Chapter I

Introduction

I am fed up
With Jim Crow laws
People who are cruel
   And afraid,
Who lynch and run,
Who are scared of me
   And me of them
I pick up my life
And take it away,
On a one way ticket
   Gone up North,
   Gone West,
   Gone!

Langston Hughes, "One Way Ticket"

America is a nation of movers, of migrants. This is not a new phenomenon. Man, by his very nature, appears to be a migratory animal. It is well known that the United States was formed by migrants—first from Asia, then from Europe, Africa, and again Asia. Until late in the nineteenth century black migration was caused by force. Among the earliest European records of Africans there is evidence of their forced
removal from their homeland to the oasis of the deserts and the coasts of the Mediterranean. These early records show that the first black slaves were brought to Egypt. Later, whole armies of slaves were imported by the Cyrenians and Carthaginians, and again by the Egyptians, some for home use and the remainder for trade in other markets. The traffic of African slaves to Europe began with the Portuguese, shortly after 1400. The introduction of black Africans to the New World occurred simultaneously with the coming of the white Europeans. Arriving as servants to the original explorers black Africans were present at the opening of the continent in the sixteenth century. The domestic slave traffic, as form of forced migration, was the means by which the black population was first redistributed in the United States. With the legal abolition by the British of the Atlantic slave trade after January 1, 1808, and the opening of the Midwest and Southwest during the nineteenth century, there was an increased demand for slave labour in the US. The result was illegal traffic in African slaves, slave breeding and domestic slave trade. The domestic slave trade provided the basic labour for the developing agricultural economy of the South. But with the Civil War, this basic institution of slavery was dismantled, affecting not only the economy, but the entire social structure of the South. The movement and migration of Blacks during the Civil War consisted chiefly of two kinds of flight: from the advancing Union troops and from the slave-holders to join or seek the protection of the Union forces. In addition to the effects of the War, an active slave trade continued and resulted in the relocation of thousands of
slaves until the war ended. Life for Blacks in the South outside the immediate areas of invasion went on in much the same manner as before.

However, the most important change in the distribution of the American population (both white and black) since 1850 is the shift from rural to urban areas. This rural-urban migration has been viewed as primarily a consequence of industrialisation. Industrial development caused the substitution of machines for men in the countryside, which created a surplus population in rural areas. Industrialisation implied the creation of new jobs in cities, both in industry and services, and these new jobs lured the rural population to the cities. The central point is that the rural population was displaced and forced to become an urban surplus population. In similar fashion the urban population of the South moved to the cities North or West. Though, this migration included both poor Whites and Blacks, the black population suffered not merely in terms of oppression but also had fewer options than whites in the South and were expected to respond differently to social conditions. Hence it becomes necessary to study the reasons why Blacks suffered more and had to migrate from South to North to escape this suffering.

Before starting the examination of black migration, a basic understanding of the process of migration is necessary. The movement of individuals and families from one place to another produces a wide variety of changes in the individuals and families involved, in the sending and receiving
communities, and in the larger areas of which the sending and receiving communities are a part. The most obvious of these changes is a decrease in the size of the place of origin and an increase in the population in the destination community. There are five types of migration developed by historians: "primitive", "forced", "impelled", "free" and "mass". "Primitive" migration is viewed as the result of an "ecological push", or man's inability to cope with natural forces. "Forced" and "impelled" migration are activated not by these ecological pressures, but by social institutions. When the persons involved retain some power to decide whether or not to leave, a migration is referred to as "impelled". When no such decision making capacity is left to the persons, it is referred to as "forced". An important form of impelled migration has been flight, such as when a stronger people move in a new territory and drive out the weaker occupants. Other classes of those who have fled their homeland include emigres, i.e. those who regard their exile as temporary and live for the day when they may return, and refugees i.e. those who flee and settle in a new country.

In the types of migration discussed thus far, the will of the migrants has been a relatively unimportant factor. A primitive migration results from the lack of means to satisfy basic physiological needs; in the forced or impelled type the persons involved are subject also to the purposes of social institutions. The type in which the will of the migrants is the decisive element, "free" migration is illustrated by the overseas movement
of peoples from Europe to America during the nineteenth century. The final type according to Petersen, a historian is "mass migration", a form of collective behaviour wherein migration becomes the style, an established pattern for a group or subgroup. The Westward Movement in 1607 in the history of migration in America is an example of free migration. Opportunity was the magnet that drew men from Europe or the eastern United States into the sparsely settled West, for there nature's bounties were so abundant that the individual needed only his own brawn brains, and courage to improve himself economically and socially.

A mention of the Westward expansion was necessary as it best explains the types of migration discussed above. This framework of migratory types provides a particularly useful and systematic way to view the migration processes of Blacks in the United States. The tragic part of the history of black migration is that the predominant form has been forced or impelled. Black migration in the United States, like that of any social group, must be viewed as an ongoing, continuous phenomenon. Black Americans had always been moving from one part of the country to another, and also out of the country, looking for freedom and opportunity. In colonial times slaves fled to the French governed North-West Territory. Others were brought or sent to the northern country by Quakers when the Quaker meeting very early outlawed slavery. When the British evacuated America after the Revolutionary War, slaves went with them to Canada, others escaped or emigrated to East Florida, West Indies, Nova Scotia or
England. From the early 19th c., fugitive southern slaves found free friends in Pennsylvania, New York, Massachusetts, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois and Canada.

For Black Americans, the Civil War, World War I, and World War II were significant periods that brought numerous changes in their lives including migrations. The decade 1910 to 1920 was a period of international crisis and domestic change in the United States. Though the Americans believed that they could remain aloof from European conflicts, two years after the outbreak of World War I, the nation was drawn into the conflict as a fully embattled participant. In addition to the international political effects of the War, important demographic changes resulted in the United States, one of which was the redistribution of the nation's black population. Domestic social changes - industrialization and urbanization - gave added impetus to the spatial mobility of Blacks. The concentration of the black population in the South began to dissolve. It was a revolutionary period for the black migrants, both for the areas from which they departed and for the cities to which they moved. Despite the earlier migrations of blacks the sudden and large scale exodus from the South to the North, which has since been referred to as the Great Migration, was not expected. Migrations from the South had occurred in the antebellum period via the underground Railroad, during the Civil War and the Reconstruction in the late 1870s to Kansas, in the late 1880s to Oklahoma, and during the years at the turn of the century to the North. In fact, the Great Migration
bears such a significant resemblance to the earliest migrations that it may be regarded as a continuation of the same movement with intervals of a number of years. The exact point in time when this Great Migration began is uncertain. Many students of history argue that it began about 1916. But one must accept the consensus that the bulk of the migration during this decade occurred between 1916 and 1919.

If one were to piece together a composite image of the typical migrant from surveys and accounts, one would have portrayed a black male between the ages of twenty five and thirty four, resident of a medium sized Southern city who had worked between five and ten years at one or two industrial enterprises, usually as an unskilled labourer. Many were married and had children. When surveyed, a migrant frequently cited the following reasons for going North. First he wished to better his economic circumstances. Some said simply, "to increase wages". Second, he wanted better educational opportunities for his children. And third, he desired greater freedom of movement.

Many migrants were hard at work at the start of the Great Migration and had to quit their jobs to move North. It was not simply the promise of higher wages that drew them to the land of opportunity. Many feared that their present position in the South would not last. There were too many labourers and too few jobs to ensure that black men, even at low wages, could remain employed while white men were made idle. A number of
migrants had already experienced in their working lives layoffs motivated by racial as well as economic circumstances and they reasoned that these occasions would increase. The decision to leave the South was made not by a single worker but by the family unit, often involving extended family members.

Few migrations are precipitated or caused by a single, isolated factor. However, broadly conceived, the conditions producing the migration were: economic and social.

The South began to industrialise in the 1880's. Its path to industrialisation was very slow because of the continued profitability of its major regional industry, Cotton. However, between 1880 and 1890 a new manufacturing domain was created. Industries that experienced tremendous growth were; Iron and Coal industry, cotton seed oil mills, timber extraction, tobacco industry. But industrialisation alone did not change the South. The area was jolted into change by the coming of the boll weevil, which had an immediate impact. Millions of acres of Cotton were destroyed. Tenants were left without productive work, money or credit. So thousands of rural labourers black and white were forced to go to Southern cities in and from there to northern cities in search of work. Now as these rural peasants moved to southern cities, urban black workers like: bankers, undertakers, barbers, carpenters, insurance salesman, masons, teachers, etc. faced competition with them. This led to
displacement for many black workers. Besides, White labourers were given preference. This led to the migration of the blacks. Now a great potential developed in the North as the World War I economy and restriction of European immigration created opportunities and wages in the North unavailable to Blacks in the South.

Social causes of black migration were as widely acknowledged by contemporary observers as the economic forces. Some of the primary social factors were injustice in the Courts, lynching, denial of suffrage, discrimination in public conveyances and inequalities in educational advantage.

Between 1890 and 1910, a majority of black adults in Southern states lost the right to vote. At both the local and state levels Blacks became powerless in combating unfair property tax assessments, disputes over wages and services and other community issues of development and change. Thousands left because they had no other choice. Disenfranchisement reminded them of antebellum days.

Education, too, which was so precious to the black community, did not change their fate. Though many free schools were established, the public school systems faced strangulation and non-segregated public education was abandoned. Differences between schools for Whites and Blacks was evident in the structures built, distribution of school funds etc. This
limiting of educational opportunity served to uphold occupational hierarchy. Poor whites had vested interests in keeping Blacks uneducated because of the competition for jobs and social status.

Another one of the most telling indicators of the inferior position of Blacks in Southern society was the level of violence to which they were exposed. Lynching was a common method of punishment for Blacks who committed criminal acts, or who simply violated the rules of acceptable behaviour for members of their caste. Blacks were not afforded the same legal protection as Whites and had little access to legal defence. Most often the trials resulted in a death sentence and execution of the defendant. This kind of a violent environment forced the Blacks to migrate.

The understanding of black migration remains incomplete without studying the experiences of the thousands of Southern black women who migrated to the Midwest between the two World Wars. There remains a void in surveys concerning the experiences of black women migrants. With the migrant absent from the family, his wife and other family members had to support themselves until the migrant made good. Many women took jobs, particularly as domestics, to support the family. They also sold many household items and moved in with other family members to keep down costs. Thus they were forced into the marketplace. Their condition was as bad if not worse, than during the days of slavery. In small towns and cities throughout the South, married women were
employed on a regular basis as cooks, maids and laundresses. Some were able to do these tasks on a part time or contractual basis, but most were forced to spend long hours away from home, bending over someone else's sink washing someone else's clothes and caring for someone else's children. But their misery did not end here. For as Hernton points out, "Negro women were forced to give up their bodies like animals to white men at random" (124). White male employers used black women to satisfy their carnal desires. Many Southern white males had their first sexual experience with black women. In some cases the use of black women as sexual objects served to maintain the double standard of sexual morality in the white South. Many white men did not have sexual relations with white women until they married. Du Bois in an essay describes the exploitation that domestic workers were subjected to. He portrays them as prey to all sorts of human indignities such as having to enter and exit by the side door, receiving extremely low wages, and being subjected to the sexual exploitation of their employer. An example of this is cited by Dollard:

An informant pointed out what it means to the Negro woman who gets two to four dollars a week as a cook to have the men of the house offer her five dollars for sexual intercourse. She probably has a family to support, certainly has bills to pay and needs the money. (124)
According to Hernton, ever since the black woman has been in America, she has largely been seen - not only sexually but also as an economic and cultural prostitute in American society. When she has been made to escape having to surrender to sexual advances of the white man, she has not escaped having to prostitute her femininity. It could be in the form of being a domestic servant in white people's homes, in their shops, restaurants, office buildings and elsewhere. At these places the qualities and labour of her sex were expropriated from her by having to nurture white babies and children, clean and take care of white homes, wash iron and cook for white people. And she was not respected for these things but was demeaned by them.

Black women faced sexual harassment even at their homes and in their community from black men. In the case of black men it is asserted that they grew up feeling emasculated and powerless in white society before reaching manhood. They often encountered women as authority figures and teachers or as the head of their household. These men consequently acted out their feeling of powerlessness against black women in the form of sexual aggression. This powerlessness was also meted out to black women, who could be their daughters, sisters, wives etc., in the form of beating. Thus black women suffered sexually too in addition to racial discrimination and economic disparity. In case of sexual oppression black women fought their battle alone. A dramatic statement of the black women's unique attitude toward solidarity with black men is found in the
1977 statement of the River Collective - a black lesbian group from Boston:

...Our situation as Black people necessitates that we have solidarity around the fact of race. ...We struggle together with black men against racism, while we also struggle with Black men about sexism. (213)

And therefore "Many black women quit the South out of a desire to achieve personal autonomy and to escape from sexual exploitation both within and outside of their families and from sexual abuse at the hands of white as well as black men" (Hine, 130). Black women were very much concerned about negative images of their sexuality. This is graphically and most forcefully echoed in numerous speeches of the early leaders of the national organisation of black women's clubs.

However, this focus on the sexual and the personal impetus for black women's migration dismisses nor diminishes the importance of economic motives. Black women faced greater discrimination and had fewer employment opportunities than black men. Their work, as mentioned before, was the most undesirable and least remunerative of all the northern migrants.

And hence there was the migration of a massive number of rural Southern Blacks into the urban areas of the North. There wasn't any fixed
pattern in which they moved. Those who had left early wrote home about freedom and jobs in the North. Labour agents came South recruiting for the big industrial companies. The Chicago Defender carried Northern help wanted ads. These agents came and took away hundreds of Negroes. Trains were backed into several Southern cities and hundreds of Negroes gathered up on a day, loaded into the cars, and whirled away to the North. One cheap way to travel was in a group. This was done via roadways, railways and also through boats in case of coastal cities. Many women too migrated leaving children and family members behind. The influence and pressure of family members played a substantial role in convincing many ambivalent young women to migrate. Some women simply seized the opportunity to accompany friends travelling North. But a woman travelling alone had a greater risk than a man. Men were better suited to defend themselves in adverse circumstances.

Unable, or unwilling, to sever ties to or abandon irrevocably the South, black women's assimilation to urban life remained fragmented and incomplete. It was the very incompleteness of the assimilation, however, which facilitated the Southernization of the Midwest. Vestiges of Southern black culture were transplanted and continuously reviewed and reinforced by these women in motion. Darlene Clark Hine says,

The resiliency of this cultural transference is reflected in food preferences and preparation styles, reliance on folk remedies and superstitions, religious
practices, speech patterns, games, family structures and social networks, and music, most notably, the blues. (134)

Perhaps, this southernization served to be the “safe space” for characters in works of art, which will be discussed later in the chapter. For e.g.: In Petry's *The Street* Granny's advice to Lutie is part of their culture or Min's visit to a root doctor is part of their superstition from where she gains strength. Even in Naylor's *The Women of Brewster Place*, characters find a source of motherhood in Mattie, a very important aspect of black family life. Perhaps this southernization and not really getting assimilated into the urban culture caught the attention of some of the artists. How it captured the imagination of writers, painters, artists, musicians etc. will be discussed later in the Chapter.

To continue with the arrival of migrants in the urban areas of the North, it had both negative and positive effects on black life. Upon arrival, Blacks found that the "promised land" was somewhat marred. They faced fierce and sometimes violent competition for employment from their urban white counterparts. Blacks from the rural South experienced a sense of alienation from the less than personal urban setting. They were faced with a new social and economic pattern, the creation of a Black ghetto, brought on by residential segregation. Blacks also suffered from poor health and over crowding. Black women too suffered though they became more economically sufficient, better educated, and more involved in self-
improvement efforts, although this did not improve their social status. They continued to be considered as whores. In fact organised prostitution among black women increased because it was the only means that some black women had of supporting their families. In the bargain they even lost their husbands. As an economically deprived group they were subject to enticement into sexual relationship with white men of considerable means and also black men.

It is difficult to argue that Blacks would have been better off had they never left the South. Carl Marks, has suggested that migrants specifically may benefit from one of the three positive alternatives; assimilation, return migration or development of an enclave society. Unfortunately, for the black migrants, North was not the hoped for promised land. Drawn as a source of cheap labour, northern industrialists had never envisioned black migrants' absorption as equal partners into the mainstream of the American work force.

Blacks were employed on management's own terms. And therefore assimilation, traditionally the most cherished alternative for the Southern black worker did not happen.

Even with the profound change of the 1960s, the black middle class has never exceeded, 30% of the population and there are indications that this group may be shrinking. The continuation of their marginal labour status
in the North represented at best "a substitution of a precapital for a mature capital labour status" (Marks 168). Of course they were better educated, better clothed and had greater political participation than their southern counterparts. But their opportunities for advancement were restricted.

Return migration was not an option widely considered. There were two reasons for this: 1) Southern black non-agricultural workers, the bulk of the migrant population, sold all they had to get to the North and therefore had much less to return to than the usual return migrant. They broke ties with the South. The second is that as urban workers, there was less to hold them to the South in any case. They had not lived on the same piece of land as their fathers and forefathers, were not returning to time honoured traditions or, in many cases, to institutions, like churches, which might have bound them. It is easier for an urban resident to move from one city to another with little less of continuity in their lives. Blacks would have developed from the development of an immigrant enclave. That they did not develop one is attributed most directly to the problem of racial solidarity. The souls of black folk carry in them a double consciousness, a struggle to be both Black and American. The outcome of that struggle was not always on the side of the race itself. Blacks neither benefitted from the Great Migration as a stepping stone to industrial development nor as minorities filling a special niche within a dominant society. They could not assimilate because of their perceived differences
from the dominant society. They could not return because they were too urban; and they could not develop an enclave society because they were too American.

The North, did offer Blacks a job, the ballot and educational opportunity for their advancement and progress but never accepted them as its children. The North profited greatly from its new found supply of cheap labour. And the South in general, cost more than it gained in this struggle, for in casting off its orphans, it discarded not only a valuable labour supply but its most useful natural resource. What Blacks did not know was that what they saw as the end of a terrible struggle for emancipation was only another beginning, and that progress in the North would be at their expense rather that at their behest.

The study of twentieth century black migration has so far been the province only of social scientists, historians and scholars of African American music and folklore. Although literary critics have noted migration as an important theme in African American fiction, until recently they have been less attentive to the relationship between migration and African American literary production. In fact literary and cultural critics like: Susan Willis, Hazel Carby, Lawrence Rodgers, and Charles Scruggs have started the important project of situating twentieth century migration as a major factor in African American cultural production. There emerged a new kind of migration narrative, one of
twentieth century's dominant forms of African American cultural production. Through migration narratives - musical, visual, and literary - African American artists and intellectuals attempt to come to terms with the dislocation of black people following migration. It is not surprising, therefore, to see the emergence of this new kind of narrative, as the impact of migration and urbanisation on the Blacks was tremendous. Farah Jasmine Griffin's *Who Set You Flowin?: The African American Migration Narrative* is an excellent study of this kind of narrative and has been a point of departure for my study of the migration narrative. Most often, migration narratives portray the movement of a major character or the text itself from a provincial (not necessarily rural) Southern or Midwestern site (home of the ancestor) to a more cosmopolitan, metropolitan area. Within the migration narrative the protagonist or a central figure who most influences the protagonist is a migrant. The representation of the migration experience depends on the genre and form of the narrative as well as the historical and political moment of production. Migration narrative has its own set of narrative conventions. It provides us with lynching scenes, meetings with ancestors and urban spaces like Kitchenettes, dance halls and street corners.

Farah Jasmine Griffin has pointed out four pivotal moments in this kind of narrative: 1) an event that propels the action northward, 2) a detailed representation of the initial confrontation with the urban landscape, 3) an illustration of the migrants' attempt to negotiate that landscape and his or
her resistance to the negative effects of urbanisation, and 4) vision of the possibilities or limitations of the Northern, Western or Mid Western city and the South. These moments may occur in any given order within the context of the narrative i.e. it is not necessary that there be a straight forward linear progression from the South to a vision of the consequences of migration, although this is most often the case.

Most migration narratives offer a catalyst for leaving the South. Although there are different reasons for migrating, in all cases the South is portrayed as an oppressive power. Southern power is exercised by people known to its victims - bosses, landlords, sheriffs and in the case of black women, even family members. In fictional texts especially, Southern power is inflicted on black bodies in the form of lynching, beating, and rape. It is dramatised in the spectacle and torture of elaborate lynching and burning rituals. "The degree to which Southern power is stressed differs from genre to genre, but there is a consensus that this power is unsophisticated in nature" (Griffin 5).

Although the narratives tend to represent the South as a site of terror and exploitation, some of them also identify it as a site of the ancestor. The role of the ancestor in the Southern sections of the migration narrative is of great significance to the development of the text. If the ancestor's role is mitigated, then it is likely that throughout the course of the narrative, the South will be portrayed as a site of racial horror and shame. In this
instance, the ancestor will be of little use on the Northern landscape. If, on the other hand, the early Southern sections stress the significance of an ancestor, or the blood of any recently deceased black person, then the South becomes a place where "black blood earns a black birthright to the land, a locus of history, culture, and possible redemption" (Griffin 5). If the South is thus established as a place of birthright, then the ancestor will be a significant influence in the migrant's life in the North. In Morrison's Song of Solomon the murder of a black person by a white mob is of major importance to the fate of all black people. The murder of Macon Dead I forces the flight of his orphaned children and kills the spirit of the black boys who remain. Pilate, his daughter, goes farther South, where she knows she will find her history, her people; she will eventually become the elder of the text- the one who embodies the wisdom and history of the ancestor. Macon, the boy, goes to the city in an effort to escape the violence of his past and to search for a spiritually empty material comfort. In Naylor's The Women of Brewster Place the act of violence that finally causes her protagonist to leave the South is the physical abuse she incurs at the hand of her father. This brutal beating by a man she loves and respects serves as the primary catalyst for Mattie's migration North.

After leaving the South, the next pivotal moment in the migration narrative is the initial confrontation with the urban landscape. The confrontation with the urban landscape: usually experienced as a change
in time, space and technology - results in a profound change in the way that the mechanisms of power work in the city. The prevalence of police brutality in urban areas is one example of this power. In Ann Petry's The Street the city silently and invisibly operates on its inhabitants. Lutie falls victim to the harsh realities of the urban North because she ignores the sustaining elements of her culture. In this instance it is often necessary for migrants to evoke the presence of an ancestor in order to combat the harsh confrontation with the urban landscape. The concept of "ancestor" has been borrowed, says Griffin, from Toni Morrison who argues:

> Ancestors are sort of timeless people where relationships to the characters are benevolent, instructive, and protective, and they provide a certain kind of wisdom.

(Evans 343)

Griffin has extended Morrison's definition of the ancestor to include an understanding of the full ramifications of the term. The ancestor is present in ritual, religion, music, food and performance. His or her legacy is evident in discursive formations like the oral tradition. The ancestor might be a literal ancestor; he or she has earthly representatives, whom we might call elders. The ancestors' presence in Southern cultural forms such as song, food, and language sometimes provides the new migrant a cushion with which to soften the impact of urbanisation. In Moorings and Metaphors. Figures of Culture and Gender in Black Women's Literature, Karla Holloway argues that the ancestor figure "serves as a recursive
touchstone" and that "the ancestral presence constitutes a posture of remembrance" (115). Toni Morrison's Pilate Dead is a representative of the ancestor. Pilate is the central female figure of Morrison's Song of Solomon. As the daughter of Macon Dead I she is a direct descendant of the flying African. She embodies the history of the Dead clan in her earring and her song. Self born, possessing no sign of her connection, she sits on the boundaries, dwells in the borderlands. In her mind she houses not only the songs and stories of the past but also the remedies, the recipes for nurturance and survival. Pilate is the transitional space between the ground where the ancestors reside and the sky to which they direct all who revere them. She is both tall and short, both eloquent and illiterate. She speaks freely to the dead, the living, and the unborn.

Ancestors are a specific presence in the migration narrative. They are found in both its content and its form. Toni Morrison best articulates the role of the migration narrative as repository of the ancestor when she says that her story telling like that of the characters in Song of Solomon, is an attempt to preserve and pass on the stories and the songs of the African American past. According to Morrison this kind of fiction, recognises what the conflicts are, what the problems are. But it need not solve those problems because it is not a case study. In an interview, Morrison even suggested that fiction as ancestor serves as a space for enlightenment, sustenance, and renewal. She adds,
There is a confrontation between old values of the tribes and newer urban values. It's confusing. There has to be a mode to do what the music did for blacks, what we used to be able to do with each other in private and in that civilization that existed underneath the white civilization. (26)

While Morrison's fiction seeks to be the repository of the ancestor, other migration narratives strive towards female bonding. Female bonding in case of black women writers was very important so much so that it could take the place of an ancestor in the narrative. This bonding amongst themselves was psychologically very healing. For instance the women in Naylor's The Women of Brewster Place survive exactly because of this female bonding. Mattie acts as a support to Etta and Miss Eva acts as a mother to Mattie, Kiswana helps Cora Lee with her children. And these women even after so many difficulties survive. Whereas in the case of Theresa and Lorraine, one of them has to die as female bonding or friendship is denied to them.

Similarly in Petry's The Street Lutie doesn't have any friend or community whose help she could take, and therefore fails in the city. She has high ambitions in life but has nobody to lean on and is the reason for her failure.
Morrison's *Song of Solomon* of course isn't based on female bonding but the female character Pilate is a very strong one. She has got all the remedies for nurturance and survival. She is the one who connects the past to the present. And hence female bonding becomes a trope in the novel for it represents the nurturance of the values of the South.

The third moment of the migration narrative is the portrayal of the way migrants negotiate the landscape. Once situated on the urban landscape, domestic, street and psychic spaces are all sites of struggle for the migrants and the power that seeks to control them. Again, the ancestor is of great significance in this struggle. These spaces are often sites where the ancestor is invoked; and at other times they are sites from which he or she is banished. Often, rejection of the ancestor leads to further alienation, exile, the status of stranger, or sometimes death. The ancestor in turn is a site of negotiation for the construction of a new self. The creation of a new self may be one of the most crucial aspects of resistance to the complexities of the North. However, for many, the sites of the ancestor are stifling and provincial and as such they inhibit the progress and the development of the protagonist. For instance, Petry in *The Street* makes a few safe spaces available to her protagonist, Lutie like the, community, family and the voice of her grandmother. But Lutie disregards all of them.
These spaces are either the locus for producing and maintaining the negative effects of urbanization - fragmentation, dislocation, and material and spiritual impoverishment - or "safe havens" from these negative effects. In the latter instance, they help the migrant to construct an alternate urban subjectivity. "Safe Spaces" is a borrowed term from Patricia Hill Collins, who defines them as places where black women speak freely and where domination does not exist as a "hegemonic ideology" (97). She identifies, as safe spaces, extended families, churches, and African American community organisations as well as cultural traditions like the black women's blues and literary traditions. However, the narratives often point out the irony of the term "safe". For instance in some cases the Black Church is not necessarily a safe space for black women in the light of its gender hierarchy, its stand against birth control and abortion. In other cases the Church is the only site that recognises and affirms black humanity. In the migration narrative "safe spaces" are available to both male and female characters but could have contradictory connotation. A woman's safe space - the home, for instance - might be inhibiting for a man. Similarly, a woman might find the culture of the street, which nurtures an urban black manhood, somewhat dangerous to her well being. Other such spaces are Churches and dance halls. Both mark sites where elements of the South are retained. The Church nurtures and sustains; it helps to maintain humanity and dignity and it ensures survival. The second space, dance hall, is significant in that it offers itself to the world as a means of expressing the angst of modern
man. The dance takes on the qualities of the Blues. It provides an opportunity for the expression of black humanity.

The fourth moment of the migration narrative provided a consideration of the sophistication of modern urban power, an evaluation of the consequences of migration and urbanisation, and a vision of future possibilities. For many artists the North ensures the death and demise of the migrant; for others migration is one step on the road to a cosmopolitan status. Still others, require a return to the South as a means of acquiring racial, historical, and cultural redemption. Milkman in Morrison's Song of Solomon, makes a journey South for finding himself, for the acquisition of a historical consciousness, for his standing on a higher spiritual and intellectual place.

Finally, the migration narrative takes shape in a variety of art forms: autobiography, fiction, music, poetry, photography and painting. Therefore the representation of the migration experience depends on "the genre and form of the narrative as well as the historical and political moment of production" (Griffin 3). In fictional texts, Southern power is inflicted on Blacks in the form of lynching, beating and rape and other forms of oppression. In painting, too, lynching dominates the form. Jacob Lawrence's collection of paintings on migration called The Migration of Negro Series, the ritual of lynching and beating have a chilling effect. The lynched body is missing from the panel in one of the paintings and the
Another cause was lynching. It was found that where there had been a lynching, the people who were reluctant to leave at first left immediately after this (Panel 15).

The most striking object, the hanging body, is striking by its absence. What Lawrence suggested in his paintings, Blues lyrics presented in their lyrical songs. Unlike these paintings, Blues lyrics, the migration narrative of the mass of migrants, tend to focus on floods, the boll weevils, sharecropping, and failed love. "The blues" encompasses the psychological state of someone who is exploited, abused, dominated and dispossessed. One such example of this type of blues song and performance is Bessie Smith's "Homeless Blues" which is about floods in the Mississippi River.

Another art form through which migrants voiced their misery was a set of migrant created documents, letters to the Chicago Defender. These letters are more explicit and concrete about the reasons for migration and they are less individualistic than the blues lyrics. A review of these letters suggest that the primary reason for leaving are economic. The vast majority of migrants are men and women in search of work and access to education for their children. The threat of violence too emerges from the silences of these notes. A letter from Dapne, Alabama expresses the full range of the desire to leave:

We work but can't get scarcely anything for it and they don't want us to go away and there is not much
of anything here to do ... begging to get away before we are killed ... we see starvation ahead of us here.

(Scott 356)

In the letters unemployment and the imminent threat of violence are primary catalysts for migrating. There is a significant difference between the letters and artistic creations of the black masses and the portrayals of migration by some scholars, which suggest ways that issues of genre and class affect meaning and interpretation.

Letters differ from Blues lyrics in that they are more explicit about the daily terror under which the writers live. This difference is very important, because it illustrates that the primary purpose of the blues lyrics is not protest or resistance but the creation of cultural pleasure. Inspite of their differences, the Blues and the letters, along with scholarly studies of black creativity, stress the decision to migrate as an active choice, a decision accenting both the subjectivity and agency of the migrant. Sociological texts stress the power of industrial capitalism over the undeveloped South and the black Southerners who inhabit it. The creations of the migrants themselves straddle the gap between sociologists like Marks and artists like Lawrence and Holiday. If social scientists stress economic factors, then artists emphasise violence as a cause of migration. Similarly for writers of the migration narrative, lynching or the imminent threat of lynching serves as the single most important event to push the movement of the text and the protagonist North. Gloria Naylor's
The Women of Brewster Place is a good example of this movement of the text and the character North. This movement is visible while Mattie is recalling her past. Mattie decides to leave the South because her father beats her on her not disclosing the name of her child’s father. This single most important event pushes her North as well as the text. Mattie, as a migrant, reaches North and has to struggle for a job, for a home and is left with bitter experiences till she meets Miss Eva in the form of an ancestor and who serves as a safe space.

The present study deals with the texts of three women writers, viz. Ann Petry, Gloria Naylor and Toni Morrison whose The Street, The Women of Brewster Place and Song of Solomon respectively have been selected to show how each writer has used the tropes of migration or revised these tropes. It is also proposed to identify the various factors responsible for the protagonists’ migration North. A trope is a figurative use of a word or expression, as metaphor or hyperbole. And therefore safe space, urban space, ancestor or the word South, or, for that matter, Violence, be it mental, physical or sexual are tropes generally used by writers of the migration narrative. For example a lynched individual becomes figuratively a synecdoche for the black community as a whole and therefore lynching is a trope. And this trope (i.e. lynching) has been used differently by different writers. Some writers use lynching to paint the climate of the South. It reminds one of the climate of terror and fear experienced by black people in the South. Some other writers may create
this climate even by emphasising the absence of lynching. There might not be actual lynching, and violence is present only in the minds of the people. The reader sees the South as the site of racial shame and horror. Similarly the 'ancestor' in the form of a mother, a grandmother or any other older woman or an ancestor male or female is used to create the South and Southern values that black men and women should uphold. And, therefore, the 'ancestor' too, is a trope used differently by different writers. An attempt has also been made to show how these writers have handled the tropes of counter migration too. Black music, Storytelling, ancestor etc. are some of the tropes of counter migration, too, handled differently by the writers of African American migration narratives.

Paul Laurence Dunbar's Sport of the Gods (1902) is supposed to be the first migration narrative. For Dunbar, the South is not a site of racial terror. His migrating black family, the Hamiltons, are sent North because of the duplicity of one white man, who is an outsider to the South. By doing so, Dunbar seems to place the unfairness of the South onto one individual character who does not belong there.

Jean Toomer's Cane is a bittersweet elegy to the beauty and the horror of the South. "Portrait in Georgia" and "Blood Burning Moon" foreshadow and document, respectively, the lynching which spurs the movement of the text. Toomer uses the political critique in establishing the defining tropes of the African American migration narrative: Nature imagery, ideals
of white womanhood, and lynching are all partners in the lynching scenes of this art form. In selecting lynching as the major reason for migration Toomer departs from Dunbar’s *Sport of the Gods*.

In the tradition of migration narratives, James Weldon Johnson’s *The Autobiography of an Ex-coloured Man* is the first to suggest lynching as the cause for the protagonist’s final migration. However, Toomer is the artist most responsible for establishing violence on the black body as a trope to signify the violence of the South and as the major catalyst for migration. Authors who follow him manipulate these tropes in different ways in order to express the role of violence as a catalyst to migration and to establish or deny the place of the South in the migrant’s survival once he or she arrives in the North.

During the years following the Harlem Renaissance, throughout the Depression to World War II, Richard Wright’s version of the migration narrative was the dominant portrayal. The threat and actual occurrence of lynching, pervade much of Wright’s work. His southern characters are either witnesses or victims; the spectre of the mob has a prominent place in the imaginations of his Northern characters. The fear of violence infiltrates their very psyches. Unlike Toomer, for Wright there is nothing to be regained by returning to the South. This shift in the portrayal of the South and the representation of lynching can be attributed to several factors. The first is simply the element of time. By the 1930s the high
sense of hope and possibility which characterised the Harlem Renaissance had given way to the harsh reality of the Depression. The presence and constant threat of lynching in the South remained. Third, Wright's own political orientation - at this time, Marxism - left no room for the romanticization of a racial past.

Wright's work of the thirties and forties suggests that the horror of the South, and lynching is its most immediate image. The South does not hold any redemptive value. This view begins to shift with the publication of James Baldwin's Go Tell It on the Mountain in 1952. In this text, in addition to lynching, the sexual exploitation of black women is portrayed as a direct cause for migration. In light of the history of the migration narrative, Baldwin is significant because he initiates a change in the gender of the victim of Southern violence. He also portrays the South as a place of possible redemption which of course Ralph Ellison too did by painting a picture of the South as a place to be valued in the African American imagination.

Historian Darlene Clark Hine notes, that scholars have failed to pay attention to the non-economic motives which led to female migration. He adds, "many black women quit the South out of a desire to achieve personal autonomy and to escape abuse at the hands of Southern white men as well as black men" (127-46).
This is a significant shift in the depiction of causes for leaving the South and it gives the woman a sense of agency over her own fate. It is more significant for this shift occurs in the work of a male writer. Most male writers focus on lynching. When Baldwin does portray a lynching it is to establish it as a crime against black humanity. Lynching, as a trope, is used in *Go Tell It On the Mountain* to paint a climate of the South.

Next, black migrants enter the modern city ill-prepared for the civilisation that awaits them. They suffer an immediate attack on their consciousness and experience the effects of domination on psychic and spiritual levels. Housing conditions are terrible, but the landlord is an absentee. There are hordes of white migrants, who progress at the expense of the black migrant. Yet these whites do not directly possess power over the Blacks. There is conflict between the races, sometimes erupting in vicious race riots. A Kitchenette too is a place where blacks are exploited, but not directly. A Kitchenette is a metaphor for the intricate way that power in the North omnisciently infiltrates, every aspect of a black man’s being. This was reflected in various forms of art also. To begin with paintings, in contrast to the bare, stagnant landscape of Southern paintings, the paintings now possessed vibrancy and movement. They are crowded with black bodies. Instead of the lone anonymous figure of the lynching painting, which sits with back turned to the viewer, here the figures are standing upright and are marching. Also the city scene is crowded and enclosed.
In the context of the migration narratives the arrival of Southern blacks is marked by an immediate confrontation with a foreign place and time, with technology and urban capitalism, with the crowd and the stranger. The portrayal of the migrants' initial confrontation with urban modernity differs in the various migration narratives while some artists and scholars focus on the degree to which migrants are transformed by the urban landscape, others portray the way they transform the city. For instance Ann Petry who was a reporter had a first hand experience of the way people lived in Harlem and therefore she has shown in her novel The Street how the city silently eats up all its inhabitants.

However, one aspect remains constant throughout most of the narratives. In the North the focus on the body which is so prevalent in the Southern sections of the migration narrative, shifts to a focus on the migrant psyche.

The Blues provide an excellent metaphor for what happens to the migrants when they arrive in the city. In terms of content Blues lyrics focus upon the impact of the city on the migrant.

Wright's view of the South in the city would emerge as the dominant African American literary perspective during the 1940s. At this time women writers like: Dorothy West, and later Gwendolyn Brooks, were
creating attractive visions of the "South in the city." Dorothy West's The Living Is Easy (1948) began to lay the foundation for this alternative view, and it would eventually be picked up by Gloria Naylor and other black women writers. In West's version the South not only survives in the city but is necessary for the sustenance and survival of the migrant. The protagonist of the novel, Cleo Judson, feels both nurtured and inhibited by her poorer Southern siblings. Through Cleo, West suggests that a Southern retention - here by the family is necessary to provide balance and stability for black migrants. Cleo is willing to concede that the warmth and community provided by her sisters are necessary to her own sustenance.

West begins the project of providing an alternative to Wright's absolute dismissal of the black Southern past; she also provides another source of possibility of the South in the city - it can be a source of inspiring resistance. Although this possibility is not realised on the pages of her narrative, by introducing it, she makes a significant departure from Wright.

Gwendolyn Brooks is another woman writer who documents the existence of both domestic and street spaces in two of her significant poems. The first, "Kitchenette Building", portrays the domestic space described by Wright, a space where dreams are born, nurtured, and sometimes lost to more immediate basic needs. The second "We Real Cool" portrays young
black men who inhabit street corners and pool halls in an effort to create community and who knowingly accept their fate - a quick, early death. Brooks's women attempt to make "homespace" out of their Kitchenettes. They attempt to nurture and sustain dreams and to create community with the others who share their station in life. More often than not, their efforts fail - the dreams die - but Brooks, records the humanity of these attempts with grace and beauty. However, as is the case with other aspects of the narratives, the degree to which these sites serve as "safe spaces" or "spaces of resistance" differs from author to author.

Black migrants were not passive victims of white power or objects of black middle class paternalism. They actively created spaces and cultures, as mentioned before, where they sought to sustain themselves and where they sometimes attempted to resist the negative impact of urbanisation. These spaces might be identified as the pockets of resistance created by modern power. A whole, street and domestic culture provided migrants with an alternative means to counter efforts for disciplining them. These alternatives were housed in various forms: Kitchens, Churches, families and friendships. Two spaces are crucial - a domestic "homespace" of women and the street culture space of men. Men and women respond to each other's spaces in opposing ways: female characters find street space threatening; male characters find domestic space stifling. The degree to which these sites serve as "safe spaces" or "spaces of resistance" differs from author to author. Those authors who stress their importance
portray them as sites where the South is evoked. In this context, the writers are not concerned with Southern exploitation and racial domination, but with the South as the site of African American culture, community and history.

"Safe space" takes shape in song, oral culture, memory, dreams, and spirituality. They exist as places where ritual evokes a Southern or African ancestor. In many ways they are spaces of "safe time" as well, for they evoke history and memory. In these spaces linear notions of time are challenged. The past exists alongside the present.

At their most progressive, safe spaces are nurturing, healing, and resisting; at their most reactionary, they are provincial sites which discourage resistance and bind the protagonist to an oppressive past. These spaces distinguish themselves from the rest of the text in language, rhythm, and notions of temporality. They often disrupt the otherwise straightforward linearity of the narrative. Literary spaces fit Michael Awkward's definition of "historically determined tropological refigurations". In other words, as Griffin suggests, they exist as figures of language revised according to the historical moment in which they are used (111).

Marita Bonner's "The Whipping" (1940), Ann Petry's The Street (1946) and Gloria Naylor's The Women of Brewster Place (1982) all portray poor,
black, single, working mothers, who live in Northern urban ghettos and who seek to provide for their sons. The women in the two earlier texts attempt to resist their construction or objectification by a dominant white discourse on black women, which constructs them as lascivious, lazy and immoral. This discourse emerges in the words and images of white authority as well as in popular culture. The women of Brewster Place try to resist the psychic and physical violence and economic poverty inflicted on them by white society and black men. In all three works, each woman has varying degrees of access to safe space. Only Mattie Michael of Brewster Place takes advantage of that space. As a result, only Mattie survives to act as a creator of safe space for the other women of Brewster place. Each author exploits the literary possibility of "narrative" safe spaces differently.

The writings of Marita Bonner, another black woman writer, reveal the foundation of black women's literary tradition of urban fiction. Unlike, Zora Neale Hurston, who was primarily concerned with rural blacks or Jessie Fauset and Nella Larsen, who focused their creative attention on the lines and experiences of upper middle class black women, Bonner was among the first to find the lives of working class and poor urban women worthy of literary consideration. Her characters work difficult jobs and have a hard time putting food on the table. They always meet head on daily confrontations with racism and sexism; they live under the constant threat of incarceration, rape and death. Though she portrays the break up
of the family on their arrival in the North, Bonner does not present black southern culture as a way of navigating the harshness of the urban landscape. The author dismisses the safe spaces— the family, the church, and the community as alternatives to the brutality of Northern oppression. Bonner shares with Wright a tendency to dismiss the resisting potential of safe spaces, but she differs from him in that, she does not portray these sites as stifling.

Inheriting Bonner's concern with working class black women, Ann Petry, another New Englander experiments with the possibilities of safe spaces in both the content and the form of her urban narrative, the best selling *The Street* (1946). In its departure from the naturalism of Wright and the realism of Bonner, Petry's novel expands the means of representing the black, urban female experience. By providing viable safe spaces that are rooted in Southern culture, she marks a shift from Wright's view. By utilizing memory and dreams as a means of informing her protagonist, Petry distinguishes herself from Bonner. However, she shares with both of them the refusal to romanticise the South and a sense of urgency in asserting the negative impact of the city. Though, a few writers precede Petry in using ancestor as a trope, she is the first writer to fully explore the possibilities of an ancestor. In the urban North, the South - the ancestor- must live in the psyche because sophisticated, fragmented Northern power most effectively oppresses the urban dweller on this plane.
While *The Street* ends with Lutie's confinement by a psychic brick wall, Gloria Naylor's *The Women of Brewster Place* ends with a vision of the destruction of the wall by those it seeks to confine. Naylor's first novel belongs to a group of black feminist texts that emerged after the Black Power Movement of the sixties. This novel asserts the vital necessity of women-centred ritual and community for black women. More than either Petry or Bonner, Naylor exploits the possibilities of safe spaces for her characters and her narrative strategy. Naylor's safe spaces challenge realism as an adequate form for portraying the lived experience of black women. However, like Bonner and Petry before her, she does not retreat from portraying the harshness of their urban existence.

To the extent that safe spaces work in *The Women of Brewster Place* they do so because the women suffer from sexual as well as racial oppression. Because of this, women's spaces serve as healing spaces. Their sex is one cause of their suffering as well as a source of their healing community. Naylor's text reverses the tropes of the two earlier texts, her refigurations of the tropes of entrapment - the brick wall, motherhood, and the fictional urban neighbourhoods - are directly related to the historical and political moment in which she writes. *Brewster Place* does not simply emerge in response to the changing political and social relationships between black men and black women following the Black Power Movement, it also helps to create that change. Here narrative technique best exploits the literary potential of the safe space and also follows and contributes to a feminist
literary construction. But Naylor's vision is limited by her denial to extend the benefits of women-defined safe space to her lesbian characters. For in the context of the lesbian relationship it is the source of oppression not only by whites and men but also by other women.

Melvin Dixon has argued that "one difference between (black male) and (black female) writers ... lies in the various ways their protagonists reinvent self through verbal performances in alternative landscapes" (57). While the women of Brewster Place create women defined safe spaces in order to sustain themselves, the male protagonist participate in street space and often enact more violent efforts to counter their oppression. In Wright's Native Son, Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man, and Alex Haley's The Autobiography of Malcolm X, domestic space is stifling and provincial. The male migrant characters of these texts attempt to develop a street culture and attempt to acquire a critical consciousness as a means of resisting the negative impact of the city.

Toni Morrison, too, writing after the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and influenced by Baldwin -completes the literary move from the individual to the collective community and from the power struggle between black and white men to the black family as a site of violence. Morrison shifts her emphasis from a single black victim of racial oppression to a community and a people. In the Song of Solomon the murder of a black person by a white mob is of major importance to the
fate of all black people. Also, the land is of great significance here, for the land and the ancestor are conflated into one benevolent, protecting and wise figure, Pilate. This land, which, in the works of the previous authors has been portrayed as blood is here exposed as an ally. In fact there is a return South in search of the ancestor and one's roots. Milkman embarks on a Southern journey. During the course of the journey he traces the history of the ancestor - not just his immediate grandfather, but the African who is the subject of the Song of Solomon. For Milkman, a return to the Southern home of his ancestors is absolutely necessary for finding himself, for this acquisition of a historical consciousness, for his standing on a higher spiritual and intellectual plane. The South to which he goes is not a place of racial horror and shame, it is a site of history and redemption for him - a place where he can piece together the fragments. Morrison's novel itself is a site of the ancestor. In this way Morrison has modified the tropes of migration narrative by making this text as an ancestor.

The decades of the seventies and eighties found black writers and literary critics participating in a re-consideration of the South and of black folk culture. The view of the South as a place of possibility is apparent in the renewed attention given to the works of Zora Neale Hurston and in the most recently published migration narratives. This is indicative not only of a tendency to romanticise the South, but also of an attempt to
reconsider its significance to black people, an attempt that in many ways would have proven futile prior to the Civil Rights Movement.

The early fiction of Paul Laurence Dunbar and Jean Toomer first establish a return to the South as a possibility for black migrants. However, for the most part, the South remained the site of racial horror and shame for black writers. While they might have shared some fond memories of a Southern home, writers like Richard Wright and Ann Petry did not see return as a viable option for their characters. While Ellison seems to suggest the importance of the South, his protagonist too retreats and Baldwin's second novel goes to Europe. He does not venture into a fictional South until the late sixties. Even Toomer's contemporary Nella Larsen provides us with a protagonist, Helga Crane, whose return to the South signals her metaphoric death. In the 1960s Amiri Baraka contributes a questing protagonist who must return to the South for a necessary understanding of African American culture. Yet in this novel, The System of Dante's Hall, the South is an obligatory site of cultural sojourn, but not a destiny. It is not until the seventies and eighties that writers like Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, Maya Angelou, Ernest Gaines, James McPherson and Albert Murray begin to seriously reconsider the South as a viable option for black people.

These writers differ from Toomer and Dunbar in two important ways. For Toomer, a journey of immersion to the South is a necessary step for the
African American intellectual; it is not, however, his ultimate destiny. His work is to be accomplished in the North. For Dunbar, the South is a place for African Americans to cast down their buckets, accept racial inequities, and build around them. With the exception of Baraka, latter day writers differ from both these views in that they see the South as a place to stay because it has changed. For these writers the South is a site of racial memory and redemption. Unlike Toomer, they portray the South as a final resting place for black people. Unlike Dunbar, they portray it as a place of change racial mores and in this way a much better place than the North for black people.

In poetry, as well as other art forms too counter migration had started happening where the South has a place of racial history and site of the ancestor. In 1973 James Weatherly with the anthem of black counter migration "Midnight Train to Georgia." answered the question "To Where from Here?" This was a question which Blacks had started asking after having failed in the North. Though many earlier Blues and Spirituals of the twenties talked about such Southbound journeys, this is the first Post-Civil Rights Movement song to accompany the growing number of Blacks and to document possible reasons for their return to the South:

L.A. proved too much for the man

... So he's leaving life, he's come to know.

... He said he's going back to find.

... What's left of his world,
A world he left behind
Not so long ago.
He's leaving,
... on that Midnight Train to Georgia.
...Said he's going back to a simpler place in time
... He kept dreaming, that someday he'd be a star.
... But he sure found out the hard way
That dreams don't always come true
So he turned all his hopes
And he even sold his car
Bought a one way ticket back
To the life he once knew....

(Motown Records 5303 MC)

Throughout the poem, the South is a haven where the failed migrant might heal from his failure. The city is a place of failed dreams and lost hope. However, the poem fails to confront the reality of the racist past of the American South, and suggests that the South is free of the problems that plague Northern, Western, and Midwestern cities.

In the 1991-92 television season, the sequence of *Designing Women* too portrayed a New South where traditional racial and gender roles have disappeared. The trend toward romanticising the Southern past is in many ways a reflection of some very real social changes that have occurred there over the past twenty years. This, romanticization of a
Southern past combined with the changes in race relations that occurred in the South following the Civil Rights Movement and the violent chaos of Northern cities have contributed to a very real reconsideration of the South on the part of African Americans. Amongst them Toni Morrison and Alice Walker are the two most successful writers of this period who helped to reshape the journey of immersion as a final vision of the migration narrative and to rewrite the character of the questing black male of these narratives. Both women wrote novels whose central figures were black males who, upon returning to the South, discover the nurturing side of themselves and in so doing contribute to the well-being of other, female characters. Walker's *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* (1970) and Morrison's *Song of Solomon* portray the South as a place of racial history and the site of the ancestor. It is a place where their male protagonists find the female in themselves and begin a process of redemption. Grange Copeland in Walker's *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* has to return back home, South, for reaffirmation of his manhood. Both, he and his granddaughter Ruth realise that running away North is not so much the solution as staying back, for there is always a possibility of resistance to any domination. "That is part of mystery and gift passed on to us that has kept us, generation after generation, going" (346), says Walker in her afterword to the novel. The protagonist of Arrested Developments (a rap group) "Tennessee" expresses a similar view of the South:

Lord live really been real stressed

down and out, loses
ground.
... I don't know where I could go
to let these ghost out of my skull ...
He guided me to Tennessee ... home.

In Tennessee, the protagonist embraces and is enlightened by both the beauty and the terror of the Southern past:

Walk the roads my forefathers walked
Climb the trees my forefathers hung from.
Ask those trees for all their wisdom,
They tell me my ears are
So young ... home ....

(EMI Records Group, FA-21929)

In this song, the very trees from which black bodies were lynched now provide the descendants of those bodies with ancestral wisdom. Now the site of that terror is a source of wisdom, spirituality, and redemption.

The recent return migration of African Americans to the South is anticipated by their literature, and in many ways the narrative of return has helped to shape the discourse around this counter migration. However, there are significant differences between the literary narratives and interviews with return migrants. While the former tend to stress
history and ancestors as the reason for "journeys of immersion", return migrants include other factors as well, like: better economic opportunities, easier life styles, improved race relations, increased violence of Northern gangs and the decay of the urban infrastructure. Anthropologist Carol B. Stack has conducted an extensive research around return migration to the South and notes:

Important for most individuals is the homeplace, often a place of birth, usually the place where childhood was spent, but not necessarily either. Homeplaces are identified as the centre of family history, a characteristic shared with no other place. More than any other place for which a person develops ties, such as the location of college or vacations, the homeplace persists as a migration destination. (3)

Stack goes on to note that the homeplace offers migrants a "haven of safety". For Phoebe Benson, a return migrant to South Carolina, the South provides a sense of safety and contributes "to a sense of being plugged into African American roots." Ms. Beson notes: "there are patterns that are very comforting here; it's like the smell of fresh washed sheets and bacon frying in the morning. These are verities and they are reassuring for me". (Smothers A1). Other migrants cite the increased violence of Northern gangs and the decay of the urban infrastructure as a reason for returning. Perhaps return migrants Barbara and Marshall
Logan best articulate the strengths and weaknesses of return without romanticising it:

With (my children's) educational background, their exposure, this is not the place for them. There still aren't great opportunities for young black people in small Southern cities. ... They would be better off in Atlanta or even a Columbia, S.C. ... Now, I feel that I have returned to my roots. I go to the church that grew up in and I have restored an old home next door to my 93 year old uncle. I feel really at home.

(Smothers B1)

The South of this portrait continues to be a place that suffers from a racist legacy. Nonetheless, it is also a haven of African American history and community, a site of the ancestor, and for some African Americans, it is still home.

Though the Song of Solomon is an important migration narrative, Jazz is Morrison's most explicit migration narrative to date. It revisits the theme of black mobility and modernity. In so doing, it explicitly revised some of the most important tropes of the migration narrative- tropes that Morrison helped to define through her creative and critical writings. During the Jazz Age black migrants and jazz music became that "imagined Africanist persona" that allowed white writers, musicians and consumers of black culture to articulate and imaginatively act out the
forbidden in American culture" (Griffin 194). Morrison's novel is not only an attempt to reclaim the Jazz Age, to place the creators of jazz at its very centre, but also comments on the negative and positive consequences of migration. The text also embodies the ancestor's morality. But the gift of the ancestor that this text gives us is not the ancestor of the South, but an ancestor who is herself a migrant. This text offers an alternative figure, one who carries the wisdom of these first migrants, their music, their history, their vision, and even the literature that defined their moment. The final vision of the narrative is one where the migrants have been transformed and have transformed American culture and society. There is no looking back, no return to the South. Instead they continue to exist on the urban landscape and they even manage to survive in order to love and live. Through this novel Morrison is offering an alternative to counter migration. Even Alice Walker in her novel *The Color Purple* suggests this. For Nettie, Celie's sister, goes to Africa as a missionary and has to come back. Africans too can't accept the Blacks when they want to reform or change their ways and parts of culture. And hence Samuel, Nettie and Celie's children come back to America. Of course, in Walker's case it is Africa.

To sum up now one could conclude that violence, as a catalyst to migration was a recurring theme in the migration narrative of African American artists. The causes, victims, and victimisers are constantly shifting, but the tenet remains the same: that violence enacted upon
Blacks is a primary cause for their choosing to leave the South. Trudier Harris notes that between 1853 and 1968 a literary tradition of portraying lynching emerged among black male writers. She suggests that after 1968, lynching had less symbolic significance for black writers and appears with less frequency than in previous years. Also, black women writers are less concerned with the graphic depiction of rape and lynching but look instead at the consequences for a people, a collective community. Therefore, the aim in this introductory chapter was to begin by tracing a history of black migration from the South to the North. This was followed by different reasons for which Blacks moved, viewed differently by sociologists, historians, economists and literary artists. The creative texts stress the migration of one character, who stands as representative of the mass. The sociological and historical studies and the letters of the migrants focus on the migration of a people. Because of this they tend to highlight a broader range of reasons for leaving the South. The literary artists made possible, the emergence of a new kind of migration narrative. This new kind of migration narrative underwent changes in different decades in the hands of different writers. Also, how the tropes of migration and counter migration were used and later modified by different writers writing in different decades, was examined. Keeping this in mind an attempt has been made to study Ann Petry's The Street (1946), Gloria Naylor's The Women of Brewster Place (1982), and Toni Morrison's Song of Solomon (1977). Morrison's Song of Solomon though written before
Naylor's *The Women of Brewster Place* has been selected because it best illustrates the process of counter migration.
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