CHAPTER VII
THE CONSCIOUS – UNCONSCIOUS INTERFACE

1. Psychoanalysis and Deconstruction

Apart from the socio-psychological angle the novels under discussion may be approached from two different perspectives, psycho-analytical and deconstructionist. The issues at stake may be analysed and understood better with the application of these two frameworks. The application of psychoanalytic material as a narrative strategy is employed by post-modernist Afro-American novelists like many others to call attention to the several possible interpretations of a novel from diverse angles and perspectives. “The singular project of psychoanalysis — to elicit meanings from external reality through the exploration of psychic space — creates a vestibule for the exercise of the imaginary.”¹ All the four novelists under study, Morrison, Walker, Ellison and Baldwin offer surrealistic accounts of the incidents, opposing binaries of the real and unreal, the fantastic and factual, the possible and impossible events while exploring the psychic dimensions of American slavery and racial conflict. Through the multiple meanings that these narratives elicit, they are able to destabilise stereotypic representations and resist attempts for a definite closure at the same time.

Some of the novels under study are amenable to deconstructionist analysis. They are picked on selectively and brought under the pur-view of this exploration. For example, Morrison’s *Beloved* can be read as

reconstruction of a historical event which occurred in 1855. Many critics have given it a feminist reading stressing the importance of female bonding. *Beloved* is at the same time a chilling account of a ghost come back to seek revenge for its murder. Deconstructing all these readings, one may suggest that the whole novel is the ravings of a schizophrenic mind overcome by feelings of guilt and shame. According to the readers' response, *Beloved* can be a real young woman, a ghost, a fantasy, a fragmented self, or a part of the collective unconscious. Perhaps this rejection of all structures of the conventional reader's single minded search for clear cut meaning suggests what Post-structuralists call the perennial shifting of meaning. The novelists use a language of elusion, withdrawal and avoidance, deliberately avoiding commitments and positive assertions to posit that in these post modern times meaning itself is meaningless or hopeless.

Ferdinand de Saussure, the Swiss linguist, has made the fundamental distinction between "langue" the general system of a language and "parole," the individual use of that system by a speaker. Langue or Linguistics consists of signs. A sign is made of the signifier (symbol used) and the signified (the meaning – the object). The signifier denotes meaning by way of its difference from other signifiers within the language system. For example, the letters "p", "i", "n" denote a metal fastener by virtue of its difference from other signifiers. Therefore, no positive terms and as such the meaning of a term is always relative and arbitrary.

Jacques Derrida remarks that "in language there are only differences without positive terms."2 As such conventional assumptions about authors and critics, or authors and readers or the primacy of the text to discourse, or about...

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the text, are all found to depend on distinctions that betray an unacknowledged desire for stability, closure and presence. According to Patrik Grant, "If Levi-Strauss hypostasizes the presence of structural laws, Derrida celebrates the freedoms attendant on the absence of any enduring law whatever." He explains that Derrida indicates that the fabric of reality is immensely richer than our understanding of it. Derrida would even posit that there is no transcendental signifier behind any word or text and that the only thing attainable is an indeterminacy of meaning. His famous idea "difference-differance" indicates this sense of perpetually commuted and scattered meaning. Derrida points out that each word is contaminated by its opposite — the absence, as it were, that enables the presence. This leads him to posit the mode of reading a text which he calls deconstruction. Derrida suggests that meaning does not come to rest or achieve full presence but that the tension between rhetoric and logic, symbolic and literal, image and idea involves the readers in aporias that destabilize our certainties and push our interpretations even further.

Deconstructive readings concentrate on parts of a text rather than on the whole of it. A deconstructionist dismantles the text in order to reassemble it in many different forms. This implies that the reader need not limit himself to a single interpretation of the text. In other words, the reader co-authors the text and constructs it anew. Morrison's Jazz is thus another novel which lends itself to multiple readings. After the different narrators have narrated parts of it, the impersonal voice in the novel finally suggests that the whole thing could be just a figment of one character's imagination. Morrison seems directly to invite the readers to participate in the construction of the text.

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As Derrida remarks, the reading of a text can become “the joyous affirmation of the play of the word, any of the innocence of becoming, the affirmation of a world of signs without fault, without truth and without origin which is offered to an active interpretation.” Deconstructionists thus argue that the very differences that make signs meaningful prevent them from meaning anything definite. Moreover the signs always retain with them the “traces” of their other uses in other contexts. Meaning is disseminated rather than centralised. The tactic of deconstructive criticism is to show how texts come to undermine their own ruling systems of logic. It results in the continuous deferral of meaning. This is done by fastening “on the symptomatic points, the aporia of meaning where texts get into trouble, come unstuck and offer to contradict themselves.” For instance Morrison’s Tar Baby seems problematic in the concluding part of the novel where Jadine rejects her African past whereas throughout the novel, the reader is under the impression that the importance of this inheritance is the major text. In such cases, the reader may find “loose stones” which could get the text into trouble. The text thus deconstructs itself and becomes plural. The novel can no longer be read as a mere play of racial loyalties.

At every reading the reader may bring in any number of binary opposites like past/present, dream/reality, familiar/unfamiliar, material/spiritual and so on. Still the reader realises that the text remains as unannexed as ever. The reader may subvert the meaning he perceives to have been intended by the author and impose his own meaning or interpretation of meaning on a text. This means that no text can ever have a definite meaning. Therefore no

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reading, however farfetched or outlandish, can be considered an impossible one. Therefore the reading of the novel *Tar Baby* as the lack of the feminine archetype or the interplay of conscious and unconscious psychic elements is entirely justifiable and valid.

Psycho-analysis is especially useful not only as a narrative strategy but also as a handy tool to read such novels. The term psycho-analysis is used here in the popular sense to mean any kind of analysis based on psychology. Jung and his disciples would prefer the term “Analytical psychology” to psycho analysis. The post-modern Afro-American novels make ample use of psycho-analysis to bring out the double consciousness of the Afro-American as a split personality. Across many layers of semiotic representations, the characters as well as the readers become part of the intra-psychic drama involved in the peculiar historical experiences of the Afro-Americans. Establishing and destructuring means, the novels suggest that social history is only one side of the picture, reflecting a particular agenda or a particular consciousness. Through extensive use of dream sequences, nightmares, the shadows of dark memories, uncanny, mysterious happenings, even the appearance of ghosts and spirits, primordial longings and inexplicable occurrences and actions, these writers create a world which defies any single uni-dimensional interpretation. The presence and absence of chaotic and contradictory aspects of the Black self concept are best illuminated against this background.

2. *The Unconscious*

As already stated the self concept of the Afro-Americans is analysed, primarily based on Jungian psychology. Since Jung considered the self as a
point between the conscious and the unconscious, it would be appropriate to examine briefly the elements that constitute these two layers of the psyche.

Since a literary work is apparently consciously and intentionally shaped by the personal psychology of the writer, his social and historical background may explain both the experiences described and the artistic expression and form given to it. But sometimes we come across literary material which is hard to explain. It seems to be about things we have never experienced or heard in everyday life. The material reminds us of dreams or night-time fears, something strange and mysterious, which seems to belong to the dark and uncanny recesses of the human mind. It is something peculiar, to a primordial experience which surpasses man’s understanding, a revelation whose heights and depths are beyond us. The “totality of all psychic phenomena which lacks the quality of consciousness” is the unconscious. Our intuition warns us that it is about something unknown, something secret by its very nature. The writer seems to have a presentiment of incomprehensible happenings in the psychic world. Freud considers every work of art as a museum-piece of the unconscious. Jung too believes that the unconscious often seeks the attention of the conscious by appearing as dreams and mythological figures.

Usually a conflict between the conscious and unconscious is avoided mainly by what psychologists call Repression, Devaluation, Rationalisation and Projection. The complete suppression of certain past events so that we are completely unaware of it is called Repression. The conscious mind represses what is unpleasant, painful or shameful to remember. Devaluation is another way of avoiding conflict by not repressing it completely but

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removing considerable psychic energy from it. Rationalization is another means the conscious mind adopts to hide inexplicable things from itself by rationalizing i.e. persuading that there is nothing odd to the experience. We find a perfectly reasonable excuse for the happening. Projection means we attribute our own unconscious tendencies to other people. We may hate a person and claim that the hatred was from that person. Projection leads to a lot of misunderstanding but that too is something one is totally unaware of.

Psychic elements do not exist in isolation whether in the consciousness or the unconscious. They gather psychic energy, group together to form complexes. For example a person badly treated by a person with a beard may tend to fear and suspect all persons with beards without understanding why. This complex may be transferred to the offspring also. This may explain the complex attitudes of black skinned people towards the Whites and vice versa. If the complex is unconscious that is, if it has been repressed, it would form a great hindrance for these people to get along with each other without knowing why.

According to phylo-genetic law, it is not only the physical characteristics and racial traits that are inherited from generation to generation but the psychic elements also. Man's psyche always shows traces of the earlier stages of evolution it has passed through. Mankind in general shares a common matrix of the collective unconscious, out of which images, myths and dreams appear. The importance of the collective unconscious in the study of literature is that its manifestations are compensatory to the conscious attitude so that they have the effect of bringing a one-sided, unadapted or dangerous state of consciousness back into equilibrium. "Whenever the collective unconscious becomes a living experience and is brought to bear upon the conscious outlook of an age, this event is a creative
act which is of importance for a whole epoch.”

A work of art, that may serve as a message to generation of men is produced. Jung considers an epoch like an individual in that it has its own limitation of conscious outlook and hence requires a compensatory adjustment. This is effected by the collective unconscious when a poet or seer lends expression to the unspoken desires of his time and shows the way to its fulfillment.

Jung explains that psychic development occurs only when the conscious mind and the unconscious mind are well balanced and act in a complementary manner. Like Freud, Jung too believes that art is a kind of innate drive that seizes a human being. But Freud considers the repressed events in childhood and the libido as the elements of the unconscious whereas Jung considers the collective unconscious of the artist to be equally significant. To him an artist is “a vehicle and moulder of the unconscious psychic life of mankind.” Perhaps this is what Alice Walker means when she claims that she is only the medium through which her characters speak. Toni Morrison also remarks that the characters in her novel have a mind of their own. The unconscious prevails upon him, and the artist is driven to create, to seek for constant growth and development. According to Jung the creative process has a feminine quality, it arises from the depths of the unconscious, what he considers the realm of the mothers.

The archetypes have always been there, buried in the unconscious ever since man was born but are awakened whenever a great error deflects an individual or a society towards a one-sided and false consciousness. These

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8 Ibid., p.101.
“images then instinctively rise to the surface in dreams and in the visions of artists and seers to restore the psychic balance whether of the individual or of the epoch.”

3. The Self as Goal

A new born child has no self consciousness. The development of an organised central consciousness which one thinks of as “I” or a “me consciousness” is part of the period of early growth and it is not some thing which one had from the beginning. Consciousness itself must be thought of as evolving out of the unconscious. From this point of view the unconscious can be regarded as a storehouse of psychic elements which become conscious one or two at a time. In other words it is the power supply which keeps psychic life going.

David Cox in his book Modern Psychology: The Teachings of Carl Gustav Jung elaborates upon this idea. He observes that the development of consciousness from a state of unconsciousness is only possible if the unconscious state is somehow the state of an individual. He posits that from the birth of a baby there is the possibility of individual development inherent in its psyche. However much circumstances may direct the actual course of development, the possibilities latent in the original unconscious state also exert a determining influence. When we think of the self as an expression of the individual totality of a person we must see the self as the origin or matrix out of which the conscious individual develops. In other words, when we think of the potential wholeness to which the life of an individual may point, we must also see it as the directing source which guides the

\[9\] Ibid., p. 104.
development of consciousness. Hence, the self stands to the conscious individual both as creator and preserver.

The individual mind has a developed consciousness which rests upon a background of undeveloped unconscious elements. It is created by the self out of the unlimited potential of an original unconscious state. It also tends towards a complete development in which the total personality plays its part. "The goal is not to be understood as a final state in which everything has become conscious, but rather as a dynamic association between consciousness and the unconscious in which neither has the last word." This means that "individuation," the term Jung used for this state, is not a condition in which the ego has complete control of everything but that the ego takes its proper place, exercises full responsibility for the activity of consciousness and at the same time acknowledges the existence of other determining factors in the psyche.

According to Jung, in the final analysis the ego is subordinate to the direction of something else. This is not the unconscious because if it were so the individual's life would be just as one sided as it would be if it were directed exclusively by consciousness. If the individual was totally controlled by the unconscious, it would lead to a state that the ancient people called possession by gods, demons or ghosts. The individual so possessed by what we can call an archetype to the exclusion of all activities of the ego may become inhuman, consider himself a supreme power, a god, and become a dictator or a destroyer of mankind. Tashi, in Possessing the Secret of Joy who takes upon herself the task of taking revenge on the T'Sunga can be considered one such example. She becomes almost possessed once the

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repressed elements in the unconscious take control. Violet in Jazz is another possessed figure who loses control over her own body. The ultimate control should be carried out by the totality of the psyche, of which egoc consciousness and the unconscious are both partial expressions. Thus the goal of development is to allow the self to express itself fully in one’s life in whatever way it chooses and thus the self stands at the end as goal or destination as well as the beginning, or as origin or creator. Thus the self is an idea by means of which it is possible to link together a large variety of things that happen in human life.

If someone refuses to admit that he has bad elements within him and sets out to live a life of extreme virtue, he is likely to find that he gives way to unexpected tendencies, or thinks in a deplorable manner which makes him suffer torments of guilt, or else he may suffer a neurosis which interferes continually with his chosen way of life. Such a neurosis can be regarded as compensation for his attempt to live too narrow a life which does not give opportunities for his total self to develop, and if the man can be persuaded to see it in this light, he may be led to a new approach to life and continuing development. For example Ellison’s Invisible Man, Baldwin’s John in Go Tell It on the Mountain, Vivaldo in Another Country, Morrison’s Milkman in Song of Solomon, Pecola in The Bluest Eye, Walker’s Sula in Sula, Meridian in Meridian, Celie in The Color Purple are all such characters who lead a one-sided, selfish, obsessive and servile life. Those who realise the ultimate cause behind this blind striving after one’s life aim, desire or principle and try to rectify it are able to survive and attain a fuller development of one’s self, while the others may become neurotic, isolated and maladjusted, insane or even commit suicide.
Jung considers the self itself as one of the central and ultimate archetypes in collective unconscious, the archetype of archetypes or the archetype of the self. This is different from the self in “myself” which is only “I” of conscious life. The self archetype refers to the totality of the psyche, the conscious and the unconscious. He also “calls this archetype the Image of God or the archetype of Deity and he tells us that when it is active it expresses itself in ideas and symbols usually connected with the idea of God.” It is also called the “the archetype of wholeness” because it becomes visible when an individual is moving towards psychic wholeness and completion and “the archetype of unity” because it points to the possibility of living a life in which the psyche functions as a united whole. Jung finds that the idea of God is formed after the pattern of this archetype and that it does no harm from the point of view of religion or psychology because such a belief, psychologically understood involves the ascription of supreme value to the archetype of the self. It is this wholeness of self that Sula aspires for, what critics call her search for God within herself. The interference of this archetype upon the consciousness is regarded as a sort the wrath of God, of divine warning and the individual tries to lead his life taking into account the activities of this self archetype, in accordance with his total nature. The self thus viewed is not just an idea or a concept but a real thing, an active power which can be known only by experiencing it.

The self must thus be thought of as a power as well as an idea because many of the happenings which are connected together by the idea of the self are happenings in which we experience the exercise of a power upon us. “As a connecting idea the self has to be treated as the origin of power which is described as the activities of the self and therefore it is a source of power.”

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11 Ibid., p.154.
12 Ibid.
At the same time, the self as an idea or concept enables us to talk about, experiences which involve a dynamic relation between the ego and other forces acting from within the psyche.

4. The Feminine Archetype

"In the dreams of more and more people a surprising and specific figure is appearing" says Alice Walker. In her article "Giving the Party" she narrates how she was listening to a tape by a well-known Canadian psycho-analyst, Marion Woodman. Woodman describes the figure, that of a large black or chocolate woman as the "Black Madonna." Enchanted, Walker remarks that she is "there in the unconscious where she's always been, most internal and external doors slammed against her." This Black Madonna is in fact none but the feminine archetype, the giver of life, nurturer and preserver, the great mother or Goddess. In the American mind the figure of the large Black woman, the aunt Jemima or the mammies who were always looking after and feeding the white as well as Black children became the modern version of this age-old archetype.

For years the American capitalist racist society had forced the repression of the Black woman image by deliberately making her grotesquely visible and totally unacceptable to the white mind. In the dream of an analysand, she appeared in a cage in a party and when the dreamer asked her what she was doing she replied that she was giving the party. Walker comments that though caged in foolish antebellum dresses and aunt Jemima bandannas she was "the Goddess who can never be thrown away, though she

14 Ibid.
is caged, that is only because she is inside us,”\textsuperscript{15} by which she means all Americans.

“In the Western world, the culturally ingrained patriarchal fear of the feminine has resulted in an imbalanced society whose members remain numbed and indifferent to life and toward one another.”\textsuperscript{16} Michele Pessoni observes that a great sense of despair exhibits itself in the literature of the Americans which abounds with writers mourning the loss of some intangible force that might restore meaning to a world decaying into wasteland decade by decade. For many of these writers that absent force is feminine in nature. She gives the example of Henry Adams who noted the absence of the Virgin as a spiritual force in America, “a land which worshipped a frighteningly impersonal and non-regenerative god-head, the machine.”\textsuperscript{17}

Black writers like Gloria Naylor, Ntozake Shange, Toni Morrison and Alice Walker realizing the loss of a feminine spiritual centre began to explore the possibility of discovering divinity from within, “of reconnecting to the feminine archetype buried deep within the human psyche in order to resurrect a way of seeing and feeling which offers the promise of healing and life to an ailing world.”\textsuperscript{18} For them:

the deity resurfacing from some collective unconscious yearning is more than just the repressed virgin of Christianity. She is the spirit of the Great Goddess, the

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., p.25.
\textsuperscript{16} Michele Pessoni, “She was Laughing at Their God: Discovering the Goddess within Sula.” \textit{African American Review}, 29, No.3 (1995), p.439.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
archetypal feminine virgin/mother/crone who can provide what traditional patriarchal institutions have failed to provide, reverence for all forms of life.\textsuperscript{19}

Although the term "Patriarchy" is usually associated with male dominated, white, west's Judeo-Christian elite as revealed in the novels, it is actually not gender bound or race bound. It denotes a psychic state of mind which is hostile towards nature, life, or any quality traditionally associated with the feminine like nurturance, community, continuity. As a matter of fact traditional Chinese culture adopts the basic concept of, Yang "to refer to such virtues as maleness, the source of life, vitality, creativity, light, happiness," and it is curious to note that the Chinese concept of Yin "connotes femaleness, darkness, evil, destruction, sadness, death."\textsuperscript{20}

But in the Western mind as in some Eastern culture too, it is "Yang" concept that is feminine. It refers to birth, life, nurturance, regeneration, love, light, community and society. The feminine archetype which appears in the novels under study functions as a unifying force, connecting human beings to one another, to nature, to society and psychic interdependence. The characters are all in desperate need of such spiritual connection because they inhabit disconnected, rootless, non-regenerative patriarchal societies. According to Jung the development of a complete or whole self occurs when such a reconnection to the human psyche, to instinct, to intuition, to nature and life takes place. All these qualities he too attributed to the feminine archetype which he argued had been repressed in a patriarchal world of science, technology and reason. So they kept appearing in dreams, fantasises

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
and works of art and literature. However these images are universal though they may strike one as deeply meaningful or relevant of one’s modern life. No one type of archetype whether ancient or modern, Greek or African should be considered the only true archetype. “Archetypes are in a constant state of flux, recreating themselves over and over again.”

The modern patriarchal consciousness oriented toward individuality, competition and personal acquisition, become fatal when they are given primary importance to the exclusion of all feminine traits. In Morrison’s *Song of Solomon*, Milkman is one such character, whose father Macon Dead had taught him that his life ambition should be to own things. Money is the “trace” that would give him freedom and create his identity. “And let the things you own, own other things. Then you’ll own yourself and other people too.” Milkman’s father had seen his father, the man he loved and admired, being blown “five feet into the air,” while protecting his property. He had determined not to let anyone deprive him of his rightful ownership. But the effect of Milkman’s reliance on the materiality of the trace is to deprive him of the freedom and individuality that was also signified along with it. His individuality becomes arrogance and isolation, acquisition becomes possessiveness and mastery. According to Neumann, “This modern consciousness is threatening the existence of western mankind, for the one-sidedness of masculine development has led to a hypertrophy of consciousness at the expense of the whole man.” Milkman’s life is reduced to the empty one-dimensional, selfish, insensitive mode of mere

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21 Michele Pessoni, “She was Laughing at Their God: Discovering the Goddess within Sula” op. cit., p.440.
23 Ibid., p.52.
commercialism and money transactions. He takes all the service, devotion and love he gets from his family and girlfriends especially from Hagar, for granted.

It is Macon’s sister Pilate, the woman without a navel, who becomes Milkman’s pilot who reconnects him to his past, to his tradition and ancient secret lore of his ancestor Solomon who knew how to fly. Pilate is the projection of the feminine archetype that was missing in Milkman’s consciousness. She is neither fully connected to her entire past, nor completely disconnected from it like Milkman and his mother Ruth. She has a bag of bones and rocks with her. The bones she believes were of a man her father had killed while Milkman discovers that the bones could actually have belonged to her father. The rocks she keeps as traces of the places she had visited. Her name itself signifies her connection to her past. Her father had chosen the Christ killing Pilate because he liked the look of the word and copied it down from the Bible without knowing what it meant. But the ritual of naming passes from one generation to the next. Milkman’s father’s name Macon Dead signifies the white logo-centric powers. The drunken officer who copied down the names of the Blacks in the registration card mistook the name of his father’s birthplace, Macon, and his condition being dead, and thus he became Macon Dead, disconnected from his family and past. However Pilate’s childhood song:

O Sugarman done fly away
Sugarman done gone
Sugar cut across the sky
Sugarman gone home

is the link to some collective memory of her past in Danville and her community in Shalimar.

While Milkman is in the Southside community, his self has no centre, that is, it lacked a coherence, a coming together of the features forming a total self. Without a centre, any sense of the sacred, love or tender feelings that create meaning in life, he keeps defining himself by the terms of others. He is disconnected even from the house he lives in and the people whose centre of existence he is. Though he is attracted to his aunt Pilate's strange, unselfish ways and total lack of greed for wealth he does not consciously adopt her ways. He takes her guidance only in his search for gold. This quest for gold gradually becomes his quest for self, for reconnection to his past. Milkman rediscovering his family, his past and follows the story of his ancestors back through the traces to the legacy of his forefathers. He discovers his origins which give his life meaning and a sense of the sacred rooted in the Black rural folk tradition of the South. For the first time in his life Milkman recognizes how cruel and ungrateful he had been to Hagar and other women in his life. Thus Pilate kindles in him the values of love, gratitude, sharing, familial ties and of connecting with one's past. This knowledge gives him confidence that like his ancestor he too could "fly" when he chose.

Ellison's Invisible Man after confronting and rejecting a series of possible individual choices in the American milieu finally ends up in a coal cellar. A deeper analysis of the text reveals the novelist's quest for a fuller understanding of human consciousness by probing its dream plot and hallucinated images. Ellison goes "into the deeper level of his consciousness" opening himself to what can be called "an inner world where reason and madness mingle with hope and memory and endlessly give birth to nightmare and to dream."26 Trueblood's nightmare for instance seems a typically

Freudian dream where behind conscious public gestures incestuous cravings lurk in the depths of his unconscious. By portraying the subject of his lust as a white woman perhaps Ellison was deliberately giving in to the eternal nightmares of the white men who created the fantasy of the Black man raping the white woman. But the scene is also one of the best depictions of the projection of the dark shadowy archetypes of one’s self on to another. Norton’s gratitude to Trueblood for narrating the horrible tale could only be interpreted in this way. In any case Ellison succeeds in clarifying the darker aspects of self which are manifested in polymorphous multiplicity and ambivalence.

In keeping with the other portions of the novel where different people, the college presidents, trustees and political organisations all try to impose various phases of selfhood upon the protagonist, Trueblood’s nightmare can also be assumed to be projected. Perhaps Ellison wished to suggest that at such an unconscious level, the shadowy dark archetypes exist in the white as well as the Black mind. Yet, when the protagonist’s moral and intellectual foundations are destructured, his self left without any centre, it is to dreams and hallucinations that he looks to for an answer. In dreams he finds it possible for the multiple polarities and contradictory, fragments of self to go forward and backward at the same time. In dream an “other” may simultaneously be a “self.” In his dream he comes upon an old singer of spirituals who proves to be an oracle. In Jungian dream symbology she may be interpreted as “Anima” or the “feminine archetype,” the mediating agent between the conscious and the unconscious self. Unable to take him back to the security of the womb, the protagonist’s dream, then pushes him further through a dark narrow passage until he finally resurfaces from this underworld. However he finds that this escape too is not satisfactory. Without
the possibility of action, existence takes on a meaningless, knowledge is forgotten and the capacities to love and care are suppressed.

In Walker’s novels it is the men who project the dark shadowy parts of their self born out of centuries of helplessness, rage and frustration of slavery on to their women folk. It is this lack of the feminine elements of love, care, nurturance and life which destroys the lives of both Margaret and Mem in Walker’s *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*. It is the appearance of Ruth at the end of the novel which frees them from the self-created vicious circle of love, hate, guilt and vulnerability. This theme of the life-giving capabilities of the feminine archetype is further developed in *The Color Purple* where Shug Avery becomes symbolic of the strong nurturing mother. But it is in *Meridian* that the power of the self to free itself from all chains of enslavement whether that of one’s sex, family or community is fully developed. Throughout her early life, Meridian is trying to overcome a sense of guilt she knows not for what. In trying to get reconnected to the spiritual ecstasy she had known in the serpents pit in childhood, in regaining the regenerative power of Black church and music, she herself becomes a spiritual mother. Meridian has long spells when she loses touch with consciousness. She comes out of her trance with renewed spiritual strength. Shug Avery takes Celie out of her death-in-life joyless existence to a new life of sharing, love and care with her dear ones. This primordial mother image is not always associated with the positive qualities of joy, love and light. In *Possessing the Secret of Joy* Tashi becomes emblematic of the power of the destructive mother who kills the oppressor of her people. Yet Tashi in giving up her own life for her people takes on mythic overtones.

In Morrison’s *Sula*, Sula is alienated from the feminine principles in her own consciousness. She had been disconnected emotionally from her
mother when she heard her say that she did not like Sula. Similarly she had seen her grandmother Eva burn her own son to death. But Sula could understand only the destructive force of these mothers which made her deny the maternal instinct in her own self. Her repeated assertions that she did not want to create one “other” but her own self, do not succeed because she could not grasp the importance of connecting with an “other” in order to develop her own self. The readers are left with the feeling that had she not broken off with her alter ego Nel, Sula’s search for self fulfillment would have been complete.

In Baldwin’s *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, Elizabeth is perhaps the only character with an ethical and moral sense of her own identity. It is through her attachment to her father and reaction against her mother and aunt that she gains the sense of a love that is life-giving. She knows that love’s imprisonment is not a threat or a bribe. Although hers is a self sacrificing and life-giving love, she is unable to save Richard who becomes a victim of police brutality, and commits suicide. However, it is their illegitimate son John who becomes the central figure of the novel. Elizabeth is sensitively involved in John’s quest for selfhood. Surrounded by the engulfing influence of his stepfather, the hypocrisies and religious illusions of his elders, his own guilt and shame, John can hardly salvage a sense of self. Elizabeth with her quiet dignity and strong integrity stands out as a consoling and sustaining figure of motherhood. John experiences the lowest depths of the unconscious as he lies before the altar:

It was a sound of rage and weeping which filled the grave, rage and weeping from time set free but bound now in eternity; rage that had no language weeping with no voice which yet spoke now, to John’s started soul, of boundless
melancholy of the bitterest patience and the largest night, 
of the deepest water, the strongest chains.27

After this experience he undergoes a transformation and takes up priesthhood to serve Christ full-time. And in his religious ecstasy he finds another presence, that of his friend Elisha. Elisha acts as John’s teacher and role model as well as brother and father figures pointing out dangers in his path and exhorting him with warm encouragement. Her presence while John is on the threshing floor proves crucial to John’s regeneration and she is the first person to welcome him back from unconsciousness. It is her help that he seeks to face up to the condemning and accusing glances of his father and the questioning ones of his mother. At the conclusion of the novel Baldwin hints that the religious ecstasy is only the beginning of a long complex journey full of trials. He will need the feminine elements of life-giving love, nurturance and light to overcome these trials.

Elizabhetl’s inability to save Richard is made up by Baldwin in Tell Me How Long the Trains Been Gone where Tish with her strong love and trust in Fonny stands by him in his long trails. To Fonny who is accused, condemned, beaten and imprisoned, she is like a fresh light of hope. And in the end Tish is able to get back her husband and he is able to find a new sense of selfhood in his profession as a sculptor.

Although Baldwin and Ellison too, in some respects, have been considered as anti-feminists in that they never consciously portray women in a positive light in their fiction, it can be inferred that they are in full agreement that love, emotional connection, nurturance and creativity are the

only compensating factors in a bitter, loveless, rootless meaningless and self-destroying society. The Feminine Archetype in the unconscious and their symbolic embodiments in fiction reveal that they possess the psychic energy necessary to demolish the realities of the hostile, oppressive world and construct a multiple quest for a viable identity and a developed sense of self. Morrison's Pilate, Sula, Eva and Sethe and Walker's Meridian, Tashi and Ruth have become mythological figures foregrounding the significance of the Feminine Archetypes in the psychic development of the Black self.

5. The Fragments of Self

One's notion of one's self is largely an image of the self as it is reflected in the consciousness. But the self is seldom completely united. There are always larger or smaller groups of repressed experiences or memories which are independent of the larger system of consciousness. Thus the personal unconscious has all the elements of the normal self, its own desires, its own thoughts and even a kind of consciousness. The personal unconscious is different from the collective unconscious which is the ancestral heritage common to all men, whereas the personal unconscious is related to one's past. In extreme cases of psychic trauma or mental conflict the consciousness itself may become divided and fragmented.

In Invisible Man Ralph Ellison seeks a fuller understanding of the many opposing, vague, and confusing fragments of the self by probing its dream-plots and hallucinated images. Ellison descends through the many layers of consciousness and semi-consciousness and unconscious, and comes up with nebulous shapes and forms, an evasive world of half-revelations which insinuate and half-expose without fully revealing or clarifying an elusive reality which keeps moving just beyond one's conscious grip of viable
meaning. The nameless protagonist of the novel, the invisible man, tries to force visibility of his self upon others as he keeps moving between drug-induced hallucination, dreams and nightmares, the real and unreal characters and incidents in the external world and in the inner world of his psyche.

His encounter with the “tall blonde man” in his nightmare, in the prologue of the novel represents an encounter between the self and non-self. The blonde man does not see the protagonist as an individual and even insults him with a racial slur. All his efforts to make himself visible to the blonde man fail. The protagonist then begins to suspect if he really exists or if he is just a figment of the imagination of the white people. He decides to stop playing the roles in the white man’s nightmare but he does not know what roles he must play to be true to his self. In the prologue he asks the readers “to whom can I be responsible, and why should I be, when you refuse to see me?”28 Yet as he is making his speech his unconscious prompts him to ask for “social equality” instead of “social responsibility.” The way the narrator keeps shifting roles and making paradoxical statements only serves to add to his invisibility and yet his lack of responsibility is in itself a means to retain a part of his self which might otherwise be lost completely.

Just as in the prologue, the hospital scene where the narrator undergoes lobotomy is a sort of descent into a collective race memory. As one of the officials of the hospital explains the descent into the basement is probably some buried memory guiding him. “Perhaps this storage basement corresponds to the structure of his mind.”29 He gains some glimpses into half understood scenes from his childhood down south, but he goes on assuming and discarding various “selves” which do not give him any sense of an

29 Ibid., p.275
identity. He experiences moments of insight when he becomes aware of the fragments of his self:

The old self that slept a few hours a night and dreamed sometimes of my grandfather and Bledsoe and Brockway and Mary, the self that flew without wings and plunged from great heights; and the new public self that spoke for the Brotherhood and was becoming so much more important than the other that I seemed to run a foot race against my self.\(^{30}\)

It is this awareness of his divided personality that increases his indignation when he discovers that the brotherhood is just manipulating him and his race. He consciously decides to accept the duplicity, the fluidity and multiplicity of roles available in Harlem by playing on the name of Rineheart. Rineheart should be viewed more as a principle than a character. He functions as an antithesis to the protagonist’s self at the beginning when he expects identity to be singular and stable.

This ambiguity of the self deepens into multiple and conflicting possibilities in dreams and nightmares where space and time are suspended, where backward may also be forward, far may also be near. Motives and psychological postures become paradoxical in these phantasmagorias. This is vividly apparent in the final chapter of the novel when the protagonist experiences a hallucination, which he describes as neither of dream nor of waking but somewhere in between. On the one hand, he experiences a nightmarish vision of castration as trustees, college presidents, political
organisations struggle to impose various forms of selfhood upon him. When he resists, they come forward with a knife, cut his genitalia and fling it away. This suggests that they had taken away his manhood, his power to shape public events on his terms.

Yet while in the foreground of his vision, feeling empty, painful and powerless capable only of despairing laughter, a bridge beneath the apex of which his genitalia catch, slowly comes alive as if drawing life from those genitalia. As has been described in chapter III of this thesis, it begins to move like an iron man, headless, whose iron legs clang doomfully. Full of pain and sorrow he shouts that it must be stopped but the headless automaton keeps on striding painfully away. Deconstructing earlier analysis, we can consider this iron man as another aspect of his self, a more vengeful personality severed from his ego and conscious will as it’s headlessness suggests. Thus the hallucinating narrator, painful and empty, reduced to despairing laughter on the one hand, and the ironman heedlessly bent on revenge could both be authentic and contradictory visions of the same self. Rather than serving to define the self, the dreaming psyche seems to multiply it. Perhaps what Ellison wants to suggest is that beyond static defining forms of selfhood, a fluid and problematic essence lurks, containing within it multiple, conflicting and unseizable aspects of selfhood.

Like Ellison’s *Invisible Man* Morrison’s *Beloved* also resists a definite closure. Multiple readings of the text have been attempted. Morrison deliberately uses the psycho-analytical material of fantasy, the spiritual, the unreal and uncanny to create a strange wonderful world of what critics call “magic realism.” She too traverses the boundaries between the visible and the invisible, the conscious and unconscious to reveal the ambivalent and fragmentary nature of the self. Her text lends support to the various readings
put forward for the reappearance of the ghost figure of Beloved, eighteen years after her murder. Most critics have considered Beloved as the ghost who has come back to wreak vengeance on her mother, Sethe. A few have postulated that Beloved is not a ghost but a real girl whose mother has died by diving into the water from the slave ship, who somehow escapes and when she sees Sethe, mistakes her for her real mother. Deconstructing the evidence provided for the above readings, recent interpretation considers the novel as the struggle of the ego to establish itself over the unbearable psychological odds. It is Black experience born out of a sense of fragmentation.

The dehumanizing effects of slavery had already destabilised Sethe’s sense of self. After committing the staggering crime of murdering her own daughter, she lives in a state of schizophrenia, where various fragments of herself are constantly confronting one another. Thus the ghost of her dead daughter Beloved is actually only the manifestation of Sethe’s guilt and shame which she has repressed for years. Although she is not considered insane, society ignores her and her house because of her crime. For a clearer understanding of split personality we may refer to Morrison’s first novel The Bluest Eye where the poor adolescent Pecola has internalized the values of physical beauty and self worth so much that she comes to believe that only a pair of blue eyes could save her. Her imbibing these false values into herself leads to a total collapse of the centre of herself. In the following scene Pecola is found conversing with the other part of herself. This other self assures her that she is the most beautiful girl in town.

In the same way Sethe is found conversing with the other, the supposed ghost of Beloved

You came back because of me?
Yes.
You remember me?
Yes. I remember you.
You never forgot me?
Your face is mine.
Do you forgive me? Will you stay? You safe here now.\textsuperscript{31}

Sethe is asking for forgiveness for killing Beloved. And Beloved answers that Sethe’s face is that of Beloved. In other words it is a psychological necessity that Sethe confronts the guilt and sorrow she has repressed into her unconscious. Yet Beloved’s claim that her face is that of Sethe only proves that they are in fact one. Throughout the novel Morrison deliberately avoids any direct descriptions of Beloved’s face. Considered in this light Beloved’s attempt to seduce Paul D. by taking him away from the house it not so shocking or confusing because Sethe had always loved Paul D.. As Paul D. himself comments- “She gathers me, Man, the pieces I am, she gathers them and gives them back to me in all the right order...”\textsuperscript{32}

Perhaps Morrison portrays Beloved as a sensual woman to give the readers an insight into what Sethe’s life with her daughters would have been if it had been possible for a Black slave woman to live with her family in dignity and self-respect in America. Viewed in this way, the whole novel, the appearance of the ghost could be considered a fantasy of a mutilated mother love. The mixing of past/present, real/Unreal, wonderful/terrible creates an uncanny atmosphere of fear and awe, almost like the inner dark world of the unconscious where these things may co-exist and come out without apparent reason or context.

Characters who are split into parts of lost familial or cultural

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., p.272.
fragments, into racial halves, into observed and observing selves, often lose conscious control of their bodies. In seeing themselves from afar they may lose the ability to identify with their own bodies which often become fragmented or amputated and seem to act on their own. In Faulkner's *Light in August*, Joe Christmas is described throughout the text as brandishing weapons he doesn’t even realize he possesses. He is portrayed as “descending into an unconscious or black, phantom state of mind whenever he commits acts of violence, a state from which he emerges with no clear memory of what he has done.”

Throughout *Native Son*, Bigger Thomas acts, speaks and even kills involuntarily, that is, without conscious will.

In *Jazz*, Morrison presents Joe Trace whose primary desire was to meet and then kill the father whom he imagines as his missing limb, the man who disappeared without a trace. Joe imagines that he was the “trace” the father left without. Joe Trace has many levels of double-consciousness and often acts without conscious volition. As he himself admits- “I don’t know to this day what made me speak to her on the way out the door... I couldn’t talk to anybody but Dorcas and I told her things I hadn’t told myself.” The self communicates with itself only through the medium of another. After murdering Dorcas with the gun he says that the gun was in his hand but he had actually wanted to touch her with his hand.

For Black women like Dorcas and Violet the effect of this multiple consciousness was an alienation from their own bodies. “Women, like Blacks, are emphatically embodied, made to emblematize the primitive and the carnal, yet simultaneously denied materiality, and made to emblematize

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the ethereal and the abstract."\textsuperscript{35} For some Black women, this dichotomy gets expressed as an alienation from their own bodies. Dorcas feels the jazz Music which Morrison describes, "While her aunt (Alice) worried about how to keep the heart ignorant of the hips and the head in charge of both."\textsuperscript{36} Alice thus thinks of the self in disconnected parts.

Violet experiences, "This inability to identify with her body as her self, reflects a fragmentation of language and consciousness...."\textsuperscript{37} The words which come out of her mouth seem disconnected to her self.Disconnected words lead to disjointed action: "less excusable than a wayward mouth is an independent hand that can find in a parrot’s cage a knife lost for weeks."\textsuperscript{38} Violet claims that she never knew the knife was in her hand. Although in the novel Violet is described as a woman who has lost control, she is a compelled and possessed figure. Violet, in attempting to disfigure the corpse of Dorcas, tries to kill what's already dead, without a will of her own. She is possessed by music, by the dead and by some other. Violet’s conversation with Alice takes place as if there was an "other," a third person between them. Violet tells Alice that it was not she who tried cut up the dead girl’s face:

I am not the one you need to be scared of.
No? Who is?
I don’t know. That’s what hurts my head...
Why did he do such a thing?
Why did she?
Why did you?

\textsuperscript{35} Richard Hardack, op. cit., 456.
\textsuperscript{36} Toni Morrison, \textit{Jazz}, op. cit., p.60.
\textsuperscript{37} Richard Hardack, p.457.
\textsuperscript{38} Toni Morrison \textit{Jazz}, p.24.
I don’t know.³⁹

Violet herself wonders who that other Violet, her double identity, was:

Who on earth that other Violet was that walked about that city in her skin; peeked out through her eyes and saw other things... that Violet slammed past a white woman... She had been looking for that knife for a month. Couldn’t for the life of her think what she’d done with it. But that Violet knew and went right to it.⁴⁰

This other Violet, the one the with murder lurking inside her is in effect only another aspect of her self. But Violet was unconscious of this aspect. As she says, “I got quiet because the things I couldn’t say were coming out of my mouth anyhow. I got quiet because I didn’t know what my hands might get up to... The business going on inside me I thought was none of my business and none of Joe’s either.”⁴¹

Violet imagines another self in the daughter she never had, conjures another phantom child even as she endures a “crooked kind of mourning for a rival young enough to be her daughter.”⁴² Alice reminds Violet that sexual rivals are only in (versions) of one’s self — “Somebody wanting arms just like you do.”⁴³ After this her identification of Dorcas as the daughter she never had but could have had increases. She also realizes that for herself to

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⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 89.
⁴¹ Ibid., p. 97.
⁴² Ibid., p. 111.
⁴³ Ibid.
be made whole, she would have to kill the other Violet who acts without her conscious volition.

Felice understands “about having another you inside that isn’t anything like you... Nothing like me. I saw myself as somebody I’d seen in a picture-show or a magazine.” Throughout Jazz no character, male or female, can or would want to be self-reliant and self-created. For most of the novel they are not even self identifying. In order to escape this condition Violet killed this “other” inside. “Then I killed the me that killed her,” she says. In The Temple of My Familiar Lissie is another character who becomes conscious that she has many selves inside her. Her photographs taken at different times, are so unlike, as if she were a totally different woman in each.

Baldwin’s Giovanni’s Room and Another Country also examine the tendency of the self to be fragmented as all basic certainties are eroded by modern consciousness. The workings of sex among these half formed and doubtful selves are presented as one of the major elements in Man’s psyche, in which definable shapes appear and disappear. Men and women are torn between homosexual, heterosexual and asexual love as they try to arrive at a definition of one’s self which will sustain them in the face of the evils and self destroying hostile world. David, Rufus and other characters have had at least one experience of homosexuality and though they find it amply satisfying, they still opt for a heterosexual life, at least most of Baldwin’s characters do, which seems to be taking away part of their self. This clearly illustrates the concept that fragmentation of the self continues to be a salient feature of the inner life of most of the characters of these writers.

44 Ibid., pp.208-209.
45 Ibid., p.209
5. Towards Individuation

As mentioned earlier, man's unconscious, by its very nature, always prompts him to a better, fuller and more developed attainment of his potential. For a complete, developed and integrated self, the individual should take into account his conscious experiences as well as the manifestations of the unconscious, according to Jung. As far as the Afro-American is concerned, the psychic duality of his individuality as African and American, the burden of slavery and later, of racism, of the white American's attempt to define him in derogatory roles and images, his own anger, diffidence and resentment make a positive evaluation of his self with a strong unified centre almost impossible. Novelists like Ellison, Baldwin, Morrison and Walker understand that one of the main hurdles for a positive Black self-concept is the weight of the past sufferings, the psychic injuries passed from generation to generation and carried on either in the different levels of the unconscious or repressed just below the conscious mind.

The main argument of this study is that only when an Afro-American is able to reconcile himself to his past, his racial history, his tradition and origin and overcome what is oppressive in it, will he be able to connect to his present social and psychological realities and evolve an integrated and united sense of self. The characters presented in the fictional universe of these writers are men and women displaced, dispossessed, alienated and isolated with either no sense of self or fragments of self living one-sided, incomplete and unsatisfactory lives. They are either unconscious or uncaring of what is lacking. Like the feminine archetypes, some chance encounter with the unconscious mythological figures, some inexplicable incident word or deed takes them on a quest for identity and through reconnection to their past, their roots and ancestral properties, they take a conscious account of their lives,
their collective history and racial identity. It is this voyage through the past that gives them confidence about the present and thus hope for the future. Thus the characters strive for individuation, for a unified strong centre for the self, for an identity which unites them and yet differentiates them from their racial collectivity.

The hero of *Invisible Man* surrenders different aspects of self and takes on new selves just as false and one-dimensional. His encounter with the eccentric half-mad men at the Golden inn, with the simple folk type Mary Rambo who takes him in and gives him shelter, the pseudo-sybil old woman, Brother Trap's leg-chain, death of Tod Clifton are all reminders from his unconscious, but he cannot accept his past. His confrontation with the varied folk figures from his native southern village with their native vernacular speech and the Brer Rabbit and Brer Bear folktale figures which came into his conscious mind when he was in a state of semi-consciousness, the lines from the blues, the spéling and mother wit double game all sustain his sense of selfhood but only for short intervals of time can he remain connected to his ancestral folk heritage. His escape from self-deception came in the figure of Rineheart, who is himself an illusion. The "Invisible Man" learns to reject all illusions. "Acceptance of the past with all its failures and shortcoming is a key to the present."46 He understands finally:

And now all past humiliations became precious parts of my experience and for the first time, leaning against that stone wall in the sweltering night, I began to accept my past and, as I accepted it, I felt memories welling up within me. It was as though I’d learned suddenly to look around corners,
images of past humiliations flickered through my head and I saw that they were more than separate experiences. They were me, they defined me.47

Acceptance of the past gives him the self knowledge to refuse to accept a debased myth of origins. Ellison subverts racist caricatures using his fiction as a weapon against “those formulas which have been evolved to describe my (his) group’s identity.”48 “Invisible Man” looks backward to the enslaved self for it’s human dignity and self awareness. Real freedom lies in acceptance of one’s limitations.

Baldwin would be satisfied with nothing less than the achievement of his full potential as a man and this trend is reflected in his novels as the characters try to attain sexual, spiritual and racial freedom. In Go Tell It on the Mountain John undergoes deep psychic pain at being hated by Gabriel, the man who chose to be his father but considered him a bastard. He tries to attain closeness to his Heavenly Father as a way to eliminate fear and hate for Gabriel but the narrow dictates and hypocrisies of his religious superiors, his own sense of sin at his growing sexuality, all add to a feeling of doom. The moment of his conversion, as he lay unconscious before the altar is described in images of darkness, chaos, silence and emptiness. His soul was thrust into outer darkness by a rejecting, punishing, castrating father-figure who is the surrogate of a hostile society. At the depth of John’s despair, a sound emerges to assuage his pain:

He had heard it all his life, but it was only now that his ears

were opened to this sound that came from the darkness, that could only come from darkness, that yet bore such sure witness to the glory of the light. And now in his moaning, and so far from any help he heard it in himself — it rose from his bleeding, his cracked open heart.  

It is John’s unconscious knowledge of and interaction with his deceased father, Richard, that offers him a way out of this deep despair. The voice at first seems to John to be malicious and ironic because it asked him to leave the temple and go out into the world. But later it counsels him to “rise from the filthy floor” and to resist the limiting structures of his religious environment. The voice says “Get up, boy. Don’t let him keep you here. You got everything your daddy got…,” suggesting John’s deep communion with his biological father Richard. Richard’s voice is available to John because of his mother Elizabeth’s abiding faith in their love and her happy memories of Richard. This voice arises from the depths of John’s unconscious and provides the crucial inspiration for John to go through his ordeal and ask the Lord’s help to be delivered. When John emerges from his darkness intact, saved and joyous, Elizabeth feels justified in not repenting her past, her love for Richard or the birth of their son John out of wedlock. Throughout the rest of the novel John’s new connection with his dead father remains below the level of consciousness but it is all the stronger because of its hiddenness. Thus John’s descent into the unconsciousness connects him to his racial past as suggested by the images of the strong chains, the cruel lash, the bodies on the trees, in the fire and in the water. He also understands the true facts of his paternity and needs no longer to be ashamed of his.

49 James Baldwin, Go Tell It on the Mountain, p.228.
50 Ibid., p.194
51 Ibid., p.196
bastardy. Thus John is reconciled to his own self-doubts and conflicts, and accepts himself without feelings of fear, shame, guilt and despair. Baldwin "clearly offers a protagonist who rises to a sense of his own basic goodness, strength and ability to succeed in matters spiritual as well as temporal."52

Alice Walker in *Meridian* describes a scene where a bunch of Black country boys meets Lynne, Truman's white wife, for the first time. They were literally afraid of her and didn't want to be seen talking to her. "To them she was route to death, pure and simple. They felt her power over them in their bones, their mothers had feared her even before they were born."53 This brings out the unconscious fear and distrust the Blacks have inherited for the Whites from their parents. The same Lynne tells Truman in a moment of anger, "You’re like the rest of those nigger Zombies. No life of your own at all unless it’s something against white folks. You can’t even enjoy a good fuck without hoping some cracker is somewhere grinding his teeth."54 But Truman, like Meridian, continuously feels guilty the cause of which he doesn’t know. He abandons the white Lynne and goes back to Meridian. Meridian had herself been unconsciously struggling to resolve a guilt whose origin, she could not identify. Ironically Meridian's salvation comes through the Black church. The very church she had denounced provided her the thing that she needed to sustain her. Yet it was not Christianity that she accepted but the music that she heard in it. It was the old music, the song of the people transformed by the experience of each generation, that held them together. The music reminded her of her early childhood, of her sharing of spiritual ecstasy at the serpent’s pit. Meridian could go back to her past, even

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54 Ibid., p. 195
reconnect with her father and her great grandmother Feather Mae. She also understood the whole history of slavery that could make a Black man ready to kill a white man. It is her exposure to this music that reminded her of the gospels and spirituals of her ancestors that gives her the regenerative power which makes her present life possible. Thus Meridian overcomes the repressed elements in her unconscious, transcends her physical body even, and attains a wholeness of self and rises like a mythical goddess. Like Meridian, Fanny in *The Temple of My Familiar* becomes possessed by the past. Suwelo, who loves her finds that Fanny seems at times to go off totally in mind as if she was in another world. She even speaks to him about the people, long dead, as if they were living and had met her. It is almost as if Fanny had gone through the whole oppressing history of slavery, in her different births, and remembered them all in the present life.

Morrison’s picture of the woman in the yellow dress in *Tar Baby*, the one who held three eggs aloft and spat contempt at Jadine seems like an African goddess come to remind Jadine not to forget her ancient properties as a Black and as a woman. She is reminiscent of the navelless Pilate in *Song of Solomon* who is another archetype that compels Milkman to a journey to his past history and his roots. Like the African goddess who had three eggs in her hand, Pilate also offers eggs and apples to Milkman. In both novels, eggs suggest origin and encourage a return to the past. As Cynthia A. Davis observes, through his geographic descent into his past Milkman “becomes part of the historical process by which the struggle for self definition is both complicated and fulfilled.”

Similarly the appearance of Beloved whether from the world of the supernatural or from Africa in the lives of Sethe and Paul D. has a definite purpose. She has come to force Sethe to come to terms

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with her past, the whole history of slavery, and the psychic pain, guilt and shame of having killed her own three years-old daughter. Beloved also plays the role of forcing Paul D. to accept his past and Sethe’s past and move beyond them. Perhaps the novel was a reminder to the readers too about the sixty million or more who perished under slavery and to whom the novel is dedicated.

As Bell Hooks while referring to Walker’s *Possessing the Secret of Joy* remarks that “memory sustains a spirit of resistance. Too many red and black people live in a state of forgetfulness, embracing a colonized mind so that they can better assimilate into the white world.”^{56} Hooks suggests that while history may be painful, the other can, in remembering, deconstruct the history of the colonizer and its falsifying representation of the colonized. As in the case of Tashi, memory can act a catalyst against oppression and fragmentation of the self.

Thus a central motif in the fictional universe of all the writers under study is “an exploration of a sense of self through both personal and group history to the final end of articulating a narrative of the self with a clear sense of one’s place among one’s people, in an accepted or chosen location.”^{57} The self is fractured, fragmented, displaced or lost when the characters have difficulty in seeing the past, present and future as a unified continuum. Elements like guilt, shame, hate or unpleasant incidents cannot be repressed in the unconscious for long without harmful psychic

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consequences. One may become schizophrenic as Pecola or Sehte or Violet. Under the peculiar circumstances of slavery where one could neither belong to one's parents or spouse or even to one's own self, the problem of identity was an inevitable issue. People carried the psychic strains from generation to generation. They may just be half-selves of the lost parent or offspring on an everlasting quest for the other half. This is evidenced in Joe Trace who searches for his lost mother in every woman he meets. Perhaps his inability to let Dorcas go was because she is to him, his mother, the other half, self that was lost. Oedipus and Electra complexes loam large in the unconscious and have to be consciously confronted and expunged. In the fast-moving, mechanical, materialistic modern world, even love and sex deteriorate into meaningless futile gestures which take away rather than add to one's sense of wholeness and integrity. Baldwin and Walker take on the problems of homosexuality and lesbianism too, which is again, a major factor in one's definition of one's self.

The first step towards overcoming all these insurmountable odds and psychological handicaps is an awareness of what one's past has been. Understanding the far-reaching, long lasting genocidal effects of racism on an individual as he tries to come to grips with the conscious and unconscious reality of the hostile world has been advocated by all these writers. The continuing effects of racism, the double consciousness this entails, as a person is torn between his desire to affirm and reject the values of the dominant groups are also implied. Yet, man by nature has the potential in him to decentralize these restricting structures. The collective memories stored in the unconscious as myths, legends, rituals, folklore, gospel, spirituals, and blues and jazz thus become very important in the voyage towards one's ancestral, familial or personal past. All the writers stress the significance of shared history communicated by shared stories, shared traditions and shared
experiences. This aids in the exploration of one's internal world of the psyche and gathers together all the elements of the unconscious and conscious selves to form a strong stable unified and centralized sense of self.

The concept "man" exists only because man denies that he may be the "other" viz: woman. Woman is "an other" of what man is not. But to give meaning to himself, man needs this "other" even as he denies it. Similarly a self needs a non-self: an "other" against with to define itself. For the Euro-Americans the Black Diaspora is this "other" against which he defines his positive self. He projected his dark side, the shadow archetypes on to this Black person. The voyage of the Black man’s psyche to a reversal of this order, where he could see the Euro-American as the "other" and his self as the centre of his consciousness requires the psychic energy provided by the elements of his unconscious.