Western historiography struggles against fiction which narrates one thing in order to tell something else. Toni Morrison, an African-American writer wants to rewrite the African-American history of slavery with the help of her narrative technique. She maintains that narrative has a function similar to that of history. Just as we have to travel through history to encounter our prehistory, we have to travel through narrative to encounter a meaning that lies deeper than the tale’s narrative surface.

In the Western tradition, story and history are supposed to be synchronous. Black writers in America have had to contend with the problem of the unsuitability of available narrative frames. Aimed at an abolitionist audience, the first African-American narratives drew on existing literary genres and were often heavily edited filtered their experiences through dominant perspectives and adapted their stories to conventional patterns. But the consecutive and forward-moving slave stories that produce a model could not adequately convey the communal experience of black Americans. If an alternative vision of history has to be related, narrative techniques needed to be altered.

Morrison constructs history through the acts and consciousness of African-American slaves rather than through the perspective of the dominant white social classes. Morrison constructs a parallel between the individual processes of psychological recovery and a historical or national process.

*Beloved* (1987), *Jazz* (1992), and *Paradise* (1998), each set in a different period of African-American history, are often loosely grouped as another trilogy. What characterizes the second phase is the author’s working out the implications that identity may be more a construction than a biological essence. There are three different ways of dealing with the past in this trilogy. *Beloved* is about trying to forget (or repress) the past; *Jazz* is about trying to
ignore (or skip over) the past and *Paradise* is about re-inventing (re-writing) the past. The following discussion is how Morrison has used her narrative techniques to re-write the history under slavery in her next three novels, commonly termed as trilogy.

In *Beloved*, Morrison deals with the issue that links the past and the present because continuity of active remembering is critical to her own personal being. In this novel, which has received a great deal of critical attention, she returns to the historical moment of chattel slavery and challenges traditional ways of theorizing both bondage and freedom in the context of Black womanhood. In doing so, she proposes a paradigm of metaphysical liberation. She shows that emancipating the soul requires an individual to undertake a journey, both physical and metaphysical, in which one confronts one’s past. Her character, Beloved, has often been described as a ghost, but that may be taken as a spirit who serves as the repository of memory and, thus, those memories are used to promote changes in the narrative’s other characters. In the last section the omnipresent or implied narrator writes:

> It was not a story to pass on.

This is not a story to pass on. (Morrison, *Beloved* 324)

The very technique of Morrison to leave her novel open-ended makes the reader turn back to the first page of the novel to make re-reading to trace clues as to what the ending means. If the reader has been able to resist the totalizing impulse, oscillate between the pages of the book remains active, such an approach denies the sense of resolution and the desire of the reader to close the book; this is what the central aspect of Morrison’s fictional technique is. This technique is certainly connected to her investment in an oral, African-American tradition of story-telling; the Griot. It is found that the narration in *Beloved* creates too close an identification between the main character’s point of view and the point of view of the reader; the result is that many readers finish the text believing Beloved to be the ghost of the dead child. From this point of view, the text’s meaning is closed. Although the narrative
voice reasserts to raise questions about what Beloved really was. Morrison puts the meaning of *Beloved* back into circulation with the line, “This is not a story to pass on. ( *Beloved* 324) Through Beloved, the narrative’s characters, and perhaps the readers, are empowered to confront the dilemmas of their personal and collective pasts in terms of slavery, affecting liberation from the historical pain and shame of slavery.

In *Beloved* Morrison brings together the African-American oral and literary tradition and the Euro-American novel tradition to create a powerful and intensely personal representation of slavery in America. Here, she tries to replicate the black female slave’s voice; the unspeakable thoughts, unspoken. She has to rely to a great extent on oral history. The story of *Beloved*, results in a new kind of history, interlocking different accounts and versions of events to create an emotional and fictional response to slavery. Part of the novel’s interest lies in horror and beauty with which Sethe and Paul D come to terms with their memories, allowing the reader to share the pain of their lives. In *Beloved*, Morrison seems to underline that freeing yourself was one thing; claiming ownership of that freed self was another.

The distinction between plot and story is immediately apparent in the way the events in the novel are related to the readers in reverse chronological order: in the plot the reader sees in August 1873, Paul D turns up at 124-Sethe’s house. Paul, Sethe, and Denver go to the carnival; on the way home, they discover Beloved sitting on a stump: Paul moves out of Sethe’s bed. In winter Beloved seduces Paul D; Paul tells Sethe that he slept with Beloved; Stamp Paid shows Paul a clipping about Sethe killing her child; Paul and Sethe split. January, 1875: Sethe, Denver, and Beloved go ice skating. March: Sethe realizes that Beloved is her dead baby. April: Denver goes for work. Summer: the townspeople come to 124 to help Sethe to get rid of Beloved.
The story of the novel or that of Sethe flashes back 18 years to the time she had entered into a deal with carver for ten minutes sex to get the word ‘Beloved’ carved on her baby’s headstone. The reader isn’t told how the baby died. The reader learns the details in flashbacks. So, there is a case of mimesis where the author believes more in ‘telling’, rather than in ‘showing’, i.e. diegesis. The narrative is first person whereas it is copiously interspersed with third person narration during the novel. The story begins in 1873, though the narrative stretches back to include memories of Sethe’s mother and Baby Suggs. The action of Beloved revolves around Sethe, the formerly enslaved Black woman who embarks on a journey of self-possession. The story of Paul D has been dealt within the present and the past. Morrison tries to weave the stories of both Sethe and Paul D in such a way that they become essential for each other. While Morrison juxtaposes incidents that occur elsewhere between 1796 and 1874, the narrative’s primary setting is in Cincinnati, Ohio, between 1855 and 1874 by reeling off incidents that occurred in Kentucky before 1855. The core narrative opens in 1874 at Sethe’s home, 124 Bluestone Road.

Morrison wants to write a sub-text from a new critical direction. She focuses on the issue of slavery by fictionalizing a real event that occurred in the life of Margaret Garner, which appears in The Black Book, a work conceived by Morrison and made up of newspaper cuttings, songs and photographs to produce a history of nameless black men and women.

Unlike the univocal, nineteenth-century slave narratives, in which plot rides character in the protagonist’s journey of transformation from object to subject, Beloved is a haunting story of a mother’s love that frames a series of interrelated love stories by multiple narrators.

The earlier slave narratives were largely delivered using the first person and tended to develop sequentially. In contrast, Beloved is dialogic, the treatment of time is quite the opposite from linear narrative. The psychological effects of slavery and inner life outweigh the historical facts, which is largely through the memories of Paul D. Unlike the slave narratives which sought to be all-inclusive eyewitness accounts of the material conditions of
slavery, Morrison’s novel exposes the unsaid of the narratives, the psychic subtexts that lie within and beneath the historical facts. Through the character of Beloved, Sethe seizes the opportunity to unfold before the world the picture of gruesome and horrendous life the slaves had to go through and also offered an opportunity to the author to tell the world the life of slavery, to peep into their past and to reconstruct the history of black people. Morrison says, she wrote *Beloved* convinced that:

> This has to be the least read of all the books I’d written because it is about something that the characters don’t want to remember, black people don’t want to remember, white people don’t want to remember. I mean, it is national amnesia. (Bonnie 23)

The plot of *Beloved* is not easy to summarize. Apparently, Morrison’s technique is to thread various narratives together, using the present tense to convey the vividness of the memories of her characters. *Beloved* is the story of a visitation from the past and the consequent upheaval in the emotional lives of its characters. It is set during an appalling period in America’s history; the years of the Civil War and of slavery. After the Civil War ended, i.e. in the latter half of the nineteenth century, life was still dreadful for slaves as well as for the emancipated. The novel examines the impact of slavery on a group of black people. Morrison shows through her non-linear narrative how the past may unconsciously impose on or intersect with the present. By doing so, Morrison induces her readers to participate imaginatively in the process of creation of narratives. Brian Finney explains:

> Part of [Morrison’s] narrative strategy is to position the reader within the text in such a way as to invite participation in the reconstruction of the story, one which is usually complicated by an achronological ordering of events. (21)

In this process, Morrison’s readers are asked to rethink what they think they know, not only about slavery, but about psychic phenomena. That Morrison asks this level of participation from the reader is not surprising as she describes her writing as “expecting,
demanding participatory reading….It’s not just about telling the story, it’s about involving the reader.” (Christian 125)

In narratology, irrespective of any language, there are only two modes of narration and they are ‘telling’ a fiction and ‘showing’ it. While ‘telling’ a story a writer often intrudes in the course of narrative and supplies information about the fictional material. In ‘showing’ fiction, the narrator minimizes his/her presence in the text and allows the reader to experience fiction on his own without comments. The mode of narration of ‘telling’ rather than ‘showing’ is remarkably used in Beloved, wherein the narrator supplies information about her past. Actually, Morrison wanted to write a sub-text in the form of Beloved. Having drawn upon the story of Margaret Garner, Morrison engages her readers’ literary imaginations and historical knowledge of female sexuality, motherhood and community as she constructs Sethe, an empowered woman capable of exerting her free will to alter her destiny despite her restrictive environment.

Focalization is also of great importance. Time and again, the memories of Sethe of Sweet Home are recalled though she has been away from that home for 18 years. Sethe recalls incidents from Sweet Home when she was a young lass or when she was a married woman. But the narrator in the story is mature Sethe, while the focalizer is Sethe, a married woman. She tells Paul D about the ill-treatment of schoolteacher’s nephews. For instance, the following passage is a testimony:

“I had milk,” she said. “I was pregnant with Denver but I had milk for my baby girl….Now he rolled the dough out with wooden pin. “Anybody could smell me long before he saw me.”

….After I left you, those boys came in there and took my milk. That’s what they came in there for. Held me down and took it. I told Mrs. Garner on em. She had that lump and couldn’t speak but her eyes rolled out tears. (Beloved 19)
The use of the third-person narrator interspersed with the first-person narrator employed here by the writer has special effects on the narration that story which otherwise couldn’t have been narrated. In pouring out the agony of characters, Morrison uses the first-person narrative to narrate the inner psyche of the characters, while for describing other details she uses the third-person narrator—one who tells the story by describing the action of other people (“he said,” “they did”). The third-person narrative technique in *Beloved*, committed more to ‘telling’ rather than ‘showing’ allows more freedom to the narrator for making comments on events and characters, even has the liberty of imposing her own viewpoint on the reader. It remains fairly constant throughout the novel, but the point of view from which the story is told changes from section to section. Like the Stream of Consciousness novels, there is no story in the conventional sense.

The expectation of the reader is initially disrupted by the narrative’s *in medias res* beginning and by the vivid personification of place, 124 Bluestone Road, the narrative hook that centers each of the novel’s three sections. The number of chapters (28) corresponds to the lunar or menstrual cycle; as it is a book about women; each of the three parts begins with chapter describing the state of the house 124 as it goes from spiteful to loud and from loud to quiet. About her strategy, Morrison explains:

> The reader is snatched, yanked, thrown into an environment completely foreign, and I want it as the first stroke of the shared experience that might be possible between the readers and the novel’s population. Snatched just as the slaves were from one place to another, from any place to another, without preparation and without defense….And the house into which this snatching -this kidnap ping-propels, changes from spiteful to loud to quiet, as the sounds in the body of the ship itself may have changed. (Morrison, *Unspeakable* 396)

The narrative progresses by leaps and bounds, and started and left, only to be resumed over the course of chapters. Chronicling a non-linear account of almost five decades of the
life of Sethe, the novel has epic dimensions. Swinging back and forth, the narrative creates a tangled web of mystery, lacking both chronology and continuity.

Morrison has combined the technique of Stream of Consciousness and interior monologue with three-fold traditional technique - direct narration, descriptive passages and conversation. Of course the stream of consciousness technique was not a new technique at that time but Morrison has used this technique to lessen the cruelty shown by the schoolmaster’s nephews. She employs the stream of consciousness method which enables Sethe to dramatize the interaction between the self and the society; the consciousness and the situation. Through interior monologue the inner thoughts of the three female protagonists are poured out vividly in the present tense. For example, the following thoughts of Sethe:

BELOVED, she my daughter. She mine. See. She come back to me of her own free will and I don’t have time to explain before because it had to be done quick….She come back to me, my daughter, and she is mine. (Beloved 236-241)

Denver interior monologue begins with:

BELOVED is my sister. I swallowed her blood right along with my mother’s milk….She played with me and always came to be with me whenever I needed her. She’s mine, Beloved. She’s mine. (Beloved 242-247)

While Sethe’s interior monologue is motivated by guilt and the need to explain, Denver’s thoughts are full of her fears, dreams and loneliness. Beloved’s interior monologue which begins with:

I AM BELOVED and she is mine. I see her take flowers away from leaves she puts them in a round basket the leaves are not for her she fills the basket she opens the grass…she is face smiling at me doing it at last a hot thing now we can join a hot thing (Beloved 248-252)
This section is even more disjointed than the thoughts of Denver and Sethe. There is no punctuation and Morrison flouts typographical conventions, allowing the format of the text itself to endorse her choice of the narrative style. It reflects the timelessness of Beloved’s presence. She has explained in an interview with Marsha Darling that Beloved speaks the language of both Death and the Middle Passage and that the language is the same for both experiences. The use of chorus, a musical device is a tribute to the importance of music for black heritage. The peculiar method of Morrison’s use of the interior monologue in this novel is that she juxtaposes the internal monologues with the chorus voices of Sethe, Denver and Beloved:

I waited for you
You are mine
You are mine
You are mine (Beloved 256)

The fusion of identity expressed in this refrain can only be destructive. Still in an absolute possession of her mother, Beloved enforces the internalized enslavement that has become a legacy of institutionalized slavery.

Another technique Morrison has used in this novel is the technique of flashback. Through flashback, the omniscient narrator remembers the past of Sethe. Sethe remembers waking up on the bank of the Ohio, after giving birth to Denver. The implied author takes omniscience over her and ‘tells’ Sethe’s feelings.

Amy had gone. Sethe was alone and weak, but alive, and so was her baby. She walked a ways downriver and then stood gazing at the glimmering water. By and by a flatbed slid into view, but she could not see if the figures on it were white-people or not. She began to sweat from a fever she thanked God for since it would certainly keep her baby warm. (Beloved 106)

The narrative technique of flashback helps the writer to peep into the past of Sethe; even it tells the reader how terrible it was for a pregnant woman to bear the cruelty of the
white racist against the slaves. Stamp Paid helped her to cross the river, where she was met a woman called Ella. Then the narrative of Paul D experience in the chain gang is described. Beloved have sex with Paul D. In Section -14, the author demonstrates Beloved’s fear of death through her stream of consciousness.

Beloved looked at the tooth and thought, this is it. Next would be her arm, her hand, a toe. Pieces of her would drop may be one at a time, maybe all at once….She had two dreams: exploding and being swallowed. When her tooth came out…she thought it was starting. (Beloved 157)

Then the story recalls two incidents; one in the present tense and other in the past tense, the tale of Baby Suggs’s arrival. Baby Suggs’s stream of consciousness reveals the agony of a slave mother. She recalls that on Halle’s birth, she had barely glanced at him, thinking “it wasn’t worth the trouble to try and learn features she would never see change into adulthood.” (Beloved 163)

Not that Morrison has denounced the traditional narrative. The conversation of Stamp Paid and Paul D is an example of traditional narrative. Stamp Paid finds Paul D on the church steps, and apologizes to him. He tells Paul D how he got his name. Earlier he was Joshua. The issue of naming illustrates Morrison’s fundamental worries about language. Stamp Paid challenges white power by renaming himself. This self-baptism is an assertion of self-ownership and therefore a direct negation of slavery. A peculiar method of Morrison’s use of the stream of consciousness technique in this novel is that she juxtaposes the internal monologues with the authorial comments by way of explanation. Engaging in a conversation with Denver, Sethe remembers the grip of Paul D. as she stood before the cooking stove. She thinks:

“...’Would it be all right? Would it be all right to go ahead and feel? Go ahead and count on something?’ She asked herself. She couldn’t think clearly….She had left the room.”(Beloved 46)
The feeling of fear haunts Sethe when she thinks of Paul D. the implied author takes omniscience over her and ‘tells’ her feeling. The implied author ‘assures’ the reader that on remembering her past, Sethe feels disappointed again. The narrative voice ‘tells’ the situation:

124 was so full of strong feeling perhaps she was oblivious to the loss of anything at all. There was a time when she scanned the field every morning and every evening for her boys. When she stood at the open window, unmindful of flies, her head cocked to her left shoulder, her eyes searching to the right for them….Sometime they ran along the railroad track laughing, too loud, apparently, to hear her. (*Beloved* 47)

The implied author, on this scene ‘directs’ the reader how to respond to Sethe’s feelings, as she derives and therefore he ‘tells’ everything. In this manner, the implied author ‘tells’ Sethe’s fear, disappointment and patience. By telling the situation in this way, the narrator judiciously prepares the reader for an understanding of Sethe in the right perspective. Through this ‘telling’ the conflict is developed further.

Each section of *Beloved* begins with a number and personification of a house that figures as a character other in the text. In “Unspeakable Things Unspoken,” Morrison comments:

Beginning *Beloved* with numerals rather than spelled out numbers, it was my intention to give the house an identity separate from the street or even the city; to name it the way Sweet Home was named, the way plantations were named, but not with nouns or “proper” names -with numbers instead because numbers have no adjectives, no posture of coziness or grandeur or estate builders…laying claim to instant history and legend. (31)
Morrison has dedicated her novel to Sixty Million and more, who failed to survive the Middle Passage. The epigraph from 9:25 prefigures the writer’s purpose to reclaim the lost tribe:

I will call them my people,
Which were not my people,
And her beloved,
Which was not beloved. (*Beloved*)

Through these lines Morrison seems to connect the past with the present. Mae G. Henderson points out: “the author not only creates problem in the relationship between the past and the present but also thematizes the importance of historical Reclamation and Repossession. Morrison seeks to repossess the African and slave ancestors after their historic inflation.” (Henderson 76) Morrison uses the primary tool of “memory that creates the chain of tradition, which passes happening on from generation to generation.” (Furman 80)

The structure of *Beloved* is designed by Morrison in a way that it matches form with substance, the novel’s inscription “Sixty Million and more,” gives us a framework for analyzing the text: it stands for Africans; a number that refers to extermination of the sizeable portion of their population. In the epilogue, Morrison writes: Everybody knew what she [Beloved] was called, but nobody anywhere knew her name. Disremembered and unaccounted for, she cannot be lost because no one is looking for her, and even if they were, how can they call her if they don’t know her name? The readers are introduced to unmarked chapters. The absence of passages, dates and numbers reflects a negation of time with regard to African people.

*Beloved*, like *The Bluest Eye* or *Sula*, is characterized by fragmented sequences whose irregular juxtaposition is the combined result of ellipsis, digression, and jumbled chronology. Morrison uses a polyvocal approach in her narrative. She produces a symphony of voices
through her use of interior monologues, stream of consciousness, flashback, and ambiguously shifting narrative points of view. Like Williams who breaks from the linearly rendered emancipatory narrative to challenge traditional historiographies of slavery, Morrison intensifies this strategy to reveal the rich inferiority of African-American life as she situates her narrative completely within the African-American community, telling its story from the inside out. To make the plot a structural whole, Morrison has consistently used these techniques. She develops the plot and tells the story of major characters, and finally reaches at a resolution of the story. To make the novel work as a ritual, Morrison adopts techniques from Modernist novels, such as the fragmentation of the plot and a shifting narrative voice, to compel the reader to actively construct an interpretive framework.

In *Beloved*, there is no visible connection between the events experienced by various characters (for example, by Stamp Paid and Baby Suggs, or by Sethe and Paul D), even though these characters were situated in the same period of time and even sometimes in the same place. They have become submerged stories isolated from their context and deprived of the possibility of expression.

Another skilful structural device that Morrison uses to reflect the unchanging status of African people is the repetition of key words, phrases or sentences. Sometimes the last line of the previous chapter leads to the opening of the next chapter. At one page the chapter ends with the lines: “she is mine, Beloved, she’s mine.” (*Beloved* 247), the next chapter begins with “I AM BELOVED and she is mine.” (*Beloved* 248) This is just to achieve structural coherence as well as to reflect, the African’s unchanging reality.

In constructing *Beloved*, Morrison confronts the counterproductive bifurcation of the Black man’s narrative and the Black woman’s narrative: “[Paul D] wants to put his story next to [Sethe’s]” (*Beloved* 273). Indeed, their individual narratives are both independent and dependent. Morrison presents both narratives, creating an intensely inter-textual relationship
that highlights how essential one is for the other. Certainly, Morrison is primarily concerned with the free Black woman’s story after slavery. Constructing her narrative of liberation in this way, Morrison allows her readers, both men and women, to participate in presenting their own process of liberation.

If Sethe’s individual memories exist in the world as fragments of a historical memory, then, by extension, the individual process of recollection or re-memory can be reproduced on a historical level. In other words, Morrison uses memory as the metaphor of the psychological realities of slave life. Through memory, Morrison moves into the psychic consequences of slavery. The text *Beloved* moves through a series of narratives starts and stops which is complicated by Sethe’s desire to forget or disremember the past. Re-memory thus functions in Morrison’s history as a tool for the problem of re-imaging one’s heritage.

The opening section presents many of the events which are later unraveled in the novel. The time-scale is elastic. References are elliptic and coherence is denied. The unfolding and disintegration of Sweet Home, Sethe’s escape, Denver’s birth and Sethe’s act of infanticide, the arrival of Paul D’s at 124 are stories, which are conceived in the opening section of the novel and are allowed to grow in the course of the novel.

In the beginning, the gloomy atmosphere of 124 does not show the presence of Beloved. It is rather considered as the entry of a ghost. The implied narrator describes the home, “there had been no visitors of any sort and certainly no friends” for eighteen years (*Beloved* 12). An ambiguously shifting narrative point of view by Morrison makes the story and history more reliable as she interlinks the past with the present. She uses present tense throughout the novel, although the narrative spans a period of some fifty years, stretching back to Baby Suggs’s youth and Sethe’s earliest memories of her mother. The arrival of Paul D makes the story develop further. A tale is told, and a narrative journey starts. Sethe narrates to Paul D how she had made an escape; there is the memory of a white girl who helped Sethe escape and the inhuman treatment of the schoolteacher’s nephews.
The omniscient narrator again describes the scene of sex between Paul D and Sethe. In her memory Sethe recalls her coupling with Halle, fragments of the story of Denver’s birth and Sethe allows herself to envisage a future with Paul D. The story moves forward when Paul D, Sethe and Denver come back at 124 from the carnival. A young black woman calling herself Beloved is waiting for them outside 124. Beloved asks Sethe questions about her past. Paul D tells Sethe that Halle had witnessed schoolteacher’s nephew stealing her milk. Through the character of the schoolteacher, Morrison shows how one culture is superior or inferior to the other. Charles Johnson maintains:

He (schoolteacher) uses the metaphor of race in its latent relation to power and knowledge aimed to control, by inscribing these differences as fixed as finite categories although fallacious. Arbitrary constructs to language spell the difference between the subordinate and super-ordinate, between bondman and lord. Its call into use is simultaneous with the shaping of an economic order in several important ways by western cultures and their traditions. (Johnson 43)

The name Paul D is symbolic. It means very small without history or family to be proud of. Such naming implies anonymity and lack of identity. (Darling, In Realms 5-6) The iron bit in Paul D’s mouth is a barbaric symbol of silence and oppression:

There was a wildness that shot up into the eye the moment the lips were yanked back….Days after it was taken out, goos fat was rubbed on the mouth but nothing to Soothe the tongue or take Wildness out of the eye (Beloved 71)

In narrating the tale of Sethe’s escape, Denver feels what Sethe must have felt while escaping from Sweet Home. For the first time, the mistaken child for a ghost actually reveals her identity to Denver in section eight. Morrison explains this in one of her interview:
So when they say “what was it like over there?” they may mean—they do mean—“what was it like being dead?” She tells them what it was like being where she was on that ship as a child. Both things are possible, and there is evidence in the text that both things could be approached, because the language of both experiences—death and Middle Passage—is the same. (Darling, In Realms 5-6)

Denver’s narration of the tale, of Sethe’s escape, her birth and aftermath are told by or remembered through the consciousness of various characters—Denver, Sethe, Stamp Paid and Beloved. This implies the multiplicity of perspectives and historical positions. Maggie Sale points out:

That the process of creating oral history out of memories depends upon the interaction between the perspectives and needs of teller and listeners….The boundaries of the text CHALLENGE notions of objectivity in creation of history….Not only does Beloved foreground its own construction as history and fiction, but it asserts that all historical narratives participate in a similar fictionalizing that reveals as much about the writer (teller) as it recovers of the past. (Sale 23)

Morrison’s omniscience allows the readers to enter the sheriff, the schoolteacher and the nephew’s psyche. This choice of narrator for the central event of the novel has various implications. It distances the reader from the drama of the events, thus increasing the horrific aspect of the passage, while simultaneously validating Sethe’s response to the system that schoolteacher represents.

To show the coherence and continuity of the story of the birth of Denver, Morrison starts telling it in section -1, it continues in section -8 and further in section -9. The oscillation of the narrative from the present to the past, then again into the present recall the prevailing conditions of the slaves during that period.
The second part of *Beloved* contains seven sections; the implied narrator describes 124 from spiteful to loud. The changing atmosphere of the home is inflicting of the corresponding changes in the minds of the characters. Section one describes Stamp Paid coming to knock on Sethe’s door. He regrets having shown the newspaper clipping. In this section there are the memories of Baby Suggs and of Sweet Home. Sethe is relieved of having to remember the presence of Beloved and that absolves her of some of the weight of the past. The dialogue between Stamp Paid and Ella is an example of Morrison’s skill at faithfully rendering the inherent incongruities of speech. Incomplete phrases, rhetoric questions, exclamations and double negatives abound.

“He is sleeping in the church,” said Ella.

“They church! Stamp was shocked and very hurt.

“Yeah. Asked Reverend Pike if he could stay in the cellar.”

“I expect he knows that.”

“Why? Why he have to ask? Can’t nobody offer? What’s going on?

…

“It’s her, ain’t it?”

“Her who?”

…

“I ain’t got no friends take a handsaw to their own children.”

“What you say casts a different light. I thought-” (Beloved 219-221)

Part three of the novel has three sections. In Section-1, home was quiet from loud which signifies the recovery of the situation; how one starts getting settled in new conditions. The situation in the home starts degenerated. Sethe has stopped going to work. Denver realizes that her mother is in danger. She plucks up courage to leave 124. The community starts leaving her food. Denver goes to the Boldwins and the women in the community decide
to intervene to rescue Sethe. Beloved has gone. Paul D meets Denver. He remembers his travels after Alfred and his first experience of the North. He goes to visit Sethe. On being asked, Sethe declares that she has no plans at all, which denotes the lack of a future. The last section of part-3 has an epilogue in the third-person describes the ways in which Beloved and her memory passes from the protagonists’ lives. The novel finishes with her name.

To sum up, it can be deduced that *Beloved* is an indictment of the racial abuse meted out to the slaves and simultaneously a celebration of the heroic survival of their race, culture and identity. Morrison has tried to re-write the history of blacks through her characters in this novel. At the same time, she has vainly tried to forget the memories of the past. Sethe doesn’t like to remember her past; she wants to forget her past, but the line ‘this is not a story to pass on’ (*Beloved* 324) is very contradictory. Actually Morrison wants this story to pass on.

The third-person narrative technique interspersed with first-person narrative executed with omniscient and implied narrator for the purpose of ‘telling’ rather than ‘showing’ an experienced truth of life is unique. It gives to *Beloved* a high degree of intensity because the entire action of the novel is focused on the unlimited experience of the central character. Morrison by narrating the horrific, heart-wrenching story of a mother, a wife, and a woman questions the very existence of relationships in the face of hostile, intimidating outer world. All signs of racial discriminations, psychological turmoil and physical dehumanization strip the reality of all sanity. Morrison’s primary focus is to depict how whites had used every weapon in their armory to devastate the blacks and keep them fettered in the eternal inferno of slavery. The novel focuses on a community of ex-slaves and how they manage to get their life back on track. The novel questions, through the eyes of schoolteacher, what the difference is between a man and an animal. In its vivid portrayal of the Negro community, complete with their desires and troubles, the novel shows that the colored man is like any other man. Closely tied to the race is the past. Each character has endured a furious past,
complete with worst imaginable horrors. Sethe has been raped and forced to murder, Paul D has been imprisoned in a cube in a ditch, Stamp Paid was forced to give his wife away to be a sex toy, and the list goes on and on. Many of these men and women have chosen like Sethe and Paul D, to repress the past. Others worked actively against it, like Stamp Paid. However, no resolution occurs for any of the characters and each learns to accept and deal with the past (which is very alive in the present) only to find a future.

Toni Morrison’s next novel *Jazz* seems to be in continuity with *Beloved*. The character of Beloved disappears without trace, which is reintroduced in the guise of Wild and Joe in *Jazz*. When Joe (Joseph) makes inquiries about his own parents he is told: “O honey, they disappeared without a trace.” (Morrison, *Jazz* 124) The narrator narrates the story of Joe, how he changes to Trace. Joe was born in 1873 and was taken in by the Williams family, brought up with their son Victory. Changing of name seven times symbolizes new identity. The story of Joe and Violet, for instance, is intertwined with the history of late slavery. By taking the surname Trace, Joe re-signifies a history in which the power to signify had been denied him (he took the name because he had been told his parents had left “without a trace” [*Jazz* 124]). In other words, it is precisely the rooting of the sign in temporality that gives Joe the opportunity to redefine himself and his history.

Like *Beloved*, *Jazz* is an extremely open-ended text from a reader-response point of view. After the death of Dorcas, the vacancy has been filled in by Felice and the story goes on. Although the narrative of *Jazz* makes no secret of who killed whom, the conversation between Alice and Violet throws a shower of questions:

“Why did [Joe Trace] do such a thing?”

“Why did [Dorcas]?”

“Why did [Violet]?” (*Jazz* 81)
Though the question of who killed who is easily answered, it remains a complex question in the history of American which Jazz attempts posthumously to answer. Although Jazz is part of a larger narrative that began with Beloved and moves on to Paradise, it is much more daring and sophisticated than either of the other novels in its literary technique. With this book, Morrison achieves a singular identification of form and function by naming the novel after a musical convention and then presenting manifestations of that musical form as part of the context in which the characters and events take shape. Almost every section of the novel mentions the omnipresence of jazz music as a counterpoint to the events of the text. About the music in Jazz, Henry Louis Gates, Jr. comments, “Music and literature, rivals of the arts, have not coexisted without intruding on each other’s terrain,” (52-53) It is Morrison who dares to make them coexist.

While Beloved remembers the past in order to create continuity and coherence in the present, Jazz return to the past to form an idea of black existence for the future. Beloved tells about the struggles with slavery in the late 1800’s, and Jazz picks up right where that story is left. Morrison goes beyond other authors by integrating the different subjects into one story. A more obvious interpretation of the title is that the time and place of this book had a lot to do with Jazz because of the Harlem Renaissance. When she decided to use Jazz as the name of this novel, she was not only talking about the genre of music, but was trying to symbolize something greater. Professor Karen Carmean writes that Morrison selected the title Jazz because the word is known “for the most famous kind of black music, a special kind of music that aspires to come from and produce pure emotion.” (102) Morrison tries to organize her novel like a piece of jazz music. Carmean writes that “the novel, like jazz, has a fast opening, establishing a dominant note and theme, and then the novel breaks into different parts—various stories [passages] and voices [instruments]. The novel is inspired by the whole range of human feelings, just as jazz music is a musician’s vision of human emotions and life experiences.” (102)
During Harlem Renaissance, the intellectual and artistic Mecca of blacks’ awakening, black music Jazz; the jewel of African-American art burst into full bloom. It was the product of Southerners. Thousands of Southern blacks who had moved north in search of a better life, had no idea that they were living at the time of the Harlem Renaissance, Jazz is their story. The novel attempts to redefine the meaning and sensibility of the Jazz Age.

Just as *Beloved* was inspired by the true story of Margaret Garner, *Jazz* is based on a real event. It is about trying to ignore (or skip over) the past. The idea for this novel is taken from a book of photographs called *The Harlem Book of the Dead*, by James Van Der Zee, a famous African-American photographer who worked during the Harlem Renaissance. A photograph of a young girl lying in a coffin who was shot by her jealous ex-boyfriend sparked Morrison’s imagination for the story. On the story element Gates says, “She [the dead girl] was the one I think was shot by her sweetheart at a party with a noiseless gun. Her friends asked her about it and she said, “I’ll tell you tomorrow.” (52-53) She was trying to give him a chance to get away.

The use of musical structures in writing a novel is not new in modern fiction. James Joyce has already used musical structures in writing *Ulysses*. Morrison takes advantage of the setting of her plot in the twenties by applying it on African-American territory taking jazz as the unifier of black and white modernist people.

Morrison in *Jazz*, takes recourse more to the dramatic technique of “telling” rather than “showing” fiction, wherein the unreliable omniscient narrator does not maintain the purity of its objective and concrete narrative. He rather gets involved in describing the situation. In ‘telling’ mode of narration, the writer intrudes in the course of narrative and supplies information about the fictional materials, as in the following lines where the narrator supplies extra material to the narrative. When Violet enquires of Dorcas, She is told that “the girl wore what kind of lip rouge; the marcelling iron they used on her (though I (Narrator)
suspect that girl didn’t need to straighten her hair)" (Jazz 5) The omniscient narrator knows what is needed and what is not. The reader is quickly informed by the narrator of Jazz that no juridical or charitable agencies could understand or help the situation. Thus the mystery of the novel’s present becomes a place of departure, for the search for an answer that can only be found in a retrospective telling. It reconstitutes the social history of America by constructing historical knowledge from the vantage point of its oppressed players. This novel also shows the breakdown of the spurious family of Violet and Joe who live a childless and therefore essentially futureless existence in New York. After they reach the promised country in Harlem, Violet is encouraged by the illusory promise of full participation in the American dream.

The novel is made up of ten sections that have no numbered divisions or chapter headings but follow each other with unequal lengths and pick up the story at unexpected places in the narrative track. The structure and the chapter layout do not give adequate knowledge about the plan of the writer. Jazz is divided into ten parts that appear intentional—but if they correspond to anything specific, one cannot reach at a conclusion.

Morrison’s Jazz is a simply titled novel, but this simplicity belies the complexity of the narrative structure to which the word ‘jazz’ alludes. The novel is experimental as it challenges the conventions of the American canonical literary narrative. Morrison incorporates elements of the genre of jazz music as a way of both honoring African-American modes of expression and its cultural production.

The married life of Joe and Violet crumbles when Joe, a middle-aged man, falls in love with Dorcas, an eighteen-year-old woman. In a fit of passion, Joe shoots and kills his beloved Dorcas. Violet, who finds out about the affair, later tries to cut the face of the young woman’s corpse at the funeral. In this novel, Morrison examined the extremes of romantic love between a man and a woman.
The most problematic part of the novel is the narrator; the narrator’s ambiguity. One cannot reach a conclusion as to who is the narrator of the story. The reliability of the narrator has been one of the fundamental questions of traditional narratology ever since Wayne C. Booth first introduced the concept of unreliable narration in 1961 in his book *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. The reliability of a narrator may be put to doubt in several ways, and the truthfulness of any narration in fiction as such has also been questioned. Unreliable narration is often linked with mental illness and instability, the voice of a broken mind.

The narrator of *Jazz* at times tells the readers that “I haven’t got any muscles, so I can’t really be expected to defend myself” (*Jazz* 28) Yet at other times, it seems to be a human being who knows the disappointment of lovers, “of missed opportunities” (*Jazz* 29) There are also instances when this narrator appears to be omniscient, opens up details no one but an author could know. For instance, Joe Trace’s three trips in search of Wild. On another occasion the voice is subjective and limited. This narrative voice destabilizes a reader’s reading of the novel. It seems to tell the story as a character within the novel, yet positions itself within the text, narrating the facts.

The narrator also asserts complete control over the plot, as an author would: “well, it’s my storm, isn’t it? I break lives to prove I can mend them back again” (*Jazz* 219) here, the narrator seems unreliable. Note, for instance, the following:

And when I was feeling most invisible being tightlipped, silent, and unobservable, they were whispering about me to each other. They know how little I could be counted on; how poorly, how shabbily my know-it-all self covered helplessness. That when I invented stories about them -and it seemed to me so fine-I was completely in their hands (*Jazz* 220)

At times this voice admits its lack of omniscience: “I have been careless and stupid and it infuriated me to discover (again) how unreliable I am” (*Jazz* 160) Philip Page goes to
the extent saying, “This narrator straddles the conventional dichotomy between third-person (external) narration and first-person (internal) narrator, destabilizing traditional concept of narration. (Page, Traces 60)

Jan Furman, in her fine book *Toni Morrison's Fiction*, feels sure that the narrator is a woman. She says, “…slight textual clues and strong intuition points towards the narrator’s identity as feminine.” (56) Henry Louis Gates Jr., however disagrees and comments:

A final word about Morrison’s narrator: despite its revelation of a full and lyrical consciousness, despite its extensive ruminations about its character’s consciousness, it remains indeterminate: it is neither male nor female; neither young nor old; neither rich nor poor. It is both and neither. (52)

One cannot figure out who is telling the story. The narrator seems to keep changing personalities—shape shifting. Sometimes it seems like a gossipy neighbour or relative; sometimes the narrator is like a cat or a small dog who strolls in and out of people’s home; and sometimes the narrator is either God or the Dude who drives the Goodyear Blimp.

Perhaps, the epigraph of the novel tells more about the narrator.

I am the name of the sound
and the sound of the name.
I am the sign of the letter
and the designation of the division.

“Thunder, Perfect Mind,” (*The Nag Hammadi*)

Critics and readers speculate differently about the narrator. Some argues that it is a character within the text, the author of the text, the voice of the city, or the voice of Jazz. In an interview, Morrison comments that, “the voice” is meant to convey that the book was talking, writing itself, in a sense. This voice can also be read as that of language itself; the language which continually aims at objectivity. It creates perfect design as well and becomes
the handmaid of the reader. Readers are given a large responsibility in the textual world that is *Jazz*. At times the readers are not guided by any reliable person or narrator who can stabilize its meaning. (McKay ii) Doreatha Mbalia notes, “With this type of narrator, Morrison is teaching us to read differently. You can’t depend on the narrator for that matter.” (Mbalia 123) John Leonard, in review of *Jazz*, for the first time suggests that “the narrative voice is the voice of the novel; the book itself.” (36-49) Last two paragraphs of the novel show it clearly:

I envy them [Joe & Violet] their public love. I myself have known it in secret, shared it in secret and longed, aw longed to show it -to be able to say out loud what they have no need to say at all: *That I have loved only you, surrounded my whole self reckless to you and nobody else. That I want you to love me back and show it to me. That I lone the way you hold me, how close you let me be to you. I like your fingers on and on, lifting, turning. I have watched your face for a long time now, and missed your eyes when you went away from me.*

*Talking to you and hearing you answer—that’s the kick.*

But I can’t say that aloud; I can’t tell anyone that I have waited for this all my life and that being chosen to wait is the reason I can. If I were able I’d say it. Say make me, remake me. You are free to do it and I am free to let you because look, look. Look where your hands are. Now. (*Jazz* 229)

The words in italics speak the last speech of the narrator i.e. the book itself. This process is not one-sided. It is rather a mutual process—one has to make and remake the novel through narrative. The narrator only realizes it at the end: “when I invented stories about them...I was completely in their hands, managed without mercy” (*Jazz* 220)

The importance of jazz in Morrison’s novel is emphasized by its running as a motif throughout the text. The novel begins with a sound, a rhythm, rather than a word, “sth”. And
the novel itself is constructed as variations on a theme. The theme, the simple plot of the Joe-Violet-Dorcas triangle, is presented, as we have seen, in the first paragraph, and the rest of the novel presents variations on this theme. The narrative point-of-view switches to various characters either through focus or through the literal handing over of the narrative device so that each character can perform his/her own invention of the theme.

In *Jazz*, Morrison multiplies the usual dramatic core of the usual montage of flashbacks, repetitions with variations, and slanted perspectives to relate the theme with jazz music. It is not designed to develop the plot but to produce a kind of justification for actions that seem to challenge understanding, as if stories did not need to be told. In an interview with Margaret Reynolds, Morrison describes the use of music in the novel as instrumental in the creation of its rhetoric:

The music is inherent in the structure, and in repetition, not in the choice of words. I wanted very much in *Jazz* to catch the feeling of riffs, of staccato, of lyricism, of blues. But that would be in the organization of the sentence, the selection of words, but not in the so-called high-brow or extra literary words. I’m delighted and fascinated by nuance in language. So much of street language and colloquial language and the parlance of these people which was oral—the language of ordinary people in African-American culture. My tendency would be to try to shape it so that you could actually almost have a sound. The text has to work quietly, I think, on the page, but it ought to have a sound as well. (Reynolds 15)

Morrison’s technique of using an unreliable narrator generally contributes to enhancing the effectiveness of the story, of true events over the limited perception of a narrator. But, the narrator’s self-disqualification does not allow the readers to dismiss the character that she represents as unfit. In fact, her confession of incompetence ends in an
appeal for understanding from the readers that things replicate during the progress. She is the Voice of the City, not just a gossiping voice like Malvonne; she is a multiplicity of voices. More than just a voice or a point of view–she is a changeable and an image of the reader that the author would probably like to imagine for her story.

The narrator in the end of the novel tells that she (it) had believed “life was made just so the world would have some way to think about itself, but that it had gone awry with human flesh, pinioned by misery, hangs on to it with pleasure... I don’t believe that anymore. Something is missing there. Something rogues. Something else you have to figure in before you can figure it out” (Jazz 227-28). With these words the narrator affirms the transitory nature of the narration as something that cannot occur outside the text. There is nothing outside the narrative and the reader has to enter into it for full understanding of the text that links the performative and connotative functions of Jazz. The closing words of the novel “[I’d say make me, remake me. You are free to do it and I am free to let you because look, look. Look where your hands are. Now.” (Jazz 229) are a declaration of freedom.

Jazz is written in the third person past tense, with an omniscient narrator. The point of view changes from chapter to chapter, shifting from Joe, Alice Manfred, Violet, and Golden Grey, to Felice and back. It is this shifting perspective that lends the story its framework and depth. Each person’s way of receiving things deepens his/her understanding. By the end of the story, the simple facts outlined in the opening sentences have been strengthened and transformed into a complex web. The narrator tells the plot in the first two pages:

Sth, I know that woman. She used to live with a flock of birds on Lenox Avenue. Know her husband, too. He fell for an eighteen-year-old girl with one of those deep down, spooky loves that made him so sad and happy he shot her just to keep the feeling going. When the woman, her name is Violet, went to the funeral to see the girl and to cut her dead face they threw her to the floor
and out of the church…and the dead girl’s aunt didn't want to throw money to helpless lawyers or laughing cops when she knew the expense wouldn’t improve anything. Besides, she found out that the man who killed her niece cried all day and for him and for Violet that is as bad as jail. (Jazz 3-4)

The opening word of the novel, “sth,” introduces the reader to the colloquial narrative voice that will recount the whole story, which tells the tale of Violet and Joe. The narrator speaks casually and uses idiomatic expressions and slang phrases, thereby suggesting an atmosphere where stories and urban tradition are swapped frequently. The very first paragraph tells the story of Joe and Violet in abbreviated form. The rest of the novel will go on to flesh out the tale and lead the reader backwards and forwards in time and in and out of the consciousness of key players. The narrator’s assertion, “I know that woman,” and later, “Know her husband too” is significant because it demonstrates that the narrative voice that hovers over the plot is a part of this community and has witnessed many of the events.

The use of the language by the narrator reflects the pulse of Harlem Renaissance with its jazz music, dancing, and poetic innovation. A feeling of optimism pervades the narrator’s description of the City’s black community but there is also a feeling of imminent danger. The narrator is shown to be more confident as she says, “no one knows all there is to know about me,” and the mystery of the narrator is never explicitly resolved in the novel. The narrator seems to be female because of the way she speaks and because of the special concern that she has for the women in the narrative. She dwells in the beauty parlors and overhears the gossip or sits with the neighborhood women’s organizations that are deciding on Violet’s reputation. She slips through time and takes the readers back to earlier episodes in which Violet displayed her sadness or acted out crazily. The fluidity of the narrator’s speech is reminiscent of a jazz tune that adheres to no set rules.

Like many of the sections in this novel, the second section is marked off with a fully blank page that must be turned before continuing on with the story. The blank page serves as a
pause in the jazz-like structure that informs and shapes the prose, language and narrative tempo. As with a jazz piece, themes from earlier segments are revisited and fleshed out. Section-1 ends with the words “I love you” (Jazz24) and Section-2 picks up this theme and continually uses it, as the first words of Section Two are “Or used to.” (Jazz27)

As the novel’s stories are told and retold, the narrator digresses to explore the lives of secondary characters and the stories of black people as a whole. On the train north to the city, the narrator suddenly gives us a glimpse of the world from within the perspective of an attendant who “never got his way.” (Jazz31)

On page 40 after just two lines blank gap, the narrator starts describing about Malvonne and how she is convinced by Joe to spend some time with a female [Dorcas] for some conversation in her apartment. The narrator often mentions a character’s name in relation to a certain plot event and then branches out from that point to a discussion of his or her life or personality. While in the previous section, the narrator had been describing the meetings between Joe and Dorcas in Malvonne’s apartment, now the focus switches to Malvonne herself. Like the narrator, she collects what she deems to be the relevant information pieces together different story lines. When she cleans the white peoples’ office buildings she learns about the men from different traces. Malvonne mirrors not only the narrative of Jazz itself but also the City landscape that is everywhere and everything.

There are elements of magic and mystery in the way how the narrator begins the section by remembering about that day in July, when the parade took place down Fifth Avenue, years before the meeting of Joe and Dorcas. Her tone is such that it seems that she is recounting a bit of folklore and telling about the hot summer day. It seems that she begins this anecdote and the reader almost expects a fable with a clear moral lesson to follow.

This continual shifting of focus is also reflected in the characters’ different attitudes towards jazz music, which was played all over Harlem during these years. Alice Manfred fears the
music that drops down to places below the buckled belts. Like Wild, Alice Manfred wants to remain unseen and disappearing into the cracks and shadows of the city without being bothered by hateful whites. She considers invisibility a virtue and tries to teach her niece “how to crawl along the walls of buildings, disappear into doorways, cut across corners in choked traffic, how to avoid a white boy over the age of eleven.” (Jazz 55)

The music, just like the City and the other characters of the novel, changes when considered from different vantage points. The narrator urges her reader to consider the different viewpoints and often contradicts herself, moving quickly from feeling sympathy to feeling disdain for the characters. However, several pages later the narrator says about Dorcas that the girl was a pack of lies. The horror of fire and losing one’s mother connects Dorcas and Joe and allows them to share one another’s anguish.

Just after three dots in the middle of the line with a gap, the narrator narrates the scene. In March of 1926, a few months after Dorcas’s murder, Alice Manfred waits in her home for a visit from Violet, an unlikely visitor but one that Alice no longer minds. The hat becomes the connecting thread that carries the narrator from one train of thought to the next. Section three ends with Violet sitting in Alice’s apartment, wearing “a hat in the morning.” (JZ 87) and section four opens with a description of “that hat,” (JZ 89)

Many of the emancipated slaves do not know where to go. Morrison tries to relate this image to the image of Violet’s bird. It reflects the ways in which Violet, Joe, and the City’s other migrants have adapted to their new surroundings. When Violet tries to release the parrot from its steel-barred captivity it does not know what to do with itself. The bird has forgotten freedom and flight and thus its release from the cage resonates with the experience of emancipation from slavery. Standing outside Violet’s window, the bird hopes to re-enter its enslavement because it does not know how to choose or what to do in the greater world. Violet’s loss of strength is juxtaposed with the parrot that “forgot how to fly and just
trembled on the sill.” (Jazz 92) In this way, Morrison uses the image of the parrot to show how a human being too can suffer in the bitter cold of a City winter when freshly released from bondage.

The structure of the novel is also suggestive, just as jazz, in which one performer takes on the theme of another and plays variations around it, so the different performers in the text take on each other’s themes, between sections of the novel. For example, the two short sentences below strike the same key-note; the first concludes a chapter focusing on Violet, whereas the second opens with a section focusing on Joe’s past: [Violet] noticed ... that it was spring. In the City. (Jazz 114) And when spring comes to the City people notice one another. (Jazz 116)

As the novel progresses, the middle-aged female narrator who seems to speak at the very start of the book becomes more and more depersonalized and starts to inhabit the empty spaces between and within novel’s characters. While at the opening of the novel, she seemed to know Joe and Violet no better or worse than the other members of their community, now the narrator seems to know these characters more intimately. The narrator immediately appears to be another character in the plot, one to whom the reader will eventually be introduced, but she slowly starts to fade and seems to be –at different times–a stand-in for the jazz music of the era or for the city landscape itself.

Golden’s journey to find his father bears the undertones of a mythic quest, in which the hero must return to his origins in order to know himself better. In a society where blacks are subjected to the stereotyping of a dominant white culture, names and labels don’t always fit correctly. For this reason perhaps, Morrison is interested in playing with assumptions related to identity. The narrator also allows the reader to see how Golden must imagine himself, how he would like the story to be told, and paying close attention to his gallant rescue of the pregnant woman. The narrator asks herself, “What was I thinking of? How could I have
imagined him so poorly? Not noticed the hurt that was not linked to the color of his skin, or the blood that beat beneath it.” (Jazz 160) Later in the same passage she raises the question of her own reliability as a narrator saying, “I have been careless and stupid and it infuriates me to discover (again) how unreliable I am.” (Jazz 160) In this moment, Morrison reveals that history can be reshaped and manipulated to suit the aims and agenda of the teller. For this reason, she does not allow her tale to be fixed and interpreted from any one point of view.

Hunters Hunter’s own name points to the way in which black people have been traditionally considered in terms of their relation to a white person in power. Further, the doubling of names with Henry LesTroy and Hunters Hunter speaks of the multiple identities a person can have and mirrors the psychic violence done to an oppressed race. The following comments of Doreatha Drummond Mbalia point out:

Morrison has used jazz techniques to tell the story in flashbacks. One way that a listener knows that what a creative musician is playing is a version of an original melody is because the musician flashes back; from time to time, he plays the melody as it was played by the original artist. In doing so, the artist first gives credit to the originator and, second, shows the connection between the original and his version of the original. Likewise in Jazz, Morrison shows the readers the connection between Wild and Dorcas in her rendering of Joe’s search for Dorcas. (Mbalia 123)

The section in which Dorcas is shown in a party where she was shot at is narrated in the present tense. The verbs denoting inner processes of thought or feeling can be used as signals of shifting point of view. The reader is shown as a guest at the party. Just as we had wondered about the identity of the narrator now the reader is led to question his or her own identity. The following lines from the text reveal this aspect:

“He is coming. I know he is because I know how flat his eyes went when I told him not to. And how they raced afterward. I didn’t say it nicely, although
I meant to. Get away from me. You bring me another bottle of cologne I’ll drink it and die you don’t leave me alone. (*Jazz* 189)

Here, in the last line the author has not used punctuation mark. The following lines denote the disturbing mind of Dorcas:

“He said, you can’t die from cologne.

“I said, you know what I mean.

“He said, you want me to leave my wife?

“I said, No! I want you to leave me.

“He said, Why? (*Jazz* 189)

When the narrator speaks to us and addresses the reader with “you” she is speaking to someone within Harlem’s black community, for whom “you” is used. The reader’s own identity begins to slip away just as the narrator continues to resemble less of a person and more of a spirit. Morrison's narrative voice floats like the party spirit that “lifts to the ceiling where it floats for a bit looking down with pleasure on the dressed-up nakedness below.”(*Jazz* 188) Dorcas’s repetition of the phrase “He is coming for me” (*Jazz* 189) becomes her own refrain in the greater jazz structure of the book.

The sudden change from winter to spring, death to life, which occurs between the party scene and the opening of a new section, represents a great leap in both the time and tone of the story. Here, the narrator describes the scene of Felice arrival, who at this point begins to tell the story of her upbringing. However, the two sections are connected by the theme of collective consciousness. On her deathbed, Dorcas taps into the underlying voice of the blues or jazz song, listening to the unidentified whisper and thinking, “I don’t know who is that woman singing but I know the words by heart.” (*Jazz* 213) Dorcas advises the readers to listen with her, thereby inviting the reader into the folds of the story and into the collective psyche or consciousness that her narrator has created.
There are other elements of speech in *Jazz* that are reminiscent of the musical genre. For example, the characters do not always speak in formal or complete sentences. At times, there are just enough words to convey a general idea or impression, and the reader must fill in the perceived gaps. The astute reader picks up on this fact on the very first page of the novel when scanning through the quotes from this first part. The narrator is describing a woman and she adds, “Know her husband, too” (*Jazz* 3). The absence of the subject, ‘I’, mimics colloquial speech; irrelevant details are omitted and the reader has to pick up the narrative “beat” or lose the novel’s rhythm completely. Proper English is rejected as false in this novel; instead, Morrison’s characters must express themselves in their own authentic voices, even at the possible expense of losing the reader.

*Jazz* moves back and forth between earlier times and the early twentieth century, introducing a densely populated collection of characters in two different locations. As with jazz music, the narrative structure of Morrison’s novel disrupts expectations that the reader has developed while reading conventionally written texts.

Another aspect of the narrative structure of this novel that is reminiscent of jazz music is the way in which the same story is played out again and again, but in different ways. The narrator of *Jazz* explains the essential elements of the plot, but reworks and revises them in multiple retellings. Each time she does, a new voice or new perspective emerges, layering on new meanings. Jazz music does the same, playing with a melodic or harmonic theme again and again, but tweaking it slightly and creating a variation—or many variations—on the theme. In Morrison’s novel, certain words repeat like beats in jazz. ‘Felice,’ he said. And kept on saying it, ‘Felice. Felice. Felice.’ With two syllables, not one like most people do” (*Jazz* 212).

*Jazz* can be linked to jazz music and understood as the literary equivalent of a jazz composition by examining the conclusion of *Jazz*. There is something ambiguous, and unsettling about the ending of the novel, which seems to lack a resolution in keeping with the
conventional understanding of the term and its traditional uses in literary narratives. In Jazz music too it is the same. Endings can be abrupt and unexpected; they can also trail off inconclusively, simply holding or insistently repeating and then fading out on a certain note.

In section ten. The narrator is extremely self-conscious, constantly doubting and questioning the job that she is doing in representing the individual characters, the City, and its rhythms as a whole. She wants desperately to tell the story of Harlem right and to do justice to the characters justice. She shows us the cracks in her judgment to illustrate how the notion of objectivity easily collapses, as any standpoint assumes a bias. Now, at the very end of her story the narrator undercuts her own narrative when she says, “I missed the people altogether.” She suggests that she did not reach the core of the characters or the genesis of their suffering. Further, the narrator blames herself for not having her own life. Instead, she tried to make sense of everyone else's existence while allowing her to be emptied out. Thus, Morrison suggests that observing, studying, and empathizing are not sufficient: one must be more than a narrator; one must be a character.

The narrator thinks that she is invisible but now she realizes that the characters were aware of her all the while. In Wild’s eyes the narrator becomes visible and whole and then moves on quickly to wrap up the loose ends of her story. When she realizes that she must tend to her own pain, the narrator arrives at the statement, “Now I know.” Like a mother figure, Wild heals the narrator’s wounds. While Joe never understood the gesture that his supposed mother had made, the narrator knows that Wild is, in a sense, the mother of them all when she receives the woman’s hand. Now the narrator has found her mother and identity as well.

Thus, the third-person omniscient narrative executed by an unreliable narrator for the purpose of ‘telling’ rather ‘showing’ the lives of migrated slaves gives to Jazz an integrity by taking a historical event on the pages of the novel. Morrison has delineated the story of Dorcas, Violet and Joe. At the same time, the technique does suffer from certain limitations. Some events of
the novel need reconsideration. The first is the fact that, contrary to the expectations of the narrator, Felice is adopted by the middle-aged couple as their own daughter instead of becoming the next victim of their craziness. In the underlying logic of the novel, not only has she become the daughter they never had, but has also changed into a substitute for Dorcas. She redeems the dangerous qualities in Dorcas and prolongs the epiphany she appears to have experienced before she died. The second event is why, after a period of mourning, does the Trace couple become reconciled? At the end of one of Felice’s visits, they start dancing to the music drifting from the house across the alley (Jazz 214). The community seems to have forgotten their violent acts of the past winter, and the couple finds a place to rest and talk “on any stoop they want to” (Jazz 223). Their narrator also remembers a scene of past but forgotten tenderness, “an evening, back in 1906” (Jazz 225). The final distancing of the narrator helps stress not the inaccessibility of the events under consideration but the inadequateness of the storytelling process itself. The novel is denounced as novel because it is a fabrication of a narrator frustrated of the normal joys of life who seems to find compensation in the pain of others. With all its limitations, however, Morrison has made a very effective use of the technique in this novel which successfully communicates the novelist’s view of the changing history of slaves and of jazz; the music.

With her next novel Paradise, Morrison seems to complete her circle of trilogy. It is well known that Morrison started out with the intention of making Beloved, Jazz and Paradise a trilogy and eventually changed her mind. In Paradise, Morrison has tried to re-invent (or re-write) the past; for her narrative has a function similar to that of history. Just as we have to travel through history to encounter our prehistory, we have to travel through narrative to encounter a meaning that lies deeper than the tale’s narrative surface. By destabilizing African-America’s past along, Morrison opens the possibility of assuming an active role in the construction of African-American history in the form of addressing
contemporary problems. In her Nobel lecture, Morrison says: “I Know I can’t change the future but I can change the past. Insight and knowledge change the past. It is the past, not the future, which is infinite.” (www.noble.se)

Morrison told to *The New York Times* just after the publication of *Paradise*, “I’m mad. Something I forgot to do is bothering me a lot. The last word in the book *Paradise* should have a small ‘p,’ not a capital P. The whole point is to get paradise off its pedestal as a place for anyone, to open it up for passengers and crew. I want all the readers to put a lowercase mark on that ‘p’.” (Smith 25)

The story of *Paradise* takes the readers to an African-American town, Ruby, Oklahoma in 1976. Ruby is an isolated and restricted place for outsiders. It is located more than 90 miles from the nearest community, except for a small house of refuge for women called the Convent. The Convent is occupied by women, who have come to live together after surviving various life tragedies and misfortunes, practice a combination of an African and Christian religion and are considered to be a threat to the rigid morality in Ruby. Some of the men in Ruby believe that the religion and the women are immoral, and so they decide to destroy the Convent and the women in it. The plot of the story runs with the slaughter at Oklahoma in 1976. The plot juxtaposes two sets of characters of Ruby and the Convent residents. The rest of the novel takes place between 1968 and 1976, with frequent flashbacks going back as far as 1870. Morrison has divided the novel into nine sections, each named after a woman. The first section which is named Ruby after the name of a woman; the second section titled Mavis; the third section named Grace; the fourth is Seneca; the fifth is Divine; the sixth is Patricia; the seventh is Consolata; the eighth is Lone and ninth is Save-Marie.

In the trilogy, *Beloved*, *Jazz* and *Paradise*, Morrison uses repetition with a difference to create multiple versions of stories. She creates the stories to revise dominant history. In *Beloved*, Sethe’s freedom from the past comes from a ritual repetition of trauma. She uses her
weapon on her own children, whereas in *Paradise*, the weapon is used against the white men who threaten their children. As compared to *Beloved* and *Jazz*, *Paradise* stands out in term of multi-textured story, diversity of narrators, and most notably the versatility of narration. It also addresses a question that has always intrigued Morrison: “Why Paradise necessitates exclusion.” (Leppert)

Some of the aspects of narratology in *Paradise* need special considerations. The novel has multithreaded beginning that eventually leads towards a unified ending, and thus concludes all character narrators presence within the novel. The second aspect is how the whole set of varied stories initially narrated by unrelated characters are juxtaposed with careful pertinence to echo a single plot. Third, how a singular omniscient narrator sounds immensely incompetent in leading the narrative towards a proper closure or ending. For this, it takes repeated short leaves of narration to provide the established characters with considerably enough time to have their internal voice heard. In other words, this is an act of omniscient narrators themselves.

Omniscient narrative point of view is a sub-classification of the third-person narrative. In a third-person narrative, the narrator telling the story is someone outside the novel’s story who uses third-person to describe the characters in the novel calling them “she,” “he,” or “they”. Now, among the third-person narrators there are those who are reliable as well as those who are unreliable. The unreliable narrator narrates things about herself/himself as well as other characters rather comically with her/his tongue-in-cheek, seldom meaning what s/he says.

From the novel’s epigraph, it seems what Ron David admits that the title has been taken from “The Thunder, Perfect Mind”, in which a Female god is worshipped. As Female god is silent and invisible like the narrator of *Paradise*, so, the narrator of the novel is a Female god. (David 181-182) The unreliability of the narrator can be deciphered from the very first passage of the novel.
*Paradise*, centres on a conflict, which is explicitly or implicitly stated, developed and progressively carried forward till the end through characters in action, their interaction supported by events, situations, milieus and sometimes by authorial comments. In the novel, the conflict is presented in the opening page itself. In developing this conflict, the author adopts the modes, telling and showing. Moreover, in the novel, Morrison tries to create the scenes through omniscient narrator interspersed with first-person narration. In *Ruby*, we come across an interaction between the history of US and the consciousness of the characters. *Paradise* is a sub-text, in which Morrison wants to write to resolve the conflict.

In traditional narratology the fundamental question of the unreliability of the narrator has been raising ever since Wayne C Booth’s *The Rhetoric of Fiction* came into being. Mental illness and instability is often linked with the unreliability of narrator. In *Paradise*, when the narrator opens the novel things start getting wrong. The novel begins when one of the women in the Convent, a white girl, is shot by a group of black male leaders from Ruby. Morrison does not reveal the race of the women at the Convent except for the first victim. “I did that on purpose,” says Morrison in an interview with *Time* magazine, “I wanted the readers to wonder about the race of those girls until those readers understood that their race didn’t matter. I want to dissuade people from reading literature in that way.” (Smith 3) The attackers are nine and the viewpoint is collectively of attackers. But it looks impossible as all the nine persons cannot think a single thought at the same time. So, the narrator seems to be an unreliable narrator.

Morrison has used an unreliable narrator intentionally because the facts are irrefutable. In a sense, *Paradise* is taking up where *Jazz* leaves off. The most notable thing about the way *Jazz* ends is its bizarre narrator. It makes mistakes; it gets things wrong. It cannot be trusted. On page 1 of *Paradise* Morrison is telling the readers that this novel too has a narrator that makes mistakes, that gets things wrong, that can’t be trusted.
The novel begins in medias res, with the attack on the Convent, by Ruby’s men. The story works its way through many layers of narrative to establish the social structure and history of Ruby. At the same time, it discloses the personal histories of the women who become the objects of the town’s witch-hunting. The story is not narrated chronologically. Morrison, like Woolf and Faulkner addresses the issue of the tyranny of history by fragmenting its appearance of an orderly chronology. Thus the narrative moves by abrupt shifts within the chapters among stories of individual characters and stories of the building of a community.

The novel is essentially two separate books that overlap occasionally until they meet tragically at the end. One book is the story of a black town, Ruby, Oklahoma, how people are trying to maintain its (Ruby) identity. The other story is of the Convent and of the five women who meet and die there. Morrison’s novel tells the readers why the men feel that their Paradise is threatened by the women.

The story of Paradise is also based on a historical event. It takes its origins in U.S. slavery and Reconstruction. After Reconstruction, when Zechariah Morgan and others were forced out of political office and out of town, they went to Oklahoma. The people of Fairly (Oklahoma) refused to make these dark-skinned blacks (8-rocks-men) stay there as the people of Fairly were light-skinned blacks. These 8-rocks-men established Ruby. According to their self-narrative, they are the decadents of a group of wandering ex-slaves who at God’s command eventually succeeded in establishing the perfect all-blacks community of Haven in a far-away place in Oklahoma. Though the community was later removed to another place, Ruby, is still in Oklahoma, where it attained its present name by 1976, the time of the narrative in the novel.

The narrative structure of Paradise gives clues to Morrison’s approach to history, which emerges as a tissue of quotations. It is an open ended fabric woven by Ruby’s
multiplicity of fragmented narrative voices. Moreover, the fact that Morrison’s individual chapter headings are named after different characters makes clear that her narratives without a unifying protagonist. She doesn’t narrate the stories chronologically, so, the readers’ consciousness has to work quite differently. Morrison maintains: “We constantly think about yesterday, or 20 years ago, or the future, as we go about the day. Our minds are always moving back and forth, planning, remembering, regretting.”(www.luminarium)

The novel is full of myths. *Paradise* is itself a myth. The characters in the novel are not real; still the novel tries every kind of myth, from Bible and Greek. A traditional reader gets confused as s/he starts reading the novel because there is no beginning, no middle and of course no end. Morrison purposely contradicts during the story. Myths change through time, as do the stories of Ruby, Oklahoma. The novel is literary deconstructing and reconstructing reality. One adds, subtracts, changes, or ignores until reality fits to one’s purpose. That is the way one construct one’s myth, it is the way one constructs one’s past, and it is the way one constructs everyday reality. It is Morrison who has consciously rigged *Paradise* so that the readers not only complete her novel, but also prove its thesis.

Narrative techniques would be meaningless if these were not related to the subject-matter of the novel. The end of any art is to communicate a view of life, and the end of any technique to help communicate that view effectively. Morrison’s choice of the third-person narrative technique is determined by her intention to rewrite the history of Blacks. Through narrator, she pours out her heart and the inhuman behavior of whites towards slaves. She tries to establish equality between historical text and her sub-text, in the form of *Paradise*. The story of *Paradise* is written in third-person but the point of view varies from one character to another as the novel progresses. Although the author has used a limited omniscient perspective, yet the readers have to put together a series of perspectives in order to gain a full view of the events. For instance, the writer tells of an affair undertaken by
Connie and the readers know that her lover is from Morgan’s twins from Ruby, but do not know which one. It happens at the end of the novel when the perspective has switched to another character. This takes place continuously throughout the story. The readers look forward to the changing points of view so that they can get a different perspective and get answer to the unanswered questions.

In Morrison’s *Paradise*, the narrators are not traditional “teller” who not only describe events and characters but also evaluate them. In *Paradise*, the narrators “tell” about rather than “show” the events and characters. The narrator seems to be an omniscient narrator.

The opening section, like their beloved town, is called Ruby, after Deacon and Steward Morgan’s deceased sister. Although Ruby has a population of only 360 people, the novel that tells its story often seems to have more characters than the Bible. The beginning is multithreaded. The unreliable omniscient narrator narrates the stories of all the characters. The characters themselves are also narrators who contribute to the making of the story.

The centre of the story lies in the Convent as almost all the stories are of women who reached here from different walks of life and got involved in the mundane activities of the Convent. Through the chapters, Morrison tries to rewrite the history of these women. She uses flashbacks to throw light on the lives of these women, their native place and how they reached here. The stories of these women are inter-connected to the story of *Paradise*. The Convent was taken over by nuns and turned into a school for Native American girls. By the time that Mavis, the first of the four drop-in guests that die in the slaughter, arrives at the Convent in 1968, only two people remain: the old, bedridden Mother Superior and a woman who takes care of her, called Connie. The backgrounds of all the characters appear in bits and pieces throughout the novel. The technique of “telling’ rather than “showing” is remarkably used in this novel. Almost all of the novels of Morrison begin *in medias res* and it is obvious that the narrator has to go back to describe events and characters through flashbacks using
memory, interior monologues and stream of consciousness as narrative techniques. The novel opens with these words:

They shoot the white girl first. With the rest they can take their time. No need to hurry out here. They are seventeen miles from a town which has ninety miles between it and any other. Hiding places will be plentiful in the Convent, but there is time and the day has just begun.

They are nine, over twice the number of the women they are obliged to stampede or fall and they have the paraphernalia for either requirement: rope, a palm leaf cross, handcuffs, Mace and sunglasses, along with clean, handsome guns. (Morrison, *Paradise*)

These lines mark the confusion in the minds of the readers. Who is this white girl? Their numbers are nine; twice the number of the women is indigestible. Although each section has its story; each character narrates her story in flashback with the omniscient narrator. However the whole varied sets of stories initially narrated by unrelated characters are juxtaposed with careful pertinence to echo a single plot. All the characters show their presence in the first section –Ruby. Some of the characters are specially characterized to reinvent the past e.g. the characters of Patricia and Reverend Misner.

Morrison creates a sub-plot to equalize her thesis of *Paradise*. The section of Patricia, the daughter of a heresy driver, is working on the town’s genealogy. She burnt all her records when she does not found the purity in genes. The methods of genealogist among the citizens of Ruby serve as a model for reading *Paradise*. It also serves as a metaphor to show the historiography in the novel.

Pat had wanted proof in documents where possible to match the stories, and where proof was not available she interpreted --freely but, she thought,
insightfully because she alone had the required emotional distance

(Paradise188).

In *Paradise*, Morrison presents a perfect example of her vision of a historiography. This initiates opposition between oral and written narratives and, between history and myth. Morrison presents a counter-narrative of America in the form of *Paradise*. And if *Paradise* is Morrison’s counter-narrative of America, Patricia’s genealogy is the counter-narrative of Ruby. Patricia has personal experience that provides her the insight necessary to penetrate the town’s narratives. Ultimately, Morrison’s novel exposes historical discourse and argues for an alternative version of US history from her point of view. In other words, the novel affirms a truth as meaning and begins to dig in the history; the literary archaeology. In the very beginning the transgression of the blood rule by Ruby men is accurately depicted with the racially coded massacre: “They shoot the white girl first” (*Paradise* 3).

Steward through his interpretation tries to relate the contamination of Haven and degradation of Ruby by the Convent women. Although this narrative technique is characteristic of Morrison’s other novels, yet, she employs it in *Paradise* for the purpose of underscoring the power and process of memory whereby present needs shape the recollection of past experiences. Morrison employs a foundational religious text to interrogate the prevailing national text, in much the same way that abolitionists interrogated the institution of slavery employing the Christian tenets on which the US was founded. Lucille P. Fultz maintains, “Morrison’s text approaches the issue of coalition and the Civil Rights Movement by focusing on the splits, the racism, and the patriarchal structures within the African-American Community itself.” (Fultz 80)

“Skin colour” also plays a very significant role in this novel. In Fairly, light-skinned people are preferred whereas in Ruby people are chosen and ranked through “skin color.” (P194) For instance, the darkest “8-rock” (*Paradise*194), coal-black skin is privileged.
This can be inferred from the very episode when the community forces Menus to return the woman he brought home to marry.

Morrison introduces Minser to give voice to the young people of the town. This illustrates the possibilities of the Civil Rights Movement’s ideal of participatory democracy that functions through threat of violence. He teaches the young people the strategies of defense. His work is “made difficult by their inability to know the difference” (Paradise 208). Indeed, Minser himself remains caught within patriarchal structure that seriously limits the possibilities of the desired change. To give credence to her work, Morrison doesn’t reject the possibility of attaining Paradise at the very grassroots level. Morrison explains, “I wanted this book to move towards the possibility of re-imagining Paradise.” (Rhodes 102) The last passage which is set on a different geographical ocean beach “shows” a paradise. In this passage, Morrison attains the “showing” mode of narration instead of “telling” mode. This passage is centered on Consolata’s vision, as she is comforted by the old, black woman Piedade, a real or imagined figure who respects the blissful childhood memory to Consolata and whose singing is generally held to render solace to shipwrecked survivors. The last passage of the novel explains this:

When the ocean heaves sending rhythms of water ashore, Piedade looks to see what has come. Another ship, perhaps, but different, heading to port, crew and passengers, lost and saved, tremble, for they have been disconsolate for some time. Now they will rest before shoudering the endless work they were created to do down here in Paradise. (Paradise 318)

The image of the paradise in the above passage offers peace to some extent. At the same time it prepares newcomers to be ready to struggle again. Prior to the massacre, she offers a less abstract version, and suggests that paradise may also be attained and experienced in everyday terms. Morrison explains:
It’s interesting and important to me that once the women are coherent and strong and clean in their interior lives, they feel saved. They feel impenetrable. So that when they are warned of the attack on the convent, they don’t believe it.

Still while the moment lasts, the women have an intense experience of the kind of bliss and solace prophesied by Piedade or, more precisely in this instance, by consolata, Piedade’s textual incarnation. (Rhodes 103) It seems that like Minser, Morrison chooses (African) America as her focus of identification. Like Minser, she chooses (African) America not because it is perfect or superior to other communities, but because it is the community that she has come to know and to love…there was no better battle to fight, no better place to be. (Smith 10)

Thus, Morrison seems to reaffirm God’s original convent with America. Although she doesn’t dream of the superiority of Ruby leaders over rest of America, yet she likes to make her convent only with the Ruby People, as she remarks:

Soon (Minser thinks) Ruby will be like any other country town; the young thinking of elsewhere; the old full of regret. The sermons will be eloquent but fewer and fewer will pay attention or connect them to everyday life…but also because there was no better battle to fight, no better place to be than among these outrageously beautiful, flawed and proud people. (Paradise 306).

The structure of the novel reflects the fragmented communication as the chapters are broken into names. The Convent plays a crucial role; a healing place where fragmented voices of women speak. Philip Page points out:

In the last four chapters, Morrison constructs an elaborate model of reading and interpreting. She creates a fictional world in which many answers are not
given or are hidden so well that readers are forced to look for answers. Like Patricia, they want to fill in the missing gaps, the apparent holes and spaces in the very surface of the text. Readers are forced to step into the fictional world, to share in the author’s breathing of life into it, to join the characters and each other in voicing their co-creations of the novel’s stories and of their own stories, and to sense and even pass through the open windows of transcendent worlds. (Page, Furrowing 642-643)

Thus, the third-person omniscient narrative technique, executed with an unreliable narrator for the purpose of ‘telling’ rather than ‘showing’ an experienced signifies the face of the after-effects of slavery. At the same time, the technique does suffer from certain limitations. For instance, Morrison does not tell who the white girl is, in the very first sentence. The second paragraph opens with the words: “They are nine, over twice the number of the women they are obliged to stampede or kill. ...” Anyone who reads the book knows that there are five women in the Convent. The one hundred and fifty-eight freedmen from Mississippi and two from Louisiana parishes were unwelcome in Oklahoma. If a reader wants the facts, he should visit Patricia’s house. She documents everything. So why does Morrison say that fifteen families founded Ruby and then lists only fourteen. With all its limitations, however, Morrison has made a very effective use of the technique in _Paradise_, which successfully communicates the novelist’s view of the after-effects of slavery and how emancipated slaves, who have tried to make their niche, their nation are to some extent successful after the Civil War. In _Paradise_, Morrison also hopes to examine “the love of God and love for fellow human beings.” (Smith 10) She wants to explore why human beings, often influenced by religion, feel the need to create their own kind of paradise in society, and why creating a paradise often means other human beings must be excluded -as the men in Ruby exclude the women at the Convent. Paradises are not so easily gained. If
anyone tries to build a new paradise, someone comes for cleansing — just as an armed posse sets out from Ruby for a round of ethnic cleansing. So, it is impossible to create a paradise of one’s own.


<http://www.luminarium.org/contemporary/tonimorrison>

<http://www.nobel.se/literature/laureates/1993/morrisonlecture.html>