

The Neutrality of Gender Consciousness in Toni Morrison's *Paradise*

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Introduction

The final novel of Toni Morrison's trilogy, *Paradise*, her seventh novel, was published in 1998 (the first of the trilogy, *Beloved* in 1987 and the second *Jazz* in 1992). Toni Morrison (born Chloe Anthony Wofford) became the first African-American woman to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature for *The Bluest Eyes*, her first novel, in 1993. That heavy responsibility must have put pressure on her life as a novelist. *Paradise*, however, is by no means inferior to her first novel. This novel focuses on the gender consciousness much more intensely than her past novels. The story is set in a small town, Ruby in Oklahoma, which is populated only by black people who escaped from the "disallowing" (195)¹ by white people and lighter-skinned blacks. Ruby is located some ninety-miles away from the closest city, Demby. The Convent in which live a number of women who escaped from the real world are located seventeen miles away from Ruby. *Paradise* consists of nine chapters, (Ruby, Mavis, Grace, Seneca, Divine, Patricia, Consolata, Lone and Save-Marie), which are names of the women who appears in the story. The novel is set in the period from 1890 to 1970 during the turbulent period for black people such as World War I and II and the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the assassination of Martin Luther King. It does not follow in chronological order and this makes the story more complicated. Morrison was born in Lorain Ohio in 1931. Therefore her life coincides with the generation of "The New Fathers". (194) In other words, she also experience "disallowing" when she was an infant as they did. Morrison talking about *Paradise* in an interview with Elizabeth Farnsworth said, "Part of my idea came precisely from that research and thinking about the whole period when ex-slaves, freed men, left plantations, sometimes under duress," (2)² Her experience as a black woman and her views on the intolerant torture and vice of slavery are reflected in her novel. Morrison, however, is afraid of

¹ Morrison, Toni, 1998. *Paradise*. New York: Knopf, 1998.

² Farnsworth, Elizabeth, "Conversation: Toni Morrison." The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer Transcript. March 9, 1998. http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/entertainment/jan-june98/morrison_3-9.html.

expressing a one-side ideology slant to gender conscious and also racial issues in *Paradise*. She said in another interview, “In order to be as free as I possibly can, in my own imagination, I can’t take positions that are closed.” (3)³ Expounding on a one-side ideology is equal to extinguishing her imagination. In this novel, she tries to stay neutral in all of these areas. This thesis analyzes the neutrality of gender consciousness transcending race through specific patriarchal and matriarchal communities. Chapter I will analyze the failure of patriarchy, Chapter II will analyze the adaptability of the women living in a patriarchy, Chapter III will analyze the escapism of women transcending race under a matriarchal system and Chapter IV will analyze the ideological conflict between patriarchy and matriarchy. This dissertation compares *Paradise* with the novels of other black and white writers and also with some of Morrison’s other novels.

Chapter I. The Failure of Patriarchy

1. The Origin of a Patriarchy.

The tragedy of African-American women comes from racial segregation which is one result of the fact of long term slavery. Also it stems from gender discrimination. They had to live with the tortures of gender discrimination perpetrated by not only white men but also men of same race. Toni Morrison, particularly in *Paradise*, seems to focus on the notion of patriarchy, part of the gender discriminations. The existence of “8-rock” (193) described in the novel must be the exact symbol of typical patriarchy as imagined by Toni Morrison. The women are living in a much more isolated black people’s patriarchal community than in other stories. Morrison stated in an interview, “Race is the least reliable information you can have about someone. It’s real information, but it tells you next nothing.” (33)⁴ From the above, we can be assured that she wishes to put stress on something other than just racial issues. This ‘something must be the fundamental issue of women, namely gender discrimination which is accepted by men. The term “8-rock” is “an abbreviation for eight-rock, a deep deep level in the coal mines.” (193) In *Paradise* this term is applied to a specific group of people which is made up of nine families. Readers need to trace their past to learn the tragedies described in the novel. They encounter the first “disallowing” in Fairy in 1890. They had believed that their antagonists were only white people for ten generations, but in fact that belief was shattered by “the disallowing”, because it was

³ Jaffrey, Zia. “Toni Morrison: The Salon Interview” *Salon*. Feb 2, 1998.

http://www.salon.com/books/int/1998/02/cov_si_02int.html

⁴ Gray, Paul. “*Paradise Found*.” *Time*, Jan 19, 1998:62_68.

perpetrated not by white people but light-skinned black people. Their extreme poverty and their coal-black skin cause them intolerable tragedies. Therefore they have to head further northwest and finally make it to an area which they name Haven in Oklahoma. The humiliation which the 8-rock men suffered due to the disallowing is one factor which causes them have an extreme pride in their patriarchy. The 8-rock men which Morrison described resemble the patriarchic men living in for black people only which Alex Haley (1921-1992), recipient of a Pulitzer Prize in 1977, describes in *Roots* (1976). He had spent huge time of over twelve years to write the book exploring his roots throughout Africa. We can see how Morrison faithfully strives to describe patriarchy through the men's eyes in *Paradise* by comparing it with *Roots*. *Roots* is set in a town called Juffure in Gambia in Africa. The town's people are living in the midst of slavery and they are afraid of being taken away by "toubob (white people)" (211)⁵ and becoming a traitor to their people under slavery. The existence of the awful white people for the Juffure people exists in their group consciousness which had been formed based on hearsay alone. Their daily life which was not influenced or controlled by another race might hark back to their original and pure society. This reminds us of the 8-rock, because they defy intrusions on their original, pure life to protect the life and make a fresh start in an area populated only by black people. This desire to live separately and independently is part of their desire to erase the humiliation of disallowing. In addition, the Juffure people believe that the blacker the skin, the more beautiful. The women of the Juffure people stick a thorn into the lip and rub soot into the skin in order to become blacker which, of course, for them means to be more beautiful. The people of Haven are also proud of their own blackness which they feel far outshines the whiteness of white people. This is the exact opposite to the obvious dependence on white people of Pecola, a character in *The Bluest Eye* (1970). For this novel and other successive masterpieces such as *Beloved*. Picola asks Soaphead Church to change her eyes to the blue eyes of white people who are defeating black people and she says, "My eyes I want them blue." (174)⁶ She aspires to erase the tragedies in her life and look at the entire world through her new blue eyes. It is exactly her dissatisfaction with her own appearance that motivates her. She has never known the feeling of being beautiful as a black girl and being proud of her own beauty which nobody could imitate. The beauty she believes in is a notion of beauty which has become distorted and she has been brainwashed by the white race into believing this distorted notion. There is no longer a feeling of pride in being a black person nor a hatred of persecution. In the case of the men of Haven, however, they have pride and hatred

⁵ Haley, Alex. 1976. *Roots*. London: Vintage books, 1991.

⁶ Morrison, Toni. 1970. *The Bluest Eye*. New York: A Plume/ Penguin Book, 1994.

which makes their patriarchy consciousness much stronger. They strive to dominate the women of their town as if compensating for the humiliation they suffered at the hands of the light-skinned black people and white people, because they hope to build a cozy place by standing over something. The pride and beliefs of the 8-rock (which Pecola never had) gradually become distorted over succeeding generations.

Zechariah, a founder of the 8-rock and a key person of the town, is the one who discovers Haven. His real name is Coffee Morgan and he corresponds to the father figure of the Morgans. We can surmise that there is a great significance for Morrison to have given him the nickname, Zechariah, because we can see various scenarios for *Paradise* from the Book of Zechariah in the *Bible*. She may be hinting at the destiny of the town by giving the name of the prophet Zechariah to this character. The Book of Zechariah starts with the wrathful remarks of the Lord against forefathers of Zechariah. “Turn ye now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings.” (965)⁷ said He. One person who was exasperated by the nation which attacked Jerusalem and the towns of Judah mournfully said, “O Lord of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years?” (966)⁸ Then He said, “I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy...I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it,” (966)⁹ The humiliations that the 8-rock suffered are certainly comparable with disgracing the holiest place of the Lord. Their disappointments are incalculable like in the Book of Zechariah, they believed that their own Lord rages against the people who are attacked in similar fashion to the people of the 8-rock. Therefore Zechariah has to find new house so that the Lord will return and live in peace. We can see a link between the attitude of Zechariah towards bowing down to or accepting slavery and the attitude upheld by the people of Juffure (in *Roots*) who regarded any person who accepted slavery as traitors. They would rather die than be forced into slavery. Morrison must have been influenced by Alex Haley, because they have similar perceptions concerning this area. Zechariah has been waiting for any sign from God that they should build their town after the disallowing in Fairy. In the Book of Zechariah in the *Bible*, there is a phrase, “My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad; and the LORD shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem” (966)¹⁰. Therefore Zechariah (Coffee) also believes that the Lord will choose a divine town for him

⁷ The Holy Bible, 1945. D.D., Scofield Version, “*Zechariah 1:4*” Oxford University Press.

⁸ The Holy Bible, 1945. D.D., Scofield Version, “*Zechariah 1:12,14,15*” Oxford University Press.

⁹ The Holy Bible. 1945. D.D., Scofield Version, “*Zechariah 1:14, 16*” Oxford University Press.

¹⁰ The Holy Bible. 1945. D.D., Scofield Version, “*Zechariah 1:17*” Oxford University Press.

and his people and He is certainly going to come back to be with them. Morrison stated in an interview concerning of Song of Solomon, "I used the biblical names to show the impact of the Bible on the lives of black of people, their awe of and respect for it coupled with their ability to distort it for their own purpose."(126).¹¹ Finally Zechariah meets with the God as in the Book of Zechariah, however it is marvelous hallucination. That is the first time for a hallucination to appear in *Paradise*. In addition, as Morrison said in another interview, "All paradises, all utopias are designed by who is not there, by the people who are not allowed in."(2)¹², the utopia of Zechariah which Morrison created is filled with the imagination and hallucination for their desire to be with God.

It was around 1905 when God, "the walking man" (97) appears before Zechariah and Rector. There are certain points to note in this narrative which Morrison described. Firstly that God is obviously not a white man, but black man. As quoted in the Morrison interview in the previous page, in *Paradise* she proves that it coupled with black people's ability to distort the bible for their own purpose. She strives to show how black people resist persecution in her narrative which transcends race. With the blackness of the walking man's suit, in addition, we can see the dignity and pride of being a black man. He puts on his black jacket as if he were covering the glittering whiteness of the shirt as a symbol of white people with the blackness of his jacket. Secondly, readers are forced to wonder what God removed from the satchel and what He put back in. When we consider the passage from the *Bible*: "Turn ye now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings", God seems to give Zechariah a warning to eliminate hatred and return their basic original nature to start over anew in a new house. In other words, He removed hatred and vengeance from the 8-rock and returned justice to them. In the case of Zechariah's descendants, the young generation, however, the significance of the word of God gradually becomes more and more distorted as time passes. The isolation of the town is in part responsible for this distortion and the expansion of the patriarchy of the 8-rock giving them a taste of a sense of superiority in dominating others. Thirdly, Morrison uses the exquisite plumes of the guinea fowl which was caught in the trap in front of God to great effect. This type of expression concerning the plumes of fowls such as this is also often utilized in *Paradise*. It is a symbol which indicates the walking man is certainly God. We can see in descriptions like this Morrison tries to have us image the

¹¹ Taylor-Guthrie, Danille, ed. *Conversation with Toni Morrison*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1994.

¹² Farnsworth, Elizabeth. "Conversation: Toni Morrison." *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer Transcript*. March 9, 1998. http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/entertainment/jan-june98/morrison_3-9.html.

colors and a vivid scene as in a picture using visual techniques. In *The Song of Solomon*, she often expressed such scenes adopting painting techniques as if she were painting pictures. In an interview with Elissa Schappell, Morrison said that wearing colorful clothes is too luxurious for slaves, color has profound meanings. The guinea fowl originates in Africa, as we can see from the name, with its dark gray color and being used as a familiar source of food, it is far from being considered a thing of grace or beauty. Morrison, nevertheless, converts the guinea fowl into something which expresses elegance as if she wishes to show that it is a symbol of the 8-rock's pride to have us image vivid colors and a vivid scene by using this technique. Although former enslaved people such as the 8-rock had been in demand not for their precious personality but for their hard laborer in America like the guinea fowl, we can feel their indomitable strength and beauty through her descriptions. In this way we can see that, although Haven was built with the permission and authorization of God, it is a most arduous task for descendants of Zechariah to succeed in carrying out the word of God without distortion. Therefore The distortion occurred due to the fixation on pride of the 8-rock and the ignorance of the town's young generation. This distortion compounded the menace of patriarchy which binds the town's women. I will analyze how the descendants of Zechariah transformed the pride inherited from God and distorted into patriarchy in the following section.

2. Patriarchy as an Anachronism and the Ignorance of Younger Generation.

An incident (Protecting a black woman from some white men) which one of Zechariah's sons, Elder Morgan, participated occurred is indeed representative of the dominant desire for women of the 8-rock men. The incident gave honor to the 8-rock. His furious action against the white men comes not only from the desire to protect the woman but also from the desire to avenge the humiliation which the 8-rock suffered. In fact he left her as she was. Morrison has Elder's nephew, Steward Morgan recollect this historical incidence in "He did not sympathize with the white men, but he could see their point, could ever feel the adrenaline, imagining the fist was his own." said Steward. That is to say, there was no longer an extreme attitude toward the protection of woman, it is, but rather there is the tendency to agree with the devilish behavior of the white men. Elder's honor/vengeance drama against them was obviously replaced by the dominant desire for women. The 8-rock has narrowed their own intellectual inspiration to not just revenge, but how to control their town and has its root in patriarchy. We should not ignore one of things reinforces the patriarchy that is the existence of an Oven. When Haven was under construction, the building of the Oven is the first thing which Zechariah had the men of the town do. It was elaborately

constructed with bricks Zechariah inscribed some important words on its black lip. We are not informed exactly what those words were. The Oven is the symbol of a pride for the 8-rock men because it means that the women of the town never have to cook in kitchens of white people. Haven began declining from 1932 and the population gradually decreased from one-thousand people to five-hundred. At last fifteen families left the town. Immediately after Rector's sons, the twins, Steward Morgan and Deacon Morgan (Deek) returned from soldiering, the people of Haven experienced "Disallowing, Part Two" in 1945 (194). "The New fathers" (194) reconsolidated the blood of the 8-rock and their leaders to be their new members and they headed for the west two-hundred forty miles away to build a new town, Ruby. After the moving, the existence of the Oven overawed the women of Ruby. In Haven, the Oven had a social function, but in Ruby, however, it seems to become a holy conference place in the town for the men alone which left no room for the women to participate. Morrison strives to express a masculine psychology by describing how the men occupy the Oven which had been the one sole comfortable place for women. In an interview with Aoi Mori, Morrison said that the kitchen is a special place for women now in the past and they can be emancipated from a society dominated by male supremacy in the kitchen and have a chat alone with women without constraint. The occupation by men alone of the one comfortable place for women means that the men were determined to impose patriarchy on the women. In the age of slavery, working in the kitchen might have been a matter of pride and honor for women in those days. In *Roots*, there is a holy meeting place for men alone to participate in like the Oven of Ruby. It was called "Council of Elders sessions"¹³ which was used to govern all Juffure and have great influence. Those who have the right to take part in the meeting were only the men of the town alone who has already finished "man-training" (136). The Juffure women are prohibited from participating there. Especially when the Juffure men dealt with political issues, it was improper for the women to be there. The principles of the patriarchy were unconsciously planted. The young men who have already finished the man-training have to sneak into their mother's house as a final test and steal the mother's possessions. Under the guise of discipline, as the secretary said, "to prove yourselves smarter than all women, even your mother," (107), it shows how intense the devotion to the patriarchy which the fathers have is. The New Fathers of Ruby in some respects resemble the patriarchy of the Juffure Fathers. The New Fathers seem to impose their patriarchy on their women by their occupation of the Oven as the Jufre younger generation steals their mother's belongings to show their strength and stealth. The New Fathers hope to imbue their spirit into the

¹³ Haley, Alex. 1976. *Roots*. London: Vintage books, 1991. Pages 136.

young men at the Oven as does the training in Council of Elders of Juffure. The young men of Ruby, however, are neither obedient nor faithful to the older generation just like the young men of Juffure and they are too ignorant.

The sole successor of the Morgans, the son of Ruby, Coffee Smith (K.D.) typifies the young generation. In the beginning, K.D. appears to regret what he did to Arnette, but after the affair, K.D.'s behavior is finally beyond what his uncles can control. The shameful behavior, nevertheless, refers not only to K.D. but also to all the young men. The New Fathers had believed that the words of the Oven said "Beware the Furrow of His Brow" (86) for long time. But for the young men, however, the words have been changed into "Be the Furrow of His Brow" (87). Over this issue, the New Fathers could not hide their feelings of indignation at them, because the New Fathers cherished the fortitude of Old Fathers (16) who had been through the disallowing and the words they engraved with the feeling. There is no greater humiliation than the distortion of the words by the young men who were never acquainted with the whole story about the old fathers. The meaning of the words which the young men believe is that town's people would become God, Himself or God's justice. That is to say, the idea is a blasphemy against God. The New Fathers believe that the people can never be God, or His justice. This is what causes the division between them. One of the New Fathers, Harper Jury said, "It says 'Beware.' Not 'Be.' Beware means 'Look out. The power is mine. Get used to it' " (87). When it is compared with the original intention of Zechariah, there is the something of a gap between them. Although we are assured that Zechariah engraved, "Beware the Furrow of His Brow", one more problem is that who that person is. The reason why Zechariah not dares to put a word, "You", at the beginning was that he was sure that the "You" indicated the people who had disallowed the 8-rock. His objective might have been to make the descendants of the 8-rock consider who those people were. In the *Bible*, the some of the parts of Zechariah are similar to the foundation and intend of the Oven.

In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses. HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the LORD's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the LORD of hosts: and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, (979)¹⁴

There are the words used to observe the Festival of Shelters which is the journey of life of

¹⁴ The Holy Bible. 1945. D.D., Scofield Version, "Zechariah 14: 20, 21" Oxford University Press.

the ancestors. In addition, it means it brings down the wrath of the Lord against nations which have disgraced the sacred places and Jerusalem so that finally the chosen people will be safe and their home will never again to be destroyed. In the Festival of Shelters, the people who live in the sacred places have to celebrate the day so as not to forget the achievements of their ancestor sitting around the pot of God. God also cautioned the people that if they who do not came to celebrate and put their sacrifices into the pot, He will punish them with the same plague that He gave to the treacherous nations. It seems to show that the people of the 8-rock should not forget how tough their ancestors who built the Oven were. They, the descendants also have a heavy responsibility to desperately defend the original meaning of the Oven's words for the sake of their town. For the New Fathers, however, the disallowing people are too far away to be sensitive to Zechariah's will. And the warning engraved into the Oven is unconsciously turned away from the disallowing people to those who live closer. This can be seen in the statement by Harper, "Look out. The power is mine. Get used to it" seems to be an admonition which is aimed against not those who are outside the town but those who live within. It also refers to the men's tradition and that others will have to get used it. In other words, the warning is against the women of Ruby and it sounds like "Look out Ruby. The power is in the hands of the 8-rock men. Get used to the patriarchy". By understanding the words of the Oven, we can learn their real intentions were based on each interpretation. The young men blaspheme God and turned their thoughts toward the outside of the town because of their ignorance and lack of experience. Although The New Fathers still feel anger towards those outside the town, they forgot the original intention of the words and distorted it into the patriarchy because of their extreme isolation. The patriarchy which the 8-rock built up over time deprives the individual of independent thought and will. The women of Ruby, however, are forced to live under the patriarchy. In Chapter II, I will analyze the adaptability of the Ruby women under patriarchy and the desire of the men to protect themselves.

Chapter II The adaptability of the women under patriarchy

In contrast to feminist novels like Alice Walker and Zora Neale Hurston, Toni Morrison strives to create a new original status in gender consciousness to express no longer being categorized as a feminist. She knows that persisting on a one-sided view is likely to arouse the other side. On the other hand, feminist novelists tended to arouse the hostile feelings toward men and regarded as being on the matriarchy side by persisting too much on one-sided views. Alice Walker said in an interview, "No one writes more beautifully than Toni Morrison. She has consistently explored issues

of true complexity and terror and love in the lives of African-Americans. (268)¹⁵ As the interview shows, Toni Morrison stimulates feminist novelists and she is also stimulated by them in their distinct role as African-American women novelists to clear a new path towards opening up all the possibilities for women. I analyze that the adaptability of the women under patriarchy comparing it with Zora Neale Hurston's novel from the perspective of their hardship transcending the times in order to clarify how Morrison is stimulate by feminist novelists and strives to create the new original status in gender consciousness.

What a Ruby man was excommunicated from the member of the 8-rock makes the Ruby women was gradually closer on the adaptability way under patriarchy. The New Fathers accept only pure blood which has not been mixed with that of outsiders as the members of the town. Roger Best, however, he is the first person who broke the blood commandment. He got married with a woman who was light-skinned like the white people. Since then, the people of the 8-rock are beginning to avoid him. In *Roots*, there is a woman who is avoid by the Juffure people, because she has been raped by a white man and got pregnant. The woman was treated as if she were polluted just as in Roger's case by the same tribe. Especially in Roger's, the 8-rock men could not allow the betrayal of the patriarchy in his act of selecting a light-skinned woman. Therefore the Ruby women have to adapt the patriarchy way not to be excommunicated from the town like Roger Best. The women, however, try to inwardly find out where they belong, because their desires are quite different from the 8-rock men. In an interview on *Paradise* Morrison stated, "...they are seeking for another home, while other people are doing the same thing..." (2)¹⁶. As the interview shows, while the men were propagating the spirit of patriarchy throughout the town to meet their own desires, the women were secretly seeking for a comfortable home. We can also understand the women's desires by comparing the God which they saw with the men's God. The Ruby's women remind us of the town's women portrayed in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) which is the representative work of Zora Neale Hurston (1891-1960). The women are living in a town which is composed of only black people as is the case of the Ruby women. Hurston described in her novel how the women are seeking a place where they can belong in order to escape from the patriarchy of men of the town. Morrison also insists on the hardship of the Ruby women under patriarchy in *Paradise* as well as Hurston does.

The wife of Steward Morgan, Dovey Morgan, gradually has various complaints about her

¹⁵ Ashby, Ruth. 1991. *HERSTORY Women Who Changed the World*. New York: Penguin Books, 1995.

¹⁶ Farnsworth, Elizabeth. "Conversation: Toni Morrison." *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer Transcript*. March 9, 1998. http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/entertainment/jan-june98/morrison_3-9.html.

husband, because his mind is focusing on only disputing with others concerning the words engraved into the Oven. She does not like him having such a deep attachment to the traditions of the town and she is not interested in the meaning of the words. When she found out that she was sterile, the only existence she could rely on is her husband. She, however, could not force him go in the direction she wishes and her deep feeling of solitude results in her having a hallucination. In her hallucination God appears to her one day in autumn. We can note Dovey's desires and needs by comparing the hallucinations which she saw of God with those seen by Zechariah and Rector. God must be giving her a place to retreat to or an escape from the patriarchal society. The walking man was splendidly dressed in the black suit, on the other hand, the God which Dovey saw was wearing overalls as if He were her husband who had just came back from work. The difference exemplifies the specific desires of the town's women and men. The walking man makes us feel the dignity of the black people and their superiority as men, although the God whom Dovey saw is the expression of the ideal and desire of the opposite sex. Her ideal and desire portrays the real intention of the women living under the patriarchy and it is also the expression of her dissatisfaction with her husband, Steward. He considers her to be an attractive woman, though he only needs her in bed every night. In addition to his attitude towards her, he always spoils her cooking by adding a lot of peppers which also displeases her. Therefore she likes the freshness of God, who is the exact opposite of her husband. He always comes not in the night but in the daytime to listen to her story without any advice and eats up the food which she saved. The expression of her desires in the way is similar with the desires of the heroine, Janie in *"Their Eyes Were Watching God"*. Janie had been forced into domestic servitude by her ex-husbands as had Dovey. Her second ex-husband, especially let her down, although he promised to give her a deep love which her first ex-husband had not given, he also failed to give it to her. Finally he exercised the authority which he has received from the black community, which is leading to a patriarchal society tainted with distorted love. Therefore she needs a Savior to escape and then a young man, Tea Cake, suddenly comes before her. With Dovey, she needs the sense of belonging to somebody who is living for her alone like Tea Cake. Nevertheless in the solitude of a town like Ruby where nobody visits except for the 8-rock people, there is no way for Ruby's women to satisfy their own ideal desires except to create hallucinations of God by themselves.

Dovey's real elder sister, Soane also married into the Morgan family. She married one of the twins, Deacon (Deek) Morgan. She is distressed by the late three children. She lost her two boys in the Vietnam War and miscarried a baby. And what was even worse, she gradually noticed

that her husband has an illicit relationship with one of the women living in the Convent seventeen miles away from Ruby. We can also see her desires by analyzing the hallucination she saw. A messenger sent from God appears in front of her in 1970 when she is drying clothes in her garden. The messenger holds an empty basket as if it is filled with something and as soon as smiles at her, she disappears suddenly. It makes Soane realize the empty basket symbolizes the emptiness of her womb and loneliness she experiences due to her husband's illicit affair. She, however, hopes that the messenger symbolizes herself, because for Soane the messenger seems to have the grace and fortitude which she never has. She strives to heal herself by replacing herself with the messenger and she also hopes to live boldly even though she has lost a lot of treasures. Her suffering reminds us of Violet in *Jazz*, because her husband, Joe had an illicit love affair with a woman who seemed to be a white woman called Dorcas. With Violet, however, she tries to slash at the death face of Dorcas with a knife out of jealousy. Through her behavior, we can learn that there is a little difference in the possible outlets for each person's suffering. Soane never hurt Deek's lover as Violet did, because she strives to satisfy her desires by creating a hallucination or illusion avoiding notice. This expresses various levels or types of love such as the depth of affection toward her husband and the profundity of motherly love. With Soane, she lays a special emphasis on her affection toward her children over her affection toward her husband. In fact, when one of her sons was dying in a traffic accident and his life was saved by Deek's lover, Soane exhibited a generous trust in her and they became best friends. Although becoming close friends with husband's lover is generally extremely rare, this case shows us that her profound love toward her son is superior to the affection toward her husband. Morrison must sympathized with her motherly love more than she did with Violet who was a wife having no child. Morrison's strength comes from her sons rather than from her husband. In *Jazz*, she has "I" (228) recollect about Violet who was reconciled with her husband. As "I" said "I envy them their public love." (229)¹⁷, through this quote from "I", we can see that it also shows the real intentions of Morrison and Soane. In other words, they must need a husband's love but must be satisfied with love through the existence of their children. In addition, there is a similarity between Deek and Joe, because both of them hated white people, but they both loved women who look like white woman. It indicates their admiration of whiteness.

In opposition to Soane and Dovey, Jefferson Fleetwood's wife, Sweetie Fleetwood seems to find stability in the patriarchy society and does not to be dissatisfied with it. In her case,

¹⁷ Morrison, Toni. 1992. *Jazz*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994.

however, she also suffered at the hands of men who forced into domestic problems. If one were to suppose that Dovey is Janie who lives in a free town in *Their Eyes were Watching God*, Sweetie would be Pheoby who can live only in the tyrannical patriarchy society envying the way of life of her best friend, Janie. Sweetie never has been out of her house for more than six years since she has to look after her handicapped infant twenty-four hours a day without any help from a man. One day, she said to Mable, her mother-in-law, "Be back, directly, Miss Mable. Won't be gone but a minute, Miss Mable." (124) and she left the house. She mechanically heads for the convent wearing no overcoat as if Pheoby visits her friend, Janie's house to listen how the unrestrained town was. As Pheoby said to Janie "Ah done growed ten feet higher from jus' listenin' tuh you, Janie. Ah ain't satisfied wid mahself no mo." (284)¹⁸ at the ending of Hurston's novel, the words clearly show Sweetie's real intention which is to escape from her domestic problems and the patriarchy society.

Arnette Fleetwood was born the eldest daughter of the Fleetwoods and she has been living under the patriarchy society without offering any resistance. She is, if anything, the type who tends to be rather stable under a patriarchy than wishing to escape from it. Since she has fallen in love with K.D. she hopes to become a housewife. Although she was pregnant with his baby, gradually she has notices that he never loved her through his reactions and that he loves a woman in the convent. What made things even worse is that the relationship between the Fleetwoods and the Morgans became more and more hostile. That is why she begins to believe that the baby will never be accepted in Ruby and so she tries to kill the baby by beating her stomach when she is about to give birth to the baby in the convent. As she had hoped, the baby finally dies a few days later. The death of the baby reminds us of the relationship between Sethe and Beloved in *Beloved*. Sethe killed her daughter, Beloved to protect her, because she did not want her daughter to go through what she has suffered under slavery. As a matter of fact, on the night of Arnette and K.D.'s wedding day, she distractedly goes to the convent to see the apparition of her baby wearing the wedding dress. She seems insane like Sethe who has been suffering from Beloved's apparition. Even if she married K.D, she could never satisfies her desires for a deep attachment to him and her baby.

We can easily understand that Patricia Best is not the most suitable woman to live in Ruby. She is the daughter of Roger Best. She strives to be accepted in Ruby by adapting herself to life there and living under the patriarchy. Her suffering is directly related to her father, Roger marrying an outsider. She is a teacher in Ruby and makes every effort to become accepted. When

¹⁸ Hurston, Zora Neale. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978.

she throws an iron at her daughter face it is in part due to fear of isolation coming from her daughter's behavior and also from rage over such isolation. She finally burned the genealogical tree which she had painstakingly made. In a Morrison interview about Patricia she stated, "She's the daughter of someone whom she felt they despised, so she has an ax to grind. So she's reevaluating everything, and has come to learn some terrible things, she thinks, about this town" (5)¹⁹. It means that she found out about the terrible rule of the genealogy in the town. As we can see, through the genealogy trees, there is an obsession to protect the blood line and the coal blackness of the 8-rock. She must have burned it after discovering and understanding the intense hatred of the 8-rock for any deviation from the true blood line and for anything which might result in a stain on that blood line.

The daughter of Patricia, Belie Delia has desires contrary to her mother. She never worries about appearances like Patricia and she always acts on impulse. She has been despised as a lecherous girl by the Ruby people since an affair, although she was, in fact, still a virgin, unlike Arnette. Patricia wanted to cultivate her to be an accepted Ruby woman but everything seemed to turn out wrong. That childhood affair exactly expresses her desires. She just hopes to be loved by the people, including her mother, not as a daughter of the dignified town and the Catos, but as a person whose individuality is independent. She should not have believed that the people would widely receive her unvarnished behavior such as wearing no panties even if it was just a lack of common courtesy. Finally her behavior makes her mother furious. Therefore she knows she will not win the affection of her mother and her individuality will not be accepted and thus she decides to escape to the convent. The relationship between her and the Convent women is similar to that which exists between Pecola and the prostitutes living near her house in *The Bluest Eye*. Pecola has lost individuality by being raped by her real father and she also has been refused an existence as a black girl by the same race let alone by the whites. It makes her lose her sense. Consequently, she needs to visit them who are the only people capable of healing her. With Belie Delia, the Convent women are the sole people who can heal her as well, even though other people fear them. The Ruby women have been suffering from the egoism of the 8-rock men which brought sufferings like these and therefore their desires have gradually increased.

The Ruby women never force their desires on the 8-rock men, recognizing that the men will never allow them to ignore the rules of the 8-rock. In other words, the only way to live safely in Ruby is to repress their desires. The restraints on the Ruby women seem to be like abandoning

¹⁹ Jaffrey, Zia. "Toni Morrison: The Salon Interview." *Salon*. Feb. 2, 1998.
http://www.salon.com/books/int/1998/02/cov_si_02int.html.

the desires of Janie, the heroine in *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Janie who eloped with Tea Cake seemed to have realized her desires on the surface, although she had to go back to the town with its patriarchy society and lost him because of rabies. In fact, however, we do not know if she has really lost her boyfriend. There is a possibility that she was robbed of her property by the young men and therefore could not help going back. In either case, there is no other way for the Ruby women to live other than adapting to the patriarchy society hiding their desires as did Janie. Especially in the case of Sweetie, we can see clearly that she could not help abandoning her desires in order to protect herself. Although she ran into her unconscious longing with the Convent women like Pheoby adoring Janie, she regained consciousness when she heard the crying auditory hallucinations of an infant in the convent. After she escaped from the convent by remembering her infant who needs her, she told to her husband that the convent women were atrocious fiends, dirty and lecherous in order to protect the stable daily life even under rigid patriarchy. She wants her husband to recognize how she has adapted to patriarchy which completely opposite to the life of the Convent women and how she is suitable to be a Ruby woman. There is no longer tenderness for Pheoby who protected Janie, her best friend. Eventually Sweetie changed from Pheoby into the women of the town who hate and are jealous of Janie who lives with no restraints. In the case of Dovey and Soane who hated life under the patriarchy society, yet they have had to adapt to it while recognizing the attractiveness and potential of the Convent women just as Sweetie did. The 8-rock men exercised their distorted authority which makes the women not only suffer and but also leads them to evil ways. We can understand how Morrison proves the failure of the strong patriarchy of the Ruby men by describing the tragedy of the Ruby women. In Chapter III, I will analyze the escapism of the Convent women living under a matriarchy which is quite the opposite to the life for the Ruby women.

Chapter III A Matriarchal System

The convent came into existence twenty five years earlier than Ruby. In 1925, Mary Magna accompanying Connie (Consolate), an orphaned girl (who had been picked up in Brazil) and some of nuns and sisters arrived in Oklahoma desiring to build a convent. Since the Mother Superior (Mary Magna) had become bedridden, however, the convent gradually turns into a place which received and helped women who were escaping from something. Morrison said in an interview "I wanted the readers to wonder about the race of those girls until those readers understood that

their race didn't matter." (33)²⁰ The convent women consisted not only of black women but also white women and they were never conscious race, unlike the people of Ruby. They are people who have suffered in various ways such tragedies caused by men or betrayal perpetrated by their mother. They came to the convent to heal their trauma. I will compare them with Charlotte, the heroine of *Charlotte Temple* (1794) by the white woman novelist, Susanna Rowson, through the perspective of transcending race and to analyze how the convent women satisfy their desires through escapism.

1. The Achievement of Desires through Escapism

As soon as Mary Magna saw Connie in Brazil, she was enslaved by Connie's beautiful lawn-green eyes. Connie was also fascinated by her blue eyes just like Pecola's longing for Shirley Temple eyes. She worshiped and adored Mary Magna as if she were her mother. She devoted herself to Mary Magna as a sister of the convent. When Connie lost the source of spiritual nourishment, she decided to take in any women who needed her in the same as Mary Magna had done in the past. That relationship between the women and Connie extremely has a great similarity to the relationship between Violet and Alice, Dorcas' aunt. Although they had an extremely strange relationship, Alice strives to heal the wounded heart of Violet and Violet is gradually longing for her as if she were her mother. With Connie, on the other hand, her reliance was not focused on Mary Magna alone. When she was thirty-nine years old, one sunny summer day, she fell in love with a man (Deek Morgan) who came to the convent to buy peppers. From the time she met him, she began to decrease her dependence on Mary Magna and she finally lost her to head over the man. The invitation to go to the convent cellar and her behavior when she bit his lip destroyed his love for her in an instant. She, however, continued waiting for him every Friday. This pitiful image reminds us of Charlotte Temple who betrayed her mother and run away with a lover from a convent. Although her lover promised to marry with her, he broke it and married with another beautiful, rich woman. Even though she recognizes that he left her, she pitifully never stops waiting for him to visit her. As soon as Connie loses her eyesight, she became possessed by hallucinations as if she gained another power in place of her eyes. It makes the reader wonder if the hallucination is Mary Magna or Deek Morgan. Connie gradually becomes stronger as if her bitter feelings had been alleviated and blessed with a mission by the God. It also applies to the growth of Charlotte, because she changed from a girl who is eagerly

²⁰ Gray, Paul. "Paradise Found." *Time*, Jan 19, 1998: 62_68.

looking forward for him to visit into a mother who protects her baby on becoming pregnant. We can see such fortitude to protect a child is superior to affection and desire for a lover as in Soane Morgan's case. In other words, Connie becomes gradually stronger as a mother as if she strives to protect the convent women who long for and depends on her like their own mother as well. Therefore the hallucination is neither Mary Magna nor Deek Morgan but the appearance of God created by her desire. She seems to try to recover and renew by having this new desire to protect them. Mavis is the first woman who escaped into the convent and become the first desire for Connie. Before escaping, she lost her beloved twins after having left the babies in the car. Her emotional feelings concerning this tragedy are similar to those experienced by Sweetie in Ruby. Mavis also has three more children apart from the twins. She faithfully takes care of all the housework and looks after the children and also faithfully obeys whatever her husband, Frank demands. In the appearance, she seems to be a good wife and mother. Mavis, nevertheless, she had been suffering under Frank's patriarchal behavior and her suffering induced delusions of grandeur. For instance, she believes that her children are plotting to kill her. When we consider the background of the twins' death it is possible compare Mavis' mental derangement with Sweetie's desire to escape. Sweetie felt an impulse to run away in the midst of caring for her baby. Mavis also must have felt an impulse to escape although her babies are waiting in the car. Leaving for the babies in the hot car for many hours caused them suffocate. After losing them, she developed a persecution complex which became stronger and stronger. This persecution complex is a result of her guilt over the death of her children. This drives her to escape from the whole situation accompanying by hallucinations of her beloved twins, Merle and Pearl. Therefore the crying hallucination which Sweetie heard in the convent when she escaped there must be Merle and Pearl brought there by Mavis. Their similarities between their respective backgrounds makes them experience the same hallucination. Morrison strives to portray each outcome of patriarchy and matriarchy by describing the experiences of both the woman who continue to live under a patriarchal society and those woman who managed to escaped from it into the safety of the convent. In addition, she betrayed her daughter and told her husband where her daughter was. Mavis who was betrayed by her mother could not help escaping again and finally she arrived at the convent in 1963 when she was twenty-nine years old. Her fateful encounter with Connie changes her life completely. When Connie told Mavis, "No newspapers in this house. No radio either. Any news we get have to be from somebody telling it face to face" (41), we can see in this the exact opposite to the daily life which Mavis experienced. The affair of the twins dying in the car attracted a great deal of attention from the mass media and her neighbors.

These people were interested in Mavis as if observing an unfortunate person under a microscope through the eyes of the mass media and malicious gossipers. Therefore the words of Connie make her presence of mind recover. Her trauma slowly begins to heal due to Connie's affection for her. She is the perfect symbol of the ideal mother for Mavis. Living without men in a free atmosphere and selfishly staying with her ideal person is the culmination of her desires. As opposed to Sweetie, her escape is to fulfill her desire, however, it was made at the sacrifice of leaving her children. Gigi (Grace) is second person who escaped to the convent. She had been looking for the rock where "A man and a woman fucking forever" (63) are, because she has to meet her boyfriend, Mickey, in front of it (who was in jail on April 15th). She also can not forget the scene in which a boy throw up the blood on the hands so as not to soil his shoes. It is the symbol of her desire. She hoped that the object which the boy tried to protect is herself, because her desire is to be protected by men who treat her very well even at the sacrifice of himself. Eventually she arrived at the convent in 1971 at the time the Mother Superior died. When Connie told her, "Go, like a good girl. Cover yourself we love you just the same" (76), it might have melted her solitude. Her desires, however, not be satisfied only by Connie's affection. If Connie were compared with Charlotte who has a single-minded passion for one man alone, Gigi, figuratively speaking, might be Miss La Rue who can not stick to one man in *Charlotte Temple*.

Mademoiselle possessed too much of spirit of intrigue to remain long without adventures. As church, where she constantly appeared, her person attracted the attention of a young man who was upon a visit at a gentleman's seat in the neighbourhood: she had met him several times clandestinely; and being invited to come out that evening, eat some fruit and pastry in a summer-house be-longing to the gentleman he was visiting, and requested to bring some of the ladies with her, Charlotte being her favourite, was fixed on to accompany her. (57)²¹

This is a quotation from *Charlotte Temple* which expresses the sluttish life of Miss La Rue. She goes into the convent to redeem herself from her past slut life, although eventually this act only goes to make her desires grow. Gigi also plans to change her life by gaining satisfaction through Connie's affection. Nevertheless a new desire emerges through her interest in K.D. and in essence, she has a relationship with him for two years. As soon as she lost interest in him

²¹ Rowson, Susanna. 1794. *Charlotte Temple*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.

and dumped him, K.D. got married to Arnette Fleetwood as if he wished to get his revenge on her. We can see some tragic farewells such as Gigi's in *Paradise*. Morrison talking about farewells said, "I write what I supposed could be called the tragic mode in which there is some catharsis and revelation." (125) ²² It means that a farewell tragedy resulting from boredom brings on new desires and we can also discover the causes of the inability to gain satisfaction by observing such tragedies in *Paradise*. With Gigi, the disappearance of her mother interferes with her striving to a normal life. The absence of the mother like this, however, applies to not only Gigi and Connie, but also Morrison's trilogy. In *Jazz*, Joe has a mother who abandons him, Violet loses her mother who committed suicide by jumping into a well and Dorcas has lost her parents due to a race riot when a child. In *Beloved*, Sethe also lost her mother when she was a child. The absence of a mother is an element which tends to bring about tragedies. This is especially true for men, since it leads them to have unbalanced relationships with women often resulting in tragedy. Gigi, who abandoned her old desire, tries to find a fresh outlet but is still tied down by the loss of her mother. She would repeat these tragedies trying to erase the solitude originally brought about by the absence of her mother. Finally, she finds a way to satisfy her desires by becoming a woman in a matriarchal society because it is easier to have a relationship with a woman than a man. Seneca arrives at the convent in 1973. She is twenty-one years old at the time and although she has a childish and playful character which everybody loves. She was also abandoned by her mother who pretended to be her sister when she was five years old and she has been looking for her mother ever since. She had a boyfriend who fled the scene after hitting a little boy with his car. When she visited her boyfriend's mother to raise bail to get him released, his mother refused to help. His mother who seemed to be cold-hearted, however, sobbed secretly. When Seneca witnessed the scene, her desire to have her mother was again stimulated. After she was treated as a sex toy by Mrs. Norma Keene Fox, a white woman, she witnesses a woman, Sweetie Fleetwood walking in the middle of the street, crying. The woman reminded her of the scene when her boyfriend's mother was crying. Finally she arrived at the convent together with her. When she met Connie she was told, "Seneca? Seneca? Come on, baby. We're waiting for you" (138), and her loneliness disappeared as if she were consoled by her own mother. Morrison talking about the strength of language said, "Its function is like a preacher's: to make you stand up out of your seat, make you lose yourself and hear yourself." (123)²³ She believes that the power of language can change a person's mind and influence one's fate for life. We can see that she gave

²² LeClair, Thomas. "The Language Must Not Sweat." *New Republic*, March 1981: 25_29.

²³ LeClair, Thomas. "The Language Must Not Sweat." *New Republic*, March 1981: 25_29.

the power of language to Consolata and she selected that particular name with this in mind since the name, *Consolata*, came from the word *consolation*. The final woman who made an escape to the convent is Pallas who is the only white girl in the convent and she is also the youngest. She also had been waiting for a man just like Charlotte Temple. The origin of her name is related to the Greek myths and she was called Pallas after Pallas Athena. Athena is the daughter of Zeus and Metis. When Metis became pregnant with her, Gaia predicted to Zeus that the baby will usurp Zeus's sovereignty in the future. Zeus who was afraid of losing his power swallowed the pregnant mother. Athena, however, was still alive inside his body. He was suffering from a splitting headache so he made Prometheus split his head open and there was Athena already grown up and wearing armor. Morrison said, "There's a whole lot of space in between, but my inclination is in the tragic direction. Maybe it's a consequence of my being a classics minor" (125)²⁴ She means that tragedies she describes are influenced by the Greek myths. With the Pallas in *Paradise*, she was the daughter of parents who had a complicated relationship. When she was a child, her parents were divorced and she was taken in by her rich father who held tremendous authority just as Zeus did. She longs for the affection of her mother just like Athena longed for her mother, Metis. This desire, nevertheless, was eventually betrayed by her mother. She falls in love with a man who is working at her high school as a janitor, but she was separated from her boyfriend by her mother. She drifts to the convent as if she were escaping from them. Her behavior is similar to Pallas Athena. According to another version of the story of Athena, she was worshiped by people as the symbol of matriarchy. Therefore we can see that why she become so comfortable in the convent. From the time she gave birth to her baby, she has been waiting for her boyfriend to come for her just like Charlotte Temple waited for her lover. It gradually makes Pallas needs Connie as well as Athena is longing for her mother. In appearance, the convent women seemed to achieve their desires by escaping from each specific reality, however, their way of life in the convent and the distortion of religion are the seeds which later culminate in tragedy. In some of Morrison's novels, we have cosmopolitan and escapist women who live an uninhibited life which will result in feelings of jealousy and anger by conservative women and arouse traditionalist men to action. For instance, apart from the Convent women in *Paradise*, Dorcas living willfully was envied by the conservative woman, Violet and finally she was killed by her lover, Joe in *Jazz*. And also with *Beloved*, what Sethe who has gained from the absence of men by her unusual behavior brings about isolation from the

²⁴ LeClair, Thomas. "The Language Must Not Sweat." *New Republic*, March 1981: 25_29.

community. Morrison tried to prove persisting in one-side ideology too much such as the matriarchal system of the Convent women tends to bring antipathies as well as the failure of the patriarchy of the 8-rock men in Chapter I.

2. The Awakening and Fortitude of Matriarchal Women

The escaping women strive to lead a virtuous life and become suitable nuns serving God. What make their mind change is related to the awakening of Consolata. Connie said, "I call myself Consolata Sosa. If you want to be here you do what I say. Eat how I say. Sleep when I say. And I will teach you what you are hungry for." (262) She said this in front of the women before she started to perform a ritual. "When he fell away the woman rescue me from my body again. Twice she saves it." (263) This Consolata's words indicates that she who had lost her lover, Deek, was saved by Mary Magna twice. In other words, Connie hopes to protect her women and she believes that the ritual saved them from their past tragedies by pushing the suffering off onto their previous selves. As she desired, their suffering disappeared. Mary Magna's healing method by which her own power is injected into the body has a similarity to the ritual described in *Tell my Horse* (1938) by Zora Neale Hurston. It is a travelogue covering travel in Haiti over a long period. There is the ritual to unify nature and to take on power of the nature into body. It is related to Voodoo and the healing ritual may also come from it. Voodoo has seven Gods and one of the Gods, Erzulie is similar to Consolata. Erzulie is a God of love, beauty and fertility. She is a warrior and especially a fierce protector of women and children and she is also patron of lesbians. Connie seems to protect mothers such as Mavis and Pallas having children and lesbians such as Seneca and Gigi like the Erzulie in Voodoo. Connie gave her power to the women and removed their suffering through the ritual. In addition she has another method of healing for the women. This is through what she tells them about a woman, who stands but never says a word and sometimes she sings the song of Piedade for them. The origin of the meaning of "Piedade" comes from *pieta*. The meanings of *pieta* originally designated the devout and merciful spirits in Italian. It is also a world-famous picture and sculpture in which the Virgin Mary is grieving over Christ's death embracing him on her knee. The women (who have escaped to the convent) were abandoned by their merciless mothers and their unbearable loneliness and solitude are gradually healed by Connie's story and song as if they were embraced by the Virgin Mary.

Thou glorious orb supremely bright, Just rising from the sea,
To clear all nature with thy light What are thy beams to me?
In vain thy glories bid me rise, To hail the new born day,

Alas! my morning sacrifice Is still to weep and pray.
For what are nature's charms combin'd, To one whose weary breast
Can neither peace nor comfort find, Nor friend whereon to rest?
Oh! never! never! whilst I live Can my heart's anguish cease;
Come, friendly death, thy mandate give, And let me be at peace. (112)²⁵

This is a quotation from a grief song which appears in *Charlotte Temple*. Charlotte has been singing the song longing for her lover, Montraville. She knows that he will never come back to her, but she has been waiting for him and she hoped that he would change his mind. It is exactly similar to the hidden feelings Connie experienced after losing Mary Magna who was like her mother and after losing her lover, Deek. In other words, Charlotte's song can be applied to the Piedade which Consolata sang. For Consolata, her Piedade is not a song of mercy but a song of adoration sung for Deek who never come back to her. In fact, readers will see that Consolata is described not as a nun, but as a woman longing for her lover in the chapter entitled "Lone"

The unique religion, faith and fortitude which the convent women created through their matriarchy scare the 8-rock men. The women gradually become the target of the men. Chapter IV will analyze the collision between the ideologies of the patriarchy of the 8-rock men and the matriarchy of the convent women.

Chapter IV The Ideological Conflict

1. The Collapse of Paradise Caused by Prejudices

When the convent women had their heads shaved as if they were striving to compensate for their formerly untidy appearance and behavior, the 8-rock men gradually were becoming increasingly scared of their behavior and strength. All good deeds which the convent women did for the people of Ruby were regarded as evil deeds which would bring about the collapse of Ruby. For instance, in the case of Deek, when Connie used "stepping in" on his son to save him, Deek was scared that she was practicing witchcraft. "Just as Lone steps in to a dying person's body and soul, so Connie teaches the four women to step into each other's" (8)²⁶ states a critical essay on *Paradise* by Philip Page. Nevertheless, there is the possibility that "stepping-in" in itself enters

²⁵ Rowson, Susanna. 1794. *Charlotte Temple*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.

²⁶ Page, Philip. *Dangerous Freedom: Fusion and Fragmentation in Toni Morrison's Novels*. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1995.

the imaginary realm which the men of the 8-rock created, because they were gradually becoming increasingly afraid of people who practiced witchcraft such as Connie did. In fact, she taught the escaped women of the convent not “stepping in” but how to love or allow themselves to be used as she had been taught by Mary Magna. These are prejudices against women which transform the personalities of these men into brutes. Finally, nine men gathered around the Oven to make a plan to butcher the convent women and finally that plan was carried out.

Paradise begins with the scene in which the nine men murdered the women one after another. “They shoot the white girl first” (3) As readers can see from this quotation, the girl who was killed first is Pallas as she is the only white woman. She was shot by Steward in the hall on the first floor. Mavis, Gigi and Seneca has been preparing breakfast when they heard the shooting and they try to escape. During that time, Consolata was still sleeping in the cellar. Readers, however, have to identify the baby sleeping by Consolata, because there are two babies in the hallucination in the convent. Nevertheless we are not assured if they are Pallas’s baby or Arnette’s baby who she has been looking for, for there is a possibility that Arnette’s baby is still alive in the convent. “ “Whose baby was in there? That crib is new.” “I don’t know, but it sure wasn’t Arnette’s.” He said it again, “Right,” with the same level of doubt.” ” (304) This is a quotation from the chapter Save-Marie and appears in the conversation between Anna Flood (Ace Flood’s daughter) and the Reverend Misner. Readers think that the first child of Arnette died in the convent, however positive proof is denied by this conversation. Readers also have to decide whether the children living in the convent were real or just hallucinations. Connie finally noticed that something had happened in the convent when Mavis, Gigi and Seneca were escaping into the garden and she found Pallas lying on the hall. When Connie was about to use “stepping-in” on her, she saw the men shooting at the women running away into the garden. When Connie tried to stop the shooting, she was killed by Steward. The moment she saw Deek she said, “You’re back,” (289) Through this words, readers can see that she has been living as not a nun but as a woman. Her feeling is equal to the feeling of Mary Magna when she accepted Consolata who had been abandoned by Deek and she said, “At last” (240). They were living as not as sorcerers, but just women who were trying to get happiness and love. In the end, the rest of the convent women, Mavis, Gigi and Seneca were shot by the men. Especially the end of Connie summons up the figure of a miserable woman just like the pitiful death of Charlotte Temple because of her unrequited love. Their bodies, however, disappeared before Roger Best could pick them up. ““she left unidentified the races of the Convent women because “ knowing about a person’s race is the least amount of information an individual has when confronting another...In

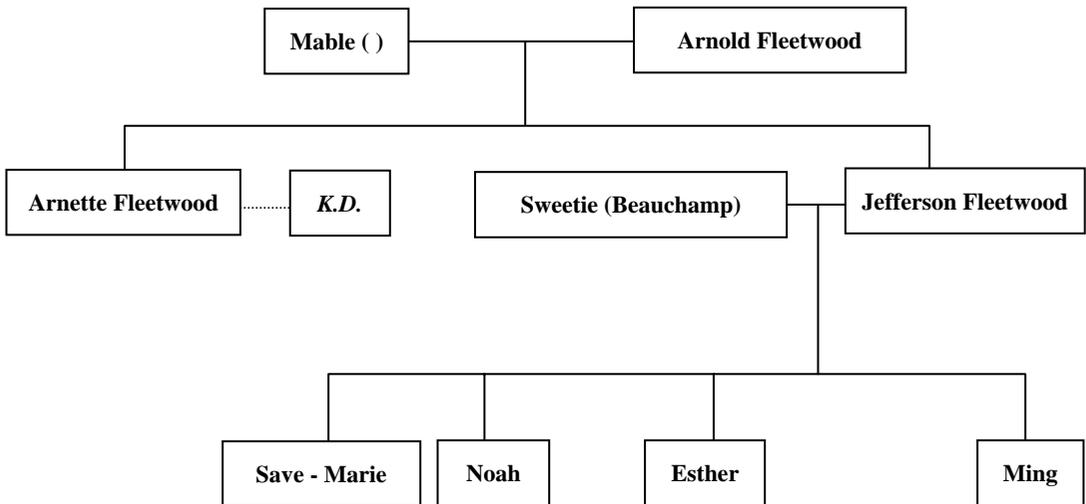
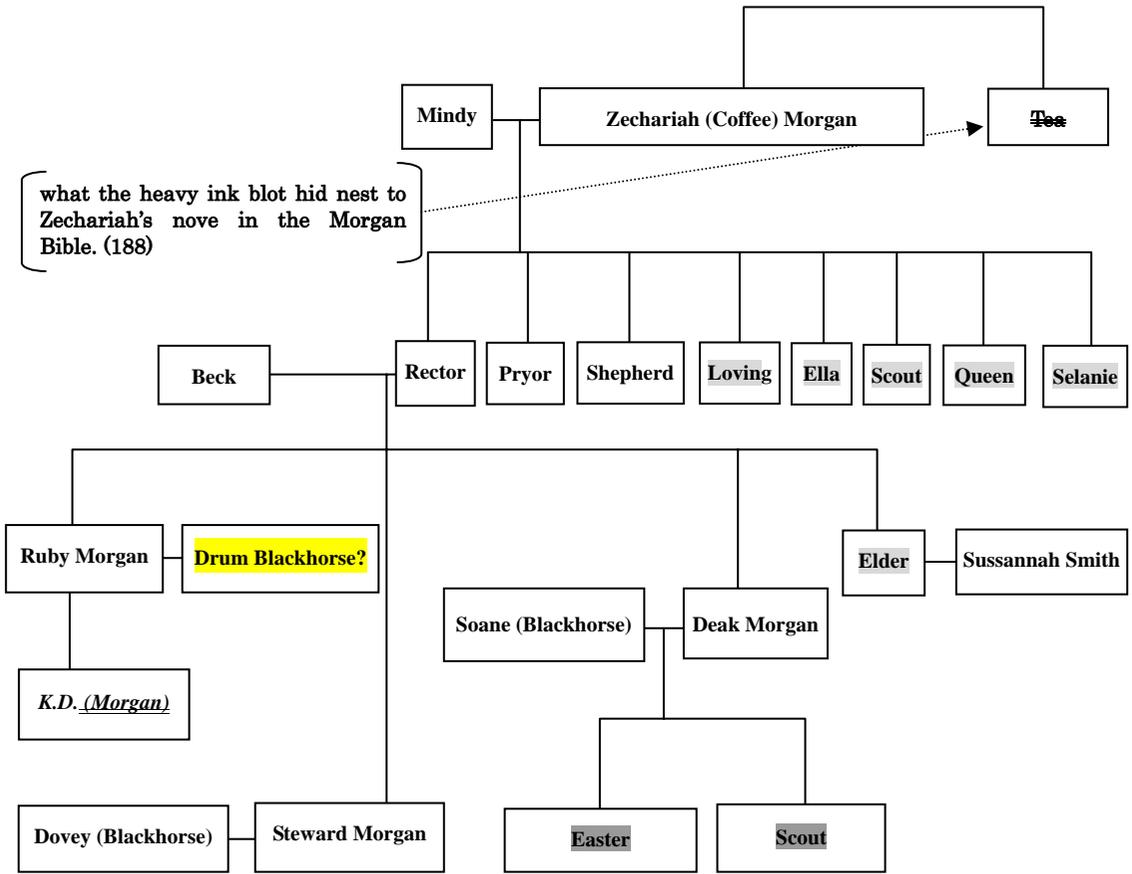
leaving open the question of the Convent women's deaths, Morrison again wants to require readers' full engagement" "stated reviewer. (2)²⁷ Morrison, however, leaves the riddles about questions about race and the bodies on purpose, because if she had specifically identified the women, readers should have come to the conclusion that she was only focusing on race and death or the lives of the women. Morrison never wants her readers to think there are also racial issues in the convent as there were in *Ruby*. Nor does she want to identify clearly which women were shot in the garden, which woman died in the hall. But she wants her readers to deeply consider why the women have to be killed by the men. The slaughter of the women by the 8-rock men reminds readers of witch hunting. Witch-hunting occurred in Europe and North America from the end of the Middle Ages to the modern era. They were killed as heretics. We can see in the *Bible*, in Exodus 22-18 (85)²⁸, "You shall not allow a witch to live." These words are exactly applicable to the feelings of the nine men. They said "Drawing folks out there flies to shit and everybody who goes near them is maimed somehow and the mess is seeping back into *our* homes, *our* families. We can't have it, you all. Can't have it at all." (276) before attacking the convent women as if obeying their own Bible which they had created. They believe that the convent women are sorceresses and that the women are also heretics for insulting the God, "walking man", whom the 8-rock worshiped. Morrison also portrayed the terror of prejudice against individual religion in *Paradise*.

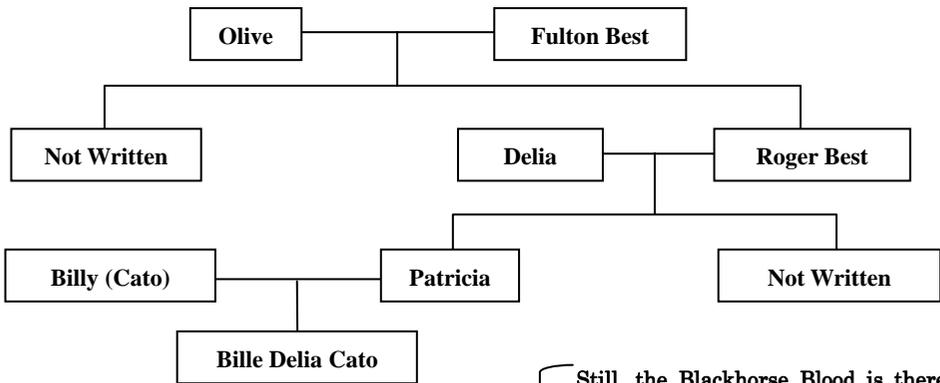
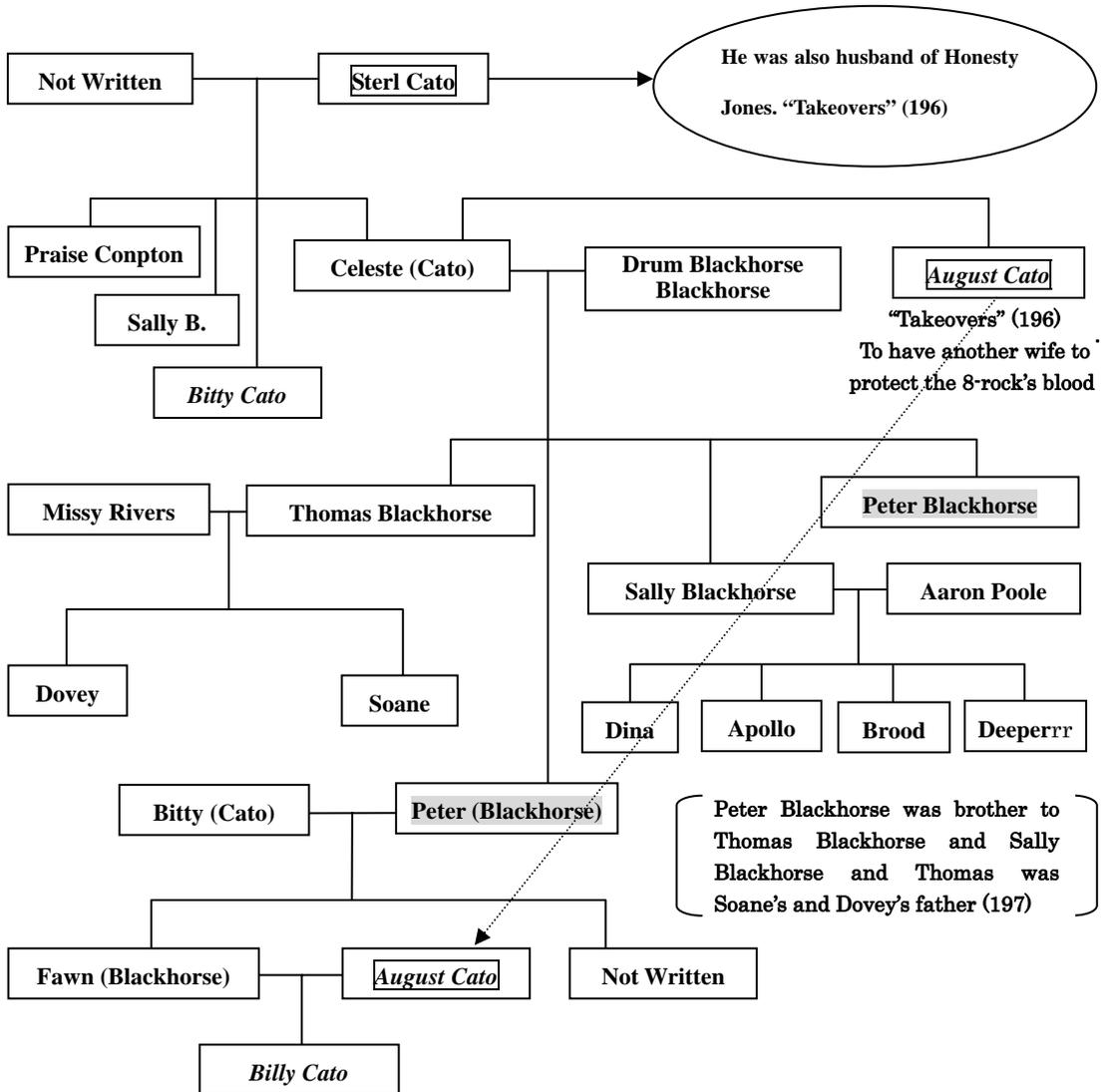
There are a lot of reasons why the men regard the women as witches and thus they feel they have the right to kill them. For example, kissing each other in the Cadillac at the wedding of K.D. and concerning Arnette, helping to kill Arnette's baby, the unusual healing practices including Connie's "stepping-in", Billie Delia's act of pushing her mother down the stairs, the appearance of buzzards, the death of Soane's sons and her miscarriages, Dovey's sterility, their having no religion and the absence of men and so on. Their prejudices against women being lesbian, being untidy, being overly cosmopolitan and independent makes the men blame their family tragedies on them. In a conversation with Elissa Schappell, Morrison said that friendship among women was always slighted in literary works by such writers as Henry James and Jane Austen. Morrison strives to deny such a prejudice against female/female relationships among the convent women by describing how the nine men killed them on purpose. *Paradise* for the convent women collapsed because of the attack, however, as the reader can see through the

²⁷ Page, Philip. *Dangerous Freedom: Fusion and Fragmentation in Toni Morrison's Novels*. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1995.

²⁸ The New English Bible. 1961. *Exodus 22-18*. The Oxford University Press, 1970.

The Genealogical Trees which Patricia burned





The family tree is illustrated by Eiko Okuwaki.

Still, the Blackhorse Blood is there, and that makes my daughter, Billie Delia, a fifth? cousin to Soane's and Dovey, (197)

genealogical trees which Patricia made (see below), the town of Ruby will also collapse due to the distorted traditions which the 8-rock men created and their misguided patriarchy. Because the 8-rock men marry with some women to protect the blood line and their coal blackness.

Deek Morgan, tried to stop Steward shooting Connie, because he must have realized that when he saw her face, she could never have been a sorcerer but just a woman who loved him. After the attacking, he was full of remorse for he had done and he visited not Reverend Pulliam, but Reverend Misner to confess. "He wore his hat, business suit, vest and a clean white hose. No shoes. No socks." (300). This is a quotation from the scene in *Paradise*, when Deek is about to visit Reverend Misner. His appearance is extremely like the figure of the "walking man". In other words, he understood and acknowledged the original, true meaning of the pride and justice which the "walking man" had left and he returned to where he should have been. It means that the failure of patriarchy in Ruby and the collapse of the town is caused by hatred and prejudices against people from outside of the town and women.

2. The Similarities between Toni Morrison and Reverend Misner.

Reverend Richard Misner arrived in Ruby in 1970. He is, as it were, an out-of-towner for the 8-rock. He was hated by the 8-rock men including Reverend Pulliam, since he always tries to persuade the young generation to participate in the Civil Rights Movement. His objective opinions are similar to what Morrison strives to insist on in *Paradise*. Morrison said in an interview, "I suppose the one that is closest to my own sensibility about moral problems would be the young minister, Rev. Misner. He's struggling mightily with the tenets of his religion, the pressures of the civil rights, the dissolution of the civil rights." (1)²⁹ She has him appear in *Paradise* about seventeen years after Ruby was built and she has him striving to save the town from its entrenched vice thriving using his objective insights. Toni Morrison was born in 1931. It was thirty-some years later that the Civil Rights Act was enacted. Therefore, there is no great generation gap between Morrison and Reverend Misner. With writers concerned with ancestors such as Zora Neale Hurston, her youth might be still considered to be that of an outsider as an African-American woman author. Morrison, however, plays an important part as a descendant writer by taking an objective position through the likes of Reverend Misner. Morrison in connection with ancestor writers states, "... there is always an elder there. And these ancestors are not just parents, they are sort of timeless people whose relationships to the characters are

²⁹ Jaffrey, Zia. "Toni Morrison: The Salon Interview." *Salon*. Feb. 2, 1998.
http://www.salon.com/books/int/1998/02/cov_si_02int.html

benevolent, instructive, and protective, and they provide a certain kind of wisdom.” (343)³⁰ She strives to create new roles as a contemporary African-American woman writer respecting the ancestors by abolishing distorted traditional concepts such as the 8-rock people adhere to. She also has great respect for human rights including those white people as well as recognizing the past suffering of those who struggled against the remnants of the slavery like Reverend Misner.

⁹ Then the angel said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!’”¹⁰ And he added, “These are the true words of God.” At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, “Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” (1384)³¹

This is a quotation from a passage in the Bible which Morrison has Reverend Misner preach at the wedding of K.D. and Arnette. Reverend Misner rages at Reverend Pulliam and the 8-rock men who try to distort the word of God. He preaches to them having the rage of Augustinus against heretics by reading the passage out. His rage is the same as the feelings of the angel in the passage. The angel is warning and scolding those who worship not God but the messenger in the passage. One should not forget one’s gratitude to God. Reverend Pulliam and the 8-rock men try to distort and transform the words of the “walking man” into an egoistical belief for their own convenience, although it is equivalent to heresy. If the 8-rock men had obeyed his warning, the tragic incident of the Convent women would not have happened. “They think they have out-foxed the whitemen when in fact they imitate him. They think they are protecting their wives and children, when in fact they are maiming them. And when the maimed children ask for help, they look elsewhere for the cause.” (306) This is part of the speech which Reverend Misner gave at the funeral for Save-Marie. It is exactly these types of expressions of rage which Morrison insists on the reader of *Paradise* acknowledging and understanding. Through the terrible mistakes of the 8-rock, she proves that revenge spurred by hatred will bring about new tragedies and that hatred and egoism will distort a splendid faith in justice. In the chapter on Save-Marie, the reader witnesses the illusion that the convent women appear as if the tragic incident did not happen. Gigi meets her father, the condemned criminal, Manly Gibson and she innocently talks

³⁰ Morrison, Toni. 1984. “Rootedness: Ancestor as Foundation”. *Black Women Writers (1950-80): A Critical Evaluation*. Ed. by Mari Evans. Garden City, NY: Anchor/Doubleday, 1983. 399_45.

³¹ The Holy Bible, 1945. D.D., Scofield Version, “Revelation 19:9, 10” Oxford University Press.

with him. Pallas appears in the garden near by her mother, Divine Truelove although she never notices her mother as if she had overcome the suffering she had received at the hands of her mother and she looks so happy holding her baby. Mavis meets her daughter, Sal who she used to be scared of, however she talks with her as her mother without being scared of her. Seneca meets her mother, Jean, but she does not recognize who the woman is and the self-inflicted knife cuts on her wrist are gone. The Piedade which Connie sings is no longer a song for Deek like the song of Charlotte Temple but it is for herself to heal herself like merciful spirit of Pieta. The reader is not able to solve why the convent women appear. The reader may be forced to think the women were saved by “stepping-in” or that they had already died and are flowing on as ghosts. Morrison says in an interview with Aoi Mori that with African religions, that dead persons coming back to this world are an important element and that transmigration and the appearance of ghosts frequently appear in African folktales. She also says that death is only safe place for Margaret Garner and her daughter. The Convent women overcome their tragedy by transcending death. Through their drifting around in this world, Morrison makes her readers afraid of repeating the same tragedies.

When Reverend Misner proposes to Ace Flood’s daughter, Anna Flood, the reader can recognize that new hope appears in Ruby. His courteous behavior toward her is not based on the patriarchy of the 8-rock men. In an interview about Anna Flood Morrison said, “She has a confrontation with Rev. Meisner ... what they think about her, but she has a very subjective view. She’s the daughter of someone whom she felt they despised, so she has an ax to grind. So she’s reevaluating everything, and has come to learn some terrible things, she thinks, about this town.” (5)³² That is to say, Morrison tries to marry off the woman having subjective views as Anna does to Reverend Misner who has objective views to repair the distorted views of the town through their reconciliation and mutual understanding. In fact, the reader can see that Anna gradually denies her prejudice against the Convent women due to his existence and she hopes they are still able to go somewhere. The paradise of the Convent women has collapsed, although the reader may that the reconciliation between Reverend Misner and Anna Flood will bring about new possibilities to make the new town transcend race and gender issues and have no prejudices.

³² Jeffrey, Zia. “Toni Morrison: The Salon Interview.” *Salon*. Feb. 2, 1998.
http://www.salon.com/books/int/1998/02/cov_si_02int.html

Conclusion

Paradise is one of the best novels of Morrison's works as a Nobel Prize writer, however the reader has to face a number of problems with this difficult story and be in the position of trying to solve a puzzle. The reader will also witness the tragedies in *Paradise* which are brought about by various prejudices against women. Toni Morrison, however, never intended in this novel to insist on the necessity of matriarchy in order to abolish patriarchy. She is not categorized as a feminist writer in the same genre such as Zora Neale Hurston and Alice Walker. She always tries to create an original perspective as an African-American writer. In an interview she stated, "I would never write any "ist" I don't write "ist." ...I don't subscribe to patriarchy, and I don't think it should be substituted with matriarchy. I think it's a question of equitable access, and opening doors to all sorts of things." (3-4)³³ That is to say, she is against a one-sided conceptual basis and she tries to find a way toward a bilateral reconciliation transcending over-consciousness of gender in patriarchy and matriarchy. She believes that it will bring about solidarity among African-Americans and will also lead to the collapse of the barriers between them. In addition, she also tries to confront racial issues by portraying the Convent women as cosmopolitan. The women are never conscious of each other's race as if the issue in itself never exist unlike the case of the Ruby people. Morrison, however, did not let the paradise which she created continue for the convent women, because if she allowed them to stay there forever, she would have to admit to a one-sided conceptual bias. The collapse of the convent indicates that matriarchy would result in failure just as the actions and beliefs of the 8-rock men would bring about the failure of patriarchy. In Chapter I, I went into great detail as to why the patriarchy of the 8-rock men was bound to fail. In Chapter II, this dissertation delved into the adaptability of women under a patriarchy. Morrison goes to great length to portray the convent women's tendency towards escapism and in Chapter III I have attempted to deal with topics and analyze it from a number of aspects while giving many illustrations from *Paradise*. This escapism of the women will also result in another tragedy. For example, Mavis's daughter, Sal, will follow the same fate as her mother because of the absence of the mother. A large part of *Paradise* deals with the conflicts between matriarchy and patriarchy. Therefore these conflicts have been covered in Chapter IV from the point of view of conflicting of each ideologies showing how these conflicts will result in a breakdown of the systems if one side decides to attack the other side from their own particular stand point. As I

³³ Jeffrey, Zia. "Toni Morrison: The Salon Interview." *Salon*. Feb. 2, 1998.
http://www.salon.com/books/int/1998/02/cov_si_02int.html

quoted from one of Morrison's interviews in Chapter III, she insists on creating a new view by describing these tragedies. Therefore she clarifies the terror and problems brought about by holding prejudices against gender, racial issues and religions through staying neutral to all of them by bringing about the collapse of each Paradise. She also hopes her readers and the young generation to walk a path not leading to escapism but to mutual understanding.

This dissertation sheds light on how living under a matriarchy or patriarchy can result in extreme conflicts which may be ameliorated to some extent by adaptation or escapism. Further research is necessary to elucidate all aspects of these topics and how they relate to Toni Morrison's works and in particular to her novel *Paradise*.

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