

## Toni Morrison's Paradise: The Unreliable Narrator

Shahriyar Mansouri and Noritah Omar\*

*Department of English Language, Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication,  
Universiti Putra Malaysia, 43400 UPM, Serdang,  
Selangor, Malaysia*

*\*E-mail: nomar@fbmk.upm.edu.my*

### ABSTRACT

Previous critical readings of Toni Morrison's novels, especially *Paradise*, largely emphasise the universal themes explored in her novels, namely, feminism, culture, psychology, and of course, her remarkable presentation of African-Americans in racial and cultural conflicts. Yet, there are major areas that remain unexplored in her works. One of the most conspicuous absences is Morrison's dominance over the art of narration. Narratology, as a science, studies the ways in which narration and narrators help us shape our perceptions of reality, cultural artifacts, clichés, etc. Needless to say, it is Morrison's ceaseless dominance and control over the art of narration that take her novels, including *Paradise*, to a new level and style - a modern style, which Roland Barthes refers to as the "writerly text." By setting the science of narration as the cornerstone of this paper, the following notions will receive a proper narratological definition: (a) how the various stories, initially narrated by unrelated characters are juxtaposed against each other to convey a single plot/storyline, and (b) how a singular omniscient/omnipresent narrator is unable to lead the narrative towards a satisfactory ending. In order to investigate the significance of utilising a labyrinthine narrative form in modern texts, this paper studies the variety and relevance of the employed forms of narration, through the interdisciplinary science of narratology.

**Keywords:** American Cultural Studies, Interdisciplinary Literary Studies, Narratology, Psychoanalysis, Toni Morrison

### INTRODUCTION

*Paradise* (1999), the seventh novel by Toni Morrison, can be considered the finale of her linked series of novels, beginning with *Beloved* (1987), and including *Jazz* (1992). As most critics claim, the aforementioned novels function as more of a trilogy than separate novels carrying separate voices.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, *Paradise* stands apart in terms of its multi-textured story, its diversity of narrators and, most notably, the versatility of narration, compared to her preceding novels. Previous critical readings of Morrison's works, especially *Paradise*, have for the most part addressed her more universal themes: including feminism,

culture, psychology, and conflictive issues.<sup>2</sup> An absence, however, from this wealth of critical discussion is Morrison's dominance over the art of narration.

Narratology, the science of narration, reveals a literary critical conscience of the following aspects in the specific case of *Paradise*: (a) a multithreaded beginning that eventually leads towards a unified ending, thus explaining the presence of all 'character-narrators' within the novel; (b) how the separate stories, initially narrated by these unrelated character-narrators, are carefully and pertinently juxtaposed to convey a single plot/storyline; and finally, (c) how a singular omniscient and/or omnipresent narrator would inevitably prove to

Received: 29 September 2009

Accepted: 22 February 2010

\*Corresponding Author

be incompetent in guiding the narrative towards a proper closure or ending.

In order to examine how the narrative of *Paradise*, through such a clandestine narratorial voice, keeps up with the sum of a multi-dimensional narrative, narratology should first be explained. Narratology examines the distinctive ways in which a narrative establishes and constructs our perception towards an understanding of the world that surrounds us. This relative 'world' includes notions which are formed as the result of social interactions, such as cultural and national artefacts, clichés, societal norms, 'dos and don'ts,' psychological, historical, and cultural aspects. In the words of Hayden White (1987), narratology is "a meta-code, a human universal [code] on the basis of which transcultural messages about the nature of a shared reality can be transmitted" (pp. 13-14).

Despite the fact that the science of narration is firmly rooted in a structuralistic reading of literature and its relevant framework (p. 14), such a universal meta-code had outspoken contributors, whose body of knowledge extends considerably beyond the fixed paradigms of structuralism. In other words, narratology has borrowed many of its expounding aspects and principles from other literary theories, namely, psychoanalysis, formalism (that of Vladimir Propp's "codes of narration and folklore"), and even theories of deconstruction (Propp *et al.*, 1999, p. 32). Moreover, an overview of the field, such as Mieke Bal's influential *Narratology* (1997), breaks the science of narration down into the study of 'elements' and 'aspects', with the former being the actual events, actors, and places that make up the narrative, and the latter the ways that the text manipulates the presentation of those elements (p. 35).

#### CODES OF NARRATION: TITLING, ATTITUDINAL VOICE AND THE CONNECTION

Roland Barthes initially postulated five essential codes intended to address both the 'aspects' and 'elements' of narration, and to provide each

with a plausible definition. The first was his hermeneutic code known as 'HER.' This code seeks to resolve the most intriguing question that can be asked with regard to the title of a novel (as an unclear element in itself), or whether it is known to have possible connection with the voice in the narrative. In his *S/Z* (1974), Barthes propounds how HER can resolve the vagueness and ambivalence in the titles of literary works, and eventually its relevance to the voice of the narrative, by asking a number of questions. HER addresses "any element in a story that is not explained and, therefore, exists as an enigma for the reader, raising questions that demand explication" that should be resolved through the narrative (37).

With regard to Morrison's *Paradise*, HER can be utilised to investigate questions which originally refer back to the title, possibly one of the narrating voices of the novel,<sup>3</sup> and to examine the actual reference from which both the main voice and the narrative are labelled. As for *Paradise*, the unclear connection/relation between the narratorial voices and the title begs a number of questions: (a) What is 'paradise'? (b) Is it feminine, or masculine? (c) Is it a verb or a noun? (d) Why even this name? and (d) Was the title originally intended to reveal anything about the voice or narrator?

With respect to HER, the answer to such secrecy would not be unravelled until the very end of the novel, which reveals something "extraordinaire" about the nature of the voice and narrator. It reveals the title to be a sexless noun with no specific gender; indicative of a religiously<sup>4</sup>, yet to a large extent stereotyped, restful place in which "lost" ships or souls might harbour for eternity:

*...another ship perhaps, but different, heading to port, crew and passengers, lost and saved, atremble, for they have been disconsolate for time. Now they will rest before shouldering the endless work they were created to do down here in paradise. (Morrison, 1997, p. 318)*

Moreover, it also can be inferred that the title, although ostensibly inanimate, resonates a certain attitudinal voice towards those who may come to 'rest' there; an attitude which has direction and a source of some sort. It is, however, difficult to perceive whether the voice is charged with malice or benevolence, considering the seemingly preordained narrative which is about to prevail; in other words, why should souls and ships harbour there? Have they been forced to do so by the omniscience of the voice, or is the 'rest' undertaken voluntarily?

In order to formulate an acceptable answer, one should consider Gérard Genette's "structuralistically" faithful codes of narration.<sup>5</sup> Genette's suggestion on resolving the narrator's voice was that it should not be mixed with "perspective," or "the eyes we see through," but it should be sought for "when we analyse the relationship of narrator to the narrative, and the way the story is being told" (as cited in Tyson, 1999, p. 221). In other words, it would be the voice that "helps us determine the narrator's attitude towards the story and reliability"<sup>6</sup> (p. 222). That being said, one wonders if the voice which speaks as a reverberating narrator at the end of the story should be considered "paradise"<sup>7</sup> itself, in that it echoes a voice out of the unconscious of each character that may form a collective unconscious of the people in the novel?<sup>8</sup> Or is the voice that of a metaphysical narrator who had ordained the plot beforehand, but who still requires additional information to be narrated through the mouthpiece of characters who are 'mentally and/or physically' involved, in order to reach a sound closure for the narrative?<sup>9</sup>

To further explore the voice and attitude, one should refer to the beginning of the novel, where the narrative has not begun; sounding like introductory musings of an unknown narratorial voice that begins by referring to a poem from the Nag Hammadi Library:

*For many are the pleasant forms which  
exist in numerous sins,  
and incontinencies,  
and disgraceful passions,  
and fleeting pleasures,*

*which (men) embrace until they  
become sober  
and go up to their resting place.  
And they will find me there,  
and they will live,  
and they will not die again.  
(Robinson, 1990, p. 356)*

Considering Genette's code of voice, the attitude maintained by the voice in the novel can be labelled 'comforting' and 'soothing,' as it warns both the readers and characters about the nature of their life, deeds, the eternal 'resting place,' and of course, the omniscient entity that 'they will find...there.' In this respect, the voice at the very end of the narrative itself becomes a protective being, watching over characters, and warning them of the actions about to take place; and when the "ocean weaves" of disconcertion and turbulence have settled, it will provide the "crew and passengers" with "solace" and "unambivalent bliss of going home" (Morrison, 1997, p. 318).

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

#### **'WRITERLY' NARRATIVES: VERSATILE AND MULTI-THREADED**

The other major aspect of narration in *Paradise* is the style with which it is presented - the multiplicity of stories, implemented narratives, non-linear chronology, the labyrinth of mystified relationships among the characters, and a sound and conclusive closure with minimal exposure of the narrator's identity. The features which Barthes (1974) considers necessary for a text to be labelled "multi-level" are: (a) it starts

by foretelling the end in the beginning; (b) the multiplicity of entrances and exits for the narration and narrators; (c) non-linear chronology; and (d) a severely twisted plot. Barthes refers to such a text as the embodiment of a “writerly text”:

*[A] writerly text is ourselves writing, before the infinite play of the world (the world as function) is traversed, intersected, stopped, plasticised by some singular system (Ideology, Genus, Criticism) which reduces the plurality of entrances, the opening of networks, the infinity of languages (p. 5).*

This definition is in opposition to Peter Brooks’ (1984) hypothesis of a perceivably forward-moving text with a clear beginning, notable climax, and eventually a revealing ending, which Barthes terms a “readerly text.” Brooks argues that “all readers are naturally charged with a zeal or enthusiasm to have their hands on the final part of the story” in order to have the enigmas and mysteries which were raised in the beginning of the narrative resolved and cleared (p. 34). Brooks refers to this trusty, ongoing pace of the story as “temporal dynamics,” which is charged by a “motor force,” or a desire within readers to finish and end what they started (p. 120). Brooks elaborates on this desire as “the temporal dynamics that shape narratives in our reading of them, the play of desire in time that makes us turn pages and strive toward narrative ends” (p. 120).

Brooks’ application of codes for narration within texts seems quite outdated, and in a way stereotyped, as they are reminiscent of early Victorian novels and short stories; they offer everything in a ‘single package’, demanding the least possible mental exertion from the readers to go through and eventually digest the text. Brooks, however, looked for yet another aiding element in the art of narration, by which the narrative could be vivified to some extent: starting the novel in *medias res*, the progenitor of which is no less than Homer’s

*Odyssey*. Although beginning a narrative in *medias res* lends it, and the narration, a sense of chronological chaos, Brooks (1984) argues that it seemingly maintains a balance between the temporal progression of the story’s pace, and its element of suspense (pp. 45, 62).

With respect to *Paradise*, the reader sets himself up to witness a ‘writerly text’, a text which is garnished by: (a) a thoroughly non-linear storyline, (b) numerous ‘entrance/exit’ instances of both narrators and the narrative, and (c) a cautious main narratorial voice that guards its concealed identity, but which reveals an anticipated sense of reality, through the profusion of details in a descriptive narrative.<sup>10</sup> It cannot be ignored that from the beginning of the novel—a terrifying one at that—it seems as if the main narrator has already formed a certain attitude, tending to disclose the secrets behind the Convent, the townspeople, and all the other characters to whom the murderous scene is related. This revelation will be achieved not only by what is about to be revealed by the main narrator as a ruling omnipresent judge, but also by means of excavation from the characters’ regressive minds.

For instance, the main narratorial voice—which happens to embody (the voice of) ‘Paradise,’ delves deep into memories of Anna at the time when she is four, and “sitting on the new porch of her father’s store—back in 1954” (Morrison 1997, p. 116). It is the same exact time period in which another ‘being’ begins to narrate in *medias res*, and reveals the untold narrative of Steward, Anna, Ace, Nathan DuPres and other characters. These characters will later be given significant roles in sculpting a proper closure to the narrative of Ruby’s townspeople, as well as that of the women of the Convent. This manifold of stories within stories introduces the narrative of *Paradise* as a metanarrative: the shorter stories might possibly complete a larger picture, perhaps in relation to where this promised land might be, based on various accounts.<sup>11</sup> Secondly, it introduces the narratorial voice as if shrouded behind masks of characterisation that deliberately evokes a strong message: the narratorial voice cannot provide

enough details to finalise the closure all by itself. In this way, the voice of 'Paradise' ushers in the inevitable introduction of certain characters, whose personal memories and interpretations will make the closure become more tangible, and thus more sensible.

The narrator's voice, which adheres to Genette's code of 'distance', sounds more akin to that of a patient detective, who is resolved to disclose hidden parts related to the offensive beginning of the novel, and the involved characters. This, in fact, shapes a disclosure which resounds with what Brooks (1984) states about the available 'temporal' agent in novels: that "all narrative posits [sound like they are uttered by] if not the Sovereign Judge, at least a Sherlock Holmes capable of going back over the ground, and thereby realising the meaning of the cipher left by a life" (p. 34). In a deeper study of the versatile voices within *Paradise*, not only may one be naturally attracted to seek for the main narrators' distinctive voice, and its relative attitude towards other townspeople, but it is also the townspeople's voice itself which stands distinct due to its different tonality. In other words, as far as the psychological aspect of Genette's code of voice is concerned, the secondary resonating voice would be the convergence of the townspeople's voice, which justifies the present murderous deeds as the result of a perturbed past memories; and thus, the attitude would be the mere reluctance of townspeople in socially welcoming the women of the Convent, and a gradual detachment from them.

#### CLOSURE/ENDING: PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECT OF HUMAN NATURE

Brooks (1984) remarks on the presence of an innate desire which urges readers "to reach to an end" (p. 36), or in narratological terms, to reach complete closure. Yet, as far as the psychological aspect of closure is concerned, such an 'ending' can be thought of as the representation of a Freudian conclusive impulse, namely, the death drive. It is this innate impulse that tempts readers to find 'ends' and 'closures':

indispensable points through the process of reading and conceptualisation of the narrative.<sup>12</sup> This conclusive desire seems to be not only reader-relevant, but also author-relevant—through the mouthpiece of the narrator, and through characterisation.

In *Paradise*, characters are set to be on guard against the women of the Convent, which is complemented by their frequent verbal animosity. They seem to be eager and willing to put an end—in the way they finally do—to everything and everyone related to the Convent, as if following a determined 'conclusive unconscious'.<sup>13</sup> Accordingly, such 'homeostatic'<sup>14</sup> actions amplify how the Genettian code for 'voice' and attitude of the narrator(s) is threaded into the townspeople's voice: when this code and the apparent destructive nature of Ruby's townspeople (of course mostly aimed at the women in the Convent) are parallelised, then the narrated 'early and shocking' ending for the characters' lives becomes plausible enough.<sup>15</sup>

The 'homeostatic voice' is not limited to the men who commit the heinous act of murdering defenceless women in order to "eliminate or alleviate their mental tensions," but to their families and children as well (Hendrick, 1999, p. viii).<sup>16</sup> The embittered narratorial voice in 'Paradise', that symbolises the townspeople, goes beyond the simple bitter words, the latter of which have long been used against the women at the Convent. In fact, the ill-disposed nature of the voice begins to shape the townspeople's behaviour into something completely asocial, and partially hostile. Take the townswomen of Ruby for instance; they seem to be already fed up with how women of the Convent behaved, and how they ruined a "nice and memorable wedding" with their obnoxious appearance (Morrison, 1997, pp. 156-8). As the narrative reveals, anything which refers to the women of the Convent seems to bother the townspeople in one way or another. Their behaviour and outfits, among other things, easily trigger a negative anxiety, leading towards an unconsciously defensive attitude. The narrator, however, seemingly cannot afford to possess either a supportive or philippic perspective towards



the women in the Convent while explaining the townspeople's attitude, for doing so would jeopardise its anonymity as an omnipresent judge. This neutrality of perspective also upholds the narrator's position as an "'aspect' which can question or elaborate the 'element' of narration" stays feasible (Mieke, 1997, p. 75).

### INTROSPECTION AND 'DISTANCE': MAINTAINING MAXIMUM ANONYMITY

With regard to the Genettian code of 'distance,' the narrator acts quite professionally to maintain its distance and aloofness from the voice within the narrative<sup>17</sup>. This detachment is simply retained by instigating anonymity, i.e. by having no specific appearance in any sets of sentences, or even words, which may suggest a personalised projection of the narrator. More often than not, as to the merits of 'writerly texts,' readers are bound to 'read between the lines,' if additional information about the voice, or toward whom the narration might refer, is needed. On the contrary, in *Paradise*, the style is coloured with lavish descriptiveness, through which the narrative may reveal requisite details in a constant pace of narration. This is why the concept of 'reality'—considering the Genettian code of 'distance'—seems to be at its pinnacle by the abundance of details, while the narrator's distance is perpetually reserved. In fact, what enables the narratorial voice in *Paradise* to share such a plethora of descriptiveness is the deployment of an inclusive consciousness, shared amongst the characters of the narrative; in other words, utilising the introspective form of narration.

'Introspective narration', or the usage of a delicate form of personalised psychological narration, is the dominant method that enables the narratorial voice to maintain the total realism of the story, while protecting itself from breaking into corporeal exposure, and therefore infringing upon the code of distance.<sup>18</sup> This form of narrative is set to search deeply into the characters' unconscious—the reservoir of repressed personal memories and experiences—and bring it to surface, in a fashion that is

seemingly voluntary. What remains significant, however, is that the whole unravelled truth in this form of narration resembles a 'personal musing'; it is unconsciously uttered to alleviate a character's potentially traumatic conscience, even though it may publicly tarnish that individual. The memories and/or experiences, which are deemed necessary for the narrative by the omniscient narrator, are mostly tunnelled through this sort of musing, akin to 'monologues with present tense' rather than past-tensed monologues.<sup>19</sup>

One major reason which substantiates the usage of these personal, psychological narratives as part of the whole narrative is that they are the characters' psychic involuntary responses to the vague social stimuli within the storyline. These stimuli are implemented by the main narratorial voice, and are thus required to complement the narrative, and clarify such vagueness. In other words, there are incidents occurring within a chapter of the novel that render the whole narration simply a vague and incomplete effort; therefore, it is required to have a fresh revelation of the same incident from a more personalised and involved perspective, which is achieved through introspective narration. Moreover, the indispensability of such a personalised, introspective narration, in achieving a constant and unbreakable story pace, can best be comprehended through what Barthes (1974) labels the 'Proairetic code' or 'ACT'.<sup>20</sup> ACT is when an action or event,

*...refers to another major structuring principle that builds interest or suspense on the part of a reader or viewer. The Proairetic code applies to any action that implies a further narrative action. For example, a gunslinger draws his gun on an adversary and we wonder what the resolution of this action will be. We wait to see if he kills his opponent or is wounded himself. Suspense is thus created by action rather than by a reader's or viewer's wish to have mysteries explained. (p. 30)*

There are myriad of instances when an action or event begs for such self-inspective and character-induced form of narration. As a result, introspective narration gradually illuminates further details about that specific individual; the cause that discloses why a repressed memory is related to the ongoing flow of events, and how other individuals respond to this narration. Take, for instance, an incident in *Paradise*, where regardless of its inadvertent occurrence, it brings about a whole new setting, and an indulgence in a character's unconscious to produce a more sensible narrative:

*It was the lip swelling around its split that troubles her. With pressure it oozed a trickle of blood and suddenly everybody was running through the streets of Oakland...sirens, yes, and distant...The water trickles into the tub. Gigi put rollers in her hair:<sup>21</sup> (Morrison, 1997, p. 170)*

It is as though the Barthesian Proairetic code caused Gigi's (Grace) unconscious to force previous memories out into an analogy with a present state, and thereafter, to have them articulated through a continuous monologue with present tense. This externalisation of past memories through introspection and self-narrative may not find any better definition but to be considered as 'condensation' of unconscious images which allows a repressed memory to emerge. This particular memory tends to be avoided through the process of 'avoidance.' The introspective narration initially seems to be overwhelming and inclined to crisscross with present events and past memories. Yet, it gradually settles down to be an unconscious defence agent/mechanism which is set to sedate the traumatic mind of the narrator through self-narration.

### CONCLUSION: PARADISE THE UNRELIABLE NARRATOR?

To sum up the aforementioned forms of narratives and narration as a whole, Toni

Morrison seems to imply in her *Paradise* that we, the readers, cannot afford to search for a singular, reliable omnipresent narrator due to the complexity of the narratorial voice in the text. This complexity, which indicates unreliability, can be witnessed throughout the narrative and remain as something impeccably personal and wrapped in the labyrinth of individuals' unconscious psyches. The characters, therefore, become the next dominant narratorial voices, by way of exploring the narrative of *Paradise* from within themselves. This is when the other forms of narration, such as self-narrative, monologues, figurative, Barthesian, introspective, Genettian, etc., prove themselves to be more pragmatic than a particular omnipresent narrator. It is likely, however, that such an omnipresent narrator is formed as a sum of all narrators, namely, a collective consciousness which whispers the narrative to readers—out of the collective unconscious of all characters in that narrative. When the voice of 'Paradise' presents its resounding disagreement with the townspeople's ill-considered perception of "Furrow of the Brow," the disagreement is articulated through Dovey and Delia (Morrison, 1997, p. 93). In this way, the narratorial voice ('Paradise') maintains its anonymity and cements its position, in relation to the townspeople, as a detached, albeit watchful, voice. In view of this, 'Paradise' proves once again that its deficiency is not only caused by the complexity of the labyrinthine narrative, but also by the need to have proper closure. The latter is very significant for 'Paradise' that it hides behind a manifold of characters, and thus delves into their personal memories, and finally leads the narrative towards a proper closure using this unified body of information, in the form of scattered memories.

Considering the fact that the narrative of 'Paradise' largely depends on a manifold of personalised narration, it seems to be implied that such an omnipresent narrator repeatedly falls short and stands merely incompetent in providing the narrative with substantial pieces of information that could 'lead the story somewhere,' and at least fulfil the Barthesian closure.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, the voice too ought to be

considered as an implication of voices within the narrative forged into a unified and constant narrating tone.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>See Irena P. Patton (2008).

<sup>2</sup>Philip Page in *Dangerous Freedom: Fusion and Fragmentation in Toni Morrison's Novels* (1996) provides a strong analysis of Morrison's six fictional works, and an equally thorough reading of the criticism and theory.

<sup>3</sup>Basically, the title in Morrison's seventh novel reveals nothing specific about the nature of voice; yet what only the title resonates would be a generalised religious theme.

<sup>4</sup>I use the term 'religiously' intentionally, in order to emphasise the orthodoxy that the title of the novel represents: a metaphysical promised land, features of which both the ending and the prologue-like poem have figuratively spoken; the former in the form of a concluding point, and the latter as a point where the narrative is expected to end.

<sup>5</sup>This distinctly refers to codes that correspond with the very paradigm of structuralism presented by Gérard Genette. See Lois Tyson (1999), pp. 221-2.

<sup>6</sup>Genette notes that the concerns of the voice upon the current or prospective events within a narrative should not be considered as an individualistic instance of narrator's mindset, namely, a possible interference with the stream of ongoing events. See Tyson (1999), pp. 221-2, especially the chapter "Structuralism and Narration."

<sup>7</sup>Here, 'Paradise' refers both to the place—the promised land where the women of Convent are implied to rest eternally, and the unified body of a narratorial voice.

<sup>8</sup>The realm of unconscious, as Freud noted, should be considered as a reservoir of maintained experiences, of either individuals or in a larger scale a sum of them, within which "religious doctrine(s) are apparently known to be illusions and projections of infantile needs that comfort people who may not be able to face sufferings, uncertainty and death." It also ought to be seen as an unknown realm through which metaphysical concepts and messages are mentally producible. The latter is quite discernible when it comes to a Jungian hypothesis of unconscious. See Paul C. Vitz (1988) 1-4.

<sup>9</sup>There are marginalised characters in the novel who tend, by the order of narration, to only be heard by other characters at a distance; there is also no specific

lead to the actual physical appearances of these characters, such as the original leaders of the people of Ruby, namely, the Zechariah, Rector Morgan and so forth. These characters, despite their notable role in the formation of the Ruby are perceived to have the least presence and interference in the story-line and concurrent events.

<sup>10</sup>There are instances in *Paradise* when the main narrator intentionally dedicates a whole chapter to a specific character—Patricia, Connie, etc.—and stops taking any particular part as the leading narrator. The introspective narration, which is led by the chosen character's traumatic and revelatory unconscious, guides the whole narrative towards a more descriptive cause for a proper closure of the novel.

<sup>11</sup>Such an implementation of shorter stories within the main story occurs to be a recurring theme throughout the narrative of *Paradise*, as can be seen in pp. 94, 110, 116-17, 126-27, 170-71, 210.

<sup>12</sup>They are the same 'closing points' that define and conclude all previous efforts put forward by authors, through narrating the story in order to 'lead the narrative somewhere.' Also see Barthes (1974), p. 18.

<sup>13</sup>This 'general unconscious,' as Freud argued, should be considered as elemental representation of an innate phenomenon in both individualistic and global scale, which leads towards 'homeostasis'—fighting against tensions, negation, dissolution, and death. It had been in practice, either unintentionally or with fullest volition, in sensible instances such as civil wars, dictatorial World Wars and even in arbitrariness of social judgments towards each other; a leading desire to 'rule over' others and not to be ruled over. See Freud (1998), pp. 35, 77.

<sup>14</sup>See note 13.

<sup>15</sup>The novel starts by showing that "they," namely, the townspeople, "shoot the white girl first." And, "With the rest they can take their time" (*Paradise* 3). Within the earliest stage of the narrative, readers feel bedazzled by the blood-soaked scene, but at the same time they are still immune to the fact that these shot girls will be the major narrators of the next 318 pages to come.

<sup>16</sup>As the term 'homeostasis,' in fact, refers to such notion of alleviation and psychic balance attained through destruction or removal of other opposing elements, individuals, etc; it is also known as the 'ego potential.' See Ives Hendrick (1999), p. 96.

<sup>17</sup>Genette argues that "the more intrusive the narrator, the greater the distance between narration and story."



And conversely, "the least distance is created when we are unaware of the narrator's presence, when a tale seems to 'tell itself.'" He also notes that a more plausible distance can be achieved through the "absence of descriptive detail." In other words, "the less detail given, the less the effect of reality is created, and the greater the sense of distance between narration and story." See Genette (1983), pp. 120, 192-3. Also see Tyson (1999), pp. 220-2.

<sup>18</sup>See Dorrit Cohn (1978), p. 203.

<sup>19</sup>It is as if the whole set of revealed past memories/experiences are being re-generated, however, through a present mouthpiece; but they are being reviewed in that individual's mind, ipso facto.

<sup>20</sup>See Barthes (1974), p. 30.

<sup>21</sup>"With pressure it oozed a trickle of blood" is an instance of Barthesian Proairetic code (ACT). The entire excerpt is the most conspicuous instance of introspective narration in the narrative of Paradise.

<sup>22</sup>See note 12.

## REFERENCES

- Barthes, R. (1974). *S/Z*. (Richard Miller, Trans.). New York, NY: Noonday. (Original work published 1970).
- Brooks, P. (1984). *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*. New York, NY: Vintage.
- Cohn, D. (1978). *Transparent Minds: Narrative Modes for Presenting Consciousness in Fiction*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Cooper, A. M. (1974). *Contemporary Psychoanalysis in America: Leading Analysts Present their Work*. New York, NY: American Psychiatric Publishing.
- David, R. (2000). *Toni Morrison Explained*. New York, NY: Random House.
- Felluga, D. (2003). General introduction to narratology. *Introductory Guide to Critical Theory*. Retrieved from <http://www.cla.purdue.edu/academic/engl/theory/narratology/modules/introduction.html>.
- Freud, S. (1998). *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (James Strachey, Trans.). New York, NY: Vintage. (Original work published 1920).
- Genette, G. (1983). *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*. (Jane E. Lewin, Trans.). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. (Original work published 1970).
- Hendrick, I. (1999). *Facts and Theories of Psychoanalysis*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Mieke, B. (1997). *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.
- Morrison, T. (1999). *Paradise*. New York, NY: Knopf.
- Page, P. (1996). *Dangerous Freedom: Fusion and Fragmentation in Toni Morrison's novels*. Oxford, MS: University Press of Mississippi.
- Pattison, G. (1992). *Kierkegaard: The Aesthetic and the Religious*. London: Macmillan.
- Patton, Irena P. (2002). The dialogic narrative and the female text in Toni Morrison. *Mirage*. Retrieved from <http://www.mirage.com.mk/tekst.asp?lang=eng&tekst=32>.
- Propp, V. J., Wagner, L. A., Scott, L. and Dundes, A. (1999). *Morphology of the Folktale*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Robinson, J. M. (1990). *The Nag Hammadi library*. New York, NY: HarperOne.
- Tyson, L. (1999). *Critical Theory Today*. New York: Garland.
- Vitz, P. C. (1988). *Sigmund Freud's Christian Unconscious*. London: Guilford Press.
- White, H. (1987). *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Wiessinger, E. (2008). When to use 'I' or self-narration. Clarkson University Writing Center. Retrieved from [http://www.clarkson.edu/writingcenter/docs/using\\_I.doc](http://www.clarkson.edu/writingcenter/docs/using_I.doc).

