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The Creation of New Place and Space in Toni Morrison's *Paradise*: Collective Identity of "Ruby" Vs. Self-identity of "the Convent"

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Dedication

I am forever thankful to my parents LADJALI Abed Al Kader, and MAAMRI Lgoumri for their trust and encouragement throughout my life. In addition, I am deeply grateful to my oldest brother Mohammed for being there all the time to support me and to my little handsome Brother Ahmed. Then, I would like to extend a special word of thanks to all LADAJALI and MAAMERI's family members especially my uncle Aissa and my aunt Souad for their love and care. Finally, I would like to dedicate this work to all my dear friends with whom I witnessed unforgettable times.

Samira

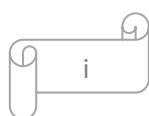
This work is first dedicated to my dear parents Mohhamed and Turkia MEBARKI for giving me the chance to study, for always being there for me, and for supporting me morally and materially in everything I do.

To all my family, uncles, aunts, cousins and to my lovely sisters Nassira and Nour.

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Abstract

This dissertation approaches the study of Toni Morrison's 'Paradise', aims at showing that 'the convent' was more successful than 'Ruby' in the construction of identity through the creation of new place and space. The two African American communities used the creation of new space and place as a way to escape racism and discrimination. On the one hand, 'Ruby' emerges as Toni refers to "black town that worth the pain". It is characterized by geographical isolation and separateness. Consequently, it falls prey to its solitude. On the other hand, 'the Convent' is an open community that welcomes all believes without judgment. 'The Convent', thus, adopted the values of freedom and equality which make it a confront zone and a perfect paradise. Through this dissertation we followed three methods, the descriptive, the comparative and the analytical method. Throughout this study, we point out that the convent women succeed to form their self-identity by the creation of new place and space. However, Ruby fails to reconstruct its collective identity because of the creation of an isolated place, which prevents Ruby from development and continuity.

Table of contents

	Dedication	I
	Acknowledgements	Ii
	Abstract	Iii
	Table of content	Iv

	General Introduction	2
	Chapter One The Main Adopted Theories in the Afro-American Literature	
1.1	Introduction	08
1.2	Conceptualization of Identity	08
1.2.1	The Contribution of John Locke	11
1.2.2	Sigmund Freud's Contribution	12
1.3	The Black Womenist Movement	14
1.4	Space and Place in Relation to the Human Being's experience	17
1.4.1	Defining Space	19
1.4.2	The Meaning of Place	20
1.5	The Geographical Imagination	21
1.6	Definition and History of Race and Racism	23
1.7	Conclusion	25
	Chapter Two The Social Life in Ruby and the Convent	
2.1	Introduction	28

2.2	Bibliography of Toni Morrison	28
2.3	Paradise “the Plot Summary and the Historical Context”	30
2.3.1	Overview of “Paradise”	30
2.3.2	The Historical Context of the Novel	31
2.4	Description of Social Life in “Paradise”	33
2.4.1	Ruby as a Comfort Zone	35
2.4.2	Social Interaction in the Convent	38
2.5	Conclusion	43
	Chapter Three Space Place and Identity Reconstruction in “Paradise”	
3.1	Introduction	45
3.2	Identity Reconstruction through the Creation of New Place “Ruby”	46
3.3	Female Characters’ Inner State and the Quest for Self-identity	50
3.3.1	The Psychoanalysis of the Convent’s characters	50
3.3.2	The Convent’s Women’ Self-identity Formation from a Psychoanalytical Perspective	56
3.4	Self-identity Reconstruction and Place	61
3.5	Conclusion	64
	General Conclusion	66
	Works Cited	68
	Résumé	
	الملخص	

General Introduction

General introduction

Hundreds of years ago, groups of Africans have been forced to leave their original lands to settle down in America, whether by means of migration, enslavement, or transportation. These people were treated as less than human beings by their white owners and They were taken from their homeland. Meanwhile the Whiteman in America did not accept them. Eventually, all the above-mentioned conditions have created among those Afro-American settlers identity crisis.

The Afro-American identity crisis is a major theme in the postcolonial literature. In this frame, the Afro-American authors tried to be the voice of the voiceless, marginalized people, and subalterns particularly women. Since the African-American women are double oppressed by the black and white man. They have been always victims of racism and sexism.

Toni Morrison, who is one of the greatest Afro-American authors, wrote mainly about the black's experience in the American society and particularly the black female's experience in the African society, which is a central theme almost in all her novels such as "Paradise" (1998). The author in that fiction has created two Afro-American communities who struggle to reconstruct their collective and self-identity. On the one hand, Ruby is an isolated all-black town that is built to escape racism and to save the Afro-Americans' collective identity. On the other hand, Morrison has created Afro-American female characters who established their own place "the Convent" in order to form their self-identity in an unjust society, which is the topic of interest "The Creation of New Place and Space in Toni Morrison's Paradise: Collective Identity of Ruby vs. Self-identity of the Convent".

Many critics and scholars from different perspectives have examined the work of Toni Morrison "Paradise". Issues like feminism, identity, space and place in the chosen novel were the center themes of many researchers. Yet the relationship between place, space, and identity, and How the creation of new place and space can be used as a way to reconstruct identity in "Paradise" have not got the researchers' interest that they deserve.

This thesis's central aim is to examine the novel "Paradise" from a different angle. Furthermore, the provided research is conducted to highlight the ambiguous points in Morrison's narrative in order to examine them, which is our contribution to the literature on Morrison's work.

By this research we tend to show how Ruby as a created place was used in the novel as a tool by the Afro-Americans to reconstruct their collective identity. In addition, we are going to clarify how the women of the Convent resisted Ruby men's oppression, and how they could achieve their self-identity by creating a new place the Convent. Moreover, we want to show the extent to which Ruby and the Convent succeeded to reach their lost identity.

This dissertation is conducted to approach "Paradise" by Toni Morrison differently. It is written to answer the following basic question which is to which extent did both Ruby and the Convent succeed to use the creation of new place and space to achieve identity? In order to answer the main question we have to find answers to the following ones, how could the African-Americans reconstruct their identity by creating their place Ruby? How could the African-American female characters in the novel find their lost identity by the creation of new place the Convent? Which one of them (Ruby or the Convent) is more successful in reaching his identity?

In her novel "Paradise", Toni Morrison tackled the issues of black identity crisis. She described a sample of two African-American societies Ruby and the Convent. The female protagonists of the Convent have succeeded to shape their identity to a higher extent than Ruby. Moreover, the Convent is a good illustration of the link between space, place and identity more than Ruby.

This research examines the major issues that are related to Toni Morrison's novel "Paradise", mainly black feminism, racism, and identity. Through this thesis, we try to highlight the relationship between space, place and identity in the novel, and to show how the creation of new place and space was used effectively as a way to valid identity. Finally, through that research we want to prove though the literary work "Paradise" is by researchers, there is always a possibility to provide a new analysis.

Toni Morrison's main interest in this fiction is to reflect the fact of the Afro-American female's experience specifically, and the experience of the African-Americans in the American community as a whole, in their road to achieve their identity, which is the topic of interest. This topic demands to review the literature about, black feminism, self-identification, psychoanalytical theory, place and identity, space and place.

In discussing the issue of Black Feminism, Patricia Hill Collins tackles in her book, "Black Feminist Thought, knowledge Consciousness at The Politics of Empowerment" (2000) the thought of the black feminist from three different perspectives. First, she discusses how black feminist thoughts were socially constructed to defeat suppression. Second, she tackles the main themes of black feminist thoughts as being a mother, a female, a worker, and as a part of a family. Third, she clarifies the relationship between black feminism, knowledge, and power. Consequently, this book allows us to understand the black feminist thought. Hence, it enables us to conduct a correct and beneficial examination of the chosen novel's female characters. Since it provides us with the necessary information about the black female's ideology.

In the book, "Black Skin, White Masks" (1986), which is translated by Charles Lam Markman, Frantz Fanon tackles the dilemma of black identity crisis. Starting from, the phenomenon of Negro's language, which is an important element for the Negro's comprehension of the other, moving to dichotomy of colored women and white men, colored men and white women. Next, he discusses the psychological characteristics of the colonizer and the colonized relations i.e. Black identity and white supremacy. Then, Frantz Fanon describes the fact of blackness and the Negro's psychopathology. At last, he deals with the black's recognition. To sum up, Frantz Fanon identifies the problems that faced Negroes and suggested some solutions to solve them. The matter of black identity crisis is strongly discussed in this work, which facilitates analyzing the blacks' struggle in Toni Morrison novel to achieve their identity.

It is important to consider the significance of the psychoanalytical theory for better understanding of the human being. Sigmund Freud is considered as the main pillar in the domain of psychology. Avinash Desousa's article "Freudian

theory and consciousness: a conceptual analysis” examines the different aspects of the Freudian psychoanalytical theory from historical, psychoanalytical, anthropological, and sociological angles. Focusing on the consciousness, ego psychology, psychoanalytical, psychotherapy, and the relationship between them. Moreover, Daniel Lapsley, in his article “Id, Ego, and Superego”, (December 2012), deals with the Freudian’s psychoanalytical theory. Mainly, he focuses on defining the Id, Ego, and Superego, which could help us in examining the psychological state of the characters, and their inner struggle to reconstruct their identity.

The complementary relationship between place and identity has been examined in “Sense of Place and Place Identity “, (2014) by Shukran Qazimi. It’s a descriptive study of the relation between identity and place, and the effect of (Environmental psychology) on people. He shows the usefulness of (the social identity theory) and (identity process theory) for better understanding to the link between place and identity. In addition, this study clarifies how place can reflect (the different social categories and concepts). Therefore, it helps us to clarify how the Afro-American society Ruby in paradise, could create a new place that resembles their original homeland’s identity.

Yi-Fu-Tuan has a significant contribution in discussing place and space. In his book, “Space and place: the perspective of experience” (1977), he questioned the sense of place and space, and the relationship between them from an experimental perspective. Each part of the book tackles space and place in relation to a specific aspect. For instance, (Spatial Identity, Knowledge, and Place), (Architectural Space and Awareness), (Attachment to Homeland), and (Visibility: the Creation of Place). The treatment of the two notions (Space and Place) in this book is central to our research. This book paves the way for us to examine the way in which the Afro-Americans in this novel used space and place to reconstruct their identity.

Eventually, the issues presented above are all well discussed in Toni Morrison’s “Paradise” separately in various studies. However, the creation of new place and space as a way to achieve collective and self-identity in “Paradise” was not considered as a research topic, which makes it interesting to be studied.

In this study, we used three significant approaches. First, we depend on the historical approach in order to provide the reader with a historical background about the African-American's history in America during the 20th century. The second used approach is the sociological one, since it serves us in examining the social life of the Afro-American society Ruby and the Convent. Third, we use the psychological approach to give a close psychoanalysis of the Convent's characters in the chosen novel. Concerning the methods, we depend mainly on the descriptive, the comparative, and the analytical methods. First, we give a descriptive study to the social life in Ruby and the Convent. Second, we make a comparison between the two communities. Finally, we depend on this description and comparison to analyze the relationship between place space and identity in Morrison's novel.

This research is composed of three chapters. The first chapter is about the theoretical framework of this research. Then, the second chapter provides the reader with a descriptive study of the social life in Ruby and the Convent. Finally, the third chapter is an analytical and a comparative study of the creation of new place and space to reconstruct identity.

**Chapter One the Main Adopted Theories in the
Afro-American Literature**

Chapter One the Main Adopted Theories in the Afro-American Literature

1.1 Introduction

Since the first creation of human being, questioning the universe issues has arisen. The curiosity to find explanation and logical argument for everything surrounding human or concerning their existence pushed them to enlarge their knowledge and awareness. Human process of thinking examines the problematic of physical, metaphysical, natural or super natural phenomena. Consequently, the field of knowledge evolves sub categories that are numerous and endless.

One category is philosophy that is considered as the mother and the seed for every sub field of knowledge. Philosophers highlighted every ambiguous point and tasted every correspondent answer. Their theories opened up an endless dialogue and counterparts. Each gives justifications and proofs to solidify the content of his theory. The following papers include an explanation and clarification of some philosophical theories, besides to what have been triggered as a response to them in the psychological development of people, and in the social construction. The following chapter represents the main theories that are related to the topic under discussion, which are about, identity, black feminism, racism, space and place, geographical imagination.

1.2 Conceptualization of Identity

Identity is considered to be the first principle of being that states what really any thing is, its category, component, and its nature. Kanu said that John Locke is the first person that brought the term identity into light. He claims that:

When we see anything to be in any place in any instant of time, we are sure that it is that very thing, and not another which at that same time

Chapter One the Main Adopted Theories in the Afro-American Literature

exists in another place, how like and undistinguishable so ever it may be in all other respects: and in this consists identity, when the ideas it is attributed vary not at all from what they were that moment wherein we consider their former existence, and to which we compare the present... when therefore we demand whether anything be the same or not, it refers always to something that existed such a time in such a place, which it was certain, at that instant, was the same with itself, and no other. (qtd. In Kanu 34)

John Lock clarifies that each being is determined in itself, is one with itself that does not exist in another place in the same time; each thing is unique by itself across time, has the same characteristics over time. in brief ,identity definition can be summarized in answering the main question of being “who am I” or “what is it”.

In addition, the term identity has developed over time. It gained the interest of many researchers and scholars. Each brought a new contribution about identity. Henri Tajfel provided the field of study with a new theory concerning identity that he called “Social Identity Theory”. Social identity identifies who any person is in relation to his social belonging. Tajfel claims that the group to which any person belongs is a source of pride and self-esteem. Moreover, social identity addresses how the belonging to a certain group could affect the person’s psyche. It aims to specify and predict the circumstances under which individuals think of themselves as persons or as group member. (Huddy 132)

When persons perceive themselves as a part of one group, it is intergroup for them. Whereas, when persons compare themselves with another group that they do not identify with, it is called outgroup. Those mentalities are created due to three processes. First, the social categorisation that categorizes people according to some factors such as colour, level, religion and other. When we know to which category, we belong. Consequently, we recognize what is the appropriate behaviour for us. Next, social identification, which is the adaptation of identity to the group we belong to by having the same action, it strengthens

Chapter One the Main Adopted Theories in the Afro-American Literature

emotion towards that identification. Finally, the social comparison in which we compare the intergroup favourably with out-group, as a result, racism and discrimination spread among societies (Social Identity Theory).

Furthermore, in his article “African Identity and the Emergence of Globalisation” Kanu Ikechukwu Anthony clarifies the need of the African identity’s renaissance. Since the Africans were denied strongly. According to him, African renaissance resembles the revival or the rebirth of the African identity. It should rebuild the African national image. “The Black Consciousness Movement” was a significant step towards reaffirming the identity of Africa. Moreover, he mentioned the main three factors that encouraged rising the quest for the African identity. The first, ideological race classification that comes as equivalence to Darwin social evolution. Kanu stated that, “This was when Charles Darwin produced his theory on the “origin of species by natural selection” in which he stated that from all variations of life found in the world, nature selects certain of them for survival while others are marked for extinction”. This means that human beings are classified naturally .In addition to, Linnaeus’s Anthropology, that classifies humans in hierarchy, gives the black the lowest level of human being, the closest to animals. Second, slave trade and the dehumanization of Africa that used to be easy prey to the western abuse and maltreatment. Third, colonialism and the exploitation of Africa that kept the uncivilized Africans all the time regarded as backwards. Thus, Africans were pushed to rescue their identity that is based whether on their ancient civilization, black-backwards, skin colour, geo-numeric, or the pragmatic recuperation.

As it is mentioned above, Tajfel’s contribution of social identity marks the sense of belonging to a certain group that demands a specific appropriate behaviour. Therefore; Individuals’ psychology is directly affected by their environment. The in-group members agreed on a set of morals, values, attitudes that serves the benefit of the whole. While

Chapter One the Main Adopted Theories in the Afro-American Literature

having this group identity, each person faces the conflict in shaping his personal identity to cope with the collective one (Kanu 36-39.2013).

Over time, there was a conflict of giving an exact or an appropriate definition to the complexity of the concept of personal identity. Generally, it is regarded as composition of experiences from childhood to adulthood that construct a unique set of characteristics that involves beliefs, values, and emotions. This construction is based on each individual's experiences along his life and how these experiences are processed within human developmental stages. Providing the field of study with such a definition came after a huge conflict between philosophers, different contributions and theories took place throughout history, among those philosophers John Locke and Sigmund Freud.

1.2.1 The Contributions of John Locke

In contrast to Christian belief that the soul accounts for personal identity, John Locke said that personal identity is a matter of continuity. In his essay of 'human understanding', he presented the significance of experience in imprinting knowledge in the human mind. He believed that children were born passive "Tabula Rasa" and their experiences in their environment develop their thinking without any pre-existing innate ideas. He divided experience into two types, external and internal. The external one refers to the human being's sensational interaction with the surrounding objects, whereas the internal experience is the human's reflection of the human mind such as remembering, believing and emotion. Locke suggests that one personal identity is dependent on his consciousness that extends because of thinking; Locke said, "Consciousness always accompanies thinking" (Qtd. In Katelyn) so that persons must process this intellectual mechanism, which is thinking in, order to precise who they really are (Katelyn).

Chapter One the Main Adopted Theories in the Afro-American Literature

Moreover, John Locke was an active philosopher. He supported his theory of “Tabula Rasa” with another theory concerning the human mind, the Lockean Theory of Memory. Rayan A. Piccirillo, in his article, stated that, “as far as [a] consciousness can be extended backwards to any past action or thought, so far reaches the identity of that person; it is the same self now as it was then; and it is by the same self with this present one that now reflects on it, that that action was done” (Qtd. In Lockean Theory of Memory). Locke claims that any person can remember his experience that used to happen in the past. Those experiences that enrich the consciousness are stocked in the mind of humans formulating his memory, so we can deduce that there is an inseparable link between memory and personal identity. It is built based on the experiences that are kept in the memory of each.

However, this theory had been criticized negatively by many philosophers in the field such as John Perry, Reid. Their criticism handles a logical argument that if a person could not remember doing something in his past does not mean that it did not happen (Lockean Theory of Memory).

1.2.2 Sigmund Freud Contribution

Sigmund Freud (1856 to 1939) is considered as the father of psychiatry. He originated the Psychoanalytical Theory of Human Personality in the late nineteenth century. He is the first to discuss the unconscious mind. He claims that there is three level of consciousness. First of all, the conscious mind, which includes everything we are aware of. Second, the precocious mind is a part of our conscious mind. Yet, it is out of attention. It holds our memories that can be recalled and retrieved i.e. the memories we are aware of. Yet, out of our attention. .third, the unconscious mind is out of our awareness.

Chapter One the Main Adopted Theories in the Afro-American Literature

According to Freud, the human mind is constructed from three different principal parts that are, the id which refers to the instinct and the senses of humans. It resembles the unconscious level and egoism nature of human being. Second, the super ego resembles the conscious mind, is the moral compass that state what is appropriate and what is not. The last one is the ego. Freud considers it the self. It is in-between the conscious and the unconscious that keeps the balance between the ego and the super ego.

The conflict among the three parts of the individuals' mind is the direct responsible of building the personal identity. This conflict starts from childhood towards adulthood in what Freud called the Psychosexual Development that is composed of five stages. First, the Oral Stage in which the libido is all about the baby mouth and his acquirement of his oral skill (from birth to 1.5 years of age) through imitation of the surrounding people. According to Freud, the oral stimulation result an oral fixation on all oral thing in the later life. Second, the Anal Stage (1.5-3 years of age), Freud claims that during it the child ameliorates his toilet hobbit through the training of certain behaviour. Third, the Phallic Stage (3-5 years of age) throughout this years both kind of sex start to have a sexual attraction towards parents of the other gender. Fourth, the Latency Stage that marks the development of inactive sexual feeling towards the other gender. Finally, the Individual mind combined all previous tasks to obtain a healthy sexual feeling and behaviour. This stage is called the General Stage that starts from twelve years old forward (Soul).

To achieve identity, human adopted a different processes and ways. For instance, rebelling against the whole system whether politically or socially throughout political organizations or movements. One of the most worldwide spread movement is feminism.

Chapter One the Main Adopted Theories in the Afro-American Literature

1.3 The Black Womanist Movement

Feminism is a global movement that took place from the end of the 19th century. It is borrowed from the French term “feminisme”. It is said that it is the call of women’s equal rights politically, socially, and economically in the injustice society. Moreover, it is regarded as the doctrine that aims to improve the position of women by talking on their behalf in the patriarchy system, led by middle class white-women from Western Europe and North America .this movement was divided thematically into three major waves:

Primarily, the First Wave of Feminism took place in the late nineteenth century specifically in the United Kingdom and the United States. The feminist activist aimed to obtain an “equal contract and property rights for women”. Specifically, a feminist of the first wave’s main target is to obtain the right of political participation in elections, women’s suffrage. In the United Kingdom, activists achieved their goal in 1918 when women finally had the right to vote after the Representation of the people act .whereas in the United States, feminist could gain the right to vote in 1919 in the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the united states contribution .winning the political conflict and inequality motivate women to ask for more right and freedom. (History and Theory of Feminism)

Then, the Second Wave, which dates back to the early 1960s to the 1980s, is a continuation of the first wave, to gain more royalties. The activist wanted to mark the end of gender, racism, and discrimination. This coincided with the civil right movement in the United States. Feminism was influenced by the ultimate goal of this movement, which is equality of position among all people within the American society. In addition to its contribution to women’s rights that were claimed in the civil right act of 1964. This act

Chapter One the Main Adopted Theories in the Afro-American Literature

came against discrimination that is based on sex, colour, nationality and religion. (Second-Wave Feminism)

Another movement that encouraged Feminism in the United States of America is the Abolitionist Movement that advocates slavery and calls for social equality. It motivated women to ask for greater rights .Betty Friedan, a feminist writer, published “The Feminine Mystique” in 1963 that depict the women’s dissatisfaction of their life style. This ideology qualified her to be the president of The National Organization of Women (NOW) that seeks to give women an egalitarian position in all aspect of life in American environment. Yet, those feminist thought and ideas were exclusive to defend the white-women middle class’s rights marginalizing others on basis of colour and race.

Finally, the seed of The Third Feminist Wave goes back to the mid-1980 bringing a new contribution to the feminist movement. It is said that it resembles a strong reaction and rejection of the second feminist movement ideology. The most negative observation about the second wave was that its neglection of the lower class women and the non-white ones. It aimed to discuss the second wave’s ideas and its priorities and correct what must be corrected, Such as the multiracial issues. (History and Theory of Feminism)

In addition, the new contribution brought by the Third Wave, is the new concept which is Multiracial Feminism Theory.it is seen as the “liberation movement spearheaded by women of colour”, that claim the rights and advantages of the marginalized people, black female, minorities, and immigrants. “Multiracial Feminism grew as a movement to challenge racist, classist, and sexist barriers not as interlocking identities that make up both privilege and oppression”. In this saying we can recognize, in addition to discussing women of colour issues, that multiracial feminist deals with social and political conflict that face minorities and women in general.it seeks to a broader goals and much more

Chapter One the Main Adopted Theories in the Afro-American Literature

privileged to women, women of colour, and subjugated people. (Multiracial Feminist Theory)

The Afro-American feminist, Patricia Hill Collins, was an active writer concerning gender inequality and racism. Her main interest was in the Afro-American female experience in the American society. She stated in her most famous book, "Black Feminist Thought, Knowledge Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment" that:

As a historically oppressed group, the United States black women have produced social thought designed to oppose oppression. Not only does the form assumed by this thought diverge from standard academic theory -it can take the form of poetry, music, essay, and the like but the purpose of black women's collective thought is distinctly different. Social theories emerging from/or on behalf of U.S. Black women and other historically oppressed groups aim to find ways to escape from, survive in and/or oppose prevailing social and political injustice. (Collins 09)

Those words clarify that, black women in the United States were suffering from oppression for long period, since their first coming from Africa to America as slaves. In response to this historical oppression, they formulated a black consciousness that gave them the agency to strive for empowerment on their own terms and to defend themselves in an unjust system. This consciousness took different literary forms that helped it to spread worldwide. In addition, it is mentioned that black feminist thought is regarded as critical social theory that seeks a black collective identity.

In addition, it is stated that because of the slave trade a stereotype image had been constructed about the black female as being subordinated and subjugated. Their traditional characteristic of a good woman was concluded in, "piety, purity, submissiveness, and

Chapter One the Main Adopted Theories in the Afro-American Literature

domesticity”. This controlling image had been criticised by black feminist in order to deconstruct it into the most appropriate one (72).

1.4 Space and Place in Relation to the Human Being’s Experience

Space and Place are two important key terms in the discipline of Geography. Geographers and thinkers through history seem interested in studying these two concepts, to define them, and to find the adequate methods to analyze them.

As it stated in “Space vs. place”, Yi-Fu Tuan, who is a specialist and a philosopher in the human geography, in his book “Space and Place: the Perspective of Experience” has analyzed that relationship between Space, Place, and the human being’s experiences. In addition, he tried to give a definition to these significant terms. Basically, one of the main ideas discussed in that book is that Space and Place can be defined through and in relation to people’s experiences, whether “direct/ intimate” experiences or “indirect/conceptual” ones (Tuan 06). “What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value” (06).

On one hand, according to the same source, Tuan defines Space as a location that has no social meaning, no familiar associations, no senses or values. Thus, Space is considered as an abstract thing that refers to “openness” and “freedom” (06).

On the other hand, as it is suggested in “Space vs. place”, the concept of Place is the contrary of Space, though the two terms can’t be defined without each other. Place is something concrete, it can be considered as a piece of Space that is

Chapter One the Main Adopted Theories in the Afro-American Literature

filled by the human being's experiences. Place refers to "security" and "stability" (06). Thus, according to Yi-Fu Tuan, Places are built to satisfy the people's biological needs like "food, water" which is a common point between human beings and animals (04).

Seamon and Sowers state that, "...Space and Place are dialectically structured in human environmental experience, since our understanding of Space is related to the Places we inhabit, which in turn derive meaning from their Special context" (Qtd. In Space vs. Place)

In "The Dimensions of Place Meaning" Maarja Saar and Hannes Palang claim that, according to Lefebvre (1991) and Soja (1996), Space is defined as a "physical" environment which has no meaning, and through the people's social activities it can be turn to be known as a Place. Another definition given by John Agnew to "Place and Space": Place is a location or a piece of Space that is lived, thus place is characterized by being "specific", and Space by being "general"(06). According to Jessop, B., Brenner, N, and Jones, M, Place refers to something "local and traditional", and Space represents the "global and the modern" (Agnew 07). Therefore, Place is related to the "past", however, Space reflects that openness to the "present" and to the "future" (Agnew 07).

In addition, According to Alex Mahoudeau Tuan's article "Space and Place: Humanistic Perspective" is a lengthy essay that discusses the two concepts Space and Place from a humanistic perspective. Though the term "Humanistic" sounds that it belongs to the discipline of Humanities, Tuan's aim is to represent and examine geography scientifically.

Chapter One the Main Adopted Theories in the Afro-American Literature

On that basis, Mahoudeau argues that, Tuan criticizes the methods of analysis that are applied by the positivist school to geography because for him it regards Space abstractly, and it neglects the other world's components, basically, the humanistic ones. By using the term "humanistic", Tuan doesn't refer to history or ethics, rather it reflects "the symbolic dimensions of human behavior" (Mahoudeau). According to Tuan,

The study of space, from the humanistic perspective, is thus the study of a people's spatial feelings and ideas in the stream of experience. (...) The geographer's understanding of space is abstract, though less so than that of a pure mathematician (qtd. in Gale and Gunnar 388).

1.4.1 Defining Space

Tuan defines Space as a set of "Mental Constructions" (Mahoudeau), which are suggests Mahoudeau based on the people's bodily interactions with their surrounding world. Tuan has discussed the concept of Space in relation to different themes. First, Tuan argues that the human being defines Space in accordance to his bodily cognition to his environment, thus, this conception of Space is actually based on biological factors. At this point Tuan explains the reasons behind the positivist school's failure, which for him due to viewing Space abstractly and purely as a "geometrical space", however it neglects what's called "original space" (Mahoudeau). Therefore, according to Mahoudeau Tuan claims that Space is both a production of a cultural process, and of social interactions with the other objects, which is based actually on biological factors.

Second, Space and the individual, Tuan argues that the objects in the environment effect one's way of thinking concerning Space and vice versa.

Chapter One the Main Adopted Theories in the Afro-American Literature

Hence, according to Tuan, the geographical maps or shapes are representations of people's personal experiences with these specific Spaces (Mahoudeau).

Third, Tuan has discussed the notion of Space in relation to the group. According to Tuan, Space also can be defined on the level of society, where a group of people interact with one another among the same environment, therefore they share the same "Spatial experiences". Again, Tuan insists on the fact that Space is more than just an abstract thing. Rather, it carries different social meanings (Mahoudeau). The fourth type is Mythical Spaces. Tuan claims that, it is viewed neither as a purely abstract Space, nor as an experiential Space (Mahoudeau). Tuan states that it "occupies a position between the space of sense perception and the space of pure cognition" (Qtd. In Mahoudeau)

1.4.2 The Meaning of Place

According to Mahoudeau, Tuan thinks that the concept of Place means more than just a location. He claims that the one's social position is what defines his Place. In addition, Tuan argues that, all the geographical characteristics, or measures, like size and shape, cannot define Place, and he considers that Place is a location or an area that carries specific social meaning, in which a group of people live, and invest with their experiences, feelings, senses and with their social activities (Mahoudeau). Space is a location in "itself", a "small world" that it must be occupied and used by human beings, a location that it has a "spirit" and "personality" (Mahoudeau). Tuan states, "The personality of Place is a composite of natural endowment (the physique of the land) and the modifications wrought by successive generations of human beings". (qtd. In Gale and Gunnar 409)

Chapter One the Main Adopted Theories in the Afro-American Literature

The complementary relationship between Space and Place paved the way to the emergence of a new device, which is called Geographical imagination. It has a direct relation with both Space and Place. Moreover, it is functioned in relation to both of them.

1.5 The Geographical Imagination

According to Jen Jack Giesecking, the origins of the term “the Geographical Imagination” actually go back to “Sociological Imagination” of C. Wright Mill (1961). Giesecking has suggested three main definitions of the concept. First, David Harvey, who is the one who coined the term “Geographical Imagination”, claims Giesecking, defines it as a device that allows people to compare their social and spatial characteristics among a specific community with other social groups “across spaces and times” (Giesecking). In addition, according to Harvey, it can be used as an effective tool against oppression in its different forms (Giesecking). Harvey states that the Geographical Imagination:

Enables the individual to recognize the role of space and place in his own biography, to relate to the spaces he sees around him, and to recognize how transactions between individuals and between organizations are affected by the space that separates them. It allows him to recognize the relationship which exists between him and his neighborhood, his territory, or, to use the language of the street gangs, his “turf.” It allows him to judge the relevance of events in other places (on other peoples’ “turf”) to judge whether the march of communism in Vietnam, Thailand and Laos is or is not relevant to him wherever he is now. It allows him also to fashion and use space creatively and to appreciate the meaning of the spatial forms created by others. (Qtd. In *The Sociological and Geographical Imaginations* 212)

Chapter One the Main Adopted Theories in the Afro-American Literature

Furthermore, the second definition suggested by Giesecking is given by Derek Gregory (1993). Gregory argues that Geographical Imagination is that historical and social background of a specific community that is based on space (Giesecking). The third definition as Giesecking claims is the simplest one because it's based on ordinary people's understanding to the concept. Therefore, Geographical Imagination is the way in which people regard and understand space; it is one's own view concerning his surrounding world (Giesecking). Giesecking writes:

I define the geographical imagination as not only the conceptual spatial frame of the mind's eye and minds' eyes that can be used to understand power dynamics, connections between identity and space, and the production of meanings and myths of spaces and those individuals within them, but it is also individuals' and group's tool for determining their literal and metaphoric place(s) in the world. It is a personal, sometimes shared, portrayal of both imagined and real spaces and places that encompass the logic, emotion, power dynamics, and meaning of spaces in their specific time and era.

Giesecking argues that all the different "physical representations", like maps and shapes of Space are reflections of people's personal experiences within a specific space, and that is their own Geographical Imaginations. Geographical Imagination, states the author, is used mainly to achieve social justice. Particularly, it used by writers in the geographical literature to represent reality, and to cross the forbidden limits and borders in the real world by creating imaginary and real spaces in fictional works.

To conclude, the comparison between societies' characteristics in Geographical Imagination triggered a huge conflict among societies. Each society

Chapter One the Main Adopted Theories in the Afro-American Literature

regarded itself superior than the others denying their attitudes. As a result, race and racism took an important space among communities.

1.6 Definition and History of Race and Racism

Race and Racism, according to Rowan Wolf and Caroline Le Guin, are two main features that characterize the American society. They can be considered as parts of the United States' social, historical, and cultural life. Being racially conscious means to be aware of the way we evaluate or regard ourselves and other people. This evaluation is subjective most of the time, since people judge others based on their skin color, race, or gender (01).

The concept of Racism can have several meanings and multiple definitions. Racism in the simplest definition refers to all the different forms of exclusion of one person or a group, of other people based on having different racial or ethnic features. Mainly the Blacks are the ones who suffer the most from Racism because of their skin color (Cheney et al). Paula Rothenberg states that:

Racism involves the subordination of people of color by white people. While individual persons of color may well discriminate against a white person or another person of color because of their race, this does not qualify as racism according to our definition because that person of color cannot depend upon all the institutions of society to enforce or extend his or her personal dislike. Nor can he or she call upon the force of history to reflect and enforce that prejudice (...) History provides us with a long record of white people holding and using power and privilege over people of color to subordinate them, not the reverse. (Qtd. In Wolf and Le Guin 2)

Chapter One the Main Adopted Theories in the Afro-American Literature

On the basis of this quote, Racism can be defined as a political system that is based on the subordination of other people because of their races. Additionally, Racism can be considered as an “Institution” or an “ideology” that is built hundreds of years ago based on historical and social beliefs (Wolf and Le Guin 02).

Historically speaking, according to Audrey Smedley, the origins of Racism goes back to the late twentieth century by creating the term “Biological Race”, in which the first forms of racism had started in North America and South Africa. Groups of people with different races and different skin colors had to be separated from each other, in terms of social institutions like “churches, hospitals, and schools”(Smedley).

Actually, Smedley argues that, Racism as an ideology had started in the 18th century by “Slavery” in North America and the Western European nations, which used Race to characterize those people of European origins from those of African race whose grandfathers were slaves. The fact of enslavement and treating Afro- Americans as less than full human being thinks Smedley totally contradicted the United States’ claim of “human rights”, freedom and equality.

Moreover, Smedley points out that, in the nineteenth century, nearly most of the world’s nations started following the policy of Racism. Most of the leaders started reorganizing their communities on the basis of Racial and Ethnic differences. Therefore, they categorized people to “Higher” and “Lower” races. The term “Lower” race was mainly used for the workers of the colonies, who received different shapes of violence physically and mentally, abuse and indignity. Even after independence, Smedley adds those people were still viewed

Chapter One the Main Adopted Theories in the Afro-American Literature

as an inferior race. In “The Historical Origins and Development of Racism”, George M. Fredrickson states that “The Nineteenth century was an age of emancipation, nationalism, and imperialism...all of which contributed to the growth and intensification of ideological racism in Europe and the United States”.

By the mid of the twentieth century, many social groups agreed that it is time to stop racism, and to prevent racial activities, institutions, and beliefs by defending human rights in “Public policies” like “the Universal Declaration of Human Rights” by the United States in 1948. During the 1950’s and 60’s, this resistance against Racism became stronger especially with “The Civil Rights Movement”, that ended most of the racial practices particularly against the Afro-Americans. In addition to the “Twenty- Fourth Amendment” 1964, which eliminated unjust laws that forbidden the “Racial minorities” from their right in voting (Smedley).

Racism usually takes two forms, “Individual Racism”, and “Institutional Racism”. On one hand, Individual Racism is one’s violent attitude, or action like murder, or sabotage of possessions “against individual minorities”, based on his racist view. The accident of killing five Black children in a black church in Alabama (1967) by a group of “white terrorists” is an example of Individual racism (Cheney et al). On the other hand, Institutional Racism, as Wolf and Le Guin clarify, is embodied in the systematic racist policies against the black groups that suffer “physically and mentally” from poverty, famine, and diseases (02).

1.7 Conclusion

To conclude, the previous discussed theories has been emerged and developed in order to clarify each ambiguous point in human being’s life. They

Chapter One the Main Adopted Theories in the Afro-American Literature

have been adopted by Afro-American authors as basic themes in most of their works. Toni Morrison is one of these authors who discussed the mentioned issues in most of her novels, particularly in the last one “Paradise”1998. The reader of this novel can figure out the implication of all the theories that has been discussed above.

Chapter Two
Social Life in Ruby and the
Convent

2.1 Introduction

“Paradise” is the last novel of the Afro-American author Toni Morrison. It is the ending part of her trilogy, which contains also “Beloved” and “Jazz”. In that trilogy she recounts the history of America from an Afro-American perspective. The novel can be read from a historical, social or a feminist angle. In “Paradise”, Toni tries to tell the stories of Afro-American characters who suffered from different shapes of oppression, racism and abuse, and each one of them tells his story from in his own way.

In the following chapter, first we will shed light on the author’s life, in addition to her achievements as a writer. Then we will move to the novel. We will make a social description of the two communities in the novel Ruby and the Convent. Finally, we will summarize the story of each one of the main female protagonists in the Convent.

2.2 Bibliography of Toni Morrison

Toni Morrison is one of the most recognizable authors of the 20th century. Her original name is Chloe Ardelia Wofford. She was born on February 18, 1981 in Lorain, Ohio, in the United States, during The Great Depression in the U S. she is the second oldest of her four brothers. The hard circumstances in America at that time because of the racial problems pushed her family to leave the South and to settle down in the North to start a new life. Her family didn’t give up on their black culture; however, they tried hard to save their cultural heritage and to pass it to the next generation. Music as an art played an important role in her life since her mother “Raham Wofford” used to be a singer and her grandfather “John Solmon Willis” was a violin player. Toni Morrison’s family had a great influence in shaping her personality and her career, particularly with the traditions that they

used to practice mainly story telling of slaves' narratives, African-American folktales, and singing, the fact that was reflected in most of her works.

In her early life, she was studying in a multicultural school with children with different nationalities. Toni Morrison's parents had experienced slavery, which made each one of the family members responsible for himself, especially Toni. Thus she started working in a very young age to prove her responsibility. Then, she went to Lorain high school, she used to love reading particularly to Jane Austen and Leo Tolstoy, and that was the first sign that she will become a famous writer in the future. Later, she graduated from high school in 1949, and continued her studies at Howard University in Washington. Howard University was a black school; however, the program was about American and English authors' works because the African-American writer's works were not allowed to be put in the libraries, the fact that does not save a chance for Toni to read the Africans' literary works. After her graduation, she started her career as a teacher at several universities, she worked as an editor, and she used to give lectures about the Afro-American culture.

Later, she joined a group of fiction writers, and she started writing her first novel. Almost all her novels are about the Afro-American history, culture, and the experience of Afro-Americans especially women. Therefore, she is considered as one of the most important figures who established the basics of Afro-American literature, which made her the first Afro-American female author who wins the Nobel Prize in literature in 1993. Through her writings, she tried to mirror her personal experience as being an Afro-American female, and to recount the stories told by her parents. That made her a significant writer all over the world with her novels: "The Bluest Eye" (1970), "Sula" (1973), "Song of Solomon" (1977), "Tar Baby" (1981), and her trilogy that narrates the

history of Afro-Americans, starting by “Beloved” (1987), “Jazz” (1992), and the last one “Paradise” (1998).

2.3 “Paradise”: the Plot Summary and the Historical Context

“Paradise” is the seventh novel of Toni Morrison. It is the ending part of her trilogy with “Beloved” and “Jazz”. Actually, the original name of the novel is War, but later Toni Morrison had changed it to “Paradise”. The story takes place in the 1970’s, in a small town named Ruby. The book is composed of nine chapters. Each chapter is named on one of the female characters in the novel “Ruby, Mavis, Grace, Seneca, Divine, Patricia, Consolata, Lone, Save, and Maria.”

2.3.1 Overview of “Paradise”

The story of the novel begins with the death of five women, one of them is a white girl, and the others are black, in a place called the Convent nearby the town of Ruby, in Oklahoma. On one hand, Ruby is an all-black small town that is established by nine families after they left their original town Haven. Because of the difficulties that they faced in their journey, and how they were refused by both the White Americans and the lighter-skinned black people, those black people decided to live in isolation especially from the Convent women.

On the other hand, The Convent, which used to be a religious school for Indian girls, was like a refuge to a group of girls, who experienced emotional and physical abuse. The Convent women were like a threat for the men of the town Ruby because they behave freely, and live without men to save them. Later, Ruby as a society has known a lot of changes, so the men of the town started blaming the Convent women for that. Therefore nine of them led by Deacon Morgan went to the Convent and shoot them all; actually, we

learn later that just two of them died. By doing so, these men have realized that eventually their behavior towards the Convent women is nothing but another shape of Racism because of gender and other differences, just like what happened to their ancestors.

2.3.2 The Historical Context of the Novel

According to Nidhi Khatana, “[Paradise] is both a history and a critique of history” (103). Khatana claims that almost in all Toni Morrison’s novels the main theme is history, particularly in her last work *Paradise*. The main concern of Toni Morrison, adds Khatana, is bringing the Afro-American’s marginalized history from the margin to the center; In addition, she aims at questioning the truths about the past, present and even the future. Moreover, in “Paradise”, Toni has tried to reflect the facts about the Afro-Americans’ struggles. “Paradise” is a reflection of the American history, argues Khatana, from an Afro-American point of view. Additionally, according to Khatana, “Paradise” is a reexamination of the main historical events that took place in America, particularly the Civil Rights Movement¹, and the Black Nationalist Movement², also it reexamines the validity of the Americans’ claims of freedom and equality. Finally, Khatana adds, through “Paradise” Toni investigates and redefines that relationship between myths, truths, and the American History. Consequently, Khatana points out that, Toni Morrison, through creating fictional characters in her novel, with different cultures, and religions, she tries to symbolize that diversity among the American society, which would for her pave the way to find possible solutions for the future (103).

¹ The Civil Rights Movement (1954-1968) is a group of non-violent protests in the U S. The aim of these movements is to achieve social and political equality for the Afro-Americans, and to fight racial discrimination and racism.

²The Black Nationalist Movement (1960’s-1970’s) is a group of social and political movements in the U S. Its goal is the empowerment of the Afro-Americans’ social, economic, and political statue in the United States, and to improve their black identity.

Peter Widdowson argues that “Paradise” represents many important chronological dates in the American history. Starting by the black slavery tales 1755, the Declaration of Independence, the American Civil War, the Emancipation Proclamation, Reconstruction, World War I, the attacks on Afro-Americans in the summer of 1919, World War II, the Civil Right Movement, the Vietnam War, Watergate, , Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King³, and John F. Kennedy’s assassinations⁴ (104). Historically speaking, the story began when a group of Afro-Americans migrated from the South to Oklahoma in 1879, which is known as the Exoduster Movement. A group of nine ex-slaves left with their families and their friends the Mississippi and Louisiana and started their journey westward. These huge numbers of Afro-Americans left their homeland to escape the bad consequences of the Reconstruction’s failure mainly racism, and injustice, hoping to find a place where they can establish a better life, in which they can be free and save (Khatana, 104). Morrison states:

On the journey from Mississippi and two Louisiana parishes to Oklahoma, the one hundred and fifty-eight freedmen were unwelcome on each grain of soil from Yazoo to Fort Smith. Turned away by rich Choctaw and poor whites, chased by yard dogs, jeered at by camp prostitutes and their children, they were nevertheless unprepared for the aggressive discouragement they received from Negro towns already being built. (13)

A group of one hundred and fifty-eight Afro-American men started their journey with their families from Mississippi and Louisiana towards Oklahoma. They faced in their journey many difficulties, as both the Whites and the lighter- skinned blacks rejected them.

³ Martin Luther King (1929-1968) He was the leader of the Civil Rights Movement from 1955 until 1968, and he was known with his non-violent policy in the protests.

⁴ John F. Kennedy (1917-1963) He was the president of the U S from 1961 until his assassination in 1963. He is famous with his speech on Civil Rights on June 11, 1963 in which “he proposed legislation” that became later the Civil Rights Act in 1964.

According to Chia-Chin Tsai, those immigrants who were led by Zechariah Morgan, they were rejected everywhere, by both the white Americans and even by the light-skinned blacks this rejection shocked them and they considered it as another kind of racism which they called “Disallowing”. At this point, Tsai highlights that relationship between the story of those eight immigrants “the Eight- Rockers” led by Zechariah Morgan, and the superstitions of the African Christianity, Claiming that the story of those Afro-American immigrants and the struggles that they faced in their journey is similar to the story of immigration that is mentioned in the Bible (166). They named themselves “the God’s chosen people”, comparing themselves to “the Exodus” in the Old Testament. They called the leaders Deacon and Steward of the new town Ruby , “the New Fathers”, and their ancestors Zechariah and the Eight-Rockers “the Old Fathers” who’s nickname is “Big papa” (167-168).

In 1890, they established their first all- black town Haven, in which they lived in prosperity, until the town disintegrated in 1949. After that the twin brothers Deacon and Steward Morgan, who were the leaders of the town at that time, encouraged people to start a new journey of immigration in Oklahoma just as their grandfathers did. Then they built their town, which they named Ruby. Actually, they named the town after their dead sister Ruby, who died in the waiting room of whites’ hospital just because of her black color (Tsai 166).

Their bad experience, starting from immigration to the fact of being rejected by everyone just because of their “bleu black” skin color had created among the inhabitants of Ruby a hate towards anyone who’s different on them (Piejko 77). Consequently, they established a town Ruby that is similar to their grandfathers’ Haven. It is based on the system of the others’ exclusion, thinking

that this would protect their social and economic interests, their common history and their identity. Ruby that all-black town, though it's characterized by safety, unity, and being "self-sufficient" town:

In this place of all places. Unique and isolated, his was a town justifiably pleased with itself. It neither had nor needed a jail. No criminals had ever come from his town. And the one or two people who acted up, humiliated their families or threatened the town's view of itself were taken good care of (...) from the beginning its people were free and protected (Morrison 8).

Ruby symbolizes the American history that is based on superiority and separateness (Khatana 105). Thus, according to Tsai Ruby is an ironic symbolism of the whites' social system (169). Consequently, according to Khatana, through the novel "Paradise" Toni Morrison has tried to rewrite the American history from the perspective of Afro-Americans. As well as, she tried to push those Afro-Americans' history from the margin to the center and to marginalize the whites' history. Storace states that "Morrison is relighting the angles from which we view American history, changing very color of its shadows, showing whites what they look like in black mirrors" (Qtd. In Khatana 105) hence the novel "Paradise" is a reflection of the way that the Afro-Americans regard the whites.

2.4 Description of Social Life in "Paradise"

Toni Morrison's "Paradise" recounts the narratives of two Afro-American communities. On the one hand, Ruby is an isolated all-black community. On the other hand, the Convent is feminist community and a shelter for a set of women.

2.4.1 Ruby as a Comfort Zone

Ruby is an imaginary setting in Toni Morrison's "paradise", located nearby Oklahoma State. It resembles a second generation of Afro-American community that established this town to be their comfort zone. It was first, inhabited by Afro-American families. The Afro-American males of these families fled on foot towards this land in order to escape subjugation and suppression. The seeds of establishing this town go back to the Exoduses movement when blacks used to move from place to another in order to escape discrimination and subjugation. The Afro-Americans got their emancipation and had the right of full citizenship. Yet, they remained regarded as inferior in the white communities. Therefore, Zechariah Morgan started a journey with nine families looking for shelter and respect away from discrimination and otherness.

The mentioned Afro-American families migrated from Mississippi and Louisiana towards land named Haven, in 1890, thinking that it would be the land of dream, which transferred into a nightmare by the beginning of the 1930's. This place was not that much different in comparison to the previous one. The conflict remained the same. The Afro-Americans had never been treated as a complete human being. Therefore, the descendent the Morigean family, Deacon and Steward, whom used to be the leader of this black group, took the decision to complete the journey of their fathers having the same proud and the same attitudes. A main reason for this decision was the death of their sister Ruby in the waiting room of the hospital.

The Historic traumas of these courageous Afro-American families pushed them forward to establish a comfort zone in where they isolated themselves from those who subjected and rejected them. The destination used to be into the territory of Oklahoma in

where they created a new town named it after their dead sister Ruby, whom used to pass away in the hospital's waiting room.

To live far away from those whom rejected them once, the pioneers of the Afro-American town ruby isolated themselves in a private place that holds their African values, traditions, and freedom out of enslavement and racism that they faced before. Ruby is regarded as a home to the exodus black families. They invented a patriarchy society similar to that of their motherland, Africa. The inhabitants of ruby adopted their African ancestors' life style and attitudes. The pioneers of Ruby had chosen to live in isolation to avoid the disallowing and humiliation. By doing so, they could reserve a pure race blood.

On the matter of economy, Ruby and the African society share a common feature that is the economic bases. Both of them adopt the agriculture to enrich their economy. It is known that the Africans were relying on their land to live besides hunting. Therefor this was the first cause that the whites practiced slave trade. Those slaves could get their emancipation. Yet, they could not leave their practices in farming. It was mostly the only practice to depend on. In addition, after the war and the great depression in the United States, it became difficult to get a job since the Afro-Americans have fewer opportunities than the whites do. Agriculture was the main source of welfare for them by which they could be self-efficient.

In addition, Ruby got a religious doctrine that is a combination between the Christianity and the old African belief. The descendent of Ruby pioneers, Zachariah, was nicknamed by the "Big Papa" or the Father. They had that feeling of being a chosen people whom adopt the biblical message of love and freedom. Moreover, the call for immigration is a direct recall of the biblical story of the Israelites.

Furthermore, Ruby is characterized by a patriarchy system. Men hold the dominant control over women. Females are meant to be housewives that are not allowed to have any other kind of practice except that of housekeeping. Financially, women were dependent on their males whom took the responsibility to protect them and the whole community. The life style in Ruby was not that different of that in Africa, men got the authority of everything which deny the role of women and give them no voice.

Although, those Afro-American migrated to scape discrimination of whites, they practice it among each other. Ruby did not remain safe as it meant to be. The conflict between the black generation and two genders strongly existed. The pioneers of ruby constructed this Afro-American town based on their ancestors' values that did not fit with the new generation whom asked more freedom and liberty.

The limitation that is imposed in Ruby is considered as an implication of disallowances that they used to suffer from. Those Afro-Americans made it forbidden to have any kind of relationship with other races which opposites their values. In first place, Ruby was created in order to provide those Afro-Americans with total freedom .Yet, this was not the case, they were forced to flow the society values. In addition, the Afro-American males' discrimination over females, they were seen as incomplete human being. For instance, the weakness of female made them an easy prey to be submissive to their males. Ruby's men got the total responsibility of women providing them with shelter, protection, and supplies. Therefore, they treated them as their own subject. Those Afro-American females had no voice to ask for their rights. The pressure and violence was the dominant feature of the two genders' relationship. Women had to be obedient and dependent on their males (Paradise's Summary).

The contradiction between what Ruby was constructed upon and what was in real life, caused big problems. It paved the way to the failure of Ruby. Ironically, women demanded their liberty and independence from Ruby's men. They wanted their freedom of thought and the responsibility of their life's decisions.

Furthermore, the subjugated women in Ruby started to have an independent consciousness which made them rebel against their society's taboo. They wanted more freedom and more liberty. As a result, they looked for another place in order to escape Ruby's injustice social system. This place is known as The Convent.

2.4.2 Social Interaction in the Convent

Actually, the Convent is a building that is located seventeen miles from Ruby in Oklahoma. It used to be a house for an embezzler "...one by one each is reminded that before it was a Convent, this house was an embezzler's folly. A mansion where bisque and rose-tone marble floors segue into teak ones" (Morrison 03). The house reflects some characteristics of the former owner and his hedonic nature, since the walls contains lot of drawings and objects with sexual content. Therefore, the convent at the beginning reflects exactly the opposite of what a convent is supposed to be. Later on, that man who owns the house was arrested by the policemen, and the house was transformed to be a religious school for Indian girls. In 1953, the Indian school was closed because of the lack of money, thus most of the nuns left the school looking for other posts. At the end just two women stayed there Mother Mary Magna who was the leader of the school and Consolata (Connie). After the establishment of Ruby, Connie became the new leader of the convent.

Consolata is so loyal to Mother Mary because she was the one who picked her up from the streets of Brazil in 1925, when she was 9-years old and a sexually abused child. Therefore, after the school was closed in 1953, Consolata chose to stay with Mother Mary, who was sick, to take care of her, and after the establishment of Ruby, Consolata had an affair with one of the town's leaders Deacon Morgan, that lasted just for few months. Later on, when the women started arriving to the convent, and especially after Mother Mary's death, she tried to be the spiritual mother of these lost women. She tried to give them shelter and love, and to understand them and to listen to their stories without judgments, once she declared "I call myself Consolata Sosa. If you want to be here you do what I say. Eat how I say. Sleep when I say. And I will teach you what you are hungry for" (Morrison 262), and she adds, "If you have a place that you should be in and somebody who loves you waiting there, then go. If not stay here and follow me. Somebody could want to meet you" (262). She is the cook and the nurse. In addition, she characterized by her supernatural powers like "stepping in".

Later on, the other women started arriving to the Convent. The first one is Mavis Albright a twenty-seven-year-old woman. She joined the Convent in 1968. She considered the Convent as a refugee from her violent past. Mavis is a victim of her husband Frank Albright. He is alcoholic man, who beats, and abused her physically, sexually, and emotionally "She had always wanted to know her better, but Frank found ways to prevent acquaintance from becoming friendship" (Morrison, 27). In addition, Mavis is haunted by the memory of her twins' death. Her infant twins died in a car during a hot day, when she left them alone and goes to purchase from the store. After the accident, Mavis was so scared so she left her house thinking that her husband with their children Sal, Frankie, and Belly James

Albright are planning to kill her. She ran away, and after crossing the country, she found herself homeless. Then she went to the Convent since it was the last shelter for her. She met Connie who helped her, and offered her food. After she joined the convent, she could hear the voices of her twins “The kitchen was crowded with children laughing? Singing? Two of whom were Merle and Pearl” (41) and she was totally convinced that they are still alive, thus she decided to stay there next to her children, she feels that “she was not safe out there or any place where Merle and Pearl were not” (259).

The next girl who came to the Convent is Gigi or Grace Gibson. She is a young, free, self-confident, wild girl, with an attractive appearance “pants so tight, heels so high, earrings so large they forgot to laugh at her hair” (53). Also she takes drugs. Her father is a prisoner since she was a child. And her mother left her in a very young age. She came first to the desert looking for “lovers’ rock” as her boyfriend Mikey told her, but she didn’t find any rock and she thought that “he may have put them in the wrong place, but he had only summoned to the surface what she had known all her life existed... somewhere” (64). Thus, she decided to go home. Accidentally, in the train to Alcon, Mississippi she met a man who told her that there is a “lovers trees” in Ruby, Oklahoma just as her grandfather told her “two trees [growing] in each other’s arms” (66). When she went to Ruby, she was disappointed for the second time, when she didn’t find any trees. Thus, she decided permanently to leave the town and go back home but she changed her mind when she visited the Convent especially after Mother Mary’s death.

Gigi decided to stay in the Convent to take care of Consolata who started drinking after the death of Mary: “Each morning, her hopes dashed, she lay on a

cot belowground, repelled by her slug like existence, each hour of which she managed to get through by sipping from black bottles with handsome names” (221). One of the main things that disturb Gigi is the memory of that black boy with his white shirt, who was killed during the Civil Rights’ manifestations in Oakland, California. That memory was like a nightmare for her. Later Gigi had a relationship with Deacon Morgan, which ended badly because for him Gigi is a worthless girl. In the convent, the relationship between Mavis and Gigi was not that good, since they used to fight most of the time.

Later, Seneca was the girl who came next to join the Convent. Seneca is 20-years old girl. She her sad story started when the woman that she thought to be her sister left her when she was 5-years old. Later on we learn through the story that this woman actually is her mother. Seneca has no self-esteem or self-confidence; she is “an occasional heart-breaking dream” (128). She worked in different places just to help her boyfriend to get out of jail. She entered several foster houses, where she was sexually abused once, she always thinks, “that there was something inside her that made boys snatch her and men flash her” (261). Thus, she keeps blaming herself for all what happened to her even other people’s faults. Therefore, she tries to please everyone around her. She believes “They might not like her. Might cry. Might leave, so she had done her best to please” (131), especially her boyfriend Eddie Turtle. However, he keeps treating her badly and making her feels worthless and stupid all the time.

She worked in Wichita bus station, but later she ran away she traveled “resolutely nowhere, closed off from society, hidden among quiet cargo – no one knowing she was there” (138). Ending up in the Convent with the other woman.

In the Convent, she was the one who tried to make peace between Gigi and Mavis after each fighting.

The last girl who came to the Convent is Pallas Divine Truelove. She is 16- years old, and the youngest of the Convent women. She is a high school student and the daughter of a rich lawyer man. She ran away with her boyfriend Carlos, who is older than she is, to her mom's house in Mexico. Later, she was shocked when she learned that her mother and her boyfriend are having a love affair. She ran away again. On her road she was almost chased by two men, but she could hide from them in a black lake, she was scared, and terrified "hoping, hoping the things touching below were sweet little goldfish like the ones in the bowl her father bought her when she was five. Or guppies, angels. Not alligators or snakes" (163). When she awoke, she found herself in the hospital. Then Billie Delia, who is working in the hospital, took her to the Convent. Pallas tried many times to escape from the Convent, but she always fails. Finally, she ended up living in the Convent with her baby Divine.

Consequently, the Convent was like a refugee that gathers a group of hopeless and homeless girls with their sad experiences. Each one of them had her own traumatized past. Each one of them was suffering in her own way, physically and emotionally, whether by a violent experience with an oppressive husband, a boyfriend or with her family.

However, In a way or another living together in the same place, and sharing their experiences with each other made the stronger, independent, free, save and more self-confident, "Unlike some people in Ruby, the Convent women were no longer haunted" (266).

2.5 Conclusion

To conclude, the last part of Toni Morrison's trilogy, "Paradise", is an excellent presentation of Afro-Americans' experience in America. She shed the light on the different aspects of the Afro-Americans' life. Furthermore, Toni's work has reflected clearly the social life and personal problems that faced the African-Americans. Moreover, reading "paradise" enables the reader to know the existing conflict in the American society. Beside, Paradise's reader can recognize the ways in which the Afro-Americans could prove themselves. Thus, Toni's narrative work opened up doors to many interpretations and critics. Hence, it could be analyzed based on various philosophical theories and movements.

Chapter Three

Space Place and Identity Reconstruction in Paradise

Chapter Three Space Place and Identity Reconstruction in “Paradise”

3.1 Introduction

Toni Morrison holds the responsibility of Afro-Americans’ voice that had been denied for long time. Her written pieces are a direct reflection of the Afro-American fact. The chosen piece to discuss “Paradise” mentions a set of historical events that took place in the United State throughout almost a century. Those events concern the Afro-Americans at the first place in their mission of finding a suitable home. Toni’s novel inspires its readers to interpret and analyze the explored themes in the present work.

In “Paradise”, Toni Morrison used her pen as an arm to bring the marginalized Afro-Americans into the center of discussion. She highlights all main turning points in the Afro-American history in America from Civil Right Movement, Emancipation, participation in the Vietnam, and the First and the Second World Wars. In addition, she enlarges the vision of its readers to successfully analyze the construction of a collective identity of two different American communities. Besides, how racism plays a major role in those communities. Moreover, her feminist dimension is clearly presented through her choice of female characters as the protagonists of “Paradise” and as the title of its nine chapters.

Furthermore, along the Afro-Americans pilgrim in the selected novel, we point out the adaptation of space and place theory because the towns, Haven and Ruby, which are inhabited by those Afro-Americans, became a part of their social life and a part of their collective memory. In addition, the social comparison of the Afro- American society along history, which resembles the geographical imagination, helps us to analyze the Afro-American social construction and development.

Chapter Three Space Place and Identity Reconstruction in “Paradise”

3.2 Identity Reconstruction through the Creation of New Place (Ruby)

The oppressive forces, that obliged the Afro-Americans in Toni’s “Paradise”, to be in a lowest rank in the social hierarchy, urge them to construct their collective identity proudly and confidently. Historically speaking, Toni Morrison within her fiction divided the Afro-Americans’ journey towards the reconstruction of their own society into three main successional generations in relation: Ex-slaves, Ruby, decedents of Ruby and the women of the Convent. (Fraile Marcos 101)

The story line seeks to explore the construction of collective identity of group of Afro-Americans in America that is named by Ruby in 1990s. It declares the conflict within the American communities. The community of Ruby resembles the second founded paradise of Blacks whom were objected by others on color basis. Essentially, Ruby had been established to be the new Haven of this group. The previous Haven also used to be the home of Afro-Americans who immigrated from Louisiana and Mississippi fleeing the same problems of their grandsons. Morrison states,

From Haven, a dream town in Oklahoma Territory, to Haven, a ghost town in Oklahoma State. Freedom who stood tall in 889 dropped to their knees in 1934 and were stomach-crawling by 1948.that is why they are here in this convent. To make sure it never happens again. That nothing inside or out rots the one all-black town worth the pain.one thousand citizens in 1905 becoming five hundred by1934 ...cotton collapsed or railroad companies laid their tracks elsewhere.....until finally the owners of the bits and pieces speculator, so eager were they to get away and try someplace else. A big city this time, or a small town—anywhere that was already built. (05)

This passage shows that those Afro-Americans regard themselves as one inseparable group that holds the same past and future. They believe they were destined, as

Chapter Three Space Place and Identity Reconstruction in “Paradise”

a chosen people to look for home that would gather them away from discrimination. Moreover, the shared memories of racism and discrimination of this group gave birth to a collective consciousness in which each one perceives him as a part of a group, which is called “intergroup” in Tajfel’s social theory. In addition, they used to be compared with the “outgroup”, the Whites community members, on basis of their skin color “Blackness”. This sense of “intergroup” and the comparison with the outside one rise their pride and self-esteem, which encourages them to look for freedom and self-efficiency in what have been called in the chosen novel Haven.

Unfortunately, this dreamland, Haven, never remained the same. Haven’s collapse is another call for home. The experience of Haven’s inhabitants with racism at the beginning of the twentieth century pushed them to look for another place Ruby to settle down in order to preserve this collective consciousness.

In addition, Ruby is considered as the intended “all-black town” to be the rescue place of this collective consciousness. Consequently, Ruby must be the town that bears no change of the previous one, and lives upon the shadows of Haven. Ana M^a Fraile Marcos said, “Haven, in the collective memory of Ruby’s inhabitants stands as their ancestors’ temporary success in creating a dream town, but also as a warning that the dream can come to an end if it is not protected against the outside influence” (103). She clarifies that the end of Haven is due to the outside influence which must not be the case of Ruby.

Consequently, Ruby is proclaimed to be “The one all-black town worth the pain”, that should be in isolation from the outside influence. Thus, there is no public service in Ruby, “There was no motel. And if there is any pie it wasn’t served at the restaurant because there was not one of either...there was no public place to sit down” (67). Those lines demonstrate a clear lack of hostility, there is no place to welcome people from outside the town. Isolation was adopted to be the arm that protects their collective consciousness.

Chapter Three Space Place and Identity Reconstruction in “Paradise”

Furthermore, Ruby’s leaders are descendent of the first leader of Haven, which symbolizes the strong and inseparable link to their origin in Haven. They adopt Haven’s patriarchal system and strict values, the inhabitants of Ruby live under discrimination, which forced to live in isolation. Consequently, they contradict the first aim for the establishment of Ruby.

Additionally, Ruby is an illustration of the real Afro-American’s society construction, that its formation had been made adopting the puritan ideals. This adaptation provided them with the feeling that they are superior. They used to assimilate the all-black town of Ruby that was founded to rescue the unity of this Afro-American group as the biblical type of “City upon Hill”, and “The New Jerusalem”. Moreover, the exclusion of blacks in Ruby and their isolation is similar to the Puritan believe. This belief expels who have no faith in their religious doctrine. Those puritans fled from England in order to preserve principles that they felt the Anglican Church rejected. (Fraile Marcos 96)

This assimilation is regarded as the reproduction of the “jurmaid rhetoric” that made them feel that they are a chosen to follow the Biblical message. Marcos states,

They root their quest in the millennial promise their ancestor believed in, and at the same time they honor them, they sharply criticize the current state of affair, which turn them into victims of racist discrimination and separates them from the fulfillment of the promise; and they finally define themselves on their own terms when renewing their faith in their own capability to bring about redemption and the fulfillment of the promise. Under Zechariah Morgan’s prophetic vision. (101)

This quotation holds that this Afro-American minority feels the responsibility to hold and protect their ancestors’ heritage. In addition, it states that the main raison of being discriminated and subjugated is their critic to others. Therefore, they had to define themselves adopting their father’s prophetic vision to immigrate to an appropriate land to

Chapter Three Space Place and Identity Reconstruction in “Paradise”

rescue their Afro-American collective consciousness. This experience is repeated for another time to their grandsons while establishing Ruby when Haven falls apart.

Another aspect of identity preservation is the monumenalized the Oven that used to be a symbol of the community unity and separateness. The Oven, which is built in Haven by the old father to be a spiritual place, is a sign that assimilates the collective consciousness of the Afro-Americans. Therefore, when the decedent followed their fathers' steps through immigration into a new land, they were determined to reestablish the Oven in the new town, Ruby, in order to keep the continuity of this collective identity and to prove that they are proud of themselves despite the fact of “Disallowing” and rejection by others.

Moreover, Toni provides the reader with an imaginary map of Ruby by which she jumps from talking about what is inside Ruby to the outside and from its present to the past. This movement in time and space enables the reader to recognize the smooth immigration of those Afro-Americans in addition to the way in which they occupy this place and giving it their social impact. Moreover, men of Ruby built this town in “wide-open space” having the same characteristics of Haven. The organization of this town, its houses, lands, and roads, should not be different of that of their ancestors which valid the idea that they want to protect their collective consciousness. (Lindsay 89)

Unfortunately, this group of Afro-Americans thought that they are protecting and preserving their collective identity by the adaptation of isolation and separateness policy. Yet, in fact, they only imitate the whites instead of contradicting them. They used to enforce isolation on other members of this group neglecting their right of freedom and self-control, which means that they were transformed into discriminators with people of the same race. It seems to them that they are on the right track, that they had the total control of the social life, and that they had the freedom to include or exclude members from their group.

Chapter Three Space Place and Identity Reconstruction in “Paradise”

In addition, Ruby had been built to be a safe place for both genders. Morrison said, “Nothing for ninety miles around she thought prey” (08). But, the reality was something different, women were subjugated and exist only in order to please their men and take care of their needs. They were voiceless and exposed to violence if they thing not to follow the patriarchal system. To disobey the rules, is a challenge that might be regarded as a threat to the tranquility of the social life in Ruby.

The contradiction between the first goal Ruby was constructed on and the dominant reality make it sure that this town will not stand for long term. Since, it is a logic matter to lose confidence in the credibility of their leader and the perfection of their society. In addition, the strict isolation of this town leads to close-mindedness of its inhabitants, personnel failure, and social deconstruction.

3.3 Female Characters’ Inner State and the Quest for Self-identity

The Convent, which used to be a religious school for Indian girls and an embezzler’s former house, is turned to be a refugee and “a feminized, matriarchal space”. (Ghasemi and Torabi 128) for a set of girls who suffered from emotional and physical abuse. Each one of the women is haunted by her traumatic past and she is a victim of a male’s oppression. Eventually, all these experiences have affected these women’s personalities and fates. Thus, accidently they ended up living in the Convent seeking freedom, love and self-image’s reconstruction.

3.3.1 The Psychoanalysis of the Convent’s Characters

According to the psychoanalytical theory of Freud, the human psyche is divided into three parts: the Id, the Ego, and the Superego. First, the Id is the part that contains the unconscious, sexual, aggressive drives and hidden memories.

Chapter Three Space Place and Identity Reconstruction in “Paradise”

Second, the Superego represents morality and social values. Third, the Ego, which reflects the realistic part of the mind, its role is to make a balance between the instincts of the Id and the morality of the Superego (McLeod. 01).

Chelsea Fetch claims that Toni Morrison’s “Paradise” represents the different shapes of oppression against the black female protagonists of the novel, especially the convent women. Then she adds that both the women of the convent and the women of Ruby are victims of the males’ unconscious drives “the Id”, thus they received different forms of sexual and aggressive behaviors like rape and abuse (01).

The first victim is Connie. When she was nine years old, Mary Magna found her raped in the streets of Brazil. Then when she joined the Convent, she had a relationship with Deacon Morgan. Actually, she was a victim of the man that she loves too. Deacon abused her sexually and emotionally. Though she loves him, he left her when she offered on him living together in the same house as a family (Fetch 04). The next woman who came to the Convent is Mavis, who suffered from the bad treatment of her husband Frank. Frank used to abuse her physically, sexually and emotionally. According to Fetch, Mavis was a victim of her husband’s aggressive and sexual instincts therefore, she decided to leave him and her children and ran away looking for a shelter (Fetch 02).

After that, Gigi is yet another woman joins the Convent. Gigi is victimized by many abusive men, especially because of her attractive appearance, thus according to Fetch, she went to the desert looking for a sign of true love. All the men that she knew used to abuse her ending up with K. D. He used to be

Chapter Three Space Place and Identity Reconstruction in “Paradise”

violent with her sexually and emotionally thus, when she decided to finish their relationship, he started beating her (Fetch 02-03).

Next, Seneca was another victim of both men and women’s unconscious drives. First, her foster brother abused her sexually when he tried to rape her. Then, when she was offered to live with a woman named Norma in her house, she learned after three weeks her sexual intentions towards her, therefore she ran away from the house ending up in the Convent. Through time, Seneca started following her own unconscious aggressive drives, which made her cutting herself many times (Fetch 03). The last victim of a man’s unconscious desires is Pallas. Her boyfriend Carlos cheated on her with her mother, after making her pregnant. Thus, she ended up alone without a family or a house living with her baby in the Convent (Fetch 03).

Consequently, all the challenges that the Convent women faced in their lives has affected their personalities in different ways. According to R. M. Prabha, Toni Morrison could successfully apply the theory of the Five Factor Model of McCrae and Costa’s idea on the Convent protagonists by creating five characters with different personalities who are living in the same place. In addition, this theory, as Prabha clarifies is similar to the Freudian psychoanalytical theory and they almost have the same function (02). Moreover, Prabha argues that the women of the Convent can be categorized into five types of personality according to the Five Factor Model theory, and these types are Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism (01).

The first character is Consolata. On the basis of the Five Factor Model, Prabha claims that she characterized by her openness to experience. According to

Chapter Three Space Place and Identity Reconstruction in “Paradise”

Prabha, this type of people value art, they are emotional, and they have creative ideas, they experienced different things in their lives, and they are always curious and excited for new ones, in addition they characterized by their strong personality (02). Therefore, Prabha argues that Consolata has a trait of “high openness”, and she clarifies how Consolata could get rid of her love affair with Deacon Morgan, and how she was loyal to Mary Magna and took care of her when she was sick. In addition, she was strong enough to stop drinking after Mary Magna’s death, and then she became the new leader of the Convent’s women. She helped them to heal from their emotional and physical traumas by her exercise of “last super” in which she asked them to draw different patterns on the floor to express their feelings, which shows her creativity. She could provide them with shelter and home, besides she welcomed all of them to live in the convent without any judgements, which reflects her social openness to other people. Also, by applying the technique of “Stepping in”, she could save many dying people’s souls the fact that shows her “high imaginative tendency fantasizing unreal and non-traditional things” (Prabha 03). At last, Prabha adds that, Consolata is the best example of High Openness to experience type of personality (Prabha 02-03). She is “the creator, healer and effective leader shows high openness to experience (Prabha 08).

The next character is Mavis Albright who, According to Prabha, is a conscientious person. Prabha clarifies that the people who have a trait of Conscientiousness characterized by being “dependable and organized” (04). They tend to plan for their behaviors and for their future goals. In addition, they have good values and they are fair people. Prabha claims that Mavis is the best example of this type of personality. She is well-organized person; she is shown in

Chapter Three Space Place and Identity Reconstruction in “Paradise”

the novel as the character that has high level of values and morals. Moreover, she is described as the person who has personal goals, and she always seeks to achieve them. Besides, she is responsible and helpful and she tends to think before she talks or does anything (Prabha 04).

Gigi or Grace, according to Prabha, she is shown in the novel as an extravert character. Prabha clarifies that extravert people are generally characterized by their active personality. They are sociable with other people, positive; also, they are full of energy and they like talking and making friends. Here Prabha claims that Grace is the best person who illustrates this type of personality. Toni shows her in the novel as a sociable girl who likes to make friends. She is a careless person. In addition, with her strong personality, and her wild, attractive appearance, she always tends to attract other people, and to be the center of attention. When she joined the convent, she could easily adapt with this new society because of her extravert nature. She became friend with almost all the women of the convent particularly, Consolata, Seneca and Pallas. In addition to her habit of taking drugs and smoking, she is careless and has no tendency to think twice of her behaviors and speaking. Therefore, she was always fighting with Mavis who is exactly the opposite of Gigi’s personality (Prabha 05-06).

The character of Pallas, according to Prabha, is that kind of people who have agreeable personality. Prabha argues that Agreeableness is the tendency to show tenderness and tolerance. These kinds of people are characterized by being sensitive, naïve, innocent, calm, and peaceful. They have the ability to control their feelings, thus they tend most of the time to avoid conflicts with other people. Prabha claims that, Pallas in “Paradise” is the best illustration of this type of

Chapter Three Space Place and Identity Reconstruction in “Paradise”

personality. She was a victim of her boyfriend Carlos, who cheated on her with her mother. She tends to trust people around her regardless of the disappointing results later. Besides, her agreeable nature pushes her to accept the situation as it is. Thus, she decided to keep her baby Divine alive and to raise him in the Convent (Prabha 06).

Seneca according to Prabha, is shown in the novel as a Neurotic person. Prabha claims that neurotic people are characterized by their negative feelings, mainly “anxiety, anger, and depression”. They are unstable emotionally, besides they have a low tendency to be leaders because of their aggressive nature, and their self-consciousness. In “Paradise”, Toni describes Seneca as that person who loves everyone except himself because her mother left her when she was five years old, thus, she lived with no family or home. She keeps blaming herself for each mistake even for other people’s faults. She has no self-esteem. Therefore, she always tries to please everyone around her. Even when men abused her, she blamed herself thinking that it is her fault because she attracted them. Therefore, according to Prabha, the sources of problem actually go back to childhood when the parents destroy that self-image of the child, which pushes him to grow that sense of anxiety among him. Consequently, the neurotic nature of Seneca is a reflection of the fact she was abandoned by her mother in a very young age and her foster brother sexually abused her. Thus, she is always sad, feels guilty for anything, angry most of the time, and lonely. Through time, she started harming herself. Toni Morrison states that Seneca “was secretly slicing her thighs, her arms. Wishing to be the queen of scars, she made thin red slits in her skin with whatever came to hand: razor, safety pin, paring knife” (qtd. in Prabha 07).

Chapter Three Space Place and Identity Reconstruction in “Paradise”

Self-harming, according to Prabha, is the way that neurotic people follow to reflect that they were victims of social abuse, but under the leadership of Consolata in the Convent, Seneca could change her neurotic behaviors by making friends especially with Pallas (Prabha 07).

Though the Convent’s women have different personalities and social experiences, they could live together in the same place. Moreover, through their social interactions with one another, they could reconstruct their personalities and their self-images.

3.3.2 The Convent Women’s Self-identity Formation from a Psychoanalytical Perspective

Stijn Vanheule & Paul Verhaeghe examine the relationship between the identity formation and one’s personal experiences in life from a psychoanalytical perspective. Besides, they tend to clarify how these interactions inside the human being’s mind affect the process of identity formation particularly from three main psychoanalytic theorists’ perspectives: Freud, Lacan, and Fonagy (Vanheule & Verhaeghe 391).

First, according to Lacan, each one identifies himself according to other people. Thus, the process of identity formation is based on the presence of others who act like a mirror that reflects one’s self-image (Vanheule & Verhaeghe 402). Second, Freud considers that the concept of identity is synonymous to the “Ego” or “Personality”, then he clarifies that the Ego is the result of “successive identifications”, thus, Freud claims that the Ego’s construction process is actually based on social interactions. Therefore, Freud argues that the Ego or the human

Chapter Three Space Place and Identity Reconstruction in “Paradise”

personality is not “innate” rather it is constructed through time by the different social interactions with others starting by the parents then society (Vanheule & Verhaeghe 393-394). Then Freud adds, the Ego actually starts by an “original identification” with the parents, and then it develops to another level of self-identification with the social relationships. Additionally, Freud argues that the Ego is a part of the Id, and it changes through the effects of the surrounding environment (Vanheule & Verhaeghe 395). Third, according to Fangay’s Psychoanalytic Attachment theory, “the presence” of the other is necessary in the construction’s process of one’s identity. He explains that the child at his early life establishes basic or primary representations that reflect the “other”, then it develops through time to become “secondary representations” that is one’s identity or self. Then he clarifies that these primary representations can take two directions positive or negative one (Vanheule & Verhaeghe 302).

Consequently, though these theories differ somehow from each other, they share a common point that is the presence of the other is necessary in one’s identity formation, which is one of the central themes in Toni Morrison’s “Paradise”.

Vida De Voss analyzes the issue of identity in “Paradise” from a psychoanalytical perspective, particularly, from Jacques Lacan’s perspective. He claims that in Paradise Toni Morrison emphasized on the fact that the construction of societies must be based on the acceptance of identity. Additionally, he argues that both the formation of collective and self-identity cannot happen without the other (Voss 03). Moreover, he emphasized on the idea that “the self” and “the other” complete each other. Actually, the other is part of

Chapter Three Space Place and Identity Reconstruction in “Paradise”

one’s identity (Voss 05). Voss claims that in *Paradise*, Toni Morrison represents this idea through the convent protagonists when each one of them depends on the other in recreating her identity (05). Voss states, “Morrison shows that identity is both based on the other and is for the other” (08). According to Lacan the process of identification with the other is actually based on psychological interactions in the human mind (Voss 9).

The first case of identity formation that is based on the other is illustrated in Consolata’s character (Voss 16). According to Voss, Consolata identifies herself in relation to Mary Magna. Therefore, after Mary’s death Consolata was described in the novel as someone who lost his identity. Toni states, “She had no identification, no insurance, no family, no work. Facing extinction, waiting to be evicted, wary of God, she felt like a curl of paper_ nothing written on it_ lying in the corner of an empty closet”. (qtd. In Voss 16), however, after the coming of the other women to the Convent, she became their new mother superior. She could reconstruct her self-identity by playing the same role of Mary Magna, who was like a model for her, because her self-image is mirrored in Mary Magna’s character.

According to Voss, Mavis and Seneca as well both of them used to identify themselves in relation to their oppressive men. On one hand, Mavis always regards herself from her husband Frank’s eye. Thus, she considers herself “a bitch” as he used to call her. On the other hand, Seneca as well used to see her self-image mirrored in her boyfriend’s words. Therefore, she always regards herself as stupid and worthless girl (Voss 18). “Can’t you get anything right? ... He was guilty as charged and she had known him for only six months, but already

Chapter Three Space Place and Identity Reconstruction in “Paradise”

he knew how hopeless she was” (Morrison 131). However, after they joined the Convent and under the leadership of Consolata, they could change the way they view themselves. Mavis for example, started thinking of herself as being beautiful after Connie’s simple comment on her hands as being “beautiful and strong”. Here, Voss clarifies that though it was a small comment, it pushed Mavis to think of herself differently and positively (Voss 19).

According to Ana M^a Fraile Marcos, the Convent’s women could rebel against the social stereotypes that are embodied in their men and the men of Ruby town. They rejected the identities that their stereotype community wanted to impose on them, however, they created their new own identities (109). Under the leadership of Consolata, the girls became stronger and free. She helped them with her exercise of “loud dreaming”. Morrison states:

That is how the loud dreaming began. How the stories rose in that place. Half-tales and the never-dreamed escaped from their lips to soar high above guttering candles, shifting dust from crates and bottles. And it was never important to know who said the dream or whether it had meaning. (Morrison 264)

The girls listen to each other’s stories and their experiences while they are lying on the floor. Therefore, they could heal each other’s injured souls, and they could love and accept themselves again (Fraile Marcos 113). Radka Nosková clarifies that, the fact that all the women of the Convent are victims of a patriarchal society ruled by oppressive men, gender and racism, which the common point between them, pushed the women to empower themselves by themselves without any male’s help (38). Thus, the hard circumstances, that each

Chapter Three Space Place and Identity Reconstruction in “Paradise”

one of the women had experienced, gave them the ability to understand and to help each other and even to help other people (Nosková 38). Later, Connie asked them to draw on the floor to express what they did feel about each other’s stories (Nosková 39). By doing so, they established a strong relationship with each other, they could finally reach peace, self-control, and they could “explore their inner selves” (Nosková 40). Nosková adds, “Through this process of letting the other women in on their deepest traumas, the Convent women take a step towards breaking free of their painful pasts and discovering their identities” (40).

Parvin Ghasemi and Zadmehr Torabi claim that, the Convent’s women particularly Mavis and Consolata could improve themselves as black feminists in an oppressive patriarchal society (122). Then they state, “The wise and strong black women of Paradise who live in the Convent, are strong enough to recreate themselves as subjects, and cultivate their own unique identity in a hegemonic environment which is replete with racial and gender discrimination” (Ghasemi and Torabi 122). Actually, the Convent as a community represents Toni Morrison’s belief that the Afro-Americans’ identity can be recreated by black feminists (Ghasemi and Torabi 123). Therefore, “the Convent women challenge every restriction imposed upon them, and transgress all the boundaries. They have substituted self-loathing by self-loving and thus reclaim their African American female identity” (Ghasemi and Torabi 124).

Consequently, the Convent women could successfully prove that they are brave enough to challenge their fears, and the imposed rules on them by men. In addition, they could rebel against their patriarchal society, and against both white and black men’s oppression, also they proved that the woman could reconstruct

Chapter Three Space Place and Identity Reconstruction in “Paradise”

her self-identity as an Afro-American female. Moreover, they asserted the fact that, by helping each other, the black feminists could empower themselves and prove their self-identities.

3.4 Self-identity Reconstruction and Place

In clarifying the relationship between Place and identification, Thomas Rohkramer and Felix Robin Schulz claim that this attachment between the human being and a Place, which gives him a sense of belonging, is an important factor in the human being's identity construction (1338). Then they add that Space is a result of human beings' social interactions with one another (1339). Henri Lefebvre states that “(social) space is (social) product” (qtd. in Rohkramer and Schulz 1340). Therefore, space is the production of human beings. Besides, to call a Space a Place, it must be imbued with some people's experiences, and who share the same beliefs, points of view, thoughts, and emotions (Rohkramer and Schulz 1340), And “a sense of destiny which guides their actions in the present and their wishes for the future” (Rohkramer and Schulz 1341). Moreover, the aim of places' creation is actually the empowerment of humans (Rohkramer and Schulz 1341).

Yi-Fu Tuan defines Place as a piece of Space that is filled by the human beings' experiences, besides, he adds that Place refers to “security” and “stability” (06). Additionally, In “The Dimensions of Place Meaning” Maarja Saar and Hannes Palang claim that, according to Lefebvre (1991) and Soja (1996), Space is defined as a “physical” environment, which has no meaning, and through the people's social activities it can be turn to be known as a Place. Thomas Rohkramer and Felix Robin Schulz argue that the meaning of place is a

Chapter Three Space Place and Identity Reconstruction in “Paradise”

central element in the construction of identities (1342). In “Paradise”, the Convent women, by living together in the same place, they established a strong relationship with each other and with that place “the Convent”. They accidentally decided to live in the same place, which is used actually to be an embezzler house. It had totally a different meaning. Later, by living together in that house, they imbued it with their experiences and with their social interactions with one another, Morrison states that, “The whole house felt permeated with a blessed malelessness, like a protected domain, free of hunters but exciting too. As though she might meet herself here—an unbridled, authentic self, but which she thought of as a “cool” self—in one of this house’s many rooms” (77).

Therefore, they turned the Convent into a meaningful Place that represents freedom, shelter, safety, and their new identity. Besides, they learned how to create their own society, a place where they can reconstruct their identities and express themselves freely (Ghasemi and Torabi 127).

This is a place where you can stay for a while. No questions. I did it once and they were nice to me. Nicer than—well, very nice. Don’t be afraid. I used to be. Afraid of them, I mean. Don’t see many girls like them out here...A little nuts, maybe, but loose, relaxed, kind of...Anyway you can collect yourself there, think things through, with nothing or nobody bothering you all the time. They’ll take care of you or leave you alone—whichever way you want it. (Morrison 175-176)

Here, Billie, one of the women who lived once in the convent, explains to Pallas her experience in the Convent. She describes it as a place where no one can judge you or ask you about your past. She described the women there as nice people, kind, tolerant, and special girls. Then she explains how the Convent is a

Chapter Three Space Place and Identity Reconstruction in “Paradise”

place where the person can find peace, love, care, freedom, and where he can find himself.

The main aim of the Convent’s women is to fight the different shapes of discrimination and racism because of their gender, and to achieve self-determination and self-control just like men particularly Ruby’ men. They aim at creating a social Space, as Hooks describes it “a site of resistance, as location of radical openness and possibility” (qtd. in Ghasemi and Torabi 128), where all people are equal regardless of their “gender, class, or race” (Ghasemi and Torabi 127).

According to Ghasemi and Torabi, Consolata is the most important character in the Convent. She is the leader of the convent women, and she is the one who helped each one of them to be stronger, and to get rid of thier traumatic past. Then, Ghasemi and Torabi adds that, Consolata is the one who took the first step in the identity formation of the other women, by changing her name from Connie to Consolata which is a sign of her rebel against society (128). Then, she could teach the other women how to rebel against the unjust rules of their society, and racism, by her exercise of “loud dreaming” (Ghasemi and Torabi 128). Consolata played all the roles in the convent. She is the mother, the sister, and the friend of all the Convent’s women. She offered them safety, and love, and she guided them to rediscover themselves. Consequently, “the Convent women were no longer haunted” (Morrison 266). Morrison demonstrates this point,

Seneca embraced and finally let go of a dark morning in state housing. Grace witnessed the successful cleansing of a white shirt that never should have been stained. Mavis moved in the shudder of rose of Sharon petals tickling her skin. Pallas, delivered of a

Chapter Three Space Place and Identity Reconstruction in “Paradise”

delicate son, held him close while the rain rinsed away a scary woman on an escalator and all fear of black water. Consolata [was] fully housed by the god who sought her out in the garden. (283)

Finally, the Convent women could successfully get rid of their former identities, and they could construct new ones under Consolata’s leadership. They became happy and they could find peace again. Besides, they realized that it is possible to create an “earthly paradise” as long as it is built on freedom, equality, and love (Ghasemi and Torabi 130).

3.5 Conclusion

To conclude, Toni Morrison’s “Paradise” is well-structured piece of literature that offers a description of two Afro-American communities’ struggle Ruby and The Convent in seeking their identity acknowledgement. Both of Ruby and the Convent used the creation of Place as a tool to reach their objective. Yet, not both of them succeeded in achieving their goal. Ruby as a community failed to keep its unique collective identity for long time because the decedent leader did not respect the values, in which the community was built upon. Their social system that is based on isolation and separateness is actually nothing but another form of discrimination and racism. However, the Convent, that is a feminist community, is created as a new place that opposes the patriarchal system of Ruby. The Convent’s social system as a small group of women is based on freedom, equality, openness and self-independence, which are the secret of their success in reaching their self-identification.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

Toni Morrison is one the most recognizable African-American authors of the 20th century. She tries through her narratives to reflect the experience of the Afro-Americans in the US and to mirror the difficulties that they have faced because of racism. Moreover, the issue of identity crisis of the Afro-Americans is a main theme almost in all her works. In her trilogy, “Beloved”, “Jazz”, and “Paradise” she recounts the history of America from an Afro-American perspective. In addition, she narrates the slavery tales and the struggles of the African-Americans in their quest for identity.

“Paradise” is the ending part of Toni’s trilogy. It tells the story of the blacks’ struggle in the US. The story takes place in the 1970’s in Oklahoma, where group of blacks are living in a small town named Ruby nearby a small feminist community named the Convent. On the one hand, Ruby is an all-black town that is established by nine families who left their homeland and settled down in Oklahoma. In their journey, both the Whites and the lighter-skinned blacks rejected those Afro-American immigrants because of their blue-black color. This experience pushed them to live in isolation from anyone who is different, particularly the Convent’s women. On the other hand, the Convent is a small feminist community that gathers a group of women who were abused emotionally and physically by their men. However, by living together they learned how to be free again and to live without men’s help, which became a kind of threat on Ruby’s men conservative society. Therefore, nine of the town’s men went to the Convent and shoot all the girls there. Eventually, they realized that their behavior is another shape of racism just like what happened to their ancestors.

Ruby and the Convent are two different communities who share the same goal, which is proving their African- American identity. However, their means to achieve their goal are different. From one side, Ruby as a society is built on the system of the other's exclusion, separateness and isolation, thinking that this would save their social interests, their common history, and their collective identity. From the other side, the Convent, as a feminist community, is based on freedom, love and equality. Eventually, the men of Ruby have created a new place and imbued it with their bad experience of racism hoping that this would protect their collective identity. However, it is nothing but another reflection of the Whites' racist policy. Unlike Ruby's men, the Convent women together could create their own place, where they filled it with their experiences of racism and abuse. Consolata as the Convent's leader has taught them with her techniques how to empower themselves and each other. They learned how to love themselves again, to get rid of their former weak identities, and to forget about their past traumas.

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Résumé :

Ce mémoire est une analyse de la romancière Toni Morrison de son roman « Le Paradis ». Ce dernier vise également à illustrer le fait que « le Convent » a davantage réussi à se forger son identité plus que « Ruby » en créant un nouvel espace et un nouvel univers. Ces deux communautés afro-américaines, pour fuir le racisme la discrimination. Elles ont utilisées à la fois un nouvel espace et un nouvel univers. D'un part, Ruby est une communauté afro-américaine fière mais introvertie, alors en guise de ce profil psychologique elle en est devenue victime. D'un autre part, « le Convent » c'est une communauté extravertie, ouvert d'esprit, tolère toutes les croyances sans aucun jugement et qui part des principes liberté et égalité, ce qui a fait d'elle une zone de relaxation et de paix au-delà du parfait on a pu constater de cette analyse que les femmes qui font partie de la communauté « le Convent » ont réussi à se forger une forte personnalité en allant vers l'avant et créant un nouvel espace. Contrairement à « le Convent », Ruby a échoué dans la déconstruction de son identité à cause de son introversion qui l'a empêchée d'évaluer et de se reconstruire.

ملخص المذكرة:

تتطرق المذكرة التالية الى دراسة حول رواية توني موريسون " النعيم" كما أنها تهدف الى توضيح أن " الكونفانت" نجح أكثر من " روبي" في بناء هويته عن طريق خلق مكان ومساحة جديدين. هذين المجتمعين الأفرو-أمريكيين استعملا خلق مكان ومساحة جديدين للهروب من التمييز العنصري والتعصب. من جهة واحدة روبي نشأ كمجتمع أفرو-أمريكي فخور بذاته إذ أنه يتميز بعزلة جغرافية بالإضافة إلى الانفصال عن العالم الخارجي وكنتيجة لذلك فقد وقع ضحية لانعزاله ومن جهة أخرى "الكونفانت" مجتمع متفتح يرحب بجميع الاعتقادات بدون الحكم عليها إذ أنه يتبنى مبادئ الحرية والمساواة ما جعله منطقة راحة ونعيم مثالي. تمكنا عبر هذه الدراسة من استخلاص أن نساء "الكونفانت" نجحوا في تشكيل هويتهم الشخصية عبر خلق مكان ومساحة جديدين. على عكسها فإن روبي فشل في إعادة بناء هويته الجماعية بسبب خلق مكان جديد معزول وهو ما منعه من التطور والاستمرارية.