up in Vesper County, Virginia, in 1873 by a black couple Mrs. Rhoda and Mr. Frank Williams, along with the six children of their own. The first change came to him when he was at the first day of his school where he had to tell his full name to the teacher for entering it in the school register; he told "Joseph Trace." Joe remembers how he got his name. When Mrs. Rhoda took him up, she gave him the name "Joseph" after her father, and she never pretended to him that he was their own child, but always said, "you are just like my own child." So one day when he asked her about his own parents, she told him very affectionately, "Oh honey, they disappeared without a trace" (*Jazz*, p.124). So he developed an understanding about his inherited identity that he was the "Trace" without which his parents disappeared. The second change came to him when he was picked out and trained to be an independent man by Mr. Frank, who in his eyes was a hunter's hunter; but he remembers the white folks calling him a witch doctor, for no other reason but to disagree that he was as smart as the Whites. It was in 1893 that Joe changed for the third time when Viena burned to the ground. He remembers, "Red fire doing fast what white sheets took too long to finish ; cancelling every deed; vacating every field; emptying us out of our places so fast we went running from one part of the country to another" (p.126). Joe and Victory moved fifteen miles far to Palestine; there he met Violet and they got married. The memory of Joe's fourth change in his personality made by the circumstances of his quest for living, that had begotten in 1906 when he took his wife to Rome; he boarded the Southern Sky for a northern one. He remembers that they moved them five times in four different cars to abide by the Jim Crow Law.[4] Joe and Violet used to live in a railroad flat in the

Tenderloin. Violet went at service and he began to work for whitefolks from polishing shoes to cleaning their toilets. Then he thought that "he had settled into his permanent self, the fifth one, when they left the stink of Mulberry Street and Little Africa" (127). Morrison narrates the history of cultural difference through the memories of Joe Trace in different stages of his life. He remembers the day just before the war when the coloured folks used to buy plots of land and build houses with big yards and vegetable gardens. If one could earn fifty, sixty dollars a month, one could manage such a provision. On his part, Joe remembers that when they moved from 140th Street to a bigger place on Lenox, "it was the light skinned renters who tried to keep us out. Me and Violet fought them, just like they was whites. We won" (127). As Joe recalls, however, bad times had hit the African American society by then; landlords white and black fought over coloured people for the high rents that was, nevertheless okay for them, since they got to live in five rooms. This memory of Joe talks about his experiences of the racial hatred in the nation relating to the black-white conflict in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He does not remember the complete story of the riot, but the scene of the riot still runs through his memory, "Then long come the summer of 1917 and after those white men took that pipe from around my head, I was brand new for sure because they almost killed me" (128). He has the living memory of the riot in Virginia, where two of his step brothers were badly hurt; Mrs. Rhoda was also attempted to kill. Joe narrates his narrow escape in the riot, "I saw some little boys running in the street. One fell down and didn't get up right away, so I went over him. That did it. Riot went on without me while me and Violet nursed my head. I survived it, though, and may be that's what made me change again the seventh time two years later in 1919 when I walked all the way, every goddamn step of the way, with the three six nine" (pp. 128-29). Joe reproaches the injustice he had done to the womanly heart of his wife Violet, "Don't get me wrong. This wasn't Violet's fault. All of it's mine. I'll never get over what I did to that girl. Never. I changed once too often. Made myself new one time too many. You could say I've been a new Negro all my life" (129). The changes that Joe has provoked throughout his growing process to manhood, has made in him a "New Negro" who has lost trace of his origin identity. He belongs to the new milieu of New Negroes who are the byproduct of the black attempt to cope up with the cultural changes after the post-migration and Post-War American modernization process.

The story of True Belle, narrated through her memory of her experiences as a slave to Colonel Wordsworth Gray, then to his daughter Vera Louise Gray and thereafter her return

home as a free woman, is also self-revealing which comments on the racial issues in the American society—the white super ego and the black sufferance over such racial differences in the society. As the narrator says, "She'd left Wordsorth, the county seat, a slave, and returned in 1888 a free woman" (*Jazz,* p.138), to be with her daughter Rose Dear and grandchildren ranging from the age of four to fourteen, and one of them Violet was twelve years old when True Belle arrived; they lived in a mean little place called Rome. What made True Belle come back from Baltimore is a tale of white hypocrisy, as his son-in-law was Dispossessed[5] of his "land and property because of a paper that he had signed after joining a party that favoured niggers voting" (138). About the experiences of white superego, True Belle remembers well how the white lady told her neighbours and friends that "She had brought her servant and an orphaned baby she fancied to Baltimore to experience a more sophisticated way of living" (139). When she left for Baltimore, her daughters Rose Dear and May were eight and ten years old respectively, and she remembers well as she went leaving behind them with her sister and husband. After serving the white family for long twenty-two years, True Belle convinced herself and her mistress to return to Vesper with ten eagle dollars in her hand as her wages for her long service and a handful of tales for her grandchildren. The most important part of her memory about the Baltimore experience is the story of blond boy Golden Gray that Vera Louise had given birth; she remembers that her mistress did not lie before her son that his father was a black-skinned nigger. True Belle has the fresh memory of "The hillarious grown-up comments he made when a child and the cavalier like courage he showed when he was a young man and went to find, if he was lucky, his father" (pp. 142-43). Golden Gray was not given any detailed information of his father, except his skin colour by his mother; he of course got the desired address of his father from True Belle. In the course of his journey to see his black father, Golden Gray came across a naked berry-black woman in the wilderness, who was hiding behind a tree. This chance meeting of Golden Gray with the wild black lady, who was fully pregnant at that time, turned out to be an anecdote that would unnerve Vera Louise and defend her son against an inevitable event of patricide. This story narrated through the memory of True Belle, adds to the complex string of the novel's historical plot, a mark of racial mixture. The wild woman whom Golden Gray meets, makes him forget his intent of killing his father for which he undertook this journey, gives birth to a boy who is later on picked up and brought up by a couple named Mrs. Rhoda and Mr. Frank Williams; and he gets the name Joe Trace in a very ironical situation, and marries Violet, the granddaughter of True Belle. The stories that True Belle narrates to her grandchildren reveals the white society's problem with the growing racial mixture. It is because of the white super

ego that Colonel Wordsorth Gray had to abandone his otherwise affectionate daughter Vera Louise after "Realizing the terrible thing that had happened to his daughter made him sweat, for there were seven mullatto children on this land" (p.141). From the fragments of her memory, True Belle relates to all the events happening around Golden Gray. Regarding his birth and christening, Golden Gray remembers from what he learned from True Belle, who gave him all details—since Vera Louise shut herself in the bedroom or turned her head whenever he tried to pull information about his father from her. Regarding his name, Golden Gray came to know that for "his christening he was not taken to the Catholic Founding Hospital, where white girls deposited their mortifications" (p.140), but they (Vera Louise and True Belle) gave him the name from what True Belle felt about the boy, "except it was golden and she had never seen that colour except in the morning sky and in the bottles of champaine." The mother of the baby Vera Louise also expressed her wonder over the colour of the boy's hair saying, "But he's golden. Completely golden" (p.148). So they named him Golden and Vera Louise added to it her inherited surname. The only thing he could gather from True Belle about his father is his name Henry LesTroy from the way True Belle pronounced it, it could be something else as well, and the address where he could search for him.

Morrison produces the history of racial hybridity against the orthodox notion of racial purity from the memory of Golden Gray about his black heredity. He remembers that when his mother Vera Louise and the cook True Belle was bathing him during his childhood, Vera Louise anxiously looked at the white palms and golden hair of the boy, True Belle just smiled. Now as a grown up man, he realises that what True Belle was smiling about was his father, the black-skinned nigger. From his childhood, he was aware of only two types of people, black like True Belle and white like his mother. So his notion of the coloured folks was quite simple. As the narrator says, "He had always thought there was only one kind—True Belle's kind. Black and nothing. Like Henry LesTroy. Like the filthy woman snoring on the cot. But there was another kind—like himself" (*Jazz*, p.149). Now as a grown-up he has realised that he belongs to neither of the kind, since he is not accepted by his black father Henry Lestroy, or looked down upon by the white society of his white mother. He remembers the way True Belle encouraged him to look for his father, "Go on. I'll tell you how to find him, or what's left of him. It don't matter if you do find him or not; it's the going that counts" (p.159).

History of Desegregation and Construction of Black Township in *Paradise*

The trend of retelling history through rememory that Morrison exploited in the first two novels is more effectively used in the third novel of the trilogy *Paradise*, where the history of the foundation of several black towns makes the narrative of the novel in the form of storytelling. The events of the past black efforts to ensure social freedom and a race free status is remorised in order to plan for futurity.

The novel is set around some major events of American history in particular and the world history in general, and these historical aspects lead the novel towards a complex chronological structure. Although at many places the events narrated in the novel have historical connectivity, and since the novel does not mention the chronology explicitly; we have to find it out by calculating from other references. Thus the fictitious events narrated in the novel reflect the historical picture of black experiences pertaining to different times. Although they are not history with detailed account of any events, they are the segments of the black history that they make us believe the way the American Blacks had to struggle for their existence in numerous establishments. For instance, the novel mentions that Steward and Deacon are married in 1949, and again it is said that in mid-August the fifteen families move from Haven to "New Haven". Another reference that we can take into account is the death of Ruby, the younger sister of the Morgan brothers in 1952, and the subsequent renaming of the town after her. Likewise, we can assume that Mavis arrives at the Convent in 1968, which we can calculate from the narrator's mention about her Cadillac, especially its registration year, "It ain't new, though. It's three years old. 'A' 65"(*Paradise*, p.25); and it is indicative of a contemporary history marked with the registration document of her car. She immediately starts the journey looking for salvation of her suffering heart, which ends at the Convent, where she arrives in 1968. The novel gives a detailed account of her mental condition and at the same time we get a beautiful idea about the psyche of a mother in such social turmoil, "Seven months after King's murder, and Soane had sobbed like the redeemed to see both her boys alive. Her sweet coloured boys unshot, unlynched, unmolested, unimprisoned" (*Paradise*, p.101). Therefore, the thirsty mother cried out when they piled out of the car, "Prayer works!" Likewise, we are given the history of each of the convent boarders, such as in May 1971, Gigi arrives at the Convent" (76-77); that in October 1973 Seneca arrives at the Convent (114) and in the same year Billie Delia visits there too (152). Morrison hereby recreates the history with some new angles from which we can view

American history, changing the very colour of its shadows, showing whites what they look like in black mirrors.

Thus the novel may be read, in the words of Widdowson, as "a history of African Americans from the end of World War II to July 1976", and more specifically from the mid-1960s to 1976 - the period of political assassinations, Vietnam War, Civil Rights Movement and many other black revolutionary activities. As reflected in the two earlier novels of the trilogy, Morrison's *Paradise* also reflects the experience of black Americans "claiming ownership" of their theoretically "freed selves" in a period of rapid change, which they have achieved to a considerable level in terms of their cultural behaviour. The black social history that makes the narrative of Morrison and other authors of the community covers a long period of the black experiences in America. It is a history of freed Blacks from the end of the period of "Reconstruction" (1877) through the various movements and wars across the world to 1976, and therefore of the way their subsequent history is a history of the failure of Reconstruction. Significantly, 1976 is also the year nominated by the historian, Manning Marable (1984), as pivotal in the decline/demise of the Civil Rights Movement, itself now known as the "Second Reconstruction" (Widdowson, 2001).

Like the other two novels of the trilogy, memory plays a significant role in making *Paradise* a historical narrative, where Morrison rememorizes the experiences of Reconstruction and the eventual failure of the Blacks in procuring equal status in the American society that they had been longing for. In *Paradise* the twin brothers, Deacon and Steward Morgan, who control both money and power in the town are haunted by constant memory of their past; the novelist gives a vivid picture of their memory:

> The twins have powerful memories. Between them they remember the details of everything that ever happened – things they witnessed and things they have not. The exact temperature of the weather when the cars circled the girls as well as the bushel yield of every farm in the county. And they have never forgotten the message or the specifics of any story, especially the controlling one told to them by their grandfather—the man who put the words in the Oven's black mouth. A story that explained why neither the founders of Haven nor their descendants could tolerate anybody but themselves. (*Paradise*,13)

The Blacks despite their perpetual efforts to come out of the dark and terrible memories of the past, had to live unwillingly in the past; and they had to keep in their minds every aspect of their family history and the community history, and thus they had to mould the present out of the memory of their past, however dark it might be. They have created that past and control the history of the town, aiming to control its present, every aspect of the town's life. In Ruby there is no history "except as it is composed" (Davidson 2001). Thus according to Davidson, "the history of the founding of the town is idealized, or even idolized." In the novel, there are several points at which there are fusion of history, memory and the present. To give an example, we can talk about the way in which that history is mingled with the life of Jesus in the annual Christmas pageant.

In *Paradise* Morrison brings back the history of the construction of the coloured towns in America as reaction to social discrimination and political injustice, and shows the black psyche of living in a self-governed social environment; and the novel's narrative brings back the memory of all such former attempts made by the black population time and again in different periods of the nation's history. The novel shows the cultural tendency of the 'homogenization of identity' improvised by the memory of the historical connectivity of the root of all racial exploitations. In the novel the racialised people of Ruby construct the city as a reserved place where they can have the freedom of living at a safe distance from the white dominance; and maintain an exclusionist community life based on the 'historical connection' to the faith developed by their founding fathers about the living according to God's free will focused with the message "Beware the Furrow of His Brow" cast on the mouth of the Oven. The citizens of Ruby are the impoverished descendants of some ex-slaves, initially pertaining to nine families, who were the common victims of the unforgettable historical event of 'Disallowing", initially assembled while looking for a place to establish a new settlement for living in their own free will. During the happenings around the hateful racial practice of Disallowing the people of "coal black" skin being rejected by the whites and the lighter skinned blacks, felt psychologically insulted by the people who were otherwise "men like them in all ways but one" (*Paradise*, p. 160/189). Taking the badge of the insult they had to bear with in the name of Disallowing, and "bound by the enormity of what had happened to them" (189), they followed the "signs of God" when they set out to establish an all-black town that allows them to "exist in that very exclusion" they experience from others. The foundation of Ruby, on the one hand, is a defensive measure against the injustice of

Disallowance, on the other hand a remedy for the past wrongs and the trauma they had suffered out of it.

Thus in the novels of her trilogy, Morrison has produced a historical narrative reiterating the cultural difference that the Blacks have been meted out in the nation. In narrating the American black experience Morrison has presented the cultural identity of the African Americans that can be viewed only through an interstitial space, the place of 'occult instability' that Bhabha calls the "Third Space" of cultural hybridity.

Memory of motherhood Under Slavery

Morrison, as a representative author of the African Americans, asserts that slavery was neither voluntary nor any God gifted or inherited job for the Blacks. It was rather a forced obligation to them, a condition from which there was no escape door for them; and the worst victims of slavery were the black mothers, who gave birth to their children, brought up them to a tender age and had to surrender them in the hands of the child pickers. Slavery in other words was always found to be an obstacle to the very status of motherhood itself. The way that each of the black woman approaches the issue of motherhood seems to be relative to each of her distinct situations. Morrison has depicted the pathetic sight of a mother how she witnesses the inhuman chase of children exercised by the white masters; and how helplessly a mother looks of their children being snatched away from them. The humiliation they suffer in the hands of the white child pickers and the white masters reveal the ways the coloured people are victimized. In the novel *Beloved* slavery is depicted as destructive force that not only destroyed the liberty of a woman, but rather as a social condition that acted in direct opposition to the ability of a woman to be a proper mother. It is not that Sethe chose the act of infanticide as an intent of having any retaliation; she is forced to murder her daughter so that slavery should not grip her daughter as it happened to her own case. Rather than leaving her daughter to face slavery alone, she does what many would consider to be a deviant act in terms of motherhood. One may doubt how a mother could be so cruel to murder her own child. In fact, both Sethe and Baby Suggs are moved by the natural maternal love that any mother possesses. Baby Suggs's maternal characteristics are obvious and like many other mothers of her community, she has reconciled to her destiny and accepted the state of slavery as a social condition that she has to bear with. She is a truly loving and spiritual woman, who opened her heart to the community and did her best for the welfare of the community, with the display of a progressive and rational woman. Sethe, on the other hand, is maternal in her

deep love of her children and her reaction to slavery is the genuine outburst of an angry mother who loses all her self-possession and rationality at the traumatic situation of slave hunting. Her anger is against the situation, or against her destiny or rather against the custom that she cannot rectify with her action. Morrison sometimes uses colour symbols in her narratives to depict certain events and the memories associated with such events; and how such memories have lasting impact upon the community. For instance, the colour Red bears a special significance in the novel; as a stock symbol, it is traditionally associated with both love and violence. In this novel, Morrison has used it as a significant symbol in connection of both of the traditional implications. In the novel we see Paul D. crying out "red heart" after sleeping with Beloved. On the one hand he has made love to her and at the same time he feels that she has done him terrible violence. Similarly for Sethe's mother-in-law Baby Suggs, the colour Red is indicative of her inner fury, because she expresses her desire to die before she had to think about red. Thus we see that in the novel, colour and love are intricately connected to each other, and both are clearly tied to the issues of love, integrity and freedom in the black society.

As a novel dealing primarily with black memory, Morrison's *Beloved* retrieves for us the memory of a black mother about the bygone days of her life that had snatched all her children away; and it is depicted through the memory of Baby Suggs that she reveals to her daughter-in-law to convince her to have patience in a traumatic situation; the words uttered by one bereaved mother as a means to bring consolation and appeasement for another grieve-stricken mother who is psychologically haunted by the loss of her children, and creates for us complex reminders of the history of motherhood,

> "My first born. All I remember of her is how she loved the burned bottom of bread. Can you beat that? Eight children and that's all I remember."(*Beloved*, p.6)

In *Beloved*, Morrison has presented the impact of slavery upon the dignity of motherhood in a highly racialized society. Each of the women approached the issue of motherhood relative to their individual distinct situations. Sethe is forced to murder her daughter so that slavery should not overcome her. Slavery heretofore is in direct opposition to the ability of a woman to function properly as a mother, because after giving birth to the children, a black mother cannot be sure if they will remain with her or not. Therefore, Sethe chooses the hateful act of infanticide so that she should not see her daughter pushed into the

hellish world of slavery. It is not that Sethe is the only victim of slavery as a mother, her mother-in-law Baby Suggs suffered it more pathetically during her days, and they have been enduring it as their destiny. She says,

> "What'd be the point?" Asked Baby Suggs. "Not a house in the country ain't packed to its rafters with some dead Negro's grief. We lucky this ghost is a baby. My husband's spirit was to come back in here? Or yours? Don't talk to me. You lucky. You got three left. Three pulling your skirts and just one raising hell from the other side. Be thankful, why don't you? I had eight. Everyone of them gone away from me. Four taken, four chased, and all, I expect, worrying somebody's house into evil."(*Beloved*, p.6)

Thus memory helps Morrison in constructing the history of slavery under the plantation industry and it turns out to be the history of bereaved motherhood under slavery, as revealed throughout the pages of *Beloved*. It is the memory of the condition of slavery that covers the best part of Morrison's narrative in the novel which the novelist carries over to the other succeeding novels of the trilogy.

The strain of using memory is continued in the second novel of the trilogy, of course in a different perspective. The novel *Jazz* is set basically around the theme of matrimonial love against the maternal love that *Beloved* deals with. Being the second novel of the trilogy, *Jazz* narrates the condition of the society after coming out of the cobweb of slavery to live in freedom. Here memory is displayed through those of Miss Vera Louise and Alice Manfred about the black pursuit of freedom. Alice for instance, remembers "…the silent women and men marching down Fifth Avenue to advertise their anger over two hundred dead Negros in East St. Louise, two of who were her sister and brother-in-law, killed in the riot" (*Jazz*, Pp.56-57). Here the memory of the riot reconstructs the history of the black movement in the nation. Talking about motherhood in a racialized society, we can say that Alice is haunted by the memory of the riots that took the lives of many of her kin relatives thereby pushing Dorcas into her orphanage. Violet also has the strong memory of her miscarried children which time and again appear in the stream of her thoughts. But contrary to Violet's grievances about her miscarriages, Joe was relatively reluctant to the matter of getting a child. He thought that "all those miscarriages—two in the field, only one in her bed—were more convenience than loss" (p.107). In fact he could not feel the motherly hunger of his wife, for he thought that city life would be much better without children. This remebrance of Joe and

Violet also relates to the history of their migration that they participated. The narrator reveals the trauma of being in the want of children, "Arriving at the train station back in 1906, the smiles they both smiled at the women with little children," and the fact is that they loved children and liked to have children of their own, but neither of them was willing to take the trouble; Violet's natural longing for children is seen as the narrator talks about her, "she was forty, she was already staring at infants, hesitating in front of toys displayed at Christmas" (p. 107). With the passage of time, Violet's longing for a child became heavier than sex: an unmanageable craving; and her uncontrolable desire turned into a trauma which can be asserted from the act of Violet buying a present and hiding it under the bed to take it out in secret to soothe her thirst for motherhood. Whenever she was alone, she began to imagine how old that last miscarried child would be now and in her imagination that child appeared to be a girl, "who would she favour? What would her speaking voice sound like? After weaning time, Violet would blow her breath on the baby girl's food, cooling it down for the tender mouth" (p.108).

This way Violet was drowning into deep-dreaming of a child, and it was when "her breasts were flat enough not to need the bonders, when her nipples had lost their point" a physical indication showing her inability to reproduce; at such a point of time when motherhood was a mere dream that could never come true, mother-hunger began to hit her like a hammer. This individual memory of Joe and Violet about their experiences with filial matters reveals the state of the common Blacks during the migration time. It was because of the need for moving from place to place in search of a better living as was common to most of the people of the American South, Joe could not pay much heed to his filial matters which resulted in the deprivation of motherhood to his wife. The state of being childless parents, early death of children and miscarriages are so common in the society that they were used to accepting such events as natural as the flow of a gentle river.

Paradise also recreates the history of racial discrimination in America from which the Blacks are always found to be trying to come out but they fail again and again; the failure of Haven in ensuring black freedom showcases racialized feelings looming large in the minds of all the African Americans which they carry from generation to generation. The failure of Haven as an all-black town and the memory in connection with it encourages the next generation progenies to found Ruby as another all-black town, in a somewhat more advanced and modernized living condition than their predecessors had in Haven. Despite their hard toil, Ruby, however, also eventually fails; because of their lack of leadership and organisation

ability and the lack of social integrity that they displayed in their attack upon the convent; the black leaders of Ruby are seen trembling with fear after the murder of a white girl in the Convent. It is the fear of the white law, the white supremacy and the racial hegemony they have been witnessing over the years, which finally resulted in the failure of Ruby. Throughout the events they are haunted by the memory of the oppression that their forefathers had suffered, and they are always found to be engaged in the efforts to come out of the racial discrimination they have been suffering over the ages.

Recreating History through Storytelling

Toni Morrison is a great storyteller and the stories she tells in her novels make essential parts of African American history. The technique of storytelling has a great connection with the knowledge of history of a race the author wants to write about. Morrison has got an indelible imprint of various folk resources that she has inherited from her family and her community environment which she uses as the prime sources for storytelling. In fact in all kinds of storytelling, the Fables, tall tales and legends, there are certain historical incidents as their inspiration. The art of storytelling has multiplicity of meaning and different forms of artistic works are involved in the art of storytelling. We can say that the habit of storytelling began when early people painted the caves, which are still surviving in the form of archeological resources in different parts of the world. Likewise, there are numerous instances of storytelling that we find in the paintings of the royal palaces, walls and many historical buildings; although in many cases it is not known why they were painted, but we can say that they were associated with storytelling. Many a times authors are inspired to write their books on the basis of such archeological and artistic works. For instance, Toni Morrison is urged to write her *Beloved* by reading a newspaper clipping in *The Black Book*, that summarized "the story of Margaret Garner, a young mother who, having escaped slavery, was arrested for killing one of her children (and trying to kill the others) rather than let them be returned to the owner's plantation."[6]

So far as the history of storytelling is concerned, the storytellers in the ancient times are supposed to tell their stories to the people who gathered around them, mostly recollected from their memory. Regarding storytelling, Toni Morrison said, "No one tells the story about himself or herself unless forced. They don't want to talk, they don't want to remember. But when you say it, hear it, look at it, and share it, they are not only one, they are two, three, and four, you know? The collective sharing of that information heals the individual—and the

collective."[7] By reiterating the urge for telling one's own stories Morrison tries to focus the need for exploring the untold and unheard stories to the common people.

For her novels Morrison did not have to discover her tales, she has rather retold the stories which are already stocked in her memory, the stories of exploitation and suffering of the people of her race. Thus she has fulfilled the essential quality of a novelist, as the English novelist Anthony Trollope pointed out in his autobiography that the success of writing a novel depends on whether the novelist has "a story to tell or to tell a story."[8] Toni Morrison had procured a big storage of such stories that she gathered from her experiences and in her community which she feels, are very essential to tell so that the rest of the world should know how her race is struggling with their identity. Therefore, Morrison has created stereotype characters which represent their types; so that the experiences of her characters should be the common experience of the African Americans. Why Morrison creates stereotype characters in her novels as typical preconceived slaves, can be justified as her intent to generalize the black experiences in America, which she herself may not have experienced but got to hear from various sources of her surrounding, and thereby she tries to perpetuate the history of slavery. The author's intent behind writing these stories is not to entertain the readers but, rather to make the world know the things happening to her people. Using raw and unpolished languages in her fictional narratives, Morrison produces raw vision of the Black suffrage in the nation. Thus they are told as a form of catharsis, a way to come to terms with what has happened or happening with the American Blacks, by explaining and thus understanding the reality about the nation's racist experiences. Thus storytelling is not about hanging on to the past, but rather about understanding it, accepting it, and moving on from it. Therefore, Morrison's fitting remark at the end of *Beloved* that "This is not a story to pass on" makes it clear that she is a storyteller and her stories are not at all forgetable, ignorable and something that should be let go with just a nod of the head; they are rather to be grasped, felt and do something for the betterment of her society, or for the betterment of humanity as a whole; because they reflect certain vital truths of the American society in particular and to the dignity of the whole human race in general. These are the stories of racial exploitation and sexual exploitation in different periods of African American racial history.

Memory of Wounds and Scars Used for Recreating History

The treatment of history in the novels of Toni Morrison is a matter of revisiting those aspects of history that have been kept behind the screen in the mainstream history of

America. Her intent of remembering history is to explore the wounds the Blacks in America have been suffering for generations. These memories are the scars of the wounds of inhumanity that the Blacks are made to carry on their shoulders; and the novels of Morrison are filled with such memories that remind us one or the other wound provoked by the American Blacks. The author's attempt of using memory is to heal the community's wounds, caused by racial exploitation and the feelings of 'being raced' over the ages.

The memories that Morrison uses in her novels are always scaring, whether they are displayed visibly or expressed symbolically. For instance, in the novel *Beloved*, Sethe will always carry a tree on her back that symbolizes the scars or the wounds of slavery under plantation, "A chokecherry tree. Trunk, branches and even leaves" (*Beloved*, p.16). It is a constant reminder of the bitter life or the nightmare that she passed at Sweet Home, the plantation in Kentucky where she spent most of her life under slavery. Similarly, we can say that the scar that Joe in the novel *Jazz* carries after the brutal murder of Dorcas, ruins the peace of his married life, he has been living in the apartment in the northern City; and we get a picture of the living conditions of the coloured people through the reaction of Joe and Violet to the situation. After the brutal murder of Dorcas, the couple is usually expected to forget everything, what was past. But instead of trying to forget the causes and consequences of Joe's murderous and Violet's reteliating responses to Dorcas, the couple choose to set her picture in a prominent place in their home and visit it at regular intervals on nights, thereby allowing the event as a constant reminder of the horrible act. Thus by keeping the Dorcas wound refreshed with the photograph (as a constant and disturbing reminder), the Traces have created a kind of self-disturbance and particularly Joe is constantly haunted by his past and he is made to remember his (mis)deed. As memory makes a common tool for Morrison to build up narratives for retelling the historical events, it is used elaborately in each of the novels of the trilogy. In *Paradise*, Morrison makes use of such memory in more complex and fruitful manner than she did in the previous two novels. Here we are presented with a very different tree of scars, the family tree as Patricia Best points out to a collective scaring more dangerous even than *Beloved*'s; for in *Beloved* Morrison explores motherly love, and in *Jazz* she explores sexual love, whereas *Paradise* is a contemplation of a devout community where divine love, the love for the creator is strongly presented. In *Paradise*, through the family trees of the nine families associated with the foundation of Ruby that Patricia Best tries to draw in her historical project, Morrison uses the memory of the events associated with the

foundation of the all-black towns that developed during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In her novels, Morrison displays a clear concern with the scaring potential of memories, but she seems to be uncertain how to balance between the acts of remembering and forgetting. In many cases the African slaves remained silent and their silence was like a veil on the state of slavery and the long silence led towards forgetfulness. Morrison feels that the Blacks were denied justifiable access to historical accuracy, as 'they were silent about many things' and 'they forgot many things', and this denial was not self-chosen but obsession with them. Morrison also wants to avoid such an obsession with the past that will make future events pre-determined. Morrison says that the protagonist of *Jazz* has 'lived too much' in her own mind and she makes her delineate through the character of Dorcas; and the events with Dorcas and the Traces will simply be turned out as a hateful event. Likewise, the citizens of Ruby in *Paradise* are almost programmed to hate as for their coloured race and there is a delicate hatred given birth by difference of race and class. The opening sentence of *Paradise* "they shot the white girl first" displays such a hateful racial difference. Morrison's use of memory can be said to be a way of enjoying constructively with the past; of learning from, yet not being controlled by events rather than merely deeming her message that *Beloved* was not a story to pass on, which therefore, she deliberately recreates in the subsequent novels, *Jazz* and *Paradise*.

As memory is the means to bring the past to the present so as to lead the future, the most common tendency of focusing on the past is to remember only those past events which are not supposed to be passed on. Paul D. expresses such sentiments in telling Sethe, "me and you, we got more yesterday than anybody. We need some kind of tomorrow" (*Beloved*, p.321). Thus recollecting the past Paul D. wants to live the present and hopes for the future. Morrison has successfully presented the traumatic state of the racialized people that they had suffered out of certain collective wounds; and in her novels the protagonists are powerfully marked by such traumatic incidences and the everlasting traces of such wounds. In *Jazz*, for instance, Joe Trace witnesses the wild mother who disowns him in all aspects of life, and in *Paradise* the women in the convent are pushed to live there by certain traumatic events of their lives. Similarly, in *Beloved* Sethe has been turned out to be an infanticide by the trauma of slavery and her obsession with it. These are the scars common to all African Americans, the traces of which they can never wipe out, and the memory always remains active in their hearts.

Collective Memory in Reconstructing History

Rather than individual memory, collective memory plays more important role in shaping the contemporary history of a community. Paul Recoeur, the famous French philosopher in his book *Memory, History Forgetting,* (trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer, 2004) points out that "it is not only individual, but also collective conscience which is shaped by key-events as most events connected with founding of any community are acts and events of violence" and he believes that "collective memory is a kind of storage of such individual blows, wounds and scars". It is the collective memory that Baby Suggs in *Beloved* is trying to appease in her celebrations of the flesh and her advice to her disciples to ,love every part of the black body that the Whites despise; as the collective memory of the riot helps Dorcas's aunt forget the wound of the murder of her niece. Likewise, it is the collective memory of Disallowing that gives such weighty significance to the "Beware the Furrow of His Brow" etched on the oven in Ruby as we see in *Paradise*.

Sometimes the collective memory appears as a more dangerous action, for collective memory is nothing but the storage of individual exploitation, anger and hatred. Sethe's collective memory about the chase and capture of her children is changed and soothed by the appearance of Beloved, the reincarnation of her lost daughter; but the collective experiences of the freed slaves over the years are not changed; hence the neighbours of Sethe always feels a phantom appearance around Sethe's house. She wants to forget the troublesome experience of slave catching by keeping the memory of infanticide fresh and she makes up by the presence of Beloved beside her. The individual differences between the plantation owners and the slaves are not decreased over the generations; on the contrary, the collective memory of exclusion in Ruby hovers about the towns folk and make them intolerant against any outsider.

There is no denying the fact that memory is inescapable, and one cannot bring about collective memory by disowning of the past events. The narrator of *Jazz*, who is crazy about the city, in memorising the war-time situation says:

> "Alone, yes, but top-notch and indestructible—like the City in 1926 when all the wars are over and there will never be another one. The people down there in the shadow are happy about that. At last, at last, everything's ahead. The smart ones say so and people listening to them and reading what they write

> down agree: Here comes the new. Look out. There goes the sad stuff. The things nobody-could-help-stuff" (*Jazz*, p.7).

There is always a persisting effort to make people of the oppressed section forget the past. History can be deviated from the reality by a manipulative narrative, as is found in most of the white discourses; but it cannot be removed from human psyche. By making people forget the past, one cannot remove history from the public memory, though they can be made aware of the changes the society provokes, for change is inevitable in every society and folks are to embrace such changes, as the Blacks are shown to be trying to keep pace with the changung social scenario in *Jazz*. That is why the narrator of *Jazz* again says,

> "Forget that. History is over, you all, and everything's ahead at last. In halls and offices people are sitting around thinking future thoughts about projects and bridges and fast-clicking trains underneath. The A&P hires a colored clerk, big-legged women with pink kitty tongues roll money into green tubes for later on; then they laugh and put their arms around each other" (p.7).

The effort to convince that history is over—as we see in the approaches of the young generation of the African Americans like Patricia Best in *Paradise*—is only an attempt to hide certain truths of the past, which can never be done practically. In fact history is never over, and any attempt to deny the importance of history is doomed to the failure of the futurity. The horrible event of slavery and child picking looms so large on Sethe that she can never overcome what happened with her and what she did to defend her child from the hands of the slave pickers. Beloved is her conscience and a consolation to her past deeds. So she replies to the queries of Paul D regarding the identity of Beloved, as who she was or where she came or who told her about124, "(Beloved) Must be somebody from the old days" (*Jazz*, p.7). It indicates that it must be the spirit of Sethe's daughter, she had killed. In fact Sethe always tried to keep herself busy with her works in order to beat the shadows of past that looms large on her mind and the appearance of Beloved works as an embodiment of that past which has to be believed and confronted now that it has physically materialized. As a freed woman, she builds up the present materializing the past experiences, which she keeps alive in her minds and the individual memory of Sethe turns out to be collective memory for the members of 124.

As an embodiment of the past, the power of Beloved and all that she represents over the residents of 124, is illustrative of the totalizing power of the past that hovers about the

home of Sethe and nobody living in 124 can scare it. Paul D as well as Denver does not want her yet they cannot avoid her and they have to live with the uncanny presence of Beloved as a sense of the past. It is the same power that makes the genealogy of the people of Ruby a tree of scars, the twin brothers Deacon and Stewart Morgan in *Paradise* have "powerful memories. Between them they remember the details of everything that has ever happened. Things they have witnessed and things they have not" (p.7).

Their active memory helps them bring back essential history of their race, how their community is trying to change themselves to acquire a position in the mainstream. They began to believe themselves to be impartial banks of collective memory, though they fail to notice the decline of the nativity and the origin plan of the intact nine families, which reduced them from nine to seven, considering the unwanted events of the marriage of the members of two of the nine families with those of lighter skin. The fallibility of memory is shown through the other characters also—Pallas, for instance can see the crazy woman away, "In greater detail now than when first sighted" (*Paradise,* 163). Just as they fail to see their inability to remember everything, they fail to see the possibility that they could organize the provoking changes, as the narrator of *Paradise* says,

> "It was that thinking made a community "kitchen" so agreeable. They were extraordinary. They had served, picked, plowed and traded in Lousiana since 1755, when it included Mississippi; and when it was divided into states they had helped govern both from 1868 to 1875, after which they had been reduced to field labour." (*Paradise*, p.99)"

Thus throughout her novels, especially in the trilogy, Morrison has reconstructed the history of slavery and the lives under the condition of institutional slavery. In their memory, there is the history of two hundred years of their struggle and suffering towards establishment of the black town as their safe Heaven, the paradise on earth. By using the memory of freed slaves, presented as protagonist characters in her novels, Morrison tries to explore the history of the African Americans under slavery. The historicity of the novels can be assumed from the author's own comment on her novel *Beloved*:

> "I think now it was the shock of liberation that drew my thoughts to what 'free" could possibly mean to women. In the eighties, the debate was still rolling: equal pay, equal treatment, access to professions, schools … and choice without stigma. To marry or not. Inevitably these thoughts led me to

> the different history of black women in this country—a history in which marriage was discouraged, impossible, or illegal; in which birthing children was required, but "having" them, being responsible for them—being, in other words, their parent—was as out of the question as freedom."[9]

Thus by making an endeavour to display the psychological state of the Blacks under the barbarous tradition of slavery, Morrison positions her writerly self in the wholly racialized society of the United States, and establishes the racial exploitation in the nation by making the readers enter into the unexplored territories of American history; and thereby occupies a position for a writer of an assumed "literary blackness" in a society constructed on the imaginative line of "literary whiteness"(*Playing in the Dark* p. xii). Her *Beloved* records the stunning experiences of slavery; whereas *Jazz* narrates the condition of black freedom through migration and its aftremath; and her *Paradise* produces the reconstruction of the coloured societies under the racial conditions like Segregation and Disallowing, arousing the racial sensibility. Thus Morrison's novels as Hutcheon points out, "though touched by the prevailing postmodern irony toward questions of truth and representation, fiction and history, *Beloved* and most contemporary novels of slavery are not "historiographic metafictions" denying the possibility of historical "Truth" (qt. in Rody, 1995). The contemporary African American fiction, towards the articulation of "slave histories", mostly centering upon questions of memory, knowledge, and identity, as Rody points out, "share with many ethnic, feminist, and postcolonial texts the impulse "to create an authoritative voice, not to undermine an already existing one."[10]

Rewriting American History: Morrison's Canon Fodder

In her essay "Black Matter(s)", Morrison questions the validity of the conventionally accepted "knowledge" of the literary historians and critics, who hold that "traditional, canonical American literature is free of, unformed by, and unshaped by the four-hundred-year-old presence of Africans and then African Americans in the United States."[11] Morrison denies the conventional and historical assumption that characteristics of the national literature of America emanate from a particular "Americanness" that is separate from and unaccountable to the Africanist presence. Morrison brings out a very important question regarding the hegemonic approaches of the so called mainstream American literary historians in their treatment of the African Americans: "How does literary utterance arrange itself when it tries to imagine an Africanistic Other?" ("Black Matters"; *Mouth Full of Blood*, p.143). The

Blacks in America are being presented in the white literary discourses, as mere decorative elements, and as displays of the facile writer's technical expertise; where there is a deliberate absence of the black subject or at best there is only a manipulated history of the 'Others' is being presented. Therefore, Morrison asserts that as a means of "transacting the whole process of Americanisation while buying its particular racial ingredients, this Africanistic presence may be something the United States cannot do without" (153).

The memory of racial exploitation has so strong an impact on the literary imagination and critical thoughts that she had a mind to use the title "Canon Fodder" instead of the present title for her essay "Unspeakable Things Unspoken" commemorating the black "ethnics" or the poor working class, who were used in the Vietnam war as mere "fodders", a hateful tradition of treating the Blacks as 'Others' even at the crucial time of war. But Morrison cherishes hope that this type of repression in the name of race will not last long, and the processes of eliminating the black silences have started in a positive note; she observes, "Silences are being broken, lost things have been found, and at least two generations of scholars are disentangling received knowledge from the apparatus of control, most notably those who are engaged in investigations of French and British colonialist literature, American slave narratives, and the delineation of the Afro-American literary tradition" (*Mouth Full of Blood*, p.170). Morrison very confidently asserts that now, after three centuries of ignorance and disinterestedness, the Afro-American artistic presence has been discovered and admitted its existance in the serious scholarship to count their contribution to American culture. Morrison as a bold voice of the repressed African American states that they no longer look forward to the elitist imagination for them, they have always been imagining themselves.

Morrison says that it is the operation of canon building that brings up the difference in the cultural identity of the Blacks from the mainstream Americans; and she maintains that "canon building is empire building, canon defense is national defense" (169). Therefore, the process of repression that the African Americans face in America is a system of social repression brought forth by such a canon of American literature which, according to Morrison, is "naturally" or "inevitably" "white" (176). Now the question that Morrison brings before us is very important from the point of view of black identity. What makes a work "black"? To this question, Morrison has the ready answer that it is "the most valuable point of entry into the question of cultural (or racial) distinction, the most fraught, is its language—its unpolished, seditious, confrontational, manipulative, inventive, disruptive, masked, and unmasking language" (173). Commenting on the impact of Afro-American culture on

contemporary American literature, Morrison refers to her own fiction, and the ways she activates language in exploring the primary concerns of her narrative. The opening lines of a fictional work play a vital role in revealing the prime motive of the author, and the subject matter it deals with. There are the prime motives revealed in the opening lines of each novel of Morrison.

Morrison's debut novel *The Bluest Eye* begins with the sentence, "Quiet, as it's kept, there were no marigolds in the fall of 1941." This simple, uncomplicated opening sentence reveals various important aspects of the novel's racial, social and historical importance of the novel. Out of this sentence, the phrase, "Quiet as it's kept", according to Morrison, reveals to her "a familiar sight of children listening to adults, to black women conversing with one another; telling a story, an anecdote, gossip about someone or some event within the circle, family, neighbourhood." At the same time it reveals a situation, "Shh, don't tell anyone else" and "no one is allowed to know this", the 'forced silence'of the Blacks about the 'raced condition'. On the one hand it is suggestive of a psychological situation, a secret gossip, where the teller is on the inside, who knows something that others do not. On the other hand, the second part of the sentence 'there is no marigold in the fall of 1941' reveals a historical situation; that connects the eventual year of American history, 1941—a momentous year marking the beginning of World Aar II for the United States—the fall of 1941, just before the declaration of war, according to Morrison has a "closet" innuendo (*Mouth Full of Blood*, p.184). As a common term, it relates to a temperate zone where there is a season called "fall" during which one expects marigolds to be at their peak, but during the months before the beginning of U.S. participation in World War II, something grim is to be divulged, so as to mean a grim reality of the American history. Likewise, the origin opening title of her second novel *Sula*, "Except for World War II nothing ever interfered with National Suicide Day", reveals the author's intent of dealing with a national subject, commenting again on an important aspect of history, though she changed it later to keep up her interest in the racial subject, and to work with her preference for the demolition of the lobby altogether. In order to befit the social context of the novel, Morrison changed the opening line to "In that place, where they tore the night shade and blackberry patches from their roots to make room for the Medallion Golf Course, there was once a neighbourhood." By making a change in her original plan, Morrison translated the anonymous into a specific, a "place" into a "neighbourhood"; for which she had to squeeze the specificity and the difference, the nostalgia, the history, and the nostalgia for the history; the violence done to it and the

consequences of that violence (187). Here in this current statement Morrison's motive of racial concern is beautifully revealed, where the signifiers "night shade"—constituted with two darkness words 'night' and 'dark'—and "black berry" have the signified correlation of "night" and "dark" denoting the advancement in the name of the golf course, that destroys the neighbourhood of a black community. Morrison always thought of Sula as "quintessentially black, metaphysically black, and presents her in the novel as a New World Black or rather as a New World woman, extracting choice from choicelessness" (188), responding inventively and improvisingly to the things found in her society. In view of the kind of woman, Morrison picks up the final conversation of Sula with Nel, where she refers to herself as a special kind of black woman, a person with her own choice, rather than a blind follower of the social trend; and in the perception of the novelist, the double dose of Sula's chosen blackness and biological blackness is in the presence of the two words of darkness in the "nightshade". According to Morrison the "blackberry patches", like the symbolic double dose of the "night shade", also self-revealing in terms of Sula's black identity: nourishing, never needing to be tended or cultivated, once rooted and bearing (188). Thus all through her novels Morrison has presented before us a stunning history of the black cultural tradition in America; and each novel of Morrison works as the strong discourses against the 'canon fodder' of white attitude towards the black subject, that fulfills the gap or the emptiness of the black subject in the American knowledge system.

Memory and Myth: Reconstruction of Black Cultural History

Memory and myth have been extensively used by Morrison in the reconstruction of black racial history in her novels. In the novel *Song of Solomon*, Morrison makes use of the myth of flight to connect the present black psychology with the memory of their African root and their inherent longing for it. The opening line of the novel, "The North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Agent promised to fly from Mercy to the other side of Lake Superior at three O'clock" and the note tacked on the door of his house, "At 3:30 p.m. on Wednesday the 18th of February, 1931, I will take off from Mercy and fly away on my own wings. Please forgive me. I love you all." There is a great racial sentiment in this oepning statement of the novel which symbolically reveals a number of issues of black identity. For instance, the name of the company has been taken from a black-owned company dependent on black clients and the two important words used for its corporate name are "life" and "mutual", which the community needs most for its development. The sentence begins with "North Carolina" and

closes with "Lake Superior"—geographical locations that according to Morrison, suggest a journey from South to North—a direction common for black immigration and in literature about it, but which is reversed here since the protagonist has to go South to mature.[12] Two other words in the opening sentence that draw's special attention of the author are "fly" and "mercy", and Morrison has used both of these terms as the central focus in her narrative: flight as escape or confrontation and mercy as the unspoken wish of the novel's population. Mercy, according to Morrison, is "what one wishes for Hagar, what is unavailable to and unsought by Meacon Dead, senior; what his wife learns to demand from him, and what the towns folk believe can never come from the white world, as is signified by the inversion of the name of the hospital from Mercy to "No-Mercy" (*Song of Solomon*, Foreword, p. xi). Morrison, however, points out that the sentence turns on its verb "promise"; a word by which the insurance agent does not declare, announce, or threaten his act; he promises, as though a contract is being executed between him and others. He hopes his flight, like that of the character in the title, toward asylum (Canada, or freedom, or company of the welcoming dead) or home, is interpreted as a radical gesture demanding change, an alternative way, a cessation of things as they are (xi). The novel uses the myth of flight as a prime motive to reveal the trauma of black life in America. Morrison again maintains that among the flights in the novel, Solomon's flight is the most magical, the theatrical, and, for Milkman, the most satisfying. In the novel, Solomon's escape from slavery is also the abandonment of his family, the insurance man leaves a message saying his suicide is a gesture of love, but guilt and despair also inform his decision (xii). Similarly, there is the myth of Piedad in *Paradise* that reveals the black power of 'changing'and 'escaping'an essential skill for their survival. Likewise, we see numerous myths used in the other novels of Morrison, which she has used for revealing some important aspects of black cultural history of America.

Notes:

1. Morrison, "Rememory", *Mouth Full of Blood*, p.324
2. Morrison, "Black Matters", *Playing in the Dark*, pp. 4-5
3. Chakrabarty 1992, *Postcolonial Studies*, p.341
4. Jim Crow also known as Segregation, was a system to enforce white-black, racial-ethnic separation and white supremacy. Deep rooted in customs and laws to control slaves and free blacks, it interfaced slavery, evolved after slavery's abolition, and was in tractice until 1964. See. Gavins. P.249.

5. In Jim Crow South whites disfranchised blacks by extralegal and legal practices such as “white primary” which allowed a political party to nominate candidates for general election; blacks were excluded. However, pursuing “the Negro’s right to vote”, the NAACP battled suffrage restriction in Texas. Gavins., p,257.
6. Toni Morrison Forward to *Beloved*, (p.xi), Vintage Books, 2005.
7. Toni Morrison’s interview with PBS in1998 hosted by Charlie Rose.
8. Anthony Trollope, Autobiography, Chapter XII, “On Novels and the Art of Writing them”; *Pebbled Roads* p. 189.
9. Toni Morrison Forward to *Beloved*, (p.x), Vintage Books, 2005.
10. Zimmerman Bonnie, “Feminist Fiction and the Postmodern Challenge”; qt. in Caroline Rody, “Traces and Cracks: Identity and Narrative in Toni Morrison’s Jazz”, African American Review, Vol.31, No.3,Autumn, 1997, pp.(481-495).
11. See “Black Matter(s)”, *Mouth Full of Blood*, p 140.
12. See Foreword, *Song of Solomon*, Vintage Books, 2006, p. xi.; also see “Black Matters”, *Mouth Full of Blood*, p. 190.

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