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*Memory Narratives and the Politics of Space in
Toni Morrison's Beloved and Song of Solomon*

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Dedication

In memory of my beloved brother Ibrahim

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Abstract

The African American experience in the United States is one that is mainly characterized as historically, psychologically, and spatially complicated and intriguing experience. To reimagine such experience, Toni Morrison commits her fiction to depict the agonizing reality of this experience using memory narratives and space as literary strategies to counteract the mainstream representation of it. The current research consists of an investigation about the ways how Toni Morrison depicts the traumatic hardships of the African American experience in her novels *Beloved* and *Song of Solomon* with regard to historical, spatial, and psychological perspectives. Through the historical perspective, this study seeks to investigate Morrison's *Beloved* in light of her historiographic project that focuses on the role of memory narratives in subverting and revising the metanarratives of the American history concerning its representation of slavery. The spatial perspective draws upon a discussion of the politics of space in Morrison's *Song of Solomon*. This discussion emphasises space as a dynamic entity that transgresses the conventional perception of space as a mere geographical dimension and it considers space as an entity that is imbued with power which can both affect and be affected. The basic objective behind analyzing both novels from a psychological standpoint is that it gives the study a prolific context to offer a vivid and thorough description of the African American experience in both novels.

General Introduction

The increasingly academic interest in concepts like memory and space reflects upon a radical shift in contemporary discourse and scholarly inquiry over the intrinsic role that both memory and space have in shaping and giving meaning to human experience. The postmodern era has often been claimed by scholars to be an era of commemoration where hegemonic Western historical representations of certain historical events; that are inherited in its master narratives, are no longer able to provide clear image about what really happened in the past and therefore they are put into question. So, a turn to history and the veracity of its various representations is about to find drastically new dimensions in literary representation; in that, the latter offers prolific as well as debatable perspectives exhibiting the role memory has in defying and refuting Western metanarratives as well as reimagining its legacy.

Therefore, the body of literary texts produced in postmodern historical context come to stimulate and initiate substantial acts of dialectical intersections between what history has determined to remember and what our communal memory is inclined to acknowledge. In this sense, and for being marked by a commemorative aspect of cogitation and interpretation, the postmodern era comes to have inevitably significant reflections of such an aspect of historical evocation in works of fiction that share the duty of adopting a new linguistic practice encompassing the dramatic power of memory in articulating particular historical issues. Issues that are essentially related to the problematic process of the reminiscence of particularly silenced, omitted, and forgotten historical and traumatic events like the holocaust and slavery. These works of fiction are often considered as what Linda Hutcheon terms in her seminal work *A poetics of postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (1988), historiographic metafiction.

For Hutcheon, historiographic metafiction comes as a response to an increasing postmodern historical consciousness that stems from a great disillusion with universal truth and teleological history. This postmodern distrust in a teleological history is based essentially on the fact that Western grand narratives are no longer credible or reliable in representing historical truth. The latter idea is best demonstrated in Jean-François Lyotard's pivotal critiques *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979) and *The Postmodern Explained: Correspondence, 1982- 1985* (1988). Both works draw upon the reasons behind the demise and dissolution of metanarratives in postmodern context. According to Lyotard, this postmodern incredulity towards Western metanarrativity rejects the cosmic perception of history and its different grand stories about humankind and human suffering.

Hence, all this is about to see light with the emergence of historiographic metafiction as a postmodern literary sub-genre that seeks to come to grips with historically-omitted stories about human experiences. For it attempts to subvert the cosmic nature of historical truth that is inherited in grand stories and replace them with more localized stories which are described as *des petits récits* or little narratives. It is through these little narratives that postmodern writers find a new medium to express differently and present the diversity of human experience which should not be viewed or treated as one entity but fragmented.

Accordingly, a sense of responsibility among postmodern writers intensifies in order to rethink and speak about histories which have been neglected by Western official history. Because of its slippery and fragile nature, Western discourses left a space for the emergence of alternative histories of those who had been intentionally silenced and left unvoiced. Those histories are the histories of the subaltern, of the disenfranchised and the dehumanized, about cultural degeneration; of those voices which have been historically and culturally obstructed by the grand narratives of the dominant discourse of a particular nation or group.

Among these groups, we have the African Americans who have long been suffering, both physically and psychologically, the appalling and atrocious ramifications of slavery system in America. Their history is one that is not accounted for and unspoken of. It is a history that is almost disremembered by the nation. Therefore, through the act of writing about their painfully traumatic past, African American novelists face the challenge of revising the American history's dominant records about slavery in order to write about this painful experience.

Subsequently, the task of writing through this traumatic experience offers postmodern African American novelists a new ground upon which they can articulate the suppressed history of slavery and give voice to the disremembered slaves who left no written records. However, to do so, African American novelists need to delve into the depths of this agonizing period of American history as an attempt to excavate truth and get access to it. In this sense, African American novelists are to face the artistically challenging task of representing the horrors and traumatic effects of slavery in their historiographic metafiction and make them accessible to the reader. This very act will allow them to reclaim their history and save it from national amnesia.

In order to achieve such a task, African American novelists' commitment to reveal the unspeakable story of slavery in their historical fictions entails a creative kind of writing that blends history with memory. In so doing, their main concern is to produce literary works which depict essentially the psychological effects slavery has on the lives of ex-slaves. In the light of this project, for these novelists the act of rewriting /re-righting history depends basically on collecting and retelling intimate and personal stories about the lives of the ex-slaves. These stories are portrayals of actual historical events and figures in which the ex-slaves could finally find a voice to express their traumatic memories.

In this vein, the main purpose behind using memory narratives in African American historiographic metafiction is to revise and reimagine the American official history, with regard to its representation of the African American experience, in order to reconstruct the experience of slavery from a more intimate perspective. This intimate perspective, however, stands for the millions of stories that were never told.

Yet, for African American novelists the fact of contemplating the psychologically problematic experience of the African American entails a close engagement with the spatial one since the history of Blacks in America is one that is mostly characterized by a series of historical spatial movements. The early shipments of human cargo from Africa known as the slave trade mark the first experience of displacement for the blacks and the great migration which is a collective experience of nearly four-million blacks who left the South to pursue their dreams in the North. All this seems to take on an inescapable area for discussing and presenting the African American experience which is space.

According to what we have mentioned earlier in the opening paragraph of our introduction, the very notion of space plays a significant role in giving meaning to human experience. Therefore, it will be necessary to consider first the emergence of space as a postmodern phenomenon. In his 1984's essay "Des Espaces Autres", Michel Foucault speaks of the revolutionary emergence of space as an influential parameter in literary fiction and literary analysis for it becomes an inevitable result of and due to the crisis of historicism, in other words, while time had been long dealt as a main paradigm in literary discussions, space emerges as a dynamically significant factor in studying the inter-relationships relating characters to specific spatial locations. Foucault has claimed that the twentieth century era will be pervaded by and will bring about a new historical outlook, "*l'époque actuelle serait*

peut-être plutôt l'époque de l'espace."¹ This postmodern outlook considers space as a form of power that requires a decisive focus on its functions as a dynamic theme in analysing literary texts.

However, the treatment of space as a dynamic theme in portraying the African American experience in postmodern fiction goes beyond the mere representation of the old contention between space and time. In fact, this treatment requires a new perspective that illuminates the dialectic that inheres between the geographical and the psychological. The geographical here stands for the American land, the land upon which African Americans have undertaken several movements over the course of history, whether willingly or by force. The psychological however represents the psychic response to these movements as they affect the African American's perception of the land and of him/herself.

Therefore, topics which are concerned with issues of race and movement are closely connected with the politics of space since the issues of movements typically allude to spatial change which certainly incur psychological problems for the migrating or displaced individual. These problems are initially owing to the power struggles embedded in space. So, the politics of space inheres within its power struggles that determine the individual's reception and perception of his/her subjectivity.

Hence, Memory and space seem to be very substantial notions in the act of examining the African American experience from both historical and spatial standpoints. Among the most successful and committed African American writers who devote their fictions to cast light on the African American experience in America, and who have undertaken the concepts of memory and space to fulfil this task, is the *Nobel Prize*- and *Pulitzer Prize*-winning American novelist Toni Morrison.

¹ "the present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space," in Jay Miskowick's translated version, "Of Other Spaces," *Diacritics*, (Spring 1986), 22-27, p. 22.

Specifically, Toni Morrison's fiction is characterized by her deep concern with evoking and portraying the traumatic experience that African Americans have long undergone in a nation where the dark epoch of slavery is still haunting the historical mindset of this nation. Her endeavour to reveal and represent a history that is almost kept at bay, in other words, a history that is cast to oblivion, is imbued with the intention of shedding light on this dark epoch and unveiling the true story behind such a painful experience through an act of literary excavation. Moreover, Morrison's literary project of contemplating the African American experience extends to touch upon the spatial experience which allows Morrison to bring about a new ground upon which she is to explore the powers embedded within certain spatial locations, mainly represented through the North and the South spaces in her fictions, to investigate their effects on the African Americans' lives and psyche.

Therefore, our research rests on the assumption that the use of memory narratives in *Beloved* and the politics of space in *Song of Solomon* allow Morrison to depict the African American experience through many perspectives. Being an overwhelmingly prolific writer whose main interest focuses on addressing issues related to the history and nature of African American experience Morrison's fiction, we argue, can be discussed and studied from historical, psychological, and spatial perspectives. These perspectives, basically, encompass a wide range of connotations which emerge out of Morrison's need to and insistence on giving voice and meaning to the African American experience that includes Black history as well as Black individual. Among her novels which take such issues at the forefront of their consideration is, *Beloved* (1987) and *Song of Solomon* (1977).

Hence, the general objective of our humble dissertation is to explore the ways how Morrison depicts the African American experience in the selected novels, *Beloved* and *Song of Solomon*, with regard to the historical, psychological, and spatial implications. At the

historical level, our intent is based on the assumption that Morrison's impulse to write *Beloved* comes as a necessity to revise and subvert the dominant discourses of the nation concerning the issue of slavery. This act of revision necessitates the use of memory narratives as a literary strategy which gives Morrison the chance to defy the conventional representation of slavery. The spatial level implies a thorough scrutiny of *Song of Solomon's* treatment of South and North spaces with reference to their effects on the characters' psychological responses towards such effects. So, the psychological sphere, supposedly, seems to be an important part of both levels. Among the reasons why we have chosen these novels is the fact that their contexts offer a fertile ground for examining the significance of Morrison's use of memory narratives in *Beloved*, and the politics of space in *Song of Solomon*.

There are many research papers which have been conducted and realised to study the use of memory and space in Morrison's fiction. Particularly relevant to my discussion, we have Cynthia Dobbs', "Toni Morrison's *Beloved*: Bodies Returned, Modernism Revisited", in 1998, Sima Farshid's, "Foucauldian Archaeology of Slavery in Morrison's *Beloved*", in 2010, Jessica Gama's, "Without Ever Leaving the Ground, She Could Fly: Ecofeminism and Soul Fulfillment in Toni Morrison's *Pilate*", in 2008, Tharita Intanam's *Contested Spaces and African-American Construction of Identity in Toni Morrison's Song of Solomon*.

Though these insightful research papers have clarified many aspects about the selected novels, the investigation of Morrison's use of both memory narratives and the politics of space to articulate her concern of giving a voice and meaning to the African American experience seems to have escaped most research presentations as far as we can tell. Throughout this research, we shall attempt to highlight this investigation by focusing on this creative correlation between space and memory with reference to its significance in achieving Morrison's concern.

For the purpose at hand, the present research paper seeks to investigate how the employment of memory narratives and the politics of space in Morrison's *Beloved* and *Song of Solomon* help portraying the African American experience in, respectively, historical and spatial contexts. In this sense, to undertake a reasonable investigation, many questions could be set forward:

1. To what extent can Morrison's *Beloved* be regarded as a historiographic metafiction?
2. Do memory narratives help promote Morrison's historiographic project?
3. Does the idea of creating two antithetical spaces (North/South) in *Song of Solomon* help Morrison articulate the African American experience?
4. Finally, to what extent Morrison has succeeded in portraying the hardships of the African experience in her selected novels?

To provide answers to these questions, we see it necessary to rely in our investigation on a theoretically-based approach that is consisting of describing and analyzing a wide range of critical and theoretical assumptions. The dissertation is divided into four chapters. The first two chapters include a body of theoretical observations which are to be discussed in order to illustrate the significance of notions like history, memory, and space in postmodern literature, while the third and fourth chapters will purposefully examine whether Morrison has successfully adopted and treated the dissertation's key concepts of memory, history, and space in the selected novels.

Chapter One will focus on a study that encompasses a body of theoretical assumptions which allow us to assess the significance and the contribution of concepts like history, historiographic metafiction, memory, trauma and narrative in constructing the fictions of those who are concerned with examining history from the perspective of the silenced, the marginalised, and the traumatised groups.

Chapter Two will examine the concepts of space, place, and landscape in terms of their psycho-geopolitical dimensions, which arguably participate in affecting the bonds established between the individual's perceived image of the physical environment he/she is attached to and his/her sense of subjectivity. To fulfil this task, we are to examine the interaction between space, which is regarded as a site of power, and the subject which is determined by this spatial power.

Chapter Three will emphasize the work of Toni Morrison; *Beloved* (1987), which certainly can be recognized as a substantial example of depicting the power of historiographic metafiction to articulate an alternative, disquieting and destabilising past of American slavery. Morrison's *Beloved* reconceptualises and rewrites history and her dedication to sixty million and more reflects upon her strong will and determination to articulate the forgotten unspoken events of the official history, through exposing the stories of those slaves who did not reach the American shores and who were believed to be perished during the Middle Passage.

Chapter Four aims at concentrating on Toni Morrison's third novel, entitled *Song of Solomon*, in which she attempts to demonstrate the importance of; as well as, the power that space has in the ways the characters of the novel perceive and construct their sense of selfhood within their community. In this way, *Song of Solomon* represents the different experiences through which the main characters of the novel may develop a certain connection to a specific space in order to locate themselves spatially.

Chapter One

Memory Narratives in the Fictions of Trauma and History

Introduction

The postmodern era witnessed an increased academic concern focusing on the critical development of memory in historical and trauma discourses. Scholars, like Pierre Nora, have noted that ‘collective memory’ emanates as a fascinating ground for scholarly inquiry only in the early twentieth century, contemporary with the so-called crisis of historicism. For Nora, memory is a superannuated mode of being that had been ravaged and desolated by modern rationalization. Nora statement calls for the condensation of a self-perceptive memory discourse that functions as a counter-history discourse and which aims at reviewing history; yet, retrieving truth; for history finds its meanings through its counter-concepts. Those counter-concepts; eminently, attract scholarship’s attention to debate the concept of memory in the context of the ‘excavation’ of history, as it has become a pressing problem for history and its ‘truths’.

In the light of the previous discussion, other distinct field has surfaced from within the depths of the former. Debates about how historical events and experiences, atrocious and painful ones in particular, connect with the rise of the discussion of trauma and its representation in the contexts of memory narratives, both at the subjective individual level and community level. Henceforth, the discourse of trauma arises out of an increased public discourse of memory as trauma becomes a crucial part in tracing the ideology of history; so that, the contemporary discussion of trauma effectively articulates various topics that contribute to the current interest in memory.

Our task; therefore, in this chapter, is to study the equivocally challenging ideas resulting from the intersection of memory, trauma, and narrative with relation to history. To fulfil this task, a body of theoretical assumptions is to be discussed in order to explicate and elucidate the postmodern rush and insistence on contemplating and questioning the very

contestable nature of ‘historical truth’ through casting light on undermining issues of memory and trauma with regard to their basic sceptical approaches to history.

Hence, the purpose of the chapter is threefold. Given its enormous considerable impact in the rewriting and remaking sense of history and historical manifestations, the motif of memory and its prominent ‘archaeological’ role in excavating ‘truth’ out of the depths of history, must be conceded. In the first section, I plan to study the development of historiographic metafiction as a counter-terrain that is created to revise the long-rooted Western metanarratives which hold as their basic credentials, rationality and the universalization of truth, embraced to justify their credibility. I shall evoke, then, some critical theories pushing forward the aim of this section in questioning the credibility and reliability of ‘historical truth’ as depicted in and sustained by Western metanarratives. Jean-François Lyotard and his pivotal critique *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979), proves to be of great importance, as he denounces the demise and dissolution of Western master narratives in postmodern thinking and writing.

Another critique that I find noteworthy is Lyotard’s review, *The Postmodern Explained: Correspondence, 1982- 1985* (1988), where he ferociously stigmatizes the universality of historical truth. I shall; also, highlight a commentary raised by Linda Hutcheon to argue that historiographic metafiction aims at subverting ‘universal truth’ through revising metanarratives; for the fact that, historiographic metafiction is a literary genre that deliberately scrutinizes the interrelationship between history and fiction as an attempt to debate the very concepts of veracity and fiction in historical narratives and discourses. The last theory considered in this section will be that of Michel Foucault and his method of ‘archaeology’ as discussed in his ground-breaking publication, *Archaeology of Knowledge*

(1969), which lays the platform for those who are engaged in ‘digging up’ the inaccessible parts of the past to excavate ‘truth’.

In the second section entitled “Memory, Trauma, and Narrative”, my intention is to scout about the significance of concepts like, memory, trauma, and narrative, in reviewing history as an attempt to distill veracity from grand historical representations and accounts. I’ll debate over particular analytical perspectives tracing the project of memory in the rewriting of history. What these perspectives have in common is that, there would be various possible versions (stories) of history, many of which have been forgotten or occluded.

The body of theoretical assumptions raised in this section will allow us to assess the significance of concepts like memory, trauma and narrative in constructing the fiction of those who are concerned with examining history from the perspective of the silenced, the marginalised, and the traumatised groups. In so doing, we will refer to some prominent works like: Zhu Ying’s *Fiction and the Incompleteness of History: Toni Morrison*, Peter Middleton and Tim Wood’s *Literatures of Memory: History, Time, and Space in Postwar Writing*, Toni Morrison’s *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, and *Memory, Creation, and Writing*, Kathleen Marks’ *Toni Morrison’s Beloved and the Apotropaic Imagination*, Anne Whitehead’s *Trauma Fiction*, Pierre Nora’s *Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire*, Cathy Caruth’s *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, and *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, Dominick LaCapra’s *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, Ruth Leys *Trauma: A Genealogy*, and Sonya Andermahr and Silvia Pellicer Ortin’s *Trauma Narratives and Herstory*.

Section 1: The Emergence of Historiographic Metafiction in Postmodern Literature

To the truth of art, external reality is irrelevant. Art creates its own reality, within which truth and the perfection of beauty is the infinite refinement of itself. History is very different. It is an empirical search for external truths, and for the best, most complete, and most profound external truths, in a maximal corresponding relationship with the absolute reality of past events.
David Hackett Fischer

In her seminal work *A poetics of postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (1988), Linda Hutcheon¹ critically introduces the new yet farsighted notion of historiographic metafiction² to the realm of postmodern literature, to reflect upon those “*well-known and popular novels which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages*”³. The following perspicacious expression adroitly clarifies Hutcheon’s stringent viewpoint concerning historiographic metafiction:

historiographic metafiction strikingly combines, on the one hand, the intensely parodic, realism-undermining self-reflexivity of metafiction, inherited from modernism, with, on the other, the historical element, suffused by the relish in storytelling, in the construction of well-made plots, carefully delineated characters and realism-enhancing narrative techniques characteristic of classic realism⁴.

¹ Linda Hutcheon (born August 24, 1947) is a Canadian academic working in the fields of literary theory and criticism, opera, and Canadian Studies, who describes herself as “intellectually promiscuous”, as she brings a cross-disciplinary approach to her work. Hutcheon holds the rank of University Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of Toronto. A specialist in postmodernist culture and critical theory on which, she has published nine books. She has also worked cooperatively in large projects involving hundreds of scholars (the multi-volumed *Rethinking Literary History*, which was awarded a Major Collaborative Research Initiatives grant from the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada in (1996) and smaller ones, most with her spouse, Dr. Michael Hutcheon.

² Another rich definition stated in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, introduces historiographic metafiction as “*an umbrella category for postmodernist forms of art and literature that combine documentary historical actuality with formalist self-reflexivity and parody. More specifically the term designates a new kind of historical novel and a distinct sub-genre of postmodern narrative.*”p. 216.

³ Hutcheon, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2004. p. 5.

⁴ Onega, susana. *Telling Histories: Narrativizing History, Historicizing Literature*. Rodopi B.V., Amsterdam-Atlanta, Netherlands, 1995. p. 7.

For Hutcheon, historiographic metafiction is a literary genre that deliberately scrutinizes the interrelationship/interdependence between history⁵ and fiction as an attempt to debate the very concepts of veracity and fiction in historical narratives and discourses. This visualization is ably elucidated by E.L.Doctorow⁶, when he constructs his standpoint with regard to the understanding of the equivocal and enigmatic notions of history and fiction:

History is a kind of fiction in which we live and hope to survive, and fiction is a kind of speculative history, or a superhistory, by which the available data for the composition is seen to be greater and more various in its sources than the historian supposes.⁷

What Hutcheon endeavours to demonstrate is that the problem of postmodernism lies in the problematizing conceptual confusion between the notions of history and fiction alongside the question of verification, “*Postmodernism deliberately confuses the notion that history’s problem is verification, while fiction’s is veracity... Both forms of narrative are signifying systems in our culture...both are modes of mediating the world for the purpose of introducing meaning*”.⁸

⁵ According to the definition stated in V. Philips Long and Moisés Silva’s *Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation*, ‘History’ is to be regarded as a term which refers either to “*the past or to the study of the past ; or, to put it another way, history can denote both events in the past and verbal accounts of these events.*” (p. 320).

⁶ Edgar Lawrence "E. L." Doctorow (born January 6, 1931) is an American writer, who occupies a central position in the history of American literature and is best known internationally for his unique works of historical fiction (*Welcome to Hard Times* (1960), *The Book of Daniel* (1971), *Ragtime* (1975), *Billy Bathgate* (1989) *The March* (2005)). E. L. Doctorow is generally considered to be among the most talented, ambitious, and admired novelists of the second half of the twentieth century. Long celebrated for his vivid evocations of nineteenth- and twentieth-century American life (particularly New York life), Doctorow has received the National Book Award, two National Book Critics Circle Awards, the PEN/Faulkner Award, the Edith Wharton Citation for Fiction, the William Dean Howell Medal of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and the presidentially conferred National Humanities Medal.

⁷ Sanchez, Jesus Benito. *Doctorow’s Ragtime :A Breach in the Frame of History*. Atlantis Vol. 19,No. 2(December 1997)pp. 15-24.

⁸ Hutcheon, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2004. p. 112

Historiographic metafiction challenges the empiricist methods of recording past events and rebuts the “truth” resulted from the process of analyzing the remaining of the past through “imaginative construction” of history or; in other terms, “historiography”:

Historiographic metafiction refutes the natural or common-sense methods of distinguishing between historical fact and fiction. It refutes the view that only history has a truth claim, both by questioning the ground of that claim in historiography and by asserting that both history and fiction are discourses, human constructs, signifying systems.⁹

Thereby, postmodern thinking and writing come to defy those inherited textual and contextual conventional systems of the past knowledge which basically stems its dogmatic features from the Enlightenment¹⁰ ideals of the universal “Truth”, to constitute a new meditation and interpretation of history and past events: “*postmodernism returns to confront the problematic nature of the past as an object of knowledge for us in the present.*”¹¹ Hence, one of the most substantial undertakings of historiographic metafiction is that, it bears the onus of tracing, excavating, revealing, and revising those past systems and empiricist ideologies (dominating a great deal of historical records and narratives), and which “*certainly silence, exclude, and absent certain past events -and people-...*”¹² to explore the inscrutable nexus between history and fiction and expose the frailty and discursivity of long-established truths that metanarratives/grand narratives/master narratives have perpetually held as its primordial incentive.

⁹ Ibid., p. 93.

¹⁰ When we attempt to understand what Kant and Hegel had to say about historical representation and interpretation, we find ourselves dealing with thinkers who believed that the Enlightenment ideal of universal truth was attainable. Later, in his *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose*, Kant comes to concede that the writing of a history should not be an empirical record of facts but the interpretation of world events as confirming to specific an certain rational ends.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 92.

¹² Ibid., p. 107.

Jean-François Lyotard¹³ elucidates this idea in his pivotal critique *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979), when he denounces the ascendancy of metanarratives¹⁴ in postmodern writing and thinking and the causes fostering and leading to their demise and dissolution. Lyotard announces: “*I define postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives. This incredulity is undoubtedly a product of progress in the sciences.*”¹⁵ In fact, this incredulity toward metanarrativity characterizing the postmodern thinking has its roots in the ascending sceptical and distrustful views concerning its credibility and reliability in presenting historical facts.

Lyotard ferociously stigmatizes the universality of history/truth in his review *The Postmodern Explained: Correspondence, 1982- 1985* (1988):

It is not the case of “abandoning” the project of modernity, as Habermas has said with regard to postmodernity, but of the “liquidation” of that project. With this annihilation, an irreparable suspicion is engraved in European, if not Western, consciousness: that universal history does not move inevitably “toward the better”, as Kant thought, or rather, that history does not necessarily have a universal finality.¹⁶

Such an observation seems quite self-evident since it propels us to deduce the presumption that there is no all-encompassing, embracing metanarrativity of historical observations which

¹³ Jean-François Lyotard (10 August 1924 – 21 April 1998) is a French philosopher, sociologist, and literary theorist. His interdisciplinary discourse spans such topics as knowledge and communication, the human body, modernist and postmodern art, literature and critical theory, music, film, time and memory, space, the city and landscape, the sublime, and the relation between aesthetics and politics. He is best recognized for his articulation of postmodernism after the late 1970s and the analysis of the impact of postmodernity on the human condition. He was co-founder of the International College of Philosophy with Jacques Derrida, François Châtelet, and Gilles Deleuze.

¹⁴ The French original *grands récits* is variously translated as ‘grand narratives’, ‘master narratives’, ‘metanarratives’ or ‘metadiscourse’, meaning ‘totalising stories’ providing ideologies with a legitimating philosophy of history and human race which are primarily used to ground and legitimise knowledge and cultural practices. Hayden White (b. 1928), an American historian, suggests that there are four Western metanarratives: Greek fatalism, Christian redemption, bourgeois progressivism, and Marxist utopianism.

¹⁵ Lyotard, Jean-François. *The Postmodern Condition : A Report on Knowledge*. The university of Minnesota, 1984. p. xxiv.

¹⁶ Lyotard, Jean-François. *The Postmodern Explained : Correspondence, 1982-1985*. The University of Minnesota Press, 111 Third Avenue South, Suite 290, Minneapolis, MN 55401-2520, 1997. p. 51.

have long been endorsing universalist, totalizing pretensions. Therefore, Lyotard called and urges for the “abandonment”, “liquidation” and dissolution of these metanarratives which he considers as presumably an inherent to modernism’s failure. “*Grand political ideologies and plans to unify society must be rejected. Modernity has witnessed the demise of such plans with the residue of world wars, fascism, totalitarianism, and genocide.... Yet, in another sense, the universality of metanarratives is the primary reason for their demise.*”¹⁷

In critical theory a metanarrative is “*a global or totalizing cultural narrative schema which orders and explains knowledge and experience.*”¹⁸ According to Lyotard, this kind of narratives which holds an historical, authentic and pristine legitimizing function, no longer retains its long-standing credibility and therefore master genuineness. Hutcheon asserts:

It is no longer big news that the master narratives of bourgeois liberalism are under attack. There is a long history of many such skeptical sieges to positivism and humanism, and today’s footsoldiers of theory- Foucault, Derrida, Habermas, Vattimo, Baudrillard – follow in the footsteps of Nietzsche, Heidegger, Marx, and Freud, to name but a few, in their attempts to challenge the empiricist, rationalist, humanist assumptions of our cultural systems, including those of science.¹⁹

Lyotard’s cognizance of the metanarrative is that “*grand story (grand récits) which seeks legitimation beyond itself to a universal reason for its justification.*”²⁰ However, the cosmic view of history and different stories about humanity, group as well as individual experiences, and other life stories, all this starts to wither away with the emergence of a new interesting kind of narrative known as “*petit récits*” or “little narratives” in the light of postmodern

¹⁷ Michener, Ronald T. *Engaging Deconstructive Theology*. MPG Books Ltd. Bodmin, Cornwall, Great Britain, 2006. p. 52.

¹⁸ Stephens, John and Robyn McCallum. *Retelling Stories, Framing Culture: Traditional Story and Metanarratives in Children’s Literature*. Library of Congress Cataloging –in-Publication Data, 1998. p. 6.

¹⁹ Hutcheon, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2004. p. 6.

²⁰ Knowles, Steven. *Beyond Evangelicalism: The Theological Methodology of Stanley J. Grenz*, Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2010. p. 78.

assumption and its recognition of the diversity of human experience that should not be viewed or treated as one entity, but fragmented.

Postmodernism is a 'mood' expressed theoretically across a diverserange of theoretical discourses and involving: a focus on the collapse of grand narratives into local incommensurable language games or 'little narratives' ... According to postmodern philosophers, metanarratives have lost their power to convince-they are literally, stories that are told in order to legitimise various versions of "the truth". With the transition from modern to postmodern, Lyotard proposes that metanarratives should give way to "petit récits", or more modest and "localized" narratives.²¹

In this case, Postmodernists have endeavoured to substitute the long-rooted inherited metanarratives of human experience throughout history with more localized, small narratives, by stressing their focus on particular local contexts; as well as, the diversity of human experience. The fragility and tenuousness of discourses and narratives made by hegemonic histories left a space for the egression of substitutional histories of those who had been intentionally silenced and left unvoiced. Those histories are the histories of the subaltern, of the disenfranchised, histories about cultural degeneration; of those voices which have been historically and culturally obstructed by the grand narratives of the dominant discourse of a particular nation or group. In an article entitled "*The Other Question... Homi K Bhabha Reconsiders the Stereotype and Colonial Discourse*", Bhabha²² mentions:

[...] they have been able to release into this discourse, into the sphere of their concerns, forms of historical contingency, small events, petit recits, a number of what I would call enunciatory sites. So there is a very complex re-writing of what the history of a colonised nation

²¹ Mahmood, Meer Mushfique and Fahmida Haque. *The Inevitable Failure of Meta-narratives in The God of Small Things*, Explorer, Volume 1, Number 2, December 2008, ISSN 1998- 5568. p. 2.

²² Homi Jahangir Bhabha (30 October 1909 – 24 January 1966) is an Indian nuclear physicist, founding director, and professor of physics at the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research. Colloquially known as the "father of Indian nuclear programme", Bhabha was the founding director of two well-known research institutions, namely the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) and the Trombay Atomic Energy Establishment (now named after him); both sites were the cornerstone of Indian development of nuclear weapons which Bhabha also supervised as its director.

would be, what the history of a transformative, anticolonial moment would be.²³

Notwithstanding the fact that grand narratives, the tenable legitimating myths of hegemonic western culture (that have long been dominating, organizing, constituting, and constructing the world through basic elements as foundations to obscure some particular histories) have lost their dominance and power because; subsequently, these obfuscated untold histories found a space (in works of fiction) to revise and rewrite their blanked occluded histories, in a process of implanting their small stories of their forgotten pasts into the fissures and lapses of grand historical records and narratives. In this sense, it can be worth mentioning RobertJ. C. Young's proposition that: "*histories can be told in many forms to write about histories of the tricontinental countries is to write about lapses in history itself. Of spaces blanked out by that ruthless whiteness.*"²⁴ Nevertheless, we cannot assume that all conventional discourses and facts of history are to be jettisoned or refuted.

Accordingly, Hutcheon's discerning description of historiographic metafiction fits properly the point discussed above, in that small histories constituting; as well as, representing 'historiography' in Gottschalk's words, attempt to write their own versions of history by drawing on their own life stories stressing on and casting light on their individual experiences in imaginative fictional works.

The process of critically examining and analyzing the records and survivals of the past is ... *historical method*. The imaginative reconstruction of that process is called *historiography* (quoted in Hutcheon 92; italics in original)... "Imaginative reconstruction is the focus of the postmodern rethinking of the problems of how we can and do come to have knowledge of the past....It is historiography's

²³ Bhabha, Homi. *The Other Question...Homi K Bhabha Reconsiders the Stereotype of Colonial Discourse*. Screen, Vol 24, 1983. p. 18-36.

²⁴ Young, RobertJ. *White Mythologies*, Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2005. p. 1-2.

explanatory and narrative emplotments of past *events* that construct what we consider historical *facts*.²⁵

The demise of historical *telos*²⁶ and the scepticism towards epistemological claims, universal truth, and teleological history undoubtedly entail a return to history, which is not a plain and simple return, but a stringent and critical one. Ultimately, these emerging *petit* voices start claiming new and diversified processes to evoke and interpret history to submit it to an alternative historical understanding and therefore meaning. Hutcheon considers this as an inevitably a process of a ‘historical consciousness’ that starts to hold a significant consideration for historiographic metafiction’s approaches to history. A historical consciousness caused by and resulted from a declining faith in historical truths. “... *any recall of the past today must be a sign of nostalgia or antiquarianism or ‘a pastiche of historical consciousness, an exercise in bad faith.*”²⁷

Continuous history is the indispensable correlative of the founding function of the subject: the guarantee that everything that has eluded him may be restored to him; the certainty that time will disperse nothing without restoring it in a reconstituted unity; the promise that one day the subject—in the form of historical consciousness— will once again be able to appropriate, to bring back under his sway, all those things that are kept at a distance by difference, and find in them what might be called his abode. Making historical analysis the discourse of the continuous and making human consciousness the original subject of all historical development and all action are two sides of the same system of thought.²⁸ (*Michel Foucault*)

The bias and prejudice characterizing Eurocentric master narratives through many perspectives cause in shaping world history by imposing their concepts of universalism,

²⁵ Hutcheon, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2004. p. 92.

²⁶ ‘Telos’ is a Greek word meaning ‘end’, ‘purpose’, or ‘goal’ that is originating from Aristotle’s philosophy of ‘the final cause’, which is the most important ‘cause’ in Aristotle’s viewpoint. This perception is adhered by his ‘Theory of Purpose’ or ‘Teleology’, in which Aristotle believes that everyone and everything have a purpose or ‘an entelechy’.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

²⁸ Dean, Mitchell. *Critical and Effective Histories: Foucault’s Methods and Historical Sociology*, Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2003. p. 92.

rationality, and objectivity on the others. This very fact creates a strong impulse among postmodernists in general and those who have been rejected by grand narratives in particular, to discard those perspectives privileged by metanarratives, to tell about their own histories with a strong belief in more localised narratives legitimising a variety of viewpoints; as well as, offering provisional judgements about particular experiences and situations.

Postmodernism's critique and rejection of the metanarratives of modernity (science, religion, philosophy, humanism, socialism, etc.), all of which seek to impose some sense of coherence onto history, direct us away from universalizations toward the particularity of local knowledge.²⁹

Postmodernists embrace a strong credence (empowered by an unquestioned sense of awareness about historical relativity, and a loss of faith in the foundational schemes that have justified the science-based rationalities of the modern world) that rejects the deterrent propensity and intentions of Western assumptions to totalize historical knowledge and beliefs (fed by grand historical stories which claim universal validity) concerning human experiences; to engage themselves in a different and prolonged process of depicting and representing history as an attempt to demonstrate the fact that history or past remains an inevitably undiminished integral part of our experiences throughout time.

For postmodernism, no universalizing epistemology is possible because all truth claims are formed within discourse. There are no universal philosophical foundations for human thought or action. All truth is culture bound.³⁰

Thus, for this very reason, it would be impossible for postmodernists to stop excavating and digging history up, infiltrating into its depths searching for new ways allowing them getting access to it. On the whole, postmodernism entails a return to history to question the entire concept of historical knowledge and its ramifications on modern and

²⁹ Featherstone, Mike. *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism*, SAGE Publications Ltd, 2007. p. 33.

³⁰ Barker, Chris. *Cultural Studies : Theory and Practice*, SAGE Publications Ltd, 2012. p. 199.

postmodern societies, and which impels us to look for more diversified modes of interpretation to review and reconsider the notion of what history is; as well as, its significant role in the shaping of human narratives.

Pursuing the epistemological and historical perspective of Foucault's archaeology with regard to history and which presupposes the excavation of the past, postmodernists, particularly those who fall under the banner of historiographic metafiction, are often considered to be archaeologists whose job requires the unearthing of history.

To undertake the history of what has been said is to re-do, in the opposite direction, the work of expression: to go back from statements preserved through time and dispersed in space, toward that interior secret that preceded them, left its mark in them, and (in every sense of the term) is betrayed by them. Thus the nucleus of the initiating subjectivity is freed. A subjectivity that always lags behind manifest history; and which finds, beneath events, another, more serious, more secret, more fundamental history, closer to the origin ... This other history, which runs beneath history, constantly anticipating it and endlessly recollecting the past, can be described ... as the evolution of mentalities...³¹

In this sense, the works of fiction produced in the tradition of historiographic metafiction, record and reconstruct history using miscellaneous metafictional techniques to emphasize that history is a kind of a multi-layered construction, not only linked to the past, but it is an essentially literary artefact which needs to be archaeologically; as well as, aesthetically excavated. According to Foucault's depiction of the problematic nature of history (mainly resulting from its complicated process of recollecting knowledge from the past), historiographic metafiction maintains the idea that all historical texts are intertextual in a sense that we can only be able to know the past through a critical process requiring digging up other texts. *"Postmodern intertextuality is a formal manifestation of both a desire to close*

³¹ Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge & the Discourse on Language*, Pantheon Books, New York, 1972. p. 121.

the gap between past and present of the reader and a desire to rewrite the past in a new context."³²

The intertextual parody of historiographic metafiction offers a sense of the presence of the past, but a past that can be known only from its texts. [...] To parody is not to destroy the past; in fact, to parody is both to enshrine the past and to question it. And this is the postmodern paradox.³³

In postmodern novels, these techniques are evoked by historiographic metafiction writers because they have no straight access to the real past, and which are employed as an archaeological attempt to rip the veil and uncover its deep inaccessible parts. Essentially, their main interest is to gather and examine the various effects of great historical events and their consequent traumas on characters and their memories.

By archaeology Foucault means the exploration of the specific and determinate historical conditions that form the grounds on which discourses are created and regulated to define a distinct field of knowledge... Archaeology suggests excavation of the past in one specific site and entails 'digging up' the local sites of discursive practice. Foucault argues that archaeology is the appropriate method for the analysis of local discursivities; it is not the transcendental and does not seek to identify the universal structures of all knowledge or all possible moral action, but treats the instances of discourse as historical events.³⁴

So, it is very lucid the point Foucault wants to demonstrate here; in that, he considers postmodernists and those writers who engage themselves with the mission of excavating the past (to know more about its real nature) as 'archaeologists' of knowledge who would never be able to rebuild and construct a full and complete image of it, because of its already fractured structure. "*It is never possible to paint a complete picture because only shards and*

³² Hutcheon, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2004. p. 118.

³³ Hutcheon, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2004. p. 126.

³⁴ Barker, Chris. *The SAGE Dictionary of Cultural Studies*, SAGE Publications Ltd, 2004. p.7-8.

remnants remain; nevertheless, it is possible to reveal the 'hidden' truths about the past."³⁵

Hence, Foucault's so-called archaeologists face the job of digging up "*the shards of meaning from the past ... and reconstruct them in the present, showing what they meant and how they were used at the time*"³⁶ and stressing their attention on the ruptures in knowledge made by history.

Nevertheless, for historiographic metafiction writers, the very process of digging up the past is widely perceived as truth seeking, through meditating on rendering and narrativizing particular historical events and discourses using memory to make sense of the past. According to Hutcheon memory has a twofold function; it "*both installs and then subverts traditional concepts of subjectivity; it both asserts and is capable of shattering the unity of man's being.*"³⁷ By this assumption, Hutcheon offers a very effective philosophical commentary on the difficulties and problems man meets in the process of memorizing the past or particular historical situations, for trying to reconstruct and preserve them; looking for answers to explaining his interaction and to position himself within the scopes of master narratives and the purpose of history with regard to the problem of historical representation.

In their quest to unveil 'truth' and rewrite history, historiographic metafiction writers resort to create Counter-Narratives³⁸ to defy the literary and artistic domination of grand

³⁵ O'Brien, Martin and Sue Penna. *Theorising Welfare: Enlightenment and Modern Society*, SAGE Publications Ltd, 2004. p. 111.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Hutcheon, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2004. p. 118.

³⁸ In Giroux, Henry A et al's "*Counternarratives: Cultural Studies and Critical Pedagogies in Postmodern spaces*", it's claimed that the notion of postmodern counternarratives have been developed through two dimensions. The first one considers them functioning generically as "*a critique of the modernist predilection for "grand", "master," and "meta" narratives*" (p. 2.) those narratives which "*have come down to us as part of the culture of the Enlightenment.*" They can be transposed as "*countercultural critique, issuing from a basic skepticism, of the philosophies of history accompanying the grand claims concerning Man, Truth, Justice and Beauty, representing the West, and "America" as the last projection of European ideals, as the apex of an unbroken, evolutionary development of two thousand years of civilization.*" In a second sense, counternarratives counter not only grand narratives but also the official and hegemonic narratives of everyday life: "*those legitimating stories propagated for specific political purposes to manipulate public consciousness by heralding a national set of common cultural ideals.*"

narratives in fiction and regain a historical recognition. Such counternarratives are, as Lyotard explicates, quintessentially, “*petits récits*” or “little stories”: “*the little stories of those individuals and groups whose knowledges and histories have been marginalized, excluded, subjugated or forgotten in the telling of official narratives.*”³⁹ These well-crafted little stories; therefore, are evoked to express a different truth, which gives the readers an insight into “*phenomena such as slavery or Holocaust, by offering a reading of a processor period, or by giving at least a plausible ‘feel’ for experience and emotion which might be difficult to arrive at through restricted documentary methods.*”⁴⁰ It’s obvious then, and as the name historiographic metafiction implies, that historiography and art or history and fiction should not be considered as reverses for they can work together to illuminate marginalized experiences, to provide new historical visions; thence, rebuilding new images of history.

Section 2: Memory, Trauma, and Narrative

There is a necessity for remembering the horror, but of course there’s a necessity for remembering it in a manner in which it can be digested, in a manner in which the memory is not destructive. The act of writing the book, in a way, is a way of confronting it and making it possible to remember. (Toni Morrison)

2.1. The Project of Memory in the Rewriting of History

History is . . . an ongoing tension between stories that have been told and stories that might be told. (Lynn Hunt)

The postmodernist fiction tends to; repeatedly, represent certain individual or collective histories that have been forgotten, untapped, or silenced through the artistry of memory and the creativity of writing, that both offer an “*emphasis to the inventive discovery and*

³⁹ Giroux, Henry A et al. *Counternarratives: Cultural Studies and Critical Pedagogies in Postmodern spaces*, Routledge, 29 West 35th Street, New York, NY 10001, 1996. p. 2.

⁴⁰ LaCapra, Dominick. *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, Hopkins University Press, Norht Charles Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21218-4363, the United States of America, 2001. p. 13.

interpretation of historical or verifiable materials.”⁴¹ This inextricable interrelatedness of history and memory is well- accentuated; or rather, resonated in a beautifully melodious poem by Paul Ricoeur, in which he deliberately reflects upon and elucidates the entangled relations among remembering and forgetting, life and storytelling, as he points out:

Under history, memory and forgetting.

Under memory and forgetting, life.

But writing a life is another story.

Incompletion.⁴²

(Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, Forgetting*)

The above poem suggests that there would be various possible versions (stories) of history, many of which have been forgotten or occluded. Hereafter, what Ricoeur implicates in his poem is an intersection of history, memory and the lapses created in the history of master narratives. These lapses give way to the birth and bring to the fore forgotten life stories. Thus, memory takes the action of breaking a new ground in the excavation of lost histories, whose retrieval and recovery would have an influential effect on the rewriting of history. So, the project of memory in inscribing lost histories seems to dedicate itself to write back painful histories and unearth repressed memories i.e. to speak ‘the unspeakable past’. In this regard, it will be worth mentioning what Toni Morrison says concerning this point:

I want to scour the official history for the alternative history that *exists*, sometimes parallel to it, more often underneath it. It gleams through the official story in curious ways – a shot here, a facet there, and it’s the kind of thing you want to pursue, and when you cannot find all the data, you have to imagine it.... I don’t want the story, the alternative or

⁴¹ Ying, Zhu. *Fiction and the Incompleteness of History: Toni Morrison, V.S. Naipaul, and Ben Okri*, Peter Lang AG, International Academic Publishers, Bern, Switzerland, 2006. p. 24.

⁴² The original poem reads:

‘Sous l’histoire, la mémoire et l’oubli.

Sous la mémoire et l’oubli, la vie.

Mais écrire la vie est une autre histoire.

Inachèvement.

(Paul Ricoeur, *La Mémoire, L’Histoire, L’Oubli*).

... the repressed story, told in a manner that duplicates the official narrative.⁴³

Therefore, the creativity of memory in fiction requires contending against the absences; as well as, filling in the gaps made by mainstream history in order to construct a coherent picture of the past. In this light, memory foregrounds the dialogic tendencies of its imaginative capacity to structure and restructure the significance of the past. So, to construct a tenacious image of the past (history), “creative memory has to work closely with artistic imagination.”⁴⁴

In this regard, memory and imagination are not thoroughly disparate entities, for the reason that “memory sifts and selects, assembles and constructs past experience, and all these activities cannot be done without imagination, that is, imagining which memories are most pertinent to represent a particular aspect of reality in the historical past.”⁴⁵ In this sense, and for the fact that it is catalyzed by imagination, memory will be privileged with narrative particularity and aesthetic selection for literary re-creation in fiction. “The fragmentary and blurred memories of the past offer an artist a peculiar attraction...”⁴⁶ For in that case, Sigmund Freud⁴⁷ writes in *Moses and Monotheism* (1964): “The artist is free to fill in the gaps in memory according to the desires of his imagination and to picture the period which he wishes to reproduce according to his intentions.”⁴⁸

⁴³ Reynolds, Margaret et al. *Toni Morrison: The Essential Guide*, Vintage, London and New York, 2003. p. 11-12.

⁴⁴ Ying, Zhu. *Fiction and the Incompleteness of History: Toni Morrison, V.S. Naipaul, and Ben Okri*, Peter Lang AG, International Academic Publishers, Bern, Switzerland, 2006. p. 25.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Sigmund Freud (1856-1939); known as the father of psychoanalysis for his in-depth inquests in the field of psychology, is a physiologist, medical doctor, psychologist and weighty thinker of the early twentieth century. Working at first with Joseph Breuer, Freud establishes the theory that the mind is a complex entity functioning as an energy-system, the structural investigation of which is the proper province of psychology. He articulates and refines the notions of the unconscious, infantile sexuality and repression, and he proposes a tripartite account of the mind's structure (all as part of a radically new conceptual and therapeutic frame of reference for the understanding of human psychological development and the treatment of abnormal mental conditions). Some of his groundbreaking works are, *Studies on Hysteria* (1895), *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901), “*Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*” (1905), *On Narcissism* (1914), *Introduction to Psychoanalysis* (1917).

⁴⁸ Freud, Sigmund et al. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol 23, Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, London, 1964. p. 71.

For this reason, the inextricably convoluted interrelatedness of history and memory is not limiting or restrictive as it appears to be; but rather, it exerts an enabling clout to creative writing and representation. This creative representation enables writers to work on lacerated, disrupted histories and broken memories so as to overcome and move beyond them. That being so, Memory is perceived to seem: “*less as a pure source of illumination than as an enabling context, a prelude to insights generated by the imagination in the present.*”⁴⁹ Accordingly, history and fiction become productive and prolific grounds of imaginative literary experience and representation where “*memory and imagination work in collaboration to challenge and make up for the incompleteness of history.*”⁵⁰

Contemporary historical literature has become considerably a vigorous sphere of argument about history and the unearthing, ‘rediscovery’, of its written off potentialities; as well as, an often heatedly collided conflict over what should be remembered and what forgotten. Its intensive debates centre upon providing new histories of individuals whose “*religion, nationality, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, class and poverty denied them the opportunity to present their stories in the publically accessible forms of literature.*”⁵¹

The new history we are beginning to see these days has little in common with the old—and for an interesting historical reason: its practitioners were nurtured in the theoretical climate of the 1970s, a time during which the individual literary work came to lose its organic unity; when literature as an organized body of knowledge abandoned the boundaries that had hitherto enclosed it, to an extent even abandoned its claims to knowledge; and when history began to seem discontinuous, sometimes in fact no more than just another fiction. It is

⁴⁹ Ying, Zhu. *Fiction and the Incompleteness of History: Toni Morrison, V.S. Naipaul, and Ben Okri*, Peter Lang AG, International Academic Publishers, Bern, Switzerland, 2006. p. 25.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵¹ Middleton, Peter and Tim Woods. *Literatures of Memory: History, Time, and Space in Postwar Writing*, Manchester University Press, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9NR, UK, 2000. p. 2.

no wonder that the scholarship we now pursue cannot take the form or speak the language of the older literary history.⁵²

In light of this argument, Herbert Linderberger⁵³ claims that the ‘new history’; in contrast with the old, cannot but concentrate on the propinquities between history and fiction, particularly the notion that both have rigorously permeable boundaries allowing for an inevitably propitious literary investigation and recreation of the past. Hence, memory has become a major preoccupation within this literary investigation that is related to historical literature, since it “...offers the opportunity to locate the growing commitment to historicism in literary studies within the wider culture.... In cases where the dominant collective sense of the past is manifestly deficient in its recognition of other social groups...”⁵⁴

Another proposition coming from Pierre Nora associating memory with history in that, memory plays a profound role in the creation and recreation of history. Nora writes, “*History in general has begun to question its own conceptual and material resources, its production processes and social means of distribution, its origins and tradition; it has thus entered the historiographic age, consummating its divorce from memory –which in turn has become a possible object of history.*”⁵⁵

Nevertheless, Nora’s presupposition generates a paradox while proclaiming that: “*objective history picks up where fickle memory leaves off in an effort to substitute for*

⁵² Hutcheon, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2004. p. 91.

⁵³ Herbert Linderberger is among the first literary critics to claim for some kind of return to historical thinking in literary criticism. His essays are meant to discuss so many areas of inquiry, such as the historical status of genres and the ways through which art and criticism are embedded within historical and institutional frameworks. His thematic essays of “*The History in Literature*” illustrate Linderberger’s prolific, capacious, and diverse knowledge, his incisive wit, and his tremendous critical thinking. Linderberger argues that, “*what we label ‘historical’ assumes strikingly different shapes in different historical situations*”, and that present shape generates a new kind of knowledge. He proclaims, “*We may well discover that our century-old form of organization within the humanities no longer fits the type of knowledge we are producing.*” (For further reading see “*The History in Literature: On Value, Genre, Institutions.*”

⁵⁴ Middleton, Peter and Tim Woods. *Literatures of Memory: History, Time, and Space in Postwar Writing*, Manchester University Press, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9NR, UK, 2000. p. 8.

⁵⁵ Cox, Timothy J. *Postmodern Tales of Slavery in the Americas: From Alejo Carpentier to Charles Johnson*, Routledge, 2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX144RN, USA, 2013. p. 21.

*memory, yet memory as desire ultimately shapes history or its revision, and often memory rives history at its seams.*⁵⁶ Therefore, to solve this paradox, writers engaged with historical literature refuge to the creative activity of memory/imagination as both “*an alternative to the tyranny of empirical-based history and to the exclusivity of myth-making*”⁵⁷ and “*a necessity of writing to achieve the language of difference (or counter-culture or counter-memory) against the master-culture’s narratives of the past and present...*”⁵⁸

2.2. Memory in the Fiction of African American Women Writers

Contemporary African American women writers have been embroiled with a project of revision, reconstruction, and emendation that profoundly inspired and influenced the thematic and structural peculiarities of their historical novels⁵⁹ and narratives: “*African American women writers have been involved for the last thirty years in a project of deconstruction and reconstruction of the past through mythology and re-memory, discovering new ways of structuring and developing narrative devices, and striving to reveal their cultural realities.*”⁶⁰ Writers such as Toni Morrison, Paule Marshall, Gloria Naylor, Alice Walker, and Sherley Ann Williams, are involved in a mission of historical deconstruction and liquidation, which shows the equivocally evocative and ambivalent status of the American history when it recounts the experiences and stories of African Americans; particularly, those

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 21-22.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 23.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ In the realm of fiction, the historical novel has increasingly become a medium of exploring the ways in which the past is given shape through the forms in which it is narrated as well as perspectives from which it is told. For minority writers and women who are engaged with this genre of fiction, existing versions of history are first of all ones that excluded their ancestors’ or women’s experiences and point of view. A rewriting of history thus will be a critique of the way they were represented and will strive for a different picture of the role of their ancestors or of women. (quoted in Winfried Fluck’s *The Historical and Political Turn in Literary Studies*.)

⁶⁰ Castro –Borrego, Silvia Pillar. *The Search for Wholeness and Diaspora Literacy in Contemporary African American Literature*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK, 2011. p. 1.

of slavery. In doing so, they are about withering away shades of gray over “*the dark period of... slavery.*”⁶¹

In the light of this project, fiction to the African American women writers, expropriates and remaps American history, for it “*stands as the ally of history, as the language of truth, restoring truth to the representation and the telling of the historical past of the diasporic identities of African Americans living in the United States, situating their history within the larger context of the African diaspora.*”⁶² Concomitantly, for this category of writers, fiction with its narrative devices subverts history as it redeems the written text from the rigour and strictness of conventional historical discourses. Accordingly, fiction in African American writing functions; frequently, as a subversive version of history. In this regard, Ralph Ellison explains “*we possess two basic versions of history: one which is written and as neatly stylized as ancient myth, and the other unwritten and chaotic and full of contradictions, changes of pace, and surprises as life itself.*”⁶³

Mainstream American literature and its traditional representations of history engenders from the dogmatic context that for African Americans means ‘history-lessness’ and ‘context-lessness’, since African Americans have traditionally been excluded from mainstream history. Morrison elucidates:

[...] we need to analyze the manipulation of the Africanist narrative (... the story of a black person, the experience of being bound and/or rejected) as a means of meditation... on one’s own humanity. Such analyses will reveal how the representation and appropriation of that narrative provides opportunities to contemplate limitation, suffering, rebellion, and to speculate on fate and destiny. They will analyze how that narrative is used for discourse on ethics, social and universal codes

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Borrego, Silvia Del Pilar Castro. “There is More to it than Meets the Eye: Alice Walker’s the Temple of my Familiar, a Narrative of the Diaspora”, Universidad de Malaga, Revista de Estudios Norteamericanos, n. 9 (2003), pp. 9-22. p. 10.

⁶³ Fabre, Genevieve and Robert O’Meally. *History and Memory in African American Culture*, Oxford University Press, 1994. p. 247.

of behavior, and assertions about and definitions of civilization and reason. Criticism of this type will show how that narrative is used in the construction of a history and a context for whites by positing history-lessness and context-lessness for blacks.⁶⁴

In an interview with City Limits magazine in March, 1988, Morrison points to a crucial concern of her own work, and that of many other African American novelists who are interested in positioning memory at the forefront of their writings, with a stentorian awareness that the history of African Americans has been “*disremembered and unaccounted for*.”⁶⁵

We live in a land where the past is always erased and America is the innocent future in which immigrants can come and start over, where the slate is clean. The past is absent or it's romanticised. This culture doesn't encourage dwelling on, let alone coming to terms with, the truth about the past. That memory is much more in danger now than it was 30 years ago.⁶⁶

According to this argument, the past of African Americans cannot be romanticised in full swing. For this reason, the act of writing through or about that past has an intimate special signification for authors who are well conscious of their pertinence to “*a race once legally proscribed from attaining literacy or having access to education*.”⁶⁷ So, African American writers found themselves committed to access the past in a delicate attempt to recover and recreate the untold and unwritten stories about their race.

Subsequently, what should be taken into consideration is the textuality of what can be known of the past, that's to say, the mainstream historical documents, also the fact that its representations are always modelled in specific facets when they are given a form, usually narratives, and also that historical accounts always “*imply conscious or unconscious functions*

⁶⁴ Morrison, Toni. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. Library of Congress, the United States of America, 1992. p. 53.

⁶⁵ Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1987. p. 522.

⁶⁶ Quoted in Rebecca Fergusson's *Rewriting Black Identities: Transition and Exchange in the Novels of Toni Morrison*, P.I.E. PETER LANG (Editions scientifiques internationales), Brussels, 2007. p. 129.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

the presentation is supposed to perform."⁶⁸ Furthermore, the reconstruction of the past from textual relics is also wrought by "*the historical moment, the social and cultural context, the narrative's function, and the investment of the historian in the object of study, something he or she is not necessarily conscious of.*"⁶⁹ In this respect, Hayden White suggests that the rewriting of history can be grasped as a writing-back process of the present into the past:

If every fully realized story... is a kind of allegory, points to a moral, or endows events, whether real or imaginary, with a significance that they do not possess as a mere sequence, then it seems possible to conclude that every historical narrative has as its latent or manifest purpose the desire to moralize the events of which it treats.⁷⁰

In light of this assumption, African American women writers are located at the core of this discussion in the relationship of history to fiction since; historically, they have been disowned the access into "*historical and literary discourse by both race and sex*"⁷¹ and; ultimately, they powerfully start acclaiming the authority to control over historical discourse, and attain power to rewrite or rather (re-right) history, using various types of counter-narratives that contrast with Western (American) historiography. In so doing, their fiction will reveal and expose the exclusiveness of the American history by focusing on the gaps and blank spots in its representation of historical events; especially, its blatant system of slavery with its different perpetuating dehumanizing processes.

From this point of view, fiction for these female writers is the means whereby they can revise and therefore reshape the American past, allowing them to make a return to the

⁶⁸ Fluck, Winfried. *The Historical and Political Turn in Literary Studies*. Gunter Narr Verlag, P.O. Box 25 67, D-72015 Tübingen, Germany. p. 284.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ White, Hayden. *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2715 North Charles Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21218-4363, the United States of America, 1987. p. 14.

⁷¹ Borrego, Silvia Del Pilar Castro. "There is More to it than Meets the Eye: Alice Walker's the Temple of my Familiar, a Narrative of the Diaspora", Universidad de Málaga, Revista de Estudios Norteamericanos, n. 9 (2003), pp. 9-22. p. 10.

history of slavery and demonstrate how many voices, stories, and oral traditions there are to be exposed to the public. In their novels they say “*reclaiming and returning to slavery allows us to locate in that psychic wound those aspects of human identity which are part of all Americans, that cannot be forgotten, the site of America’s most important triumph and failure.*”⁷² Characteristically, the African American novel that bears the onus of exposing the shameful historical reality of slavery is dominated by a deconstructive approach to the history which forgets about the brutalities of slavery. Therefore, its main interest is to; narratively, retell and reinterpret that bleak and dismal past, to “*reading the black experience as an inextricable part of the nation’s past and as an indispensable vantage point to interpret American culture and society as a whole.*”⁷³

The basic claim of their novels is to re-imagine the history which “*has been unimaginable by the official histories of the country*”⁷⁴, a history that “*contains not only African traditions and mythologies but also the horrors of slavery.*”⁷⁵ More importantly for them is to find a right and respectful representation that seeks to give voice to the historically muted subjects of slavery. To successfully negotiate this territory, African American women need fiction as a perfect medium to make excursions into the past as well as the future; and to have connecting threads between the historical reality of slavery and its narrative. These connections have to take us clear of what we ‘think’ we know about history and cultural memory.

The continuous need to explain and “inscribe the self” in a world which has historically denied the existence of that self gives both focus and intensity to the act of writing a story about black life. To examine

⁷² Graham, Maryemma. *The Cambridge Companion to the African American Novel*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2004. p. 6.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 38.

⁷⁴ Coleman, Lois Annette. *Michelle Cliff’s Fiction : Rescuing the Past, Engendering Frontier Consciousness*, p. 6.

⁷⁵ Ilmonen, Kaisa. “Rethinking the Past, Rewriting the History: Counter-Narratives in Michelle Cliff’s *Abengé*”, *the Atlantic Literary Review* Vol. 3 NO. 2 April-June 2002. p. 111.

the African American novel, then, is to understand its paradoxical nature: it grants the African American author the freedom to create a sustained vision in a world characterized by a series of counter-freedoms and conflicting visions; it allows for the humanistic formation of cultural memory, and it gives particularity to something that is often a fluctuating collection of perceptions and abstractions.⁷⁶

Contemporary African American women writers have varying ways of envisioning the uses of the past within their creative works. They all seem to agree on the importance of memory as “*a dynamic source of willed creation that contains the potential for spiritual recovery.*”⁷⁷ In their novels, memory becomes problematically; as well as, an increasingly “*critical issue not only because the way one remembers shapes the structure of the narrative but also because it is crucial to the reconstruction of an unwritten past*”⁷⁸; this very nature of memory helps them in raising and emphasising the notion that the past of slavery can therefore hold a grip on the present. Their concern with memory emerges “*in response to crisis: with cultures, as with individuals... memory becomes problematic when continuity with the past is threatened.*” For this reason, they attempt to express their “*sense of difference from the past in an intense interest in the past, an effort to understand the world that had been lost- to remember*”; for memory proves to be especially important to everyone who “*cares about change, for forgetting dooms us to repetition; and it is of particular importance for feminists.*”

In this way, African American women writers’ emphasis on memory as a necessity to claim the imagination, “*the kind of knowledge that resides in experience and memory*”⁷⁹,

⁷⁶ Graham, Maryemma. *The Cambridge Companion to the African American Novel*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2004. p. 5.

⁷⁷ Castro –Borrego, Silvia Pillar. *The Search for Wholeness and Diaspora Literacy in Contemporary African American Literature*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK, 2011. p. 2.

⁷⁸ Beaulieu, Elizabeth Ann. *Writing African American Women :An Encyclopaedia of Literature by and about Women of Color*, Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data, 2006. p. 413.

⁷⁹ Castro –Borrego, Silvia Pillar. *The Search for Wholeness and Diaspora Literacy in Contemporary African American Literature*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK, 2011. p. 2.

holds the potential to represent the history of slavery in their fiction as a means to explore “the interior life that was not written”⁸⁰, to imply “the revelation of truth and the reconstruction of the world”⁸¹ and to bring up “a kind of reality that has not been revealed before.”⁸² In parallel, Toni Morrison invites her African American counterparts to reconstruct “a collective historical memory,”⁸³ to remember “a past that, although in some ways desirable to forget, is impossible to forget.”⁸⁴

Through memory and narrative, the black woman writer is able to undermine and subvert the official American history since she is “committed to re-writing history from the woman’s point of view”⁸⁵ and her fiction becomes a way for characters’ recovery and “to find a voice and achieve resilience”⁸⁶.

African American women’s novels, plays and poetry books published since the 1980’s...undertake the exploration of the processes of memory, recovery, and representation of African American history by searching for a valid language to write and speak about their past... Their texts stand at the core of writing project focused in the examination of the United States culture and history.⁸⁷

Adopting different approaches to their narratives of slavery; notwithstanding, their fictions still intensify and illustrate “the centrality of history and the memory of slavery to...individual, racial, gender, cultural, and national identities.”⁸⁸; as well as, they function as perfect mediums to embodying and recovering the collective memory of those who suffered the traumatic experience of slavery, “...the narrativization of deliberately forgotten traumatic

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 2-3.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 3.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Castro –Borrego, Silvia Pillar. *The Search for Wholeness and Diaspora Literacy in Contemporary African American Literature*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK, 2011. p. 7.

⁸⁸ Fisch, Audrey. *The Cambridge Companion to the American Slave Narrative*, Cambridge University Press, 2007. p. 168.

events creates a space for possible healing as it provides a consensual reality and collective memory through which fragments of personal memory can be assembled, reconstructed and displayed with a tacit assumption of validity”⁸⁹.

Their artistic literary practices reflect upon their willingness to undermine the powers of the official history and to highlight the significance of both individual and collective memory in the progression of the political and social interests of their race. In this context, the very act of memory becomes a necessity for telling their forgotten untold stories about slavery and to calling for both national and personal recovery of history. In the following description, W.E.B. Du Bois negotiates the legacy of slavery as a monumental national trauma, and as an intensely personal trauma as well:

The recovery of history as both a national and a personal necessity admitting and exploring the reality of slavery is necessarily painful for a black American but only by doing so can he or she begin to understand himself or herself and American and Afro-American culture in general.⁹⁰

For African American female writers, writing through the dichotomy of history/memory, enables them redefine history and historical memory and confront the past in innovative; as well as, provocative ways that are deliberately self-reflexive and self-referential, and which are employed to imaginatively depict and reconstruct the blatant history of slavery through tracing the lives of black female subjects. They evoke and invoke the agency of memory to imaginably make the past and past experiences accessible for them, since memory is the space that is used to collect and store the experiences of the individual.

⁸⁹ Walter, Roland. *Narrative Identities: (Inter) Cultural In-Betweenness in the Americas*, Peter Lang, New York, 2003. p. 234.

⁹⁰ Andrews, William L and Nellie Y. McKay. *Toni Morrison's Beloved: A Casebook*, Oxford University Press, 1999. p. 108.

Psychologically, memory is, as the Oxford English Dictionary defines it, “*the faculty by which things are remembered; the capacity for retaining, perpetuating, or reviving the thought of things past.*” Pierre Janet, a French psychiatrist and pioneer in the research of traumatic memory, regards memory as an effectively containing and processing capacity for the restoration and retrieval of past experiences. He views the memory system as “*the central organizing apparatus of the mind, which categorizes and integrates all aspects of experience and automatically integrates them into ever enlarging and flexible meaning schemes*”⁹¹ and which “*at all times was organizing and synthesizing the incoming information in the light of previous integrated memories.*”⁹²

In this connection, it is very significant to point out to Pierre Nora’s conception of ‘memory-generating experiences’, which reflect on his observation and assessment of main differences, if not firm breaches and ruptures, between history and memory. Nora considers history as static and memory as dynamic. He defines history as “*how our hopelessly forgetful modern societies, propelled by change, organize the past*”⁹³ then, he sees memory as a factual phenomenon “*borne by living societies founded in its name... open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting.*”⁹⁴ What deserves attention in raising Nora’s argument is his spacious and capacious recognition of how memory becomes “*a tool to regain and reconstruct not just the past but history itself*”⁹⁵ ; and that the quest for memory is a mere search for one’s history.

It is not so much history, but memory. History is something official.

Memory is in the mind of the people. It is something that may be very

⁹¹ Caruth, Cathy. *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*. , Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1995. p. 159.

⁹² Bowers, Kenneth S and Donald Meichenbaum. *The Unconscious Reconsidered*, John Wiley & Sons, U.S.A, 1984. p. 28.

⁹³ Nora, Pierre. “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire” , *Representations*, No. 26, Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory (Spring, 1989), pp. 7-24, University of California Press. p. 8.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Joyce, Melvin Dixon Justin A and Dwight A. McBride. *A Melvin Dixon Critical Reader*, The University Press of Mississippi, 2006. p. 56.

minute, very unimportant, but it can change a whole life. Memory may be something very trivial, very banal. But not to the person who lives that life.⁹⁶

In this regard, no matter how memory seems “trivial” or “banal” to the official history, memory becomes essentially relevant in the works of African American women writers as it allows them to represent the possibility of creating a counter history and a counter narrative to a historical discourse that is commonly mastered and overpowered by the white man. Their endeavours to overtake and surpass the boundaries of American dominant narratives have propelled them to explore the landscape of counter-memory for the fact that:

Counter-memory is a way of remembering and forgetting that starts with the local, the immediate, and the personal. Unlike historical narratives that begin with the totality of human existence and then locate specific actions and events within that totality, counter-memory starts with the particular and the specific and then builds outward toward a total story. Counter-memory looks to the past for the hidden histories of those excluded from dominant narratives....counter-memory demands revision of existing histories by supplying new perspectives about the past. Counter-memory focuses on localized experiences with oppression, using them to reframe and re-focus dominant narratives purporting to represent universal experience.⁹⁷

Their narratives are induced by a resoluteness that refuses denial and silence, exposing blacks’ inaudibility and invisibility and converting them into distinctness; henceforth, historical recognition. Their determination to decentralize and delocalize the American history prompts “*the foregrounding of a dialogic historiography with multiple histories whose actors and narrators are those previously silenced and marginalized from*

⁹⁶ Condé, Maryse. “The Stealers of Fire: The French-Speaking Writers of the Caribbean and Their Strategies of Liberation,” Sage Journals, *Journal of Black Studies* November 35, 2004. p. 154-164.

⁹⁷ Sorkin, Adam J. *Politics and the Muse: Studies in the Politics of Recent American Literature*, Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1989 .p. 162.

historical records.”⁹⁸ Therefore, their concern as fiction writers calls on to “*deemphasize the institution of slavery and put the authority back into the hands of slaves.*”⁹⁹

African American women’s fiction meditates on the various literary as well as artistic opportunities and potentials residing in and foregrounded by the plethoric, fecund binary of memory-history to raise the subject of slavery and to question, in their novels, its legacy over history. Accordingly, their work commits itself to portraying and giving voice to slaves who “*respond by positing their memory as a crucial documentary force in history,*”¹⁰⁰ and “*their voice as a power equal to the written texts they contest.*”¹⁰¹ Thus, the argument of memory is conceived and developed as a strategic focal point in the works of African American novelists who assume the position of memory in their works as “*an effort to develop a sense of the collective history that, as African Americans, they feel has been denied to people of African descent in the Western hemisphere.*”¹⁰²

2.3. Toni Morrison and the Art of Memory

We are in the beginning stages of a new era –one that is marked by the speech of the once marginalized- then some art must be applied to the selection of what is significant not only to the past but to the present. Memory itself, in other words, is a kind of art employed by novelists.
(Kathleen Marks)

Toni Morrison’s eminent essays “*Memory, Creation, and Writing*” (1984) and “*the Site of Memory*” (1987), overwhelmingly and drastically articulate the importance of memory

⁹⁸ Vega-Gonzalez, Susana. “Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning and History: Danticat’s Insights into the Past”, *Revista Alicantina de Estudios Ingleses*, n° 17, November 2004, Departamento de Filología Inglesa Universidad de Alicante .p. 9.

⁹⁹Rody, Caroline. “Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*: History, “Rememory,” and a “Clamor for a Kiss”, *American Literary History*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 1995, pp. 92-119, Oxford University Press. p. 94.

¹⁰⁰ Graham, Maryemma. *The Cambridge Companion to the African American Novel*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2004. p. 121.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Castro –Borrego, Silvia Pillar. *The Search for Wholeness and Diaspora Literacy in Contemporary African American Literature*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK, 2011. p. 8.

in literary creation as it builds on coteremporary discussions of its aesthetic as well as paradigmatic significations in the African American context. These two critical essays make clear Morrison's ideas about "*the role of memory in the creative process and her responsibilities to her craft and her images.*"¹⁰³ In her critical vision, Morrison attempts to contemplate her main concern with memory, that carries over into her fiction, to discuss the African American presence as "*central to any understanding of our national literature and should not be permitted to hover at the margins of the literary imagination.*"¹⁰⁴

Memory for Morrison is "*the deliberate act of remembering*"¹⁰⁵ ; she must rely, then, on memory and on her belief that it can provide her with more 'truth' to examine how and why her people managed to survive the brutality of slavery. This fact should immediately alert us to Morrison's interest in Michel Foucault's notion of the archaeology of knowledge; or, past excavation:

Archaeology is a critical investigation of disciplinary systems of knowledge with the goal of understanding the discursive practices that produced those systems of knowledge. The archaeologist's interest... is to unearth, to excavate... the obscure, the marginal, the accidental, the forgotten, the overlooked, the covered-up, the displaced. His subjects for investigation are whatever taken as most natural, obvious, evident, undeniable... and indisputable.¹⁰⁶

The centrality of memory in the context of unearthing the 'obscure', the 'marginal', and the 'forgotten' history of slavery, urges Morrison to situate herself in a project of deconstructing the American history, for bringing the horrors of slavery into investigation ,in a way which is not destructive: "*There is a necessity for remembering the horror, but of course there's a necessity for remembering it in a manner in which it can be digested, in a manner in which*

¹⁰³ Marks, Kathleen. *Toni Morrison's Beloved and the Apotropaic Imagination*, The Curators of the University of Missouri, University of Missouri Press, Columbia, Missouri, 65201, the United States of America, 2002 . p. 133.

¹⁰⁴ Morrison, Toni. "Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination", . p. 5.

¹⁰⁵ Morrison, Toni. "Memory, Creation and Writing", THOUGHT Vol. 59 No. 235, 1984. p. 385

¹⁰⁶ Prado, C. G. *Searle and Foucault on Truth*, Cambridge University Press, 40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA, 2006 . p. 72.

the memory is not destructive."¹⁰⁷ In so doing, Morrison's creative investigation concerns itself in gathering 'pieces'; she states: "*The pieces (and only the pieces) are what begin the creative process for me. And the process by which the recollections of these pieces coalesce into a part (and knowing the difference between a piece and a part) is creation.*"¹⁰⁸ Memory, then, for Morrison is not merely the past recalled but also "*the imaginative faculty through which the past is understood.*"¹⁰⁹

Toni Morrison has brought to bear in our own time insights into the nature of what has been forgotten; herein lies the significance of her concern for the meaning of memory in her fiction's imaginative construction of narrative. She manages to "*give an original insight into the significance of the past, the dead, and that many-people underworld that is accessible through imagination.*"¹¹⁰ Morrison is both participant and theorist of the black aesthetic of remembering, in that she proceeds to claim a special status for memory by showing how this faculty may penetrate areas and discuss people that both seem to be erased from history. But this, she confesses, would not be possible without the element of imagination. She concedes "*memories are important, but memories and recollections won't give me total access to the unwritten interior life of these people. Only the act of imagination can help me.*"¹¹¹

Morrison aligns her own task as a novelist with structuring fiction that suggests the inaccessibility of certain orders of experience. This assumes that it is her role to 'speak the unspeakable', that is, to tell the untold experience of slavery and its dreadful impacts on the

¹⁰⁷ Taylor-Guthrie, Danille. *Conversations with Toni Morrison*, Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1994. p. 248.

¹⁰⁸ Morrison, Toni. "Memory, Creation and Writing", *THOUGHT* Vol. 59 No. 235, 1984. p. 386.

¹⁰⁹ Marks, Kathleen. *Toni Morrison's Beloved and the Apotropaic Imagination*, The Curators of the University of Missouri, University of Missouri Press, Columbia, Missouri, 65201, the United States of America, 2002 . p. 123.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

¹¹¹ Matus, Jill. *Toni Morrison*. p. 17.

psyche of slaves. This argument is supported by Morrison's own comments about her work in her key critical essay "*Unspeakable Things Unspoken: The Afro-American Presence in American Literature*", which demonstrates a more complex comprehension of her literary exercise as she seeks, in her novels, "*to speak the history and draw a direct link between the violence and the horror of slavery.*"¹¹² Through memory; therefore, Morrison has consistently urged the Afro-American authors "*to embrace the history of slavery, not as an act of paralysis but as a dynamic tool of self-recognition.*"¹¹³

According to Toni Morrison, re-memory involves the re-creation of the untold and unwritten interior lives of black people and of their ancestors, and consists of the gathering of the memories within, as well as the recollections of others, engaging through the imagination in the reconstruction of the world that these remains imply.¹¹⁴

Toni Morrison has artfully contemplated the painful past of slavery, for she reverts to a place where she succeeds in "*remembering what her characters...resist remembering.*"¹¹⁵ In this sense, Morrison uses the trope of memory to revise the complicated relationship between slavery and its representation in mainstream narratives; as well as, to represent those who are "*most removed from self-representation.*"¹¹⁶ Her artistic vision implies a reclaiming of the "*utmost importance in telling a whole story.*"¹¹⁷ A story committed to reckoning the inner life, the inner self, which has been the most "*unarticulated, an unwritten part of the African American history.*"¹¹⁸ This idea of recollecting and articulating the 'untold' and 'forgotten'

¹¹²Spaulding, Timothy. *Re-forming the Past: History, the Fantastic, and the Postmodern Slave Narrative*, Ohio State University, 2005. p. 65.

¹¹³Osagie, Lyunolu Folayan. *The Amistad Revolt: Memory, Slavery, and the Politics of Identity in the United States and Sierra Leone*, The University of Georgia Press, the United States of America, 2000. p. 73.

¹¹⁴ Castro –Borrego, Silvia Pillar. *The Search for Wholeness and Diaspora Literacy in Contemporary African American Literature*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK, 2011. p. 2.

¹¹⁵ Marks, Kathleen. *Toni Morrison's Beloved and the Apotropaic Imagination*, The Curators of the University of Missouri, University of Missouri Press, Columbia, Missouri 65201, the United States of America, 2002 . p. 131.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 132.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

stories which makes clear Morrison's credentials about "*the role of memory in the creative process and her responsibilities to her craft and her images.*"¹¹⁹

2.4. On Morrison's Conception of Rememory: A Struggle Against Disremembering and Amnesia

In most literary criticism the concept of rememory is largely attributed to Toni Morrison. Rememory, for Morrison, is a reinvented conception to the notion of 'memory' which represents a technique that is central to the narrative construction of her fiction, for it depicts and scrutinizes "*the recalling of what Morrison calls the 'unspeakable thoughts, unspoken' and the remembering or bringing back together of the disparate members of the family in painful recall.*"¹²⁰ The prefix *re* in 'rememory' stresses the cyclic nature of memory through time, in which "*repetition and imagination are capable of conjoint action, combining in projects in which the activity of either one alone would be insufficient.*"¹²¹

Morrison's theoretical conception of temporality is best expressed through the figure of the wheel - of a circle rolling forward (or occasionally backward) through time, while continually kicking up the dust of the past. Although wheels are circular, I do not believe that Morrison pursues a sense of wholeness that her circular narrative strategy might suggest, because the circles are never completed, the center never reached, and the "rememory" process always unfinished. The figure of the wheel can instead be translated into a progressive temporal strategy for a postmodern society – a strategy of learning from the past but not being paralyzed by its lessons, of forging a loose and flexible synthesis out of the fragments of history, of reaping the benefits of both a diachronic and a synchronic sense of time.¹²²

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 133.

¹²⁰ Davies, Carole Boyce. *Black women, Writing and Identity: Migrations of the Subject*, Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2003. p. 12.

¹²¹ Ying, Zhu. *Fiction and the Incompleteness of History: Toni Morrison, V.S. Naipaul, and Ben Okri*, Peter Lang AG, International Academic Publishers, Bern, 2006. p. 26.

¹²² Duvall, John N. *Productive Postmodernism: Consuming Histories and Cultural Studies*, State University of New York Press, the United States of America, 2002. p. 90-91.

What has been assumed is that Morrison uses the trope of rememory as “*the metaphorical sign of the interior life to explore and represent dimensions of slave life that classic slave narrative omitted*”¹²³, to foreground the ‘omitted’ part of experience that has been ignored or suppressed by grand narratives and to make it accessible to readers. Her intention in fulfilling this task is to “*urge the reader into active participation in the non-narrative, nonliterary experience of the text, which makes it difficult for the reader to confine himself to a cool and distant acceptance of data.*”¹²⁴ As a trope, rememory “*postulates the interconnectedness of minds, past and present.... it is an active, creative mental function.... using one’s imaginative power to realize a latent abiding connection to the past... it is a trope for the problem of reimagining one’s heritage.*”¹²⁵

In Toni Morrison's fiction, rememory serves as a basis of impedance and renitency. It is conceived as neither memory nor forgetting, but memory combined with the threat of repetition; it is neither noun nor verb, but both combined. Rememory is Morrison's attempt to reconceive the memory of slavery, to finding a way to remember. This will be reinforced through her use of this creative trope in the deployment and articulation of the agonizing trauma of slavery alongside the repressed memories and tales impossible to tell. This literary technique is perceived as an “*enabling/empowering strategy of subversive representation by black women whose historic triple marginalization in the United States of America has been problematized by their painful memories of a trouble-ridden/traumatic past as well as resistance of the margins to be centred.*”¹²⁶ Sethe, the protagonist of Morrison’s *Beloved*, well explains her own conceptualization of the concept of rememory as she affirms:

¹²³ Mobley, Marilyn Sanders. “A Different Remembering: Memory, History, and Meaning in *Beloved*,” Chelsea House Publishers, New York, 1990. p. 357-58.

¹²⁴ Morrison, Toni. “Memory, Creation and Writing”, *THOUGHT* Vol. 59 No. 235, 1984. p. 387.

¹²⁵ Rody, Caroline. “Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*: History, “Rememory,” and a “Clamor for a Kiss”, *American Literary History*, Vol. 7, No. 1. , 1995. p. 101-102.

¹²⁶ Purkayastha, Madhumita. “Rememory as a Strategy of Subversive Representation: a Feminist Reading of Morrison’s *Beloved*” . p. 2.

Someday you be walking down the road and you hear something or see something going on. So clear. And you think it's you thinking it up. A thought picture. But no. It's when you bump into a rememory that Belongs to somebody else. Where I was before I came here, that place is real. It's never going away. Even if the whole farm—every tree and grass blade of it dies. The picture is still there and what's more, if you go there—you who never was there—if you go there and stand in the place where it was, it will happen again; it will be there for you, waiting for you.¹²⁷

For Sethe, a rememory reflects a unique personal experience that meanders as a picture in the mind of the perceiver, and which can access another's rememory, realizing a collective memory of which Morrison discusses in the aforementioned expression taken from her work *beloved*. Then, rememory is an active, creative psychical action that is used by Morrison's characters as an "*imaginative power to realize a latent, abiding connection to the past*"¹²⁸ as it holds the power to turn memory into a property of consciousness with the "*heightened imaginative power sufficient to the ethnic historical novel's claim to represent the past.*"¹²⁹

To some extent, Morrison depends on the use of this technique as a solution to the problematic necessity to rewriting and redefining African American history and as a way of responding to tenets held by literary whiteness, to recognize the undeniable contribution of literary blackness in American literature and culture. In this regard, Morrison needs this technique to imagine those subjects left out from any kind of literary representation, since rememory grants her the "*access to remember and rethink individual and collective histories.*"¹³⁰ Therefore, rememory is a historical experience which transcends the boundaries of both time and space, through its dual creativity of repetition and imagination, to combat

¹²⁷ Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1987. p. 71.

¹²⁸ Rody, Caroline. "Toni Morrison's *Beloved*: History, "Rememory," and a "Clamor for a Kiss", *American Literary History*, Vol. 7, No. 1. , 1995. p. 101.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

¹³⁰ Ying, Zhu. *Fiction and the Incompleteness of History: Toni Morrison, V.S. Naipaul, and Ben Okri*, Peter Lang AG, International Academic Publishers, Bern, 2006. p. 26.

historical absence and amnesia. “Thanks to the conjoint creativity of rememory and writing, the history of slavery is re-envisioned and rewritten.”¹³¹

Section 3: The Notion of Trauma in Narrative Representation

Recent investigations on the concept of trauma have shown an increasing preoccupation with history and memory in literary studies. Historians and historical fiction writers have been immensely concerned with the effect of trauma on “the collective construction of the past and the ways in which the past is remembered in the present.”¹³² For this fact, it has been argued that the emergence of trauma in “fiction in recent decades is inseparable from the turn to memory in literary and historical studies.”¹³³ In her insightful work on trauma with regard to its intricate interrelatedness to history and memory on matters concerning representation and narrativization, Anne Whitehead indicates:

Trauma fiction effectively articulates several issues that contribute to the current interest in memory: the recognition that representing the past raises complex ethical problems; the challenge posed to conventional narrative frameworks and epistemologies by belated temporality; the difficulty of spatially locating the past; and the hitherto unrecognised cultural diversity of historical representation.¹³⁴

Whitehead’s remarks suggest that many contemporary novelists who base their writings on full-scale research in the field of trauma, their works; however, emerge out of an “ongoing public discourse of memory as trauma theory becomes part of the ideology of history.”¹³⁵ In parallel, Pierre Nora emphasizes that our era of commemoration is featured by an

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 27.

¹³² Whitehead, Anne. *Trauma Fiction*, Edinburgh University Press Ltd, 22 George Square, Edinburgh, Great Britain, 2004. p. 81.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

unprecedented degree of forgetfulness; that's why we find so many writers, scholars, and critics speaking about it, because "*there is so little left of it.*"¹³⁶

It is a contention of much contemporary literary criticism that fictional works play an emphatically paramount role in the witnessing, investigation, and representation of traumatic¹³⁷ events and experiences related to and affecting group (collective trauma); as well as, individual members. In trauma studies¹³⁸, the very concept of trauma is considered to be contradictory and problematic pertaining to its expressional and textual representation. According to Ann Whitehead, narrativising or writing about trauma "*represents a paradox or contradiction: if trauma comprises an event or experience which overwhelms the individual and resists language or representation, how then can it be narrativised in fiction?*"¹³⁹

One of the first and most significant theories studying the concept of 'trauma' and tracing its subsequent effects on individuals, comes from Cathy Caruth¹⁴⁰ with her groundbreaking works on trauma (*Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995) and *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996)), in which she provides us with some major definitions of trauma. In her attempt to describe the nature of trauma, Caruth claims: "*In its most general definition, trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed,*

¹³⁶ Nora, Pierre. "Between Memory and History : Les Lieux de Mémoire", *Representations*, No. 26, Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory. (Spring, 1989), pp. 7-24.

¹³⁷ The word "trauma" comes from the Greek word *titrosko* meaning "to wound" or "to pierce", and before the nineteenth century it was employed exclusively within medical fields. The concept comes to light in wartime in World War I as 'shell-shock,' after the Second World War as 'battle fatigue,' and after the Vietnam War as 'post traumatic stress disorder' or PTSD.

¹³⁸ Trauma studies has called attention to the fact that art in its diversified manifestations and enunciations, has considerably been used as a healing device by writers, either because of the things that are limpidly said or because of the way in which it draws attention to has been silenced. (see *Trauma Narratives and Herstory* by Sonya Andermahr and Silvia Pellicer-Ortin).

¹³⁹ Whitehead, Ann. *Trauma Fiction*, Edinburgh University Press Ltd, 2004. p. 3.

¹⁴⁰ Cathy Caruth is a professor of Comparative Literature and English and Chair of Comparative Literature at Emory University. According to Robert Jay Lifton, an M.D. in Psychiatry, she is "*one of the most innovative scholars on what we call trauma, and on our ways of perceiving and conceptualizing that still mysterious phenomenon.*"

*uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena.”*¹⁴¹

Furthermore, as the following quote suggests, Caruth associates the concept of trauma with history when she acclaims: *“For history to be a history of trauma means that it is referential precisely to the extent that it is not fully perceived as it occurs; or to put it somewhat differently, that a history can be grasped only in the very inaccessibility of its occurrence.”*¹⁴²

Therefore, and once again, it would seem quite problematic and intricate for those who are engaged in the fields of studying trauma to get a full accessibility into everybody's trauma. This dilemma is sagaciously highlighted for it is unknotted by Caruth when she urges the traumatized participants to share their ‘traumas’ so as to work over and through them. Hence, Caruth puts: *“trauma, is never simply one's own, that history is precisely the way we are implicated in each other's traumas.”*¹⁴³ For Dominick LaCapra, the denouement of this predicament lies in the aesthetic literary representation (narrativization) of traumas (i.e. the writing through and about these traumas). LaCapra states that narratives may become: *“a means of bearing witness to, enacting, and, to some extent, working over and through trauma whether personally experienced, transmitted from intimates, or sensed in one's larger social and cultural setting.”*¹⁴⁴ It will seem quite clear then that the ‘phenomenon’ of trauma tends, to a large extent, to challenge and defy representation, since it already represents itself paradoxically, as Caruth states before. That's why Caruth indicates that this inscrutable phenomenon of trauma *“has seemed to become all-inclusive”*, so that it will position a kind of quandary to the human mind to grasp it with ease and come to terms with such experience.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ Caruth, Cathy. *Unclaimed Experience : Trauma, Narrative, and History*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2715 North Charles Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21218-4363, 1996. p. 11.

¹⁴² Caruth, Cathy. *Trauma : Explorations in Memory*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2715 North Charles Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21218-4363, the United States of America, 1995. p. 8.

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 24.

¹⁴⁴ LaCapra, Dominick. *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, Hopkins University Press, North Charles Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21218-4363, the United States of America, 2001. p. 105.

¹⁴⁵ After the 9/11, the Jewish American writer Thane Rosenbaum asks: *“Is there a proper role for the artist, and specifically the novelist, at this time in our nation's History? Can we make art in a time of atrocity.”* (quoted in *Jewish American and Holocaust Literature: Representation in the Postmodern World* by Alan L. Berger and Gloria L. Cronin, 2004, 130).

In the field of psychology, the word trauma means “*an event in the subject life defined by its intensity, by the subject’s incapacity to respond adequately to it, and by the upheaval and long-lasting effects that it brings about in the psychical organization.*” Therefore, to be able to overreach and articulate this emotionally intensive experience, the very process of ‘writing through’ it, then, will be an attempt “*to articulate an unbearable psychic wound that the subject or group is not able to communicate or exteriorise, that is to say, what cannot be spoken may be at least represented and mediated through writing practices.*”¹⁴⁶ Accordingly, trauma; for its literary representation, evidently turns out to be “*a narrative theme in explanations of individual and social suffering.*”¹⁴⁷

3-1 Memory Narratives: A Process of Healing Through Narrativising Traumatic Memory

This title is evoked as a need to contextualize the specificity of trauma in the works of those writers who are extensively employing various aesthetic approaches to voice their traumatic interpretations of history; in order, to make their calamitously agonizing experiences more considerable and memorable. It is the action of telling their histories which can enable them articulate and come to terms with their painful traumatic memories; this aforementioned suggestion is well elaborated by Pierre Janet as he states, regarding memory and narrative, that “*memory... is an action; essentially, it is the action of telling a story.*” However, when memory is traumatically recalled, this entails a more problematic and intricate relationship to narrative.

This quandary is highlighted in Cathy Caruth’s prominent work, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, which offers a compelling view at what literature and narrative in

¹⁴⁶ Andermahr, Sonya and Silvia Pellicer-Ortin. *Trauma Narratives and Herstory*, PALGRAVE MACMILLAN, 2013. p. 3.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

particular brings to the comprehension of traumatic experiences. Caruth maintains that the traumatized subject is “often incapable of making the necessary narrative which we call memory regarding the event”¹⁴⁸, so the process of narrativizing his experiences is largely affected by his traumatic memory. In order to trigger any discussion on how trauma affects memory and narrative, we first need to know what is meant by traumatic memory. van der Kolk regards traumatic memory in its plain sense as “a memory of a personally traumatic event.”¹⁴⁹ A more contemplative attempt to define traumatic memory is expanded by Pierre Janet’s distinction between traumatic memory and narrative memory. According to Janet, traumatic memory “merely and unconsciously repeats the past”¹⁵⁰, and narrative memory “narrates the past as past.”¹⁵¹ For him, traumatic memory is “wordless and static ... the ultimate goal ... is to put the story... into words.”¹⁵² What the latter quote implicates is that a ‘wordless’ traumatic memory needs to be put into words in order to realize a comprehensive story or narrative.

This ‘wordless’ and ‘static’ nature of a subject’s traumatic memory implies that trauma affects the subject’s mind to be split or dissociated. The mind becomes “unable to register the wound to the psyche because the ordinary mechanisms of awareness and cognition are destroyed.”¹⁵³ Consequently, the traumatised subject becomes incapable to recall and integrate the painful experience in stable awareness, because he/she is “haunted or possessed by intrusive traumatic memories”¹⁵⁴ which cause him/her to; permanently, inhabit a retrospective traumatic past in the present: “The experience of the trauma, fixed or frozen in time, refuses to be represented as past, but is perpetually reexperienced in a painful,

¹⁴⁸ Caruth, Cathy *Trauma : Explorations in Memory*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2715 Norht Charles Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21218-4363, the United States of America, 1995. p. 160.

¹⁴⁹ J Freyd, Jennifer and Anne P Deprince. *Trauma and Cognitive Science: A Meeting of Minds, Science , and Human Experience*, Psychology Press, Taylor & Francis Group, NY, 2012. p. 11.

¹⁵⁰ Leys, Ruth. *Trauma: A Genealogy*, The University of Chicago, the United States of America, 2000. p. 105.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

dissociated, traumatic present.”¹⁵⁵ In this context, it is the role of trauma narratives which enable the traumatised subject to come to terms with his/her painful ,‘intrusive’ ,‘wordless’, and ‘dissociated’ traumatic memories that refuse to be represented, in order to articulate them, speak them out, and to coherently narrativise them.

Recent Trauma Studies have thought of literature in its diverse manifestations as “*a healing device by writers, minorities and society in general, either because of the things that are explicitly said or because of the way in which it draws attention to what has been silenced.*”¹⁵⁶ In this regard, Trauma Studies hold as a basic assumption that “*narrative and storytelling can contribute to the healing of a traumatised individual or group.*”¹⁵⁷ So, trauma narratives both represent “*a diversity of narrative techniques that facilitate the textual representation of trauma*”¹⁵⁸ and acclaim that the healing of trauma entails to “*verbalise the experience of suffering.*”¹⁵⁹

[...] the healing of trauma only begins when the traumatised person is able to transform traumatic events into coherent narrative are the traditional examples of the view that the main step for the recovery of trauma is to verbalise the experience of suffering.¹⁶⁰

Accordingly, what has been noted here is that the traumatised person’s confrontation with his/her traumatic past and his endeavour to verbalise and narrativise the trauma, may help in his/her process of healing. This very process of writing through a particular traumatic event is known as ‘scriptotherapy’¹⁶¹, a term that is used to name:

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Andermaher, Sonya and Silvia Pellicer-Ortin, *Trauma Narratives and Herstory*, Palgrave Macmillan, the UK, 2013. p. 1.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 3.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 2-3.

¹⁶¹ It is Suzette A. Henke who has first coined the term ‘scriptotherapy’ to designate the type of life writing that responds to the need of writing out and writing through traumatic experience in the mode of therapeutic re-enactment.

The process of writing out and writing through traumatic experience in the mode of therapeutic re-enactment.[...] Autobiography could so effectively mimic the scene of psychoanalysis that life-writing might provide a therapeutic alternative for victims of severe anxiety and, more seriously, of post-traumatic stress disorder.¹⁶²

Henceforth, with the emergence of trauma paradigm, literary texts become weighty spaces for the representation and recuperation of individual and collective traumas, feasibly providing new aesthetic narrative strategies to transform traumatic memories into narrative memories which; subsequently, give voice to an intolerable, wothrough' a traumatic happening will be, then, *"to articulate an unbearable psychic wound that the subject or group is not able to communicate or exteriorise, that is to say, what cannot be spoken may be at least represented and mediated through cultural practices."*¹⁶³ Thus, trauma has become an increasingly *"a narrative theme in explanations of individual and social suffering"*¹⁶⁴ converging itself as a platform that lays out *"a plethora of trauma narratives by representatives of previously marginalised social groups."*¹⁶⁵

This will include women's writing through examining their analysis of trauma which dedicates itself to *"look beyond the public and male experiences of trauma to the private, secret experiences that women encounter in the interpersonal realm."*¹⁶⁶ This feminist approach to trauma sheds light on the realities of women's lives and experiences, *"by entering both the 'private' and more visible worlds of female experiences of trauma and suffering"*¹⁶⁷ to make them realize and voice their traumatic versions of history. In so doing, women writers may resort to the process of scriptotherapy to liberate their female protagonists' aching memories through *"the act of storytelling and the transmission of their*

¹⁶² Ibid. p. 3.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 4.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

experiences to the rest of the society.”¹⁶⁸ With incorporating storytelling as a healing narrative strategy, women writers and African American women writers in particular, understand its therapeutic aspects in recovering the wounds of the past, not only for the sake of reflecting their experiences, but to aspire for changing their lives; that is, to healing their characters’ painful lives.

It is the story . . . that saves our progeny from blundering like blind beggars into the spikes of the cactus fence. The story is our escort; without it, we are blind. Does the blind man own his escort? No, neither do we the story; rather it is the story that owns us and directs us.¹⁶⁹

Conclusion

The chapter has highlighted the theoretical context that draws upon the emergence of concepts like history, memory, trauma, and narrative, with very strong emphasis on the issue of addressing the interplay of these concepts, through negotiating the ways in which their aesthetic implications have been manifested and represented in fictions of African Americans. The interplay of memory and history has shown, as Linda Hutcheon and Jean-François Lyotard have argued, the importance of memory in the reconstruction and rewriting of history. The survey of Linda Hutcheon’s and Jean-François Lyotard’s critical theoretical insights, which have been devoted to clear up the complicated dynamics of memory in the revision history, has revealed that the latter is underwent by; as well as, submitted to a process of excavation and revision espoused by writers of historiographic metafiction .

As it has already been discussed in the first section, treating the intersection of Hutcheon’s and Lyotard’s premises, has spell out the central role that memory plays in its efforts to denounce and deconstruct history; in order, to open the way for the rising of new versions of history; thereby, new voices has come to the surface and start claiming

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 6.

¹⁶⁹ Achebe, Chinua. *Anthills of Savannah*, Penguin Books Limited, 2003. p. 114.

recognition of their historical significance. Their determination has been largely related to the drive to surpass and subvert hegemonic credentials fed by grand narratives. Subsequently, The intention in pursuing a hypothetical study of Hutcheon's and Lyotard's critical viewpoints has brought to the fore momentous issues and facts concerning the Western narratives of history and the need to question their credibility and reliability in recounting and representing human experiences.

The second section has provided ample evidence which has been underlined to examining African American women writers' treatment of memory as an imaginative subversive literary strategy to offer possible alternative interpretations of the past. Indeed, the analytical interpretations of Toni Morrison's works *Memory, Creation, and Writing* and *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* have resulted in contemplating the power of memory in creating and writing counter-narratives in opposition to official narratives of history and historical truth. Furthermore, these counter-narratives; as we have seen earlier, are fundamentally induced by a counter-memory that incarnates the voices which have remained silent for so long.

According to the theoretical analyses dedicated to investigating in full depth the interrelations and the interplays among memory, trauma, and narrative, have come to the conclusion that the voices which have remained silent for so long have eventually broken the silence by the will to speak out about their buried pain and sufferings through articulating and representing them in narrative; or, what is known as trauma narratives which comprises the notion of scriptotherapy; that is, a process of healing through which the traumatised silenced person is about to come to terms with and overcome his/her trauma.

Chapter Two

Conceptualisation of Space, Place, and

Subject: A Psycho-Geopolitical Survey

Introduction

In a rapidly changing world, an increasing awareness of spatial and environmental experiences has become a major goal of humanistic geographers to study the concepts of space, place, and landscape with regard to their intensively affective spatial powers in shaping human existence and meaning. The analytical perspectives undertaken in this chapter will serve as an attempt to understand the nature of the interrelationships between space and the psychological responds and practices of individuals within it. Furthermore, it will endeavour to offer an insight about the role played by space in shaping the individuals' spatial awareness that is manifested in their sense of selfhood, self meaning, and self identity, with regard to exploring the ways individuals experience different dimensions of space.

Our objective in this chapter; therefore, , is to study the concepts of space, place, and landscape in terms of their psycho-geopolitical dimensions, which arguably participate in affecting the bonds established between the individual's perceived image of the physical environment he/she is attached to and his/her sense of subjectivity. To fulfil this task, we are to examine the interaction between space, which is regarded as a site of power, and the subject which is determined by this spatial power. Therefore, this chapter seeks to explore this interaction to assume that the subject is an ultimately a product of a psycho-geopolitical practice of space.

To pursue such an exploration, a body of theoretical insights are to be discussed in order to reveal and clarify the intrinsic interconnectedness joining space to the subject. Among these analytical perspectives, is Tuan's perception of space as a psychic place that provides people with certain affective bonds that contribute to fostering their sense of belonging. The chapter; also, provides a modestly valuable knowledge regarding space/place theoretical distinction which will serve as a basis to understand the meaning of each. The

distinction is undertaken by Doreen Massey who argues in her work *Space, Place, and Gender*, that both concepts are crucial in defining and revealing the meaning of human experiences, emotions, attachments, and feelings of selfhood exacerbated in certain places.

Moreover, of pertinent relevance to the analysis undertaken in this chapter is the works of Steve Pile (*the Body of the City: Psychoanalysis, Space, and Subjectivity*) as well as Hernan Casakin and Fatima Bernardo (*the Role of Place Identity in the Perception, Understanding, and Design of Built Environments*.) Both works sought to show that the individuals who are subjected to certain specific spatial powers are to large extent determined by these powers; hence, affecting their sense of selfhood and their process of identity formation.

Section 1: A Conceptual Backdrop

As humans, members of a certain community inhabiting different specific and limited environments, our minds tend to receive and resist power while attempting to transgress the boundaries delimiting the physical, social, and psycho-spatial spheres or spaces in which we dwell in. However, it should be made clear from the onset that the very concept of space which we shall speak about in the upcoming discussions, transcends its classically perceived nature that represents it as a mere geographical concept; in fact, it will be treated as an object coalescing geographic and psychic dimensions; as a concept which will be conceived as an entity beyond geographical specificity, as a “*socially constructed, just as society is seen as inherently spatially constituted.*”¹

Ample theories and groundbreaking analyses have been dedicated to study the notion of space with regard to the social as well as the intimate relationships within it since it has

¹ Miller, Byron A. *Geography and Social Movements: Comparing Antinuclear Activism in the Boston Area*, the University of Minnesota Press, 111 Third Avenue South, Suite 290, Minneapolis, MN 55401-2520, 2000. p. 7.

been argued that space, as a vigorous dynamic sphere, is deeply connected to the realm of mentality. Of pertinent and important relevance for the interpretation undertaken in the following section is the analysis devoted to reveal the conceptualisation of space, place and self in relation to the interconnectedness between these concepts. The conceptualisations of the notions space and place will invoke a debate on the interrelationship of the local and global which will serve as a fundamental ground to render and rethink the notions of space and place in the ways they are linked to the discourses of power and self.

Thus, the necessity for a reconceptualisation of space and place defies their conventional representation in a limited geographical spheres as it situates them within the dualistic binary discourse of space-place which infers them as opposites in connotations: While space is associated with attributes such as “*general, universal, theoretical/abstract/conceptual*”², place; on the other hand, is more often attributed with the features of the “*local, specific, concrete, descriptive*.”³ Hence, the theoretical distinction between place and space is a crucial one in revealing the meaning of each. For instance, Doreen Massey argues that “*in the pair space/place it is place which represents Being, and to it are attached a range of epithets and connotations: local, specific, concrete, descriptive*.”⁴ In the following passage, Massey negotiates her standpoint with regard to the binary of space/place and which she considers them as both “*are incredibly mobile*.”⁵

The terms space and place have long histories and bear with them a multiplicity of meanings and connotations which reverberate with other debates and many aspects of life. 'Space' may call to mind the realm of the dead or the chaos of simultaneity and multiplicity. It may be used in reference to the synchronic systems of structuralists or employed to picture the n-dimensional space of identity. Likewise with place, though perhaps with more consistency, it can raise an image of

² Dube, Musa W and Jeffrey L. Staley. *John and Postcolonialism: Travels, Space and Power*, Sheffield Academic Press Ltd, The Tower Building, 11 York Road, London SE1 7NX, 2002. p. 7.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Massey, Doreen. *Space, Place, and Gender*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1994. p. 1.

one's place in the world, of the reputedly (but as we shall see, disputed) deep meanings of 'a place called home' or, with much greater intimations of mobility and agility, can be used in the context of discussions of positionality.⁶

Another theoretical distinction exposes the importance of place as an intimate location in incarnating the experiences and aspirations of individuals which comes from Yi-Fu Tuan's "Space and Place: Humanistic Perspective". Tuan argues:

As location place is one unit among other units to which it is linked by a circulation net; the analysis of location is subsumed under the geographer's concept and analysis of space. Place, however, has more substance than the word location suggests: it is a unique entity, a 'special ensemble' (Lukermann, 1964, p. 70); it has a history and meaning. Place incarnates the experiences and aspirations of a people. Place is not only a fact to be explained in the broader frame of space, but it is also a reality to be clarified and understood from the perspectives of the people who have given it meaning.⁷

In his conceptual descriptions of space and place, Tuan further asserts that the study of space is the study of "*a people's spatial feelings and ideas in the stream of experience*"⁸ since experience is "*the totality of means by which we come to know the world: we know the world through sensation (feeling), perception, and conception.*"⁹ However, perceiving the psycho-spatial dialectics helps put into words spatial phenomena. In his book *The Body and the City: Psychoanalysis, Space and Subjectivity*, Steve Pile offers a critical psycho-physical perspective joining geographical and a mental psychoanalytical visualisation of space, announcing that the milieu or the behavioural environment as he puts, is not just linked to

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Tuan, Yi-FU. "Space and Place: Humanistic Perspective", S Gale and G. Olsson (eds.), *Philosophy in Geography*, 387-427. p. 387.

⁸ Ibid., p. 388.

⁹ Ibid.

“overt spatial practices,”¹⁰ but to “spatial relations in the unconscious; that is, to what might be called covert spatial behaviour.”¹¹

Furthermore, Tuan suggests that the counterpoising of place to space is intrinsic to understanding the idea of landscape. The following passage taken from Tuan’s *Topophilia* (1974) discusses landscape as a spatial location that surpasses and transcends its illusive representation as scenery per se:

Scenery and landscape are now nearly synonymous. The slight differences in meaning they retain reflect their dissimilar origin. Scenery has traditionally been associated with the world of illusion which is the theater. The expression “behind the scenes” reveals the unreality of scenes. We are not bidden to look “behind the landscape,” although a landscape garden can be as contrived as a stage scene, and as little enmeshed with the life of the owner as the stage paraphernalia with the life of the actor. The difference is that landscape, in its original sense, referred to the real world, not to the world of art and make-believe. In its native Dutch, “landscape” designated such commonplaces as “a collection of farms or fenced fields, sometimes a small domain or administrative unit.” Only when it was transplanted to England toward the end of the sixteenth century did the word shed its earthbound roots and acquire the precious meaning of art. Landscape came to mean a prospect seen from a specific standpoint. Then it was the artistic representation of that prospect. Landscape was also the background of an official portrait; the “scene” of a “pose.” As such it became fully integrated with the world of make-believe.¹²

The point being discussed in Tuan’s description of landscape as a notion, which literally means a common place, leads us to understand that landscape; according to his standpoint, is regarded as “a contested, tensive, topos of place, community, and self in both the literal and the figurative sense of topos.”¹³ Therefore, this ‘tensive’ and ‘contested’ nature of landscape

¹⁰ Pile, Steve. *The Body of the City: Psychoanalysis, Space, and Subjectivity*, Routledge, 2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN, 1996. p. 44.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Adams, Paul C et al. *Textures of Place : Exploring Humanist Geographies*, the Regents of the University of Minnesota, the University of Minnesota Press, 2001. p. 93-94.

¹³ Ibid., 94.

will serve as both “an actual place and as the figurative site of an ongoing sociopolitical discourse concerning the relations between community, self, and place.”¹⁴

What Tuan’s perspective calls into question is the very idea of probing place as it constitutes an integral part in human experience in order to demonstrate the significance of place in ordinary human life. Accordingly, what Tuan wants to call into attention is “the nature and meaning of place as it plays an integral part in the lives of human beings”¹⁵ as well as “the depth and complexity of place as it is experienced and fashioned by real people in real places.”¹⁶ In this sense, place becomes an ultimately inescapable dimension of human life and experience. “[...] place can be essential, even inescapable, dimension of human living and experience... Person and environment are intimately joined by bonds of familiarity, attachment and at-homeness. Person is ‘part of place and it is part of him’.”¹⁷

Section 2: Space, Place, Landscape, and Subject

In his tremendous work *Landscape and Power, Second Edition*, W.J.T Mitchell introduces us to the polemic conceptual structure of space, place, and landscape which he refers to as “a dialectical triad”¹⁸. From the very beginning, Mitchell provides us with a deep insight that probes into his basic assumptions about these different spatial concepts with an emphasis on their inherent powers, in that he states: “If a place is a specific location, a space is a ‘practiced place,’ a site activated by movements, actions, narratives, and signs, and a landscape is that site encountered as image or ‘sight.’”¹⁹ What this perspective infers is that space would be perceived through the subject’s imaginations, emotions, experiences, and

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Hubbard, Phil et al. *Key Texts in Human Geography*, SAGE Publications Ltd, 1 Oliver’s Yard, 55 City Road, London EC1Y 1SP, 2008 .p. 43.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ D. Pocock, Douglas C. *Humanistic Geography: Essays on the Experience of Place*, Routledge, 2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14RN, 2014. p. 90.

¹⁸ Mitchell, W. J. T. *Landscape and Power*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago 60637, the United States of America, 2002. p. x.

¹⁹ Ibid.

memories and that landscape, as a mental entity, could be conceived then as “*the first cognitive encounter with a place, and an apprehension of its special vectors.*”²⁰

In this context, a landscape would be thought of; then, as a psychic space, a mere product of a subject’s imagination that prescribes the power of enclosed or unmapped mental topographies. Hence, this psychic power exerted by the subject’s perceived image of a landscape, allows for the penetrating and perpetuation of specific places and certain relationships among people.

Landscape exerts a subtle power over people, eliciting a broad range of emotions and meanings that may be difficult to specify. This indeterminacy of affect seems, in fact, to be a crucial feature of whatever force landscape can have.²¹

Mitchell’s description of landscape as an image leads us to apprehend its strong spatial connotations impinged on the subject’s mind since the image, according to his argument, doesn’t refer to a literal picture in the mind, but “*a cognitive structure, where a mental process intervened in the relationship between the body and the external physical and social world.*”²² Moreover, Steve Pile presupposes that the subject’s psychic realm is conditioned by the very fact of the perceived knowledge or experience of their surrounding environments; in other words, the mind becomes a subject to other functions and factors. Pile quotes:

[...] human beings respond to their environment as it is perceived and interpreted through previous experience and knowledge. *But* interpretation, experience, and even knowledge are clearly functions of social and cultural values and constraints of personal likes and dislikes, of memory, affect, emotion, fears and beliefs, prejudices, misconceptions, mental capacities, habits and expectations, along with

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., p. vii.

²² Pile, Steve. *The Body of the City: Psychoanalysis, Space, and Subjectivity*, Routledge, 2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14 4RN, 1996. p. 25.

all institutional, economic, and physical factors that characterize the public, 'objective' environment.²³

Pile considers these 'factors' and 'functions', which the previous quote illustrates as socially and culturally embedded, as not just the condition within which the subject perceives and interpret the surrounding environment; that is, the world, but they are also "*actively created by the perceptions and interpretations of thinking, feeling, acting human being... 'functions' and 'factors' do not just impinge on perception, they actively constitute perception and are actively constituted by it.*"²⁴ He argues that the perceived images of the world are profoundly connected to the subject's conducts which posits at the intersection of personal mental topographies and the general world-view.

every image and idea about the world is compounded, then, of personal experience, learning imagination, and memory. The places that we live in, those we visit and travel through, the worlds we read about and see in works of art, and the realms of imagination and fantasy each contribute to our images of nature and man.²⁵

Accordingly, Pile makes clear the profound interrelationship between the subject, space and the world. In *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*, Edward W Soja considers that the conception we make out of spatial awareness is highly politicized by social conditions and movements and expressed by discourses of power. Since space is laden with politics and ideology, Soja indicates that the subject needs to unravel and work out the indications substantial to the social reality so as to determine and calibrate conflicts.

We must be insistently aware of how space can be made to hide consequences from us, how relations of power and discipline are

²³ Ibid., p. 42.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 43.

²⁵ Ibid., 14.

inscribed into the apparently innocent spatiality of social life, how human geographies become filled with politics and ideology.²⁶

From this standpoint, instead of being inactively predestined and determined by ‘factors’ resulting from the politics of space, the subject may ascertain personal meanings when he comes to get over the perplexing realities of daily life. These meanings would probably lead the subject to better apprehend himself and his place in the world. Therefore, subjectivity is determined by the sophisticated interactions among the subject’s conceptions and actions. Space communicates with the subject through a set of power tussles which results from various social connections working to determine the subject’s identity by generating different mental processes; along which, a process of identity formation and self meanings is induced. In her summative analytical work *For Space*, Massey attempts to give an insight into the figuration of space as a product of interrelations understood through embedded practices:

[...] we recognise space as the product of interrelations; as constituted through interactions, from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny. [...] we understand space as the sphere of the possibility of the existence of multiplicity in the sense of contemporaneous plurality; as the sphere in which distinct trajectories coexist; as the sphere therefore of coexisting heterogeneity. Without space, no multiplicity; without multiplicity, no space. If space is indeed the product of interrelations, then it must be predicated upon the existence of plurality. [...] we recognise space as always under construction. Precisely because space on this reading is a product of relations-between, relations which are necessarily embedded material practices which have to be carried out, it is always in the process of being made. It is never finished; never closed. Perhaps we could imagine space as a simultaneity of stories-so-far.²⁷

As a social geographer, Doreen Massey observes that social relations and interactions demonstrate place as an intrinsic spatial practice which can be perceived as all-pervasive in the way that it reports and shapes everyday lived experiences. In this sense, place becomes an

²⁶ Soja, Edward W. *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*, Verso, UK: 6 Meard Street, London W1F 0EG, 1989. p. 6.

²⁷ Massey, Doreen. *For Space*, SAGE Publications Ltd, 1 Oliver’s Yard, 55 City Road, London EC1Y 1SP. 2005. p. 9.

ultimately inescapable dimension of human life and experience. “[...] *place can be essential, even inescapable, dimension of human living and experience... Person and environment are intimately joined by bonds of familiarity, attachment and at-homeness. Person is ‘part of place and it is part of him’.*”²⁸ Besides, Massey extends her geo-political discernment of place to represent it as an ‘event’ situated within the wider power-geometries of space. She declares: “*If space is... a simultaneity of stories-so-far, then places are collections of those stories, articulations within the wider power-geometries of space.*”²⁹ Place, then, could be grasped as an “event”, that is “*more like a verb than a noun.*”³⁰ It is the articulations and intersections of relations binding the subject to a specific space that contributes to the particularity of place:

One way of seeing ‘places’ is as on the surface of maps... But to escape from an imagination of space as surface is to abandon also that view of place. If space is rather a simultaneity of stories-so-far, then places are collections of those stories, articulations within the wider power-geometries of space. Their character will be a product of these intersections within that wider setting, and of what is made of them... And, too, of the non-meetings-up, the disconnections and the relations not established, the exclusions. All this contributes to the specificity of place.³¹

Section 3: The Subject’s Sense of Selfhood within a Site of Power

Within the previously discussed perspectives, given that the subject is, to large extent, bound and determined by powerful spatial intersections and relations which posit him within the wider power-geometries of space, the subject would become then a product of psycho-geopolitics; that is, the subject would be “*culturally, historically and geographically*

²⁸ D. Pocock, Douglas C. *Humanistic Geography: Essays on the Experience of Place*, Routledge, 2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, OX14RN, 2014, p. 90.

²⁹ Massey, Doreen. *For Space*, SAGE Publications Ltd, 1 Oliver’s Yard, 55 City Road, London EC1Y 1SP. 2005. p. 130.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 140.

³¹ Ibid., p. 130.

specific.”³² In light of this statement, the subject will be profoundly affected and articulated by the power of space, as the latter works as a background upon which he would be provided with a sense of belonging, to ultimately be capable of structuring and constructing meaning, consolidating attachments, and intermediating transpositions.

In this regard, it will be safe to say that place, as a site of power, plays a significant role in “*how one defines one's own identity and, equally, how that identity is defined by others*” The concept of place attachment explains the way in which the subject associates with:

various places, and the effects of such bonds in identity development, place-making, perception, and practice. Both of these concepts help us to understand where and why people feel at home, as well as why displacement—forced or voluntary—can be so traumatic for individuals and groups.³³

In *The Working Landscape*, Peter F Cannavo provides a crucial understanding of the subject’s shaping of identity in relation to place. He states “*in founding places, individuals or groups also found or shape their own identities.*”³⁴ He further claims that places are not considered as just plain and inert environment, but as an active political background that serves to “*help determine who we are.*”³⁵ Throughout the trajectory of interacting with his spatial surroundings, the subject comes to “*formulate, pursue, and revise*”³⁶ his self-meaning and identity which are supposed to be embedded in his environment/place.

Hence, place might be regarded in some way as “*an extension of the self and the self is a manifestation of that place.*”³⁷ Edward Cassey attempts to illustrate the relationship between place and the sense of selfhood when he observes “*relationship... is not just one of*

³² Nast, Heidi J and Steve Pile. *Places through the body*, Routledge, London, 1998. p. 1.

³³ Giesecking, Jen Jack et al. “The People, Place, and Space Reader,” <http://peopleplacespace.org/toc/section-3/>.

³⁴ Cannavo, Peter F. *The Working Landscape*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2007. p. 33.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 34.

reciprocal influence;” place and self are both “essential to the being of the other. In effect, there is no place without self and no self without place.”³⁸ Therefore, place constitutes self; shapes identity, and so place is essential to the foregrounding of a subject’s sense of selfhood; in other words, self-exploration.

Human existence is a “situated narrative, shaped by experience and shaping identity, related to physical place, and developed in a chronological flow.”³⁹ This statement clearly demonstrates how place helps construct identity. In this context, a need to explore the notion of place identity comes to the surface of this discussion and which is inevitably invoked in order to gain a deeper understanding about the important role played by place with regard to identity formation. Bentley and Butina (2007) define place identity as “the set of meanings associated with any particular cultural landscape which any particular person or group of people draws on in the construction of their own personal or social identities.”⁴⁰ Another definition seeking to highlight the way that place relate to identity states that the notion of place identity is perceived as “a component of personal identity, or as an extension of the self that is affected by the outstanding elements of an environment, and the actions and interactions that take place there.”⁴¹

According to Bentley and Butina, the essential dimensions of identity formation and self-meaning help the subject to put up an inveterate sense of community; that is, the subject is about fostering a rooted sense of attachment to a certain place. The conception of place attachment notion has been perceived as “the comprehension of place identity in terms of the emotional link to the place.”⁴² Thus, place attachment can be conceived as “the affective bond

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Bathmaker, Ann-Marie and Penelope Harnett. *Exploring Learning, Identity & Power Through Life History & Narrative Research*, Routledge, 2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN, 2010. p. 97.

⁴⁰ Casakin, Hernan and Fatima Bernardo. *The Role of Place Identity in the Perception, Understanding, and Design of Built Environments*, . p. 122.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 147.

⁴² Ibid., p. 36.

that people can establish with some places, where they feel content and secure,”⁴³ where place identity can be defined as “a component of self-identity.”⁴⁴ Thereby, place identity would be conceptualized here as a construction of the social identity of the self, comprising features of “self-concepts that are based on the idea of belonging to geographically defined groups.”⁴⁵

When dealing with the argument that “place is a raw material for a creative production of identity,”⁴⁶ an essential connection between place and the subject conducts us to another concept: place identity, which is regarded as:

a way to express identity through the physical environment, a manifestation of self (and collective) memory, a psychological structure that arises from the individuals’ attempts to regulate their environments, and a sum of the cognitions of the individual about the physical world in which she/he lives.⁴⁷

Accordingly, place would be referred to as one of the major descriptors of identity; in that, it functions as a medium to conceive and comprehend space, it is “an emotionally bound area to which an individual or a group of people have a strong relationship.”⁴⁸ It is thought to be “the root of human identity and experience... by offering a home, the imagined origin and a place to return to, place helps to stabilize cultural identities.”⁴⁹ Hence, place, as an influential site of power, has a strong influence via its psycho-spatial particularities and the emblematic significations it conveys. To these regards, a subject’s sense of selfhood would process a set of perceptions, experiences, and appreciations of the environment. It allows for

⁴³ Ibid., p. 37.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 64.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 64.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

the development of strong affective bonds to a certain place; as well as, “*a sense of belonging that brings people together around shared values, issues and localities.*”⁵⁰

For this reason, and since place identity is already a part of personal identity formation, the subject might then describe himself “*in terms of belonging to a specific place.*”⁵¹ In light of these assumptions, it seems quite self-evident that the connection between the subject and place is more than “*simply a matter of being able to orientate oneself to one’s surroundings but has to do with a much deeper process of identification.*”⁵²

Conclusion

The intended psycho-geopolitical survey carried in this chapter leads to the conclusion that space, place, and landscape can possess unique and peculiar powerful qualities and processes which may become very intimate when they are deeply experienced, perceived, and appreciated by humans. In light of the foregoing analytical process of reinforcing our conceptual emphasis on this argument, we find that the dynamic nature of space, place and landscape makes them regarded as both, sites of power and influence.

What this chapter achieves to reveal is the importance of studying the concepts of space, place, and landscape in relation to the subject’s experiences at the levels of individuality and identity. Within these spatial dynamics man, who is subjected to particular spatial dimensions of power, is about forging interactions across different layers of meaning, among these is his endeavour to creating and developing certain affective bonds to reinforce and affirm his sense of individuality, self identity, and belonging. This would not be realized without referring to some critical works which provided us with key clarifications concerning the nature of space, place, and landscape as sites of power. They effectively contributed to the

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. iii.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid., p. 24.

psycho-geopolitical study; in that, they offered us a different critical insight into discussing the intersection of the subject, space, and sense of selfhood.

The foregoing discussion of the intersection leads us to the following conclusions: private and intimate structures of subjectivity emerge from and are shaped by spatial discourses of power (where space situates the subject and the subject brings meaning to space). The Fact holding that space transcends its physical nature to be abstractly conceived as a psycho-spatial location allows for its participation in shaping human existence and meaning to; ultimately, submitting the individual to become a psycho-geopolitical product which situates him within a discourse of power as he is about articulating as well as giving a meaning to his own existence by disclosing and articulating his self identity.

Chapter Three

Past Revisited: Memory Narratives in Toni Morrison's Beloved

Introduction



Margaret Garner's Hearth

This picture was taken at the former residence of Margaret Garner on the Maplewood (Gaines) Plantation in Maplewood, Kentucky. It feels like her presence is still lingering here, near the long-forgotten hearth. *"Sometimes the photograph of a close friend or relative-looked at too long--shifts, and something more familiar than the dear face itself moves there. They can touch it if they like, but don't, because they know things will never be the same if they do. This is not a story to pass on."* (*Beloved* 523).

Section 1: Situating *Beloved* within Historiographic Metafiction Tradition

“THE TRUE PICTURE OF THE PAST FLITS BY,” notes Walter Benjamin, perhaps “never to be seen again.” In our time, as we witness the close of an epoch, an image of the past arises, “flits by,” but what is embodied in that image is not the meaning of any particular event in that past. Rather, it is the meaning of the past itself –of that whole realm of riches and loss, and its significance to us in the faculty we call memory. Memory, then, is not merely the past recalled, but the imaginative faculty through which the past is understood.¹

A considerably crucial and substantial example depicting the power of historiographic metafiction to articulate “*an alternative, disquieting and destabilising past is Toni Morrison's novel of American slavery, Beloved (1987).*”² Morrison's *Beloved* reconceptualises and rewrites history; Morrison's dedication to sixty million and more reflects upon her strong will and determination to articulate the forgotten unspoken events of the official history, through exposing the stories of those slaves who did not reach the American shores and who were believed to be perished during the Middle Passage. With “*dedicating her novel beloved to the “sixty million and more” who failed to survive the Middle Passage,*”³ Morrison impels us to consider *Beloved* as a strong endeavour “*to give voice to the “disremembered and unaccounted for”- the women and children who left no written records.*”⁴ Hence, Morrison's dedication of the novel lucidly announces her preoccupation with the history of those lost in the Middle Passage, and those who endured the horrors of slavery.

The epigraph Morrison starts *beloved* with, “*Sixty million and more*” underscores the fact that Morrison; as an artist who seeks truth, is highly concerned with historical records and historical representation since this very beginning, according to Morrison, describes the

¹ Marks, Kathleen. *Toni Morrison's Beloved and the Apotropaic Imagination*, The Curators of the University of Missouri, University of Missouri Press, Columbia, Missouri, 65201, the United States of America, 2002. p. 123.

² De Groot, Jerome. *The Historical Novel*, Routledge, 2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN, 2010.

³ Andrews, William L and Nellie Y. McKay. *Toni Morrison's Beloved: A Casebook*, Oxford University Press, , 198 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10016, 1999 .p. 82.

⁴ Ibid.

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Middle Passage as an unaccounted for horrific historical reality that needs verification, contemplation, and representation Furthermore, Morrison's second epigraph "*I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved,*" urges for a necessity to rethink the historical representation of slavery. In quoting this biblical verse, Morrison "*has spoken of the necessity to "reinhabit" the lives of slaves and former slaves in America.*"⁵ In so doing, Morrison accomplishes this by exposing the story of Sethe and her daughter Beloved:

At the beginning of the novel is a bible verse, Romans 9:25: "I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved." The biblical writer of this passage is Paul, who is rephrasing a verse from Hosea 2:23. Just as Paul reappropriates this older verse, so Morrison reappropriates the same Bible verse that was used to justify slavery. By telling the story of Sethe and Beloved she is also retelling the story of a people "which were not my people," reclaiming a "lost" people.⁶

Insofar as the biblical prose of her epigraph draws on the unbridgeable caesura of the Middle Passage, Morrison is compelled to recognize the impossibility to name and reclaim the nameless disremembered slaves. Throughout the closing pages of *Beloved*, Morrison has kept repeating the following statement "*It was not a story to pass on.*" It is the story of Beloved and those who were left with no historical record or national recognition, a story which unflinchingly stares into the abyss of slavery to transform the forgotten history into a spellbinding story that defies the national amnesia:

Everybody knew what she was called, but nobody anywhere knew her name. Disremembered and accounted for, she cannot be lost because no one is looking for her, and even if they were, how could they call her if they don't know her name? Although she has claim, she is not claimed... Because she lacks a proper name by which she might be remembered, beloved can never be properly buried and must remain "a

⁵ Detweiler, Robert and David Jasper. *Religion and Literature : A Reader*, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky, 2000. p. 158.

⁶ Ibid.

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loneliness that roams". Yet, she is still out there seeking attention and recognition.⁷ [Emphasis added]

By focusing on the blank spots and gaps in the Western and American colonial representation of history, Morrison rediscovers a hidden history –a history that includes not only the recorded stories reciting African traditions but also and more quintessentially the horrors of slavery. In her novel *Beloved*, Morrison's project of historiography entails a strong agenda that includes several collections of *petits récits* highlighting the presence of former slaves by giving them an active visible role as subjects in history. The story of *Beloved* is immensely inspired by a historical shocking incident of Margaret Garner's infanticide. The incident of a twenty-two-year-old Kentucky slave named Margaret Garner killing her daughter provides the seed for the construction of the central story in *Beloved*:

For over a century the Garner case surfaced only in the odd historical footnote. Then Toni Morrison's award-winning 1987 novel, *Beloved*, once more brought it before the public eye. Articles and interviews touted the novel's historical origins. Still, Morrison herself has always said that Margaret Garner's infanticide only provided the seed for *Beloved*, and that her sole nineteenth century source was a reprinted journalistic article containing the "important things," such as the number and sex of Margaret's children and the barest facts about her child-murder. After that, Morrison deliberately avoided any further research. "The rest," she told reporters in 1987, "was novel writing."⁸

In *Beloved*, Morrison uses historical facts to defy national grand narratives recording slavery. One of these is the fact of a female slave who slaughtered the throat of her daughter and who finally found a voice through the character of Sethe and her daughter Beloved. In so doing, Morrison offers the readers an insight into the pain suffered because of the inhuman institution of slavery.

⁷ Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1987. p. 522.

⁸ Rarastese, Zita. *Love and Motherhood in Toni Morrison's Beloved*. Library of Congress, the United States of America, 2011.

In this novel, Morrison takes large steps beyond the genre of the slave narrative tradition to excavate, then to reclaim and re-create, the hitherto hidden lives of those who survived the ravages of the inhuman institution. Her goal, she said, was to translate the historical into the personal. She wanted her characters to move from the page into the imagination of the reader.⁹

1.1. *Beloved* and the Historical Project of Foucauldian Archaeology

In her novel, *Beloved*, Morrison performs a Foucauldian literary archaeology, excavating the true story of the escaped slave Margaret Garner who killed her own little baby girl to spare her being returned to slavery; in that, Morrison reclaims the lives of those excluded from and neglected by the national history. In an interview with Morrison addressing the black people, she confirms:

You have to stake it out and identify those who have preceded you – resummoning them, acknowledging them is just one step in that process of reclamation- so that they are always there as the confirmation and the affirmation of the life that I personally have not lived but is the life of that organism to which I belong which is black people in this country.¹⁰

In this context, Morrison's literary archaeology depends heavily on collecting stories summoning the lives of those who have been omitted from the historical record, by concerning herself essentially with digging meaning out of the historical evidence.

Therefore, in the process of disclosing the real interior motivations of a woman like Margaret Garner, Morrison “reconstructs history by articulating an absent presence –the internal or psychic life of African-American (ex-) slaves which has been omitted from the historical record.”¹¹ She endeavours to “make the invisible visible, to give voice to the silenced and life to the unloving, to transform what has been at best figured in songs and

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Cantalupo, Charles. *Ngugi Wa Thiong'o : Text and Context*, Africa World Press, Inc, P. O. Box 1892, Trenton, NJ 08607, 1996. p. 283.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 284.

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riddles and at worst in nightmares, into a still-ghostly but palpable presence.”¹² In speaking the unspeakable through the voices of the silenced subjects of slavery, Morrison is to “re-imagine both literary and American history,”¹³ she “transcends the master(s) discourse” via “writing against the dominant narrative by incorporating the African-American tradition into her narrative of *Beloved*.”¹⁴ To achieve that, Morrison engages herself with recollecting stories about real events chronicling the lives of the African Americans who endured the dreadful and spiteful crimes of the atrocious institution of slavery. In so doing, Morrison will concern herself in resisting and subverting the Western discourse that has long covered up these crimes:

My job becomes how to rip that veil drawn over “proceedings too terrible to relate.” ...Moving that veil aside requires... certain things. First of all, I must trust my own recollections. I must also depend on the recollections of others... the act of imagination is bound up with memory.¹⁵

To examine *Beloved* from a Foucauldian theoretical standpoint is very remunerative, since Morrison’s brimful attempts to unravel the real historical events of slavery bear a deep resemblance to Foucault’s project for rethinking and rewriting the Western history. “As Foucault considers the job of a historian to excavate a given epoch to expose the “other history, which runs beneath history”, Morrison makes efforts to uncover the “other history” of slavery that “runs beneath” official records.”¹⁶ Accordingly, with characterizing her narrative strategy in *beloved* as “a kind of literary archaeology,”¹⁷ Morrison is indicating that, for her, “the approach that’s most productive and most trustworthy ... is the recollection

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 283-284.

¹⁶ Farshid, Sima. ‘Foucauldian Archaeology of Slavery in Morrison’s *Beloved*’, *The international Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences* Volume 5, Number 4, 2010, <http://www.SocialSciences-Journal.com>, ISSN 1833-1882 pp303-309. p. 305.

¹⁷ Andrews, William L & Nellie Y. McKay. *Toni Morrison’s Beloved: A Casebook*, Oxford University Press, 198 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10016, 1999. p. 83.

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that moves from the image to the ... text.”¹⁸ Her art creation in *Beloved*; therefore, falls in her ability to “move that veil aside”¹⁹ in order to break through the “memories within.”²⁰ So, the historical context from which Morrison’s novel takes shape, helps Morrison to challenge “the hegemonic status of the (primarily male) slave narratives as well as the “canonical” history embodied in the master(s) narratives in a project that holds both more accountable to the “disremembered and accounted for”.”²¹

In light of this discussion, Morrison; like many of her contemporaries, looks up to achieve these objectives in *Beloved*, a novel that “both historicizes fiction and fictionalizes history.”²² In the following passage Morrison recollects the incidents upon which *Beloved* was based:

I... remember being obsessed by two or three little fragments of stories that I heard from different places. One was a news paper clipping about a woman named Margaret Garner in 1851... She succeeded in killing one; she tried to kill two others... She said, “I will not let those children live how I have lived.” She had run off into a little wood shed right outside her house to kill them because she had been caught as a fugitive. And she made up her mind that they would not suffer the way that she had and it was better for them to die. They put her in jail for a little while and I’m not even sure what the denouement is of her story. But that moment, that decision was a piece, a tail of something that was always around.²³

Morrison connects the aforementioned story fragment to another related in James Van der Zee’s *The Harlem Book of the Dead*. This very imaginative act that is so specific of Morrison’s creative insights reflects Morrison’s literary engagement with collecting real-life stories about African Americans who suffered the socially hard reality of being black. In the following story from which Morrison inspires some of *Beloved*’s scenes, a moral is to be

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., p. 82.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., p. 82-83.

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grasped as we understand the significance of Morrison's adoption of such story which reveals the painful ambiguous situation of being black in the United States.

In one picture, there was a young girl lying in a coffin and he says that she was eighteen years old and she had gone to a party and that she was dancing and suddenly she slumped and they noticed there was blood on her and they said, "what happened to you?" And she said, "I'll tell you tomorrow. I'll tell you tomorrow...." That's all she would say. And apparently her ex-boyfriend or somebody who was jealous had come to the party with a gun and a silencer and shot her. And she kept saying, "I'll tell you tomorrow" because she wanted him to get away. And he did, I guess; anyway she died.²⁴

These newspaper clippings and Van der Zee's photostory tool up the historical or real-life foundations for her novel. "*Now what made these stories connect, I can't explain,*"²⁵ states Morrison, "*but I do know that, in both instances, something seemed clear to me. A woman loved something other than herself so much, she had placed all of the value of her life in something outside herself.*"²⁶ For this, Morrison envisions her task in writing *Beloved* as twofold: "*the exploration of the black woman's sense of self and the imaginative recovery of black women's history.*"²⁷

Nevertheless, the single most quintessential inclusion in this argumentation is Morrison's excavation of history of slavery in *Beloved*, where Morrison intentionally takes up the credentials set up by philosophers of the Enlightenment who "*equated humanity with reason and reason with literacy, which the slaves were not supposed to master.*"²⁸ For Morrison has already marked out: "*Literacy was a way of assuming and providing the 'humanity' that the Constitution denied them.*"²⁹ Then, she continues arguing that, "*yet no slave society in the history of the world wrote more –or more thoughtfully- about its own*

²⁴ Ibid., p. 83.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Tally, Justine. *Toni Morrison's Beloved : Origins*, Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2008. p. 1.

²⁹ Morrison, Toni. *What Moves at the Margin: Selected Nonfiction*, University Press of Mississippi, 2008. p. 68.

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enslavement.”³⁰ Therefore, in molding the character of Sethe, Morrison challenges the Western definitions attributed to humanity as literacy, rationality, and Christianity:

Sethe is neither literate nor “rational” in her response to schoolteacher; nor is she Christian in that rather than praying to a Christian God, she “communes” with the spirit of Baby Suggs, herself a preacher of the godliness of physicality rather than spirituality. Her value as a human being does not spring from the terms of the masters, and her agency is determined by the deeply human concerns of a mother for her children, even though she has displaced her “self.”³¹

For Morrison, one of the major mediums through which the dominant discourse finds a voice is newspaper. Since media at that time was basically informed in a written style and those who deliver it were basically whites, the black people were almost pictured and exposed negatively as criminals and outlaws who deserve punishment and discipline, but never given the chance to justify for their actions or refute the accusations charged against them. The same thing happens with the novel's protagonist Sethe and her story in the newspaper. When Stamp Paid attempts to show Paul D the newspaper story about the woman who murdered her daughter, there is a perspicuous indication to the very negative inscription of blacks into the written discourse of the dominant culture. The following passage lucidly demonstrates the way how the dominant discourse tackles and exposes stories that are related to slaves and their actions:

Because there was no way in hell a black face could appear in a newspaper if the story was about something anybody wanted to hear. A whip of fear broke through the heart of chambers as soon as you saw a Negro's face in paper, since the face was not there because the person had a healthy baby, or outran a street mob. Nor was it there because the person had been killed, or maimed or caught or burned or jailed or whipped or evicted or stomped or raped or cheated, since that could hardly qualified as news in a newspaper.³²

³⁰ Ibid., p. 69.

³¹ Tally, Justine. *Toni Morrison's Beloved : Origins*, Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2008. p. 3.

³² Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1987. p. 298.

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However, Paul D counters the implications and rejects to believe that the picture drawn there is of Sethe, for he keeps asserting to Stamp Paid that the woman described in the newspaper story was not Sethe. Paul D knows her very well when they lived together in Kentucky before he left north. He always remembers her positive attitudes towards her family and community and he couldn't believe that she would ever hurt one of her children. He told Stamp Paid:

"This ain't her mouth. I know her mouth and this ain't it." [...] Oh, he heard all the old man was saying, but the more he heard, the stranger the lips in the drawing became. [...] "But this ain't her mouth," Paul D said. "This ain't at all." [...] "Uh uh. No way. A little semblance round the forehead maybe, but this ain't her mouth." [...] "I been knowing her a long time. And I can tell you for sure: this ain't her mouth. May look like it, but it ain't."³³

Paul D keeps mentioning Sethe's mouth in some form at least twelve times in four pages; that is to say, the story being described in the newspaper is not Sethe's story. It is a story implying *"the imposition of a discourse that has decided on the "truth" and meaning of the case without consulting the defendant, enacting a "grid that operates to select from the facts [...] and allows the facts to be interpreted."*³⁴ Throughout the reading of *Beloved*, Morrison provides her readers with references to the predominance of the discourses that give birth to the regimes of truth. This will be mostly self-evident in Sixo's defence against schoolteacher's accusation of theft:

"You stole that shoat, didn't you?" "No. Sir." said Sixo, but he had the decency to keep his eyes on the meat. "You telling me you didn't steal it, and I'm looking right at you?" "No, sir. I didn't steal it." Schoolteacher smiled. "Did you kill it?" "Yes, sir. I killed it" "Did you butcher it?" "Yes, sir." "Did you cook it?" "Yes, sir." "Well, then. Did you eat it?" "Yes, sir. I sure did." "And you telling me that's not stealing?" "No, sir. It ain't." "What is it then?" "Improving your property, sir." "What?" "Sixo plant rye to give the high piece a better chance. Sixo take and feed the soil, give you more crop. Sixo take and

³³ Ibid., p. 299- 302.

³⁴ Tally, Justine. *Toni Morrison's Beloved : Origins*, Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2008. p. 7.

feed Sixo give you more work.” Clever, but schoolteacher beat him anyway to show him that definition belonged to the definers- not the defined.³⁵

Seemingly, Morrison's enterprise in writing *Beloved* strives to reclaim the unthought and the unspeakable experience of slavery, as truth might be found in a “*limit experience*”³⁶ because “*the whole of modern thought is imbued with the necessity of thinking the unthought,*”³⁷ and as the “*blood-curdling cruelty of the Middle Passage has never been philosophically “thought,” Morrison's representation of the “unthought”*”³⁸ is the “*unspeakable*.” Her task, then, will be based on an experiment that engages a Foucauldian thought by daring to think the unthought and speak the unspeakable “*through the use of another principal trope: memory and dis-remembering.*”³⁹

Section 2: The Workings of Memory/Rememory in Morrison's *Beloved*

It may seem quite relevant and pertinent to start our discussion with the following passage taken from an interview where Morrison says of *Beloved*: “*There is a necessity for remembering the horror, but of course there's a necessity for remembering it in a manner in which it can be digested, in a manner in which the memory is not destructive.*”⁴⁰ Morrison continues to say, “*The act of writing the book, in a way, is a way of confronting it and making it possible to remember.*”⁴¹ This powerful dogma of reminiscence and recollection is intimately attached to Morrison's great sensibility and awareness that her books haunt readers because of the problems and difficulties her characters, especially in *Beloved*, face while they are engaged in scenes of remembrance. In the process of reading *Beloved*, what confuses readers is neither plot nor characterization but rather its historical implications and narrative,

³⁵ Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1987. p. 362-363.

³⁶ Tally, Justine. *Toni Morrison's Beloved : Origins*, Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2008. p. 27.

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 28.

⁴⁰ Matus, Jill L. *Toni Morrison: Contemporary World Writers*, Manchester University Press, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9NR, UK, 1998. p. 32.

⁴¹ Ibid.

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because the latter finds its way into representation only as it roams through the characters' flashbacks and which causes *Beloved* to be regarded as an intricate novel.

However, through the trope of memory, Morrison comes to terms with the inextricability of her story's narrative to ultimately get access into her characters' traumatic past and experiences of slavery. This collection of particular excavated *petits récits*, recounting the characters' past traumatic experiences, empowers Morrison to challenge the grand narratives of the official history; as well as, the conventional male slave narratives. The narrative in *Beloved* depends essentially on the characters' flashbacks and their recollections of past experiences, and it mainly revolves around the memories of the novel's principal character Sethe which are represented through a stream-of-consciousness technique. In *Toni Morrison: Critical perspectives Past and Present*, Henry Gates describes the enigma through which the narrative in *Beloved* is constructed as:

[O]n the most immediate level, *Beloved* clearly presents itself as novel of remembering. Through a stream-of-consciousness technique that provides fragmented and frightening hints, the narrative meanders through the mind of various characters to slowly reconstruct a portrait of the past, both individual and communal.⁴²

In his attempt to make a connection between memory and narrative, Gates; adroitly, defines *Beloved* as Morrison's most:

[...] complex fictional achievement to date presents the construction of the relation of present to past. Crafted as a fable of the dynamics of memory, it dramatizes the intersection of two warring impulses towards the past, the imperative to remember and the desperate need to forget, and encodes them in a tale where one woman's attempt to defy, forget the encroachment on the past culminates in a truly symbiotic

⁴² Gates, Henry Louis and Anthony Appiah. *Toni Morrison: Critical Perspectives Past and Present*, University of Michigan, 1993. p. xi.

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bond between the present, imaged as a haunted mother, and the past represented in the form of her murdered and resurrected child.⁴³

In *Beloved*, Morrison uses memory to show her readers the hidden buried truths about slavery. It also highlights the relationship between memory and history; in that, “*history provides the exterior view of slavery, and memory is the personal, interior view*”⁴⁴ of characters. Hence, the excavation of history through memory is the backdrop to *Beloved*: “*to secure a presence for the past demands work – ‘memory work’- whether it is writing a book, filming a documentary or erecting a monument,*”⁴⁵ particularly a past that has been “*confined to oblivion.*”⁴⁶ Accordingly, with adopting memory as a main narrative structure in *Beloved* Morrison is, eventually, capable of reconstructing or rather resurrecting “*those voices of oral history which are absent and/or silenced in written versions of history.*”⁴⁷ In this sense, Morrison’s characters’ own haven to get access into and penetrate their painful past experiences is through memory, in order to articulate and represent them into narrative; in other words, to speak their unspeakable stories:

Lacking a discourse of her own, Sethe’s task is to transform the residual images (“rememories”) of her past into a historical discourse shaped by narrativity. These images, however, remain for a time disembodied –without form, sequence or meaning... Like Morrison, Sethe must learn to represent the unspeakable and unspoken in language –and more precisely, as narrative.⁴⁸

A number of critics, and Morrison herself, have considered *Beloved* to be a novel that takes further Morrison’s particular and unique historiographic project of recovering lost, occluded, and forgotten history of slavery; as well as, her weariless enterprise of

⁴³ Ibid., p. x-xi.

⁴⁴ Beaulieu, Elizabeth Ann. *The Toni Morrison Encyclopedia*, Greenwood Press, 88 Post Road West, Westport, CT 06881, the United States of America, 2003. p. 208.

⁴⁵ Tally, Justine. *Toni Morrison's Beloved : Origins*, Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2008. p. 29.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Beaulieu, Elizabeth Ann. *The Toni Morrison Encyclopedia*, Greenwood Press, 88 Post Road West, Westport, CT 06881, the United States of America, 2003. p. 207.

⁴⁸ Brooker, Peter and Peter Widdowson. *A Practical Reader in Contemporary Literary Theory*, Routledge, 2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN, 2013. p. 396.

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reconstituting memory as historical, cultural, communal and even personal one, to achieve a possible figuration of histories and identities:

What makes *Beloved* such a landmark text in this configuration is that it does not shy away from representing the impossible... It offers a redemptive possibility of “remembering”, of refiguring histories and identities. For by revealing the forces behind and the process of the unraveling of selves, bodies, and communities, Morrison uncovers what is fundamental to the creation of personal and communal identities: the freedom to desires to imagine, and to live narratives not of coherence, necessarily, but of continuity. The recovery of this nearly lost body of history and of the bodies lost to this history is centred to the novel and to Morrison's particular modernist project of reconstituting cultural memory.⁴⁹

In this context, Morrison's novel spotlights the dynamic features of memory along with its imaginative and creative power to reconstruct and represent the significance of the past, Morrison's text foregrounds the dialogical characteristics of memory along with its imaginative capacity to construct and reconstruct the significance of the past. Thus, while the slave narrative characteristically moves in a chronological, linear narrative fashion, *Beloved* meanders through time, sometimes circling back, other times moving vertically, spirally out of time and down into space. Furthermore, *Beloved* engages the readers not just with the tangible and physical ramifications of slavery, but most importantly with the exceedingly intimate, psychological consequences through the trope of memory, to ultimately represent what Morrison herself identifies as the interior life of black people under such circumstances. In that, Morrison's *Beloved* is intended to disclose the untold of the narratives, the psychic underlying themes that reside within and beneath the holes of historical facts and obscured spaces which readers can come into them, to engage in a participatory reading.

⁴⁹ Dobbs, Cynthia. “Toni Morrison's *Beloved*: Bodies Returned, Modernism Revisited”, *African American Review*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (Winter, 1998), pp. 563-578, Indiana State University. p. 569.

2.1. The Character of Beloved: An Incarnation of a Traumatic Memory

Memory stays with traces, in order to “preserve” them, but traces of a past that has never been present, traces which themselves never occupy the form of presence and always remain, as it were, to come—come from the future, from the to come. Resurrection, which is always the formal element of “truth,” a recurrent difference between a present and its presence, does not resuscitate a past which had been present, it engages a future. (Derrida, *Memoires* 58)

Regardless of their arduous efforts to forget or suppress their memories, the ex-slaves of Morrison's novel permanently fail to do so, because they cannot dissociate the present from their atrocious past and their memories are unremittingly protracted. Therefore, rememorying, a label attributed by Morrison's characters to describe the process of rememory, will be the central activity in *Beloved*, because of it “*narrative moves constantly back and forth between past and present, mixing time inextricably, as memory escalates its battle against amnesia.*”⁵⁰ Sethe's name that might be “*an allusion to Lethe, the spring of forgetfulness in Greek myth*”⁵¹, as Susan Bowers presupposes in “*Beloved and the New Apocalypse,*” can denote for her tireless attempts to ignore and forget the past. Sethe “*work[s] hard to remember as close to nothing as was safe,*”⁵² yet the more she tries, the less she arrives to put an end to tenacious remembering, since her mind is “*Loaded with the past.*”⁵³

Sethe's unavailing attempts to forget the past is manifested in and represented by her relationship with Beloved – the incarnated ghost of her murdered baby girl that returns back to life. For, Sethe's mind is haunted by her, therefore Beloved incarnates the connection of Sethe's present with her past: “*[T]he connection of Sethe's present with her past is*

⁵⁰ Middleton, David L. *Toni Morrison's Fiction: Contemporary Criticism*, Garland Publishing Inc, Taylor & Francis Group, 19 Union Square West, New York, NY 10003, 2000. p. 214.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1987. p. 7.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 137.

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figuratively embodied in her relationship to Beloved...”⁵⁴ To embody that connection; however, seems to be one of the things that Beloved’s equivocal, mysterious, and dialectical character represents.

[T]he “rememory” of Sethe’s Medean action, Beloved, is the classic gothic trope of the past haunting the present. The girl’s specter is revived by her guilt-ridden mother as a vessel through which to confront her transgressive act of infanticide. The girl, returned as Beloved, is the physical manifestation of the return of the repressed, of Sethe’s own superego in the physical form of her dead child, called up to punish the ego for the guilt the Sethe feels. It is Beloved’s incarnation as a “rememory” of what has been “disremembered” by Sethe in her attempt to put a traumatic past behind her that allows the unspeakable to be spoken.⁵⁵

But, of course, Sethe is not the only character in *Beloved* who represses traumatic memories. Paul D; for instance, describes his heart as a tobacco tin whose role is to contain and repress traumatic memories and never let go of them:

[I]t was sometime before he could put Alfred, Georgia, Sexo, schoolteacher, Halle, his brothers, Sethe, Mister, the taste of iron, the sight of butter, the smell of hickory, notebook paper, one by one, into the tobacco tin lodged in his chest. By the time he reached 124 nothing in this world could pry it open.⁵⁶

And Ella, who, like Sethe, felt compelled to murder her children, reiterates Sethe’s and Paul D’s conducts with regard to the past as something “*to leave behind. And if I didn’t stay behind, well, you might have to stomp it out.*”⁵⁷

It is in Morrison’s creative landscape of memory and loss that Sethe, Morrison’s meditative heroine, the “*queenly woman*”⁵⁸, who articulates the novel’s hypothesis of

⁵⁴ Brooker, Peter and Peter Widdowson. *A Practical Reader in Contemporary Literary Theory*, Routledge, 2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN, 2013. p. 402.

⁵⁵ Saltzman, Lisa and Eric Rosenberg. *Trauma and Visuality in Modernity*, Dartmouth College Press, University Press of New England, One Court Street, Lebanon, NH 03766, 2006. p. 178.

⁵⁶ Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1987. p. 219.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 487

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

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memory and suppression in a diacritical lexicon. While speaking to the girl, who is allegedly incarnating her killed child and who comes from nowhere claiming to have no past, Sethe says “*You disremember everything? I never knew my mother neither, but I saw her a couple of times. Did you never see yours?*”⁵⁹ The revealing verb ‘disremember’ suggests the complexities of the novel’s characters’ mnemonic process which involves a recurring tension between remembering and forgetting upon which the main narrative of the novel is constructed. In her attempt to explain this convoluted dilemma of rememory, Sethe reveals the repetition of the word ‘rememory’ which confirms the novel’s preoccupation with the intricacies of the mind in time:

“I was talking about time. It’s so hard for me to believe in it. Some things go. Pass on. Some things just stay. I used to think it was my rememory. You know. Some things you forget. Other things you never do. But it’s not. Places, places are still there. If a house burns down, it’s gone, but the place –the picture of it- stays, and not just in my rememory, but out there, in the world. What I remember is a picture floating around out there outside my head. I mean, even if I don’t think it, even if I die, the picture of what I did, or knew, or saw is still out there. Right in the place where it happened.”⁶⁰

As the narrative moves through a series of rememories and forgetfulness, apparently mirroring the characters’ persistence of “*keeping the past at bay*,”⁶¹ the novel becomes a ceremonial to the process of remembering. Such a process empowers the characters to articulate uphill, complicated stories. Stories that, because of the terrors they suppress, are not supposed to be kept at bay or passed on.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 227.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 70.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 84.

Section 3: Memory Narratives of Healing

This ghost, *Beloved*, forces a reckoning: she makes those who have contact with her, who love and need her, confront an event in their past that loiters in the present. But *Beloved* the ghost, is haunted too, and therein lies the challenge Morrison poses.⁶²

Beloved is mainly a story about the horrors of slavery which revisits the sufferings of men and women during slavery and post-slavery in Cincinnati, Ohio and *Beloved*, the murdered child, would stand for all those who suffered the excruciating atrocities of slavery and did not endure the pain to tell their history. *Beloved* is a multi-dimensional, loaded character which is replete with fragmented stories through “many compelling voices,”⁶³ to recover and recreate “the historical rape of black American women and... the resilient spirit of blacks surviving as people.”⁶⁴

Beloved tells more than one story ... releasing possibilities for recovering memories which can be pierced together to make some sort of a history: Paul D Garner's story as well as Sethe's, together with the difficulties they have in telling even each other. It is not simply a matter of remembering but a painful labour of research and recovery and communication. *Beloved* acknowledges stories which are beyond recovery.⁶⁵

Hence, through the character of *Beloved* Morrison will be able at making the unspeakable trauma of slavery accessible to the reader. In so doing and within this, Morrison's aim focuses on representing the unspeakable traumatic memories of Sethe, Paul D Garner, *Beloved*, and other characters as Denver. So, to provide the readers with a means of conceiving the traumatic past of slavery, Morrison employs some particular and unique narrative strategies, such as the interweaving of the past and the present, recurrent motifs, and

⁶² Gordon, Avery. *Ghostly Matters : Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*, the Regents of the University of Minnesota, the University of Minnesota Press, 111 Third Avenue South, Suite 290, Minneapolis, MN 55401-2520, the United States of America, 1997. p. 139.

⁶³ Andermahr, Sonya and Silvia Pellicer-Ortin. *Trauma Narratives and Herstory*, PALGRAVE MACMILLAN, England, UK, 2013. p. 142.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

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paradoxical images, to engage her readers in the process of storytelling so that they have to presume responsibility for bearing witness and living the traumatic past of characters. One of these unique strategies to demonstrate the persistent effect of trauma is Morrison's depiction of the scars on Sethe's back as tree-form scars which root and seed on Sethe's back, just as her agonizing traumatic past which has long been rooting and seeding on her memory.

However, Sethe's denial to accept her traumatic past not only affects her own life, but also has serious ramifications for her daughter, Denver, who is entangled in the house as she is very afraid of the unknown thing that resides in the outside world which brings about her mother to murder her own child. Therefore, Sethe keeps warning Denver from getting back to Sweet Home, the place where she committed the infanticide:

Someday you be walking down the road and you hear something or see something goin on, so clear. And you think it's you thinking it up. A thought picture. But no. It's when you bump into a rememory that belongs to somebody else. Where I was before I came here, that place is real. It's never going away. Even if the whole farm-every tree and grass blade of it dies. The picture is still there and what's more, if you go there and stand in the place where it was, it will happen again; it will be there for you, waiting for you. So, Denver, you can't never go there. Never. Because even though it's all over—over and done with—it's going to always be there waiting for you. That's how come I had to get all my children out. No matter what.⁶⁶

This fragmented structure of trauma narrative demonstrates how Sethe is still tantalized and tormented by these lingering intrusive memories, trapped in a shuttered, fragmented world of repetition, but she is driven by an impulse to reveal and conceal as she strives to both rememory and not rememory, to tell and not tell the aching secrets of her slavery past. While Sethe believes that she has to keep the past at bay, she finds herself still possessed by traumatic memories which are well elaborated through her trauma narratives of past events;

⁶⁶ Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1987. p. 71.

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since trauma narratives work astutely as testimonies to the psychic and physical damage inflicted on Morrison's characters:

Deliberately using a fragmented and repetitive narrative structure to convey the disrupted, obsessive world of the trauma victim, Morrison circles around and around the shameful secrets that haunt her characters: Sethe's paralyzing and dirtying memories of the physical and psychic assaults on her humanity she suffered as slave, memories that are too awful to speak of directly and can only be told incrementally, in bits and pieces.⁶⁷

Nevertheless, with the coming of the revenant Beloved, Sethe and Denver will be able to cope with and resolve their traumatic experiences. The exchange in communication among this female triangle allows for a narrative strategy that works trauma through a therapeutic, healing structure. For instance, Denver's speech pervades Sethe's in different occasions to illustrate contradicting points of view and different versions of the same traumatic event. In some instances, the text represents a shared experience: from Denver's story of her birth told through Denver's viewpoint with her own interpretations about her mother's story, to Sethe's experience of the same story, to Amy's own experience in direct immediate discourse. This narrative strategy demonstrates the overcast experience of a traumatic event, and its lack of referentiality. This lack of referentiality is described through Beloved and her many confounding facets "*Sethe and Denver don't just get their daughter and sister back, they get a puzzled and puzzling, poly-generational, mnemonically tortured, uncertain spirit whose resurrection brings wildly unpredictable results.*"⁶⁸ Furthermore, Beloved's presence urges Denver and Sethe to work through their past by turning a scary ghost into a means for resolution; hence, healing:

⁶⁷ Bouson, J. Brooks. *Quiet as it's Kept: Shame, Trauma, and Race in the Novels of Toni Morrison*, State University of New York Press, Albany, the United States of America, 2000. p. 136.

⁶⁸ Anderson, Melanie R. *Spectrality in the Novels of Toni Morrison*, The University of Tennessee Press, Knoxville, 2013. p. 74.

This storytelling in which Sethe engages for Beloved's entertainment connects Sethe and Denver in a new and vital relationship. When Denver tells Beloved the story of her own birth, she begins to feel as if she is actually experiencing the event from Sethe's perspective. As another result of Beloved's questioning, Sethe tells stories of her past that she has never share with Denver—stories she thought she had forgotten.⁶⁹

In a 1988 conversation with Marsha Darling, Morrison spoke about the healing aspect of sharing stories among characters of *Beloved*. Morrison stated that only when the characters start reconciling with their traumatic memories of their pasts and feel relieved when they begin telling stories about them and sharing them with others that the healing of the character initiates.

Marsha Darling: One of my questions was going to be—and I think you've just answered it—where's the healing? There's healing in the memory and re-memory. Yes, each character tells her or his story, and through that there are confrontations with each other; there are a lot of things that go on, yet there's a healing in bringing it into 1873.

Toni Morrison: And no one speaks, no one tells the story about himself or herself unless forced. They don't want to talk, they don't want to remember, they don't want to say it, because they're afraid of it—which is human. But when they do say it, and hear it, and look at it, and share it, they are not only one, they're two, and three, and four, you know? The collective sharing of that information heals the individual—and the collective.⁷⁰

Eventually, Sethe will be able at reconciling with her past and make a successful return to life only when she comes to tell Paul D how she killed her daughter Beloved, "[...] *he made a comment that caused a forest to spring up between them. It will take Paul D's own education, and Sethe's attempts to understand herself and make Beloved understand her actions, before they are able to reunite.*"⁷¹ Finally, Paul D realizes that he "*put his story next to hers.*"⁷² Not

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Taylor-Guthrie, Danille. *Conversations with Toni Morrison*, the University Press of Mississippi, the United States of America, 1994. p. 248.

⁷¹ Andrews, William L & Nellie Y. McKay. *Toni Morrison's Beloved: A Casebook*, Oxford University Press, 198 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10016, 1999. p. 54.

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only is this an action of sharing their trauma narratives, but it is also an assertion that Sethe; at last, comes to terms with her traumatic past and; therefore, has a claim to herself:

“Sethe,” he says, “me and you, we got more yesterday than anybody. We need some kind of tomorrow.” He leans over and takes her hand. With the other he touches her face. “You your best thing, Sethe. You are.” His holding fingers are holding hers. “Me? Me?”⁷³

Conclusion:

In the foregoing chapter we have brought into analysis the concepts of trauma, history, and memory narratives in Morrison's *Beloved*. In the first section we have pointed out to the extent to which Morrison's *Beloved* can be regarded as a historiographic meatfiction through the study of the historical representation of slavery through narratives and collections of petits récits recording the lives of the main characters of the novel. Then, we have investigated Morrison's adoption of Foucauldian archaeology to excavate historical truth. It has been observed that Morrison's literary archaeology has provided her with proper materials to dig out and disclose the long-buried truths concerning the history of slavery, while exposing the true story of Margaret Garner. Indeed, the examination of *Beloved* from a Foucauldian standpoint proves to be very lucrative, since Morrison's fraught attempts to unravel the real historical events of slavery and to reclaim its unthought and unspeakable experience, bear a deep resemblance to Foucault's project for rethinking and rewriting the Western history.

The findings of the second section have indicated that the workings of rememory in Morrison's *Beloved* engage Morrison in a trip to scout about her characters' deepest traumatic memories; for Morrison's novel spotlights the dynamic features of memory along

⁷² Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1987. p. 521.

⁷³ Ibid.

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with its imaginative and creative power to reconstruct and represent the significance of the past. In this sense, through the trope of memory Morrison succeeds in engaging her readers not just with the tangible and physical ramifications of slavery, but most importantly with the exceedingly intimate, psychological consequences; to ultimately represent what Morrison herself identifies as the interior life of black people under such circumstances. In that, Morrison's *Beloved* is intended to disclose the untold of the narratives, the psychic underlying themes that reside within and beneath the holes of historical facts and obscured spaces which readers can come into them, to engage in a participatory reading.

In the light of the third section we have come to the conclusion that through the character of Beloved Morrison will be able at making the unspeakable trauma of slavery accessible to the reader. So, to provide the readers with a means of conceiving the traumatic past of slavery, Morrison employs some particular and unique narrative strategies, such as the interweaving of the past and the present, recurrent motifs, and paradoxical images, to engage her readers in the processes of healing and storytelling so that they have to presume responsibility for bearing witness and living the traumatic past of characters.

Chapter Four

Song of Solomon and the

Politics of Space

Chapter Four: Song of Solomon and the Politics of Space

Introduction

In her third novel, entitled *Song of Solomon*, Toni Morrison attempts to demonstrate the importance of; as well as, the power that space has in the ways the characters of the novel perceive and construct their sense of selfhood within their community. In this way, *Song of Solomon* represents the different experiences through which the main characters of the novel may develop a certain connection to a specific space in order to locate themselves spatially. Therefore, any discussion of the politics of space as a key element in the construction of Morrison's *Song of Solomon* narrative must involve an awareness of the ways how the characters of the novel come to identify themselves within their environment.

Besides that, *Song of Solomon* tackles the different processes which the characters undergo as they attempt to create certain connections and engagements with some spatial locations. In this sense, space represents itself as a key factor to the construction of the characters' sense of selfhood. Furthermore, the representation and description of space in *Song of Solomon* provides an interesting arena to discuss the processes in which the characters of the novel may or may not develop what they think as an allowing sense of self and identity.

The present chapter aims at negotiating the diverse powers and influences which space exerts upon the conducts of *Song of Solomon*'s characters in the context of self growth and sense of belonging. Being of great importance for the characters sense of selfhood, the symbolic representation of space in the novel allows Morrison to explore its implications over the characters' experiences.

Chapter Four: Song of Solomon and the Politics of Space

Section 1: Analyzing Morrison's Antithetical Representation of North and South Spaces

The South is an ancestral home of Black Americans. It is true, of course, that slavery existed in the North and that Black people have lived from the beginning in all sections of this country. But collectively it is the South that is the nucleus of Black American culture. It is here that the agony of chattel slavery created the history that is yet to be written. It is the South that has dispersed its culture into the cities of the North. The South is, in a sense, the mythic landscape of Black America.¹ (Eugenia Collier)

1.1. “a place they have come to after leaving the place they call home”: The Illusively Dystopian Power of North Space

Here is why he leaves the South: Unjust treatment, failure to secure a square deal in the courts, taxation without representation, denial of the right to vote through subterfuge of the white primary, no representation in any form of government, poor schools, unjust pay for and division of crops, insulting of women without any redress, and public torture.² (C. Otis, *N.Y. Tribune*, 1923)

According to the African American literary perspective, the North space is highly envisioned as the Promised Land or the “Land of the Open Door.” Characters depicted as ex-slaves; usually, take their journeys up North to seek not only freedom and equality, but also material opportunities. However, their dreams of financial success wither away as soon as they encounter the harsh realities of racism:

[I]n African American literature, opportunity, hope, and freedom often are figured through a migration North (out of slavery into freedom) [...] slave narratives imagine the North as a locus of freedom, twentieth-century authors like Ralph Ellison, Ann Petry, and Toni Morrison counter the image of the industrial North as the Promised Land with depictions of the harsh realities of racism.³

¹ Collier, Eugenia. “Fields Watered with Blood: Myth and Ritual in the Poetry of Margaret Walker,” in *Fields Watered with Blood: Critical Essays on Margaret Walker*, edited by Maryemma Graham (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001), p. 101.

² Sattelmeyer, Robert D. *Studies in the Literary Imagination Volume XXXI, Number 2, Fall 1998: Toni Morrison and the American South*, Department of English/ Georgia State University, Atlanta, 1998. p. 61.

³ Pramaggiore, Maria. *Irish and African American CINEMA: Identifying Others and Performing Identities, 1980-2000*, State University of New York Press, Albany, the United States of America, 2007. p. 167.

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Therefore, any discussion of the politics of the North as a delusive space in Morrison's *Song of Solomon* must involve an awareness of the ways how the characters of the novel come to see the North as both an incarnation of access and an embodiment of material success. But what this implies is the difficulty that inheres in interpreting the connections relating issues of space, place, and self: fundamentally that the real bone of contention is one of place as a sense of location and belonging.

In his article "The Politics of Space: Southernness and Manhood in the Fictions of Toni Morrison," Herman Beavers confirms that to trigger any discussion concerning the politics of space in Morrison's novels must adhere a serious consciousness about "*the ways that power relations, production relations, and cathexis interact and in their turn structure the criteria Morrison's characters use to locate themselves spatially.*"⁴ In this sense, what Beavers' statement infers about the politics of the North as a space in Morrison's *Song of Solomon*, is the emergence of some deceptively attractive power relations as well as interactions that relate Morrison's new coming southern characters to the Promised Land that is embodied by the North, and who want to reclaim and attain a sense of belonging or placeness through a sense of location i.e. claiming the North as their home, as their place. However, this will create a sense of a complicated sensibility which will be manifested as soon as these characters start seeking this sense of location via the impulse to "*acquire, conserve, and manage material goods,*"⁵ and which overwhelmingly lead these characters up to vouch a set of complex responses against certain forces acting on them:

Coming from the South, where so many Blacks lived as sharecroppers or who had land taken from them by unscrupulous Whites, the impulse to acquire, conserve, and manage material goods often leads those not

⁴ Sattelmeyer, Robert D. *Studies in the Literary Imagination* Volume XXXI, Number 2, Fall 1998: Toni Morrison and the American South, Department of English/ Georgia State University, Atlanta, 1998. p. 63.

⁵ Ibid., p. 64.

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yet able to purchase a space of their own to manifest a complex set of responses.⁶

Hence, for some of the characters in *Song of Solomon*, mainly Macon Dead, Sr, Macon Dead, and Milkman, the North as a space can assume meaning only through the accumulation of property since the relation between their sense of selfhood and placeness “*can only be structured on a grid of ownership.*”⁷ The following passage taken from the novel highlights this point as Macon Dead; the father of Milkman who is the protagonist of the novel, attempts to transmit his conception concerning land ownership and the accumulation of property as he asserts that his son, Milkman, can only attain and verify his subjectivity and selfhood through ownership and accumulation of property:

Boy, you got better things to do with your time. Besides, it’s time you started learning how to work. You start Monday. After school come to my office; work a couple of hours there and learn what’s real. Pilate can’t teach you a thing you can use in this world. Maybe the next, but not this one. Let me tell you right now the one important thing you’ll ever need to know: Own things. And let the things you own other things. Then you’ll own yourself and other people too.⁸

According to his material conduct that is manifested in his hunger for property, Macon Dead is highly distinguished as the representative of the Black capitalist in the North for he demonstrates that the north space is the authentic land for material access and excess as “*at twenty-five, he was a colored man of property.*”⁹

a hunger for property, for ownership. The firm possession of a yard, a porch, a grape arbor. Propertied black people spent all their energies, all their love, on their nests. Like frenzied, desperate birds, they over decorated everything; fussed and fidgeted over their hard-won homes; canned, jellied, and preserved all summer to fill cupboards and shelves; they painted, picked, and poked at every corner of their houses. Renting blacks cast furtive glances at these owned yards and porches

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., p. 70.

⁸ Morrison, Toni. *Song of Solomon*, Vintage International, New York, 2004. p. 102.

⁹ Ibid., p. 49.

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and made firmer commitments to buy themselves “some nice little old place.” In the meantime, they saved, and scratched, and piled away what they could in the rented hovels, looking forward to the day of property.¹⁰

He wants to walk in the footsteps of his father, the first Macon Dead, who represents “*the epitome of the modern entrepreneur who surrenders himself to the urban-industrial imperatives with fanatical conviction.*”¹¹ Macon Dead, the father of Macon Dead, senior, leaves his hometown (Shalimar), his family and his community for the pursuit of his dream in the North. He settled in Danville, Pennsylvania which becomes his new home where he seeks what his father and he are deprived of—property, especially good solid property, and a place to belong. “*Property, good solid property, the bountifulness of life.*”¹²

He called our farm Lincoln’s Heaven. It was a little bit a place. But it looked big to me then. I know now it must a been a little bit a place, maybe a hundred and fifty acres. We tilled fifty. About eighty of it was woods. Must of been a fortune in oak and pine; maybe that’s what they wanted—the lumber, the oak and the pine.¹³

The first Macon Dead spends sixteen years to obtain the beautiful Lincoln’s Heaven farm and possess his property; in other words, to grab a place to belong in the North: “*Sixteen years later he had one of the best farms in Montour County. A farm that colored their lives like a paintbrush and spoke to them like a sermon.*”¹⁴ You see? *The farm said to them.*” He works so hard to be a well-to-do and prosperous man by owning properties. He addresses his fellow blacks, who consider him as “*the farmer they wanted to be, the clever irrigator, the*

¹⁰ Sattelmeyer, Robert D. *Studies in the Literary Imagination Volume XXXI, Number 2, Fall 1998: Toni Morrison and the American South*, Department of English/ Georgia State University, Atlanta, 1998. p. 64.

¹¹ Hogue, W. Lawrence. *Race, Modernity, Postmodernity: A Look at the History and the Literatures of People of Color Since the 1960s*, University of New York Press, Albany, the United States of America, 1996. p. 33.

¹² Morrison, Toni. *Song of Solomon*, Vintage International, New York, 2004. p. 488.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 383.

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peach-tree grower, the hog slaughter, the wild-turkey roaster, the man who could plow forty in no time flat and sang like an angel while he did it,"¹⁵ saying:

See? See what you can do? Never mind you can't tell one letter from another, never mind you born a slave, never mind your daddy dead, never mind nothing. Here, this here, is what a man can do if he puts his mind to it and his back in to. Stop sniveling... We live here. On this planet, in this nation, in this country right here. Nowhere else! We got a home in this rock, don't you see! Nobody starving in my home; nobody crying in my home, and if I got a home you got one too! Grab it. Grab this land! Take it, hold it, my brothers, make it... seed it, reap it, rent it, buy it, see it, own it, build it, multiply it, and pass it on - can you hear me? Pass it on.¹⁶

However, the attractive setting of Northern life that is manifested in Lincoln's Heaven farm turns to be illusively dystopian; in that, it brings about his own demise i.e. his own death for the first Macon Dead believes that he can own and manifest his private and unique selfhood in the North through the accumulation of wealth and ownership of land. Herman Beavers asserts that the illusive power of the North lies in its representation as a "*space in which migrants can distinguish themselves as individuals via the avenue of work.*"¹⁷

Northern life is a setting made attractive because desire is an end in itself. In the North, ownership of self can only be measured by one's ability to manifest wealth in the form of material goods or one's ability to manipulate the shape of human experience to include a boundary between inside and outside. The North conjures itself as a benign setting by replacing the indignity and finality of disenfranchisement and lynching with the cyclicity of commodification, desire, and consumption. Hence, Morrison's characters embody a form of manhood that is contingent upon their ability to establish a relationship to the world of capital and profit and thus maintain an allegiance to forces yoked to the engine of their demise.¹⁸

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Sattelmeyer, Robert D. *Studies in the Literary Imagination Volume XXXI, Number 2, Fall 1998: Toni Morrison and the American South*, Department of English/ Georgia State University, Atlanta, 1998. p. 64.

¹⁸ Sattelmeyer, Robert D. *Studies in the Literary Imagination Volume XXXI, Number 2, Fall 1998: Toni Morrison and the American South*, Department of English/ Georgia State University, Atlanta, 1998. p. 71.

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Macon Dead's idyll is wrecked and devastated by Northern local whites who, covetous for land and timber, murder his father and steal the farm; therefore, Macon Dead finds himself cut off from belonging at a very young age. Following his miserable dispossession, and like his father, Macon Dead embraces the white culture's value of ownership as he devotes his entire life to coming into the possession of more and more property in order to achieve social status among his Northern counterparts to; ultimately, bearing on the project of selfhood that is measured by the wealth he can obtain. However, his obsession with property and social status bring about the distortion and destruction of his father's legacy; the Lincoln's Heaven farm, for it is not nurtured to fructify a harvest, but accumulated and then rented out in a way that brings only financial remunerations. Macon, consequently, comes to visualise the North space like an asset in much the same way the whites who murder his father. He finds himself "rattling off assets like an accountant, describing deals, total rents income, bank loans, and [...] stock market."¹⁹

To achieve social status, Macon Dead, Sr., acquires and accumulates property. His keys, a sign of his importance, represent the houses he owns. His house and car are his "way of satisfying himself that he was indeed a successful man." [H]is motto for freedom becomes, as he lectures Milkman, one of owing things: Let me tell you right now the one important thing you'll ever need to know: Own things. And let the things you own other things. Then you'll own yourself and other people too.²⁰

In this context, the politics of the North as a space proves to be illusive for Morrison's characters who want to distinguish themselves as free members within this highly racialized and hostile environment which rejects their attempts to claim their own places thus to belong in. Subsequently, they fail to endorse Northern community's system of standardization that is

¹⁹ Morrison, Toni. *Song of Solomon*, Vintage International, New York, 2004. p. 384.

²⁰ Hogue, W. Lawrence. *Race, Modernity, Postmodernity: A Look at the History and the Literatures of People of Color Since the 1960s*, University of New York Press, Albany, the United States of America, 1996. p. 33-34.

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based on the verification of identity and self-ownership via material pursuit and financial success.

Morrison's *Song of Solomon* demonstrates north space as Black utopia. In case of Milkman's ancestor Jake, through this character Morrison's depicts the Black male living in the North as an incompletely freeman to clearly illustrate the influence of north space towards self formation. For Jake north space is embodied in his farm "Lincoln's Heaven", where he enjoys and celebrates his delusional freedom from the hardships of slavery. His utopian farm is named after Abraham Lincoln, the 16th president of the United States who advocated the abolition of slavery. Therefore the flourishing and success of the farm fulfills Lincoln's dream of emancipation and prosperity for Blacks. According to Morrison's portrayal of Macon Dead's "Lincoln's Heaven" as an incarnation of utopian land for the blacks, this land comes as a blessing for those slaves to compensate for the long hard suffering and pain. Through the use of the following expressions to describe Macon Dead's farm Morrison comes to depict it as an Eden-like place where blacks are finally to enjoy the comforts that this land promised to offer. The portrayal of the farm as the Eden with the oak and pine, a pond, a stream full of fish situated right down in the heart of a valley as the prettiest mountain you ever saw, appear to demonstrate that milkman's grandpa has an ideal pastoral and agrarian life in the north space.

1.2. The South as Represented Via Pilate: a Contesting Emblematic Spatial Persona

The perception of Pilate as a symbolic character that is intimately and deeply connected with both the South and Africa holds an essential position in the portrayal of spatial imaginary of *Song of Solomon*. Indeed, this suggestively geographical persona bears a spatially cultural connection to a motherland, Africa, which is manifested in her dwelling that is often described by critics as a frontier culture. "*Pilate's house resembles one in a*

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traditional African village compound: she has forgone gas and electricity and uses candles and kerosene and she cooks over a three-stone fireplace.”²¹

Pilate lived in a narrow single-story house whose basement seemed to be rising from rather than settling into the ground. She had no electricity because she would not pay for the service. Nor for gas. At night she and her daughter lit the house with candles and kerosene lamps; they warmed themselves and cooked with wood and coal, pumped kitchen water into a dry sink through a pipeline from a well and lived pretty much as though progress was a word that meant walking a little farther on down the road.²²

Indeed, Pilate’s dwelling is perceived as being overwhelmingly opposed to that of Macon’s; since in the action of juxtaposing Pilate’s home to Macon’s, we find that her dwelling is perceived as a space of community and healing that is void of any marks of materialism or any kind of modern amenity and which deeply reflects southern way of life that resembles the African one. “*If you ever have a doubt we from Africa, look at Pilate.*”²³

Juxtaposed to Macon’s home is Pilate’s; she is a bootlegger who lives on the outskirts of town. Her home is antithetical to her brother’s, absent as it is of indoor plumbing and any kind of modern amenity. Further, the facade of middle-class respectability, on which Pilate’s brother relies, is fully absent in this dwelling. Pilate’s home life resembles the triad of independent women in *The Bluest Eye*, for Pilate lives with her adult daughter Reba and her granddaughter Hagar. Despite the paucity of material goods, Pilate’s home, a decidedly female space, becomes a site of safety, love, and protection for all who enter, including, at different times, Ruth and Milkman.²⁴

While, simultaneously engaging in a deep connection with, and grounding herself firmly in, the topographical aspects of America; therefore, Pilate’s affectionate thoughts and feelings to both Africa and America make her play a great role within *Song of Solomon*’s cartographic

²¹ Furman, Jan. *Toni Morrison’s Song of Solomon : A Casebook*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2003. p. 145.

²² Morrison, Toni. *Song of Solomon*, Vintage International, New York, 2004. p. 56.

²³ Ibid., p. 100.

²⁴ Beaulieu, Elizabeth Ann. *The Toni Morrison Encyclopedia*. Greenwood Press, London. 2003. p. 162.

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project that rejects her brother's uprootedness which is manifested in his quest for property rather than loving the land itself. In this context, Pilate is suggested to hold a significant position in Morrison's construction of a symbolic geography that is meant to depict; or rather, highlight two sharply contrasting spaces: North/South.

Pilate's inheritance is related to her concern for geography. At several points in the novel she is reading a geography book (93). Her concern for geography, her practice of collecting rocks from wherever she visits, indicates a different view toward the land than that of Macon Jr. The land for Pilate is the opportunity to affirm her cultural grounding. She inherits from her father a quest for spiritual renewal which gives priority to people over property.²⁵

Whilst the North is mainly represented through Macon's lifestyle that is dominated by his enterprise and self-interest; for Morrison, the portrayal of Pilate's character comes to embody the aspects of the South and southern way of life for although she lives in the North her way of living continues to go against the ethics of northern community, which depend mainly on the standards of capitalism, and which apparently embrace the old Black ancestry's love for land and nature.

Black ancestry is important in all Morrison's work, and especially in *Song of Solomon*, the ancient African way of life reinforces the ties between women and nature by showing that a "collective black self-recovery takes place when we begin to renew our relationship to the earth, when we remember the way of our ancestors".²⁶

It's through the motif of nature that Morrison can present Pilate as being a culture bearer who contrasts and defies the old-aged norms of capitalism that her brother pursues and almost praises.

²⁵ Hopkins, Dwight N and Sheila Greeve Davaney. *Changing Conversations: Religious Reflection & Cultural Analysis*, Routledge, New York, 1996. p. 193-194.

²⁶ Gama, Jessica. "'Without Ever Leaving the Ground, She Could Fly': Ecofeminism and Soul Fulfillment in Toni Morrison's Pilate", *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge*: Vol. 6: Iss. 4, Article 6, 2008 pp. 49-54. p. 50.

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Nature, as a realm apart from the dominant culture's institutions, provides a place from which Pilate can embody an oppositional position and Morrison can symbolically reverse the valences of class, gender, and culture hierarchy.

Like her brother Macon, Pilate grows up in the hinterlands of Pennsylvania; yet, in contrast to his ambitious material motives, Morrison portrays her as different; “*she was born wild*” and “*her stomach ... at no place interrupted by a navel.*”

Pilate is a pivotal character in the novel. She is the embodiment of difference and subtle, passive defiance. She rejects social norms, views and economical progress in favour of an age old connection between women, nature, and ancestry.²⁷

Her difference is eminently illuminated through her strong attachment with land that Morrison demonstrates in the novel through her great idyllic love of geography. In her book entitled *Subject to Negotiation: Reading Feminist Criticism and American Women's Fictions*, Elaine Neil Orr describes Pilate's love for geography as follows: “*Her only school experience awakens her love of geography, and when she runs off as a girl, she takes the geography book with her.*”²⁸ Furthermore, Lindsey Claire Smith adds:

Pilate travelling impulse recalls the journey that Singing Bird made to “the promised land,” the North, on a wagon full of ex-slaves, including her soon-to-be husband Jake. It also reflects her love of the landscape, as her favourite book is a geography text that her childhood teacher gave her.²⁹

I was twelve, but since this was my first school I had to sit over there with the little bitty children. I didn't mind it too much; matter of fact, I liked a lot of it. I loved the geography part. Learning about that made me want to read. And the teacher was tickled at how much I liked

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Neil Orr, Elaine. *Subject to Negotiation: Reading Feminist Criticism and American Women's Fiction*, the University Press of Virginia, the United States of America, 1997. p. 93.

²⁹ Claire Smith, Lindsey. *Indians, Environment, and Identity on the Borders of American literature: From Faulkner and Morrison to Walker and Silko*, PALGRAVE MCMILLAN™, New York, 2008. p. 75.

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geography. She let me have the book and I took it home with me to look at.³⁰

Regardless of her roaming and nomadic life, Pilate has a more affectionate sense of rootedness than her sedentary materialistic brother. Unlike him, her project of selfhood is bound by and more interested in her family space as well as ancestral tokens such as the snuffbox that her mother left after she died. She is more intimately close to southern ancestral roots; moreover, she has constantly revealing dreams about her father which elucidate her strong connections to black ancestry and ancestral roots.

Before they left the farm, she'd taken the scrap of brown paper with her name on it from the Bible, and after a long time trying to make up her mind between a snuffbox and a sunbonnet with blue ribbons on it, she took the little brass box that had belonged to her mother.³¹

Section 2: Milkman's journey into Southern landscape: a Psychic Journey into the Self

When the locality is clear, fully realized, then it becomes universal. I knew there was something I wanted to clear away in writing, so I used the geography of my childhood, the imagined characters based on bits and pieces of people, and that was a statement.³²

[The] return of any black born in the South takes on a special dimension. Along with an intimacy with its people and ties to its land, there is a separateness from both the people and the land—since some of the people are white and the land is not really his. This feeling of tender familiarity and brutish alienation provides tension and makes the trip down home delicate in its bitterness and tough in its joy.³³

Through the act of writing *Song of Solomon*, Morrison's real intention becomes one that she constructs a male world which is different from her other fiction that tackles mainly female issues and ;in which, she tracks a man's journey through the American landscape

³⁰ Morrison, Toni. *Song of Solomon*, Vintage International, New York, 2004. p. 56.

³¹ Ibid., p. 279.

³² Morrison, Toni et al. *Conversation with Toni Morrison*, the University Press of Mississippi, the United States of America, 1994, p 96.

³³ Sattelmeyer, Robert D. *Studies in the Literary Imagination Volume XXXI, Number 2, Fall 1998: Toni Morrison and the American South*, Department of English/ Georgia State University, Atlanta, 1998. p. 37.

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which is intended to be a deep journey into his self. “*I created a male world and inhabited it and it had this quest — a journey from stupidity to epiphany, of a man, a complete man.*”³⁴ Therefore, one of Morrison’s focuses in writing *Song of Solomon* is her preoccupation with the description of the spiritually educative journey of the novel’s protagonist Milkman Dead as his purposeless and selfish quest for gold becomes an authentic quest for a reconnection to and reunion with history, ancestry, and the self, for he pursues what his father, Macon Dead, and his aunt, Pilate Dead, have really lost: “*the true gold of reconnecting to family and the past and, therefore, a located sense of self.*”³⁵ Therefore, Milkman’s journey to the South will be characterized as “*deep into the self as into the American landscape.*”³⁶

His initiation takes him physically from the urban North through a progressively rural and southern landscape to the home of his ancestors in Shalimar, Virginia. What begins as a selfish quest for gold, for material success and escape, becomes a quest for knowledge of his family history and an identity based on that history. *Song of Solomon* is, finally, the story not just of one man’s individualization but of the potential for healing of a community.³⁷

Like the main characters in the bildungsroman, Milkman “*moves from a selfish and juvenile immaturity to a complex knowledge of adulthood*”³⁸. Furthermore, Milkman’s journey toward the South reflects Morrison’s intention to move away from and subvert the conventional American initiation story:

In stories as diverse as Nathaniel Hawthorne’s “My Kinsman, Major Molineaux” and Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man*, the American protagonist usually moves from a rural to an urban area, from the protection and identity of the nurturing family and friends to the

³⁴ Morrison, Toni. “The Site of Memory”, in *Inventing the Truth: The Art and Craft of Memoir*, 2d ed., ed. William Zinsser (Boston; New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1995), 83-102, p. 102.

³⁵ Sattelmeyer, Robert D. *Studies in the Literary Imagination Volume XXXI, Number 2, Fall 1998: Toni Morrison and the American South*, Department of English/ Georgia State University, Atlanta, 1998. p. 40.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 110.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 109.

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isolation and alienation of western individualism. Such a movement allows the youth to escape the confines of the past in order to create himself as an individual acting outside of time and convention. This freedom comes with a price, however: such an initiation typically brings separation, restriction, and a knowledge of evil. This trope is problematized in many African American works, such as Frederick Douglass's *Narrative* and Harriet Jacobs's *Incident in the Life of a Slave Girl*, in which the protagonist moves from an oppressive, enslaving, agrarian South to an enabling, industrial North. For the authors of these slave narratives, leaving behind family, friends, and even names was often essential for escape. For the African American community in the twentieth century, however, Morrison suggests that the isolating individualism that erases the memory of the South destroys spiritual and moral identity. Thus, the trip to the South is central to Morrison's subversion of the classic American initiation story. For the conventionally poor, naive, sensitive youth from the provinces, Morrison substitutes Macon Dead III, nicknamed Milkman, an emotionally isolated, alienated black man who has grown up in the industrial northern midwest, in a Michigan city on the shores of Lake Superior.³⁹

Milkman, a man who lives a haphazard and selfish life that is described by Morrison as “pointless, aimless, and it was true that he didn't concern himself an awful lot about other people. There was nothing he wanted bad enough to risk anything for, inconvenience himself for,”⁴⁰ will start a trip that defies the tide of Black migration north “in order to transcend his aimlessness”⁴¹ and “to live for something other than superficial satiation and pleasure.”⁴² Yet, along this trip and throughout the different engagements he will have with certain people, landscape, and nature, Milkman will undergo many changes in order to heal his spiritual brokenness and disconnection with his southern community and ancestral history.

Among the characters who significantly influence the spiritual growth of Milkman during his journey is his aunt Pilate. Since, Morrison has intentionally shaped the character of

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Hogue, W. Lawrence. *Race, Modernity, Postmodernity: A Look at the History and the Literatures of People of Color Since the 1960s*, University of New York Press, Albany, the United States of America, 1996. p. 32.

⁴¹ Sattelmeyer, Robert D. *Studies in the Literary Imagination Volume XXXI, Number 2, Fall 1998: Toni Morrison and the American South*, Department of English/ Georgia State University, Atlanta, 1998. p. 110.

⁴² Ibid.

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Pilate as the bearer of southern culture; in other words, the African culture, she will be the first person to introduce Milkman to his family history and community. She has a significant impact on his life for she provides him with a place to belong, a home, which becomes the first step in his quest to recover his ancestral history. Despite his father's commentary about her; "*Pilate can't teach you a thing you can use in this world*"⁴³, Pilate's home; for Milkman, becomes a space that is portrayed by Morrison as "*intimate, familiar, like a room that he lived in, a place where he belonged.*"⁴⁴ Hence, she offers him a sense of rootedness, connection, community, and self-affirmation. "*She becomes Milkman's "other mother," and by following in her footsteps, Milkman grows in his love for self and in his attachment to the land.*"⁴⁵ The following passage illustrates the function Pilate has in the life of Milkman:

The lessons begin when Milkman is twelve, with his introduction to Pilate, the aunt who functions as a benevolent sorceress or a witch figure in his life. She helps his mother conceive him, then gives him a place where he can be "surrounded by women who seemed to enjoy him and who laughed out loud"... Pilate is the primal earth mother, with her "berry-black lips," surrounded by oranges and peaches. She is united with the nature with which Milkman must reconcile in order to survive his initiation. Pilate begins by instructing Milkman in practical, everyday knowledge: to say what you mean, how to cook a perfect egg. Because she values nothing but human relationships, Pilate refers to Milkman as Hagar's brother, because, she says, "you treat them both the same".⁴⁶

"*He was oblivious to the universe of wood life that did live there in layers of ivy grown so thick he could have sunk his arm in it up to the elbow.*" Milkman, who has brought up in and confined to a community that exhorts capitalist ideals: "*owning, building, acquiring... he distorted his life, bent it for the sake of gain*"⁴⁷, lives an isolating and

⁴³ Morrison, Toni. *Song of Solomon*, Vintage International, New York, 2004. p. 102.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 344.

⁴⁵ Sattelmeyer, Robert D. *Studies in the Literary Imagination Volume XXXI, Number 2, Fall 1998: Toni Morrison and the American South*, Department of English/ Georgia State University, Atlanta, 1998. p. 40.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 113.

⁴⁷ Furman, Jan. *Toni Morrison's Song of Solomon : A Casebook*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2003. p. 80.

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constraining way of life which is about to change in his first confrontation with Shalimar's wilderness:

It is Milkman who eventually develops a more effective relation to the land when he confronts the wilderness. There he not only searches for the cave where the miner's gold is presumably hidden, but he is prepared for the strenuous encounter with the Shalimar woods.⁴⁸

In the course of his journey to south and which he undertakes in search for gold, Milkman has to come to terms with kinship; in other words, the past of his family, by enduring and outliving the southern landscape that is manifested in the woods, the Pennsylvania woods, as part of his quest for final reunion with his ancestral history and his inauthentic self. *"Milkman's trips through the woods to the Butler house and to the cave are part of his initiation as well, and they anticipate the bobcat hunt in Shalimar that will bring the shedding of his old, inauthentic self."*⁴⁹ Milkman thinks that the gold will liberate him from his father's authority and emotional extortion; however, he will soon realize that the greater treasure lies in the song that he usually hears children sing it in Shalimar and which holds the secret of his family's history:

When Milkman first arrived in Shalimar, he had heard the children singing the Song of Solomon, "that old blues song Pilate sang all the time: 'O Sugarman don't leave me here,' except the children [sing] 'Solomon don't leave me here'". The song is the clue to Milkman's family history, but more significantly, it also becomes for him an affirmation for kinship and community. As he more carefully listens to the song again, Milkman is finally able to piece together his genealogy.⁵⁰

In this sense, Milkman's engagement with the southern landscape helps him understand himself better as landscape drives him to *"move into a new relationship with a greater*

⁴⁸ Dixon, Melvin. *Ride Out the Wilderness: Geography and Identity in Afro-American Literature*, the Board of Trustees of the University of Illinois, the United States of America, 1987. p. 167.

⁴⁹ Sattelmeyer, Robert D. *Studies in the Literary Imagination Volume XXXI, Number 2, Fall 1998: Toni Morrison and the American South*, Department of English/ Georgia State University, Atlanta, 1998. p. 116.

⁵⁰ Bloom, Harold. *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations : Toni Morrison's Song of Solomon- New Edition*, Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data, the United States of America, 2009. p. 54.

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reality.”⁵¹ The reality that is unravelled by a story which is imbedded in that landscape itself; so, his family’s history as well as his family name are greatly related and deeply connected to the land, to a place that is named Shalimar which is; in fact, named after Milkman’s ancestors. As, Carolyn M. Jones affirms: “*History is a place. The place, Shalimar, is named after Milkman’s own ancestors, and their story shapes the landscape, even as Solomon’s actions have caused a disjunction in the family and the selves of the Deads.*”⁵² Therefore, Milkman gains his sense of entitlement; hence, of selfhood, in the south. “*Stripped of his personality and all the material things that he thought constituted self, Milkman comes into contact with the impersonal nature that undergirds all reality.*”⁵³

Eventually, Milkman’s journey across the southern landscape helps him transform into a complete and free man who is able now to tame the land and make a deep ;yet, liberating connection with it. “*Gone is his failure to attach to place. Now he has roots in every place that Pilate, his father, and his grandparents have lived.*”⁵⁴ His trip south to Shalimar, “*to the liberating discovery of family and past,*”⁵⁵ is as deep as his journey into the southern community of his ancestors; in this sense, *Song of Solomon* is a story which has as its main object the need to embrace community, “*the community that comes from a shared culture and history... and denies historical discontinuity and transcends the postmodernist impulse toward despair.*”⁵⁶ Thus, Morrison proves to be successful in her attempt to depict a character’s transformation from an alienated man to a man who appreciates land and people:

⁵¹ Sattelmeyer, Robert D. *Studies in the Literary Imagination Volume XXXI, Number 2, Fall 1998: Toni Morrison and the American South*, Department of English/ Georgia State University, Atlanta, 1998. p. 42.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., pp. 41-42.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 119.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Furman, Jan. *Toni Morrison’s Song of Solomon : A Casebook*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2003. p. 60.

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Morrison begins with a twentieth-century modern man, alienated and fragmented, and ends with that man's successful connection with a people. Through his initiation into the Southern community of his ancestors, Milkman gains not the typical knowledge of limitations, or the knowledge that comes through the fall into evil, but rather the understanding that the past continues to constitute the present in ways that are not constraining but liberating. He discovers both the fact and the meaning of his African American heritage.⁵⁷

Conclusion

Space is unquestionably a pivotal element for the analysis of Morrison's *Song of Solomon*. It situates the novel at the core of a critical focus which opens up the text to more complicated and subtle interpretations that reads *Song of Solomon* as a site of critique that gathers Morrison's central concerns about individuals and their relation with/to the implications that space has on their lives. And, indeed, the representation of space ends up being the basis for discussing the imperatives of its politics in the way it manipulates personal experiences that help shape the lives of the characters.

In *Song of Solomon*, space undoubtedly proves itself to be a structure of power within which the characters of the novel attempt to achieve their sense of selfhood. The process of negotiating the antithetical representation in which Morrison classifies her paradoxical characters as either northern/material or southern/spiritual appears to be analytically fruitful in the way it cunningly demonstrates the politics of space and the great influence it has over the personal experiences of the characters.

In the context of *Song of Solomon*, the process of analyzing the ways how the characters spatially develop and experience the sense of selfhood and personal autonomy; mainly observed through the journey undertaken by the protagonist Milkman to the south,

⁵⁷ Ibid., p.60.

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effectively and knavishly illustrates how space and landscape powerfully contribute to the achievement of such experience..

General Conclusion

Throughout this study I have attempted to demonstrate that Toni Morrison's fiction operates as an artistically literary arena upon which she manages to articulate and employ new emerging concepts of memory and space in recent literary discussions. To fulfil this purpose, special focus has been laid on Morrison's perception and treatment of these conceptions in two of her major works *Beloved* and *Song of Solomon*. This has allowed to explore how Morrison come to blend notions of memory, trauma and history; in *Beloved*, in order to produce a literary text that reflects upon her strong determination to excavate and rewrite the history of those who suffered from the painful atrocities of the slavery institution on the one hand, and to assert the power of space; in *Song of Solomon*, as a dynamic literary phenomenon which plays a great role in shaping and changing the lives of black people.

In *Beloved*, Morrison employs rememory as a literary technique that enables her characters to invoke, render, and articulate their painful traumatic memories in the form of memory narratives. Through the evocation of her characters' repressed traumatic memories; especially those of Sethe and Paul D, Morrison's project of literary archaeology drive us to perceive *Beloved* as a historiographic metafiction, for Morrison's adoption of Foucauldian archaeology to excavate historical truth proves to be very lucrative, since Morrison's fraught attempts to unravel the real historical events of slavery; through the painful life of Sethe, and to reclaim its unthought and unspeakable experience, bear a deep resemblance to Foucault's project for rethinking and rewriting the Western history.

In addition, we find that the workings of rememory in Morrison's *Beloved* engage Morrison in a trip to scout about her characters' deepest traumatic memories; for Morrison's novel spotlights the dynamic features of memory in narrative along with its imaginative and creative power to reconstruct and represent the significance of the past. In this sense, through

the trope of memory Morrison succeeds in engaging her readers not just with the tangible and physical ramifications of slavery, but most importantly with its exceedingly intimate, psychological consequences; to ultimately represent what Morrison herself identifies as the interior life of black people under such circumstances. In this vein, Morrison's *Beloved* is intended to disclose the untold of the narratives, the psychic underlying themes that reside within and beneath the holes of historical facts and obscured spaces which readers can come into them, to engage in a participatory reading.

Moreover, we have come to the conclusion that through the character of Beloved Morrison will be able at making the unspeakable trauma of slavery accessible to the reader. So, to provide the readers with a means of conceiving the traumatic past of slavery, Morrison employs some particular and unique narrative strategies, such as the interweaving of the past and the present, recurrent motifs, and paradoxical images, to engage her readers in the processes of healing and storytelling so that they have to presume responsibility for bearing witness and living the traumatic past of characters.

Space is unquestionably a pivotal element for the analysis of Morrison's *Song of Solomon*. It situates the novel at the core of a critical focus which opens up the text to more complicated and subtle interpretations that reads *Song of Solomon* as a site of critique that gathers Morrison's central concerns about individuals and their relation with/to the implications that space has on their lives. And, indeed, the representation of space ends up being the basis for discussing the imperatives of its politics in the way it manipulates personal experiences that help shape the lives of the characters.

In *Song of Solomon*, space undoubtedly proves itself to be a structure of power within which the characters of the novel attempt to achieve their sense of selfhood. The process of negotiating the antithetical representation in which Morrison classifies her paradoxical characters as either northern/material or southern/spiritual appears to be analytically fruitful

in the way it cunningly demonstrates the politics of space and the great influence it has over the personal experiences of the characters.

In the context of *Song of Solomon*, the process of analyzing the ways how the characters spatially develop and experience the sense of selfhood and personal autonomy; mainly observed through the journey undertaken by the protagonist Milkman to the south, effectively and knavishly illustrates how space and landscape powerfully contribute to the achievement of such spiritually educative experience.

At last, we should admit the fact that the present dissertation could not, in fact, deal with all the issues linked to Morrison's project of articulating and signposting the hardships of the African American experience in America. Among the issues which have been held over is the role of community and music in giving meaning and hope to the Blacks' traumatic experience, especially Jazz music. For all their intrinsic contribution in the process of healing, community and music constitute an interesting field of research for those who are interested in studying the fictions of Morrison from a different perspective.

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