

## CHAPTER – 2

### THE 1960s AND THE 1970s: DIASPORIC CONSCIOUSNESS IN PAULE MARSHALL'S *THE CHOSEN PLACE*, *THE TIMELESS PEOPLE* AND ALEX HALEY'S *ROOTS*; DOMESTIC STRATEGIES OF RESISTANCE IN TONI MORRISON'S *THE BLUEST EYE* AND JAMES BALDWIN'S *IF BEALE STREET COULD TALK*

The broad based political movement that provided the context for the Black Aesthetic did not exist for Black feminist discourse. In the 1960s race became the overriding sign for all Black oppression. This subjection of Black feminist discourse to the politics of race had a largely negative impact on the production, distribution, and reception of literature written by Black women.<sup>1</sup>

Elliott Butler Evans

Finally, Black Power is a psychological call to manhood. For years, the Negro has been taught that he is nobody, that his color is a sign of his biological depravity, that his being has been stamped with an indelible filth of worthlessness.<sup>2</sup>

Martin Luther King Jr

[I] am one of the 22 million Black people, who are victims of Americanism...I don't see an American dream; I see an American nightmare.<sup>3</sup>

Malcolm X

The 1950s and the 1960s were the decades which witnessed a rise in Black Civil Rights awareness as well as movements. Movements like Marcus Garvey's *Universal Negro Improvement Association* had already asserted the need for the Blacks to reclaim their African ancestry.<sup>4</sup> Cyril V. Briggs had also prioritized the liberation of Africa and the redemption of the Negro race in his association *The African Blood Brotherhood*.<sup>5</sup> In a separate context, Du Bois had raised the issue of uniting long separated Black diaspora communities in a common cause.<sup>6</sup> Although the Harlem

Renaissance helped to propagate a distinct African American artistic voice and created the image of the New Negro, the racial question in the 50s and the 60s transcended such artistic definitions. Martin Luther King Junior's non-violent ideology was instrumental in activating a number of movements for desegregation and racial equality. Malcolm X.'s movement *Nation of Islam* further strengthened the nationalist agenda, as he spoke openly about 'the state sanctioned violent denial of African American citizenship rights'.<sup>7</sup> Malcolm X's ideology also went on to influence a number of Black Power Movements as well as the Black Arts Movement. More than emphasizing the Black community's need to work out their economic, social as well as moral survival, he questioned the use of the term 'nigger' and remarked :

Its usage shall continue to be considered as unenlightened and objectionable or deliberately offensive whether in speech or writing.

We accept the use of Afro-American and Black Man in reference to persons of African heritage.<sup>8</sup>

Richard Wright had partially anticipated this movement when he expressed the necessity for protest literature in his essay, 'The Blue Print for Negro Writing'.<sup>9</sup> Larry Neal describes the Black Arts Movement in the following manner:

The Black Arts Movement is radically opposed to any concept of the artist that alienates him from his community. Black Art is the aesthetic and spiritual sister of the Black Power concept. As such, it envisions an art that speaks directly to the needs and aspirations of Black America. The Black Arts and the Black Power concept both relate broadly to the Afro-American's desire for self-determination and nationhood. Both concepts are nationalistic.<sup>10</sup>

The Black Arts Movement was also responsible for a renewed interest in the Black community about their African ancestry and tradition. The nationalist discourse of this period in Black history also involved an attempt to understand the Black Diaspora comprehensively.

This chapter attempts to deal with these diverse aspects of the period. Paule Marshall's *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*<sup>11</sup> and Alex Haley's *Roots*<sup>12</sup> were pioneering attempts to represent the Black community, with its history of slavery and oppression to arrive at a self-definition. The second half of the chapter deals with Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*<sup>13</sup> and James Baldwin's *If Beale Street Could Talk*<sup>14</sup>—two novels which try to chart out the problems of the Black community striving for self definition in the turbulent 60s and 70s. The thrust of the economic and political movements of this period was to make the Black community strong, and to help it cultivate an image of self- esteem through such slogans as 'Black is Beautiful'. My objective will be to see how such efforts affected representation of the African American family in the literature of that period and whether, in making a determined effort to project a strong racial image to the world at large, Black American writers were able to build up a sense of self- esteem within the family.

Paule Marshall's *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* and Alex Haley's *Roots* attempt to document chapters of Black American history like the Middle Passage, the American occupation of the Caribbean and Slavery as crucial to the development of the Black race as a whole. The interest in Africanist culture and the Caribbean Diaspora has been commended by Giselle Liza Anatol in her essay, 'Caribbean Migration and the New World Novel'<sup>15</sup>:

Recognizing the multiplicity of cultures embedded within 'Black' America can only enhance our study and understanding of African American literature .<sup>16</sup>

These novels, therefore, represent a transition towards cultural pluralism which was the predominant note even in the nationalist discourse of the period. Reclaiming history and reviving interest in the African Diaspora also led to the creation of a Black Studies curriculum in some colleges and universities. Nathan

Hare, the chair in the pioneering Black Studies Department of San Francisco State College outlined the curriculum of the Black Studies programme.<sup>17</sup> In his definition we see the community's need to create a meaningful self image which would obviously go on to bolster racial pride. He remarked:

A Black studies program may be divided into two phases - the expressive and the pragmatic. The expressive phase refers to the effort to build in Black youth a sense of pride of self, of collective destiny; a sense of pastness as a springboard in the quest for a new and better future. It revolves around such courses as Black history and Black art and culture but hinges on applicability (relevance) to the Black community and its needs.<sup>18</sup>

Although the movements of this period addressed the need for the Black community to redefine its racial image and emphasize the importance of history, we also see a lack of acknowledgement of the contribution of Black women to the Civil Rights agitation and in the enterprise of Black nation formation. Stephen Henderson notes in his introduction to 'Black Women Writers'<sup>19</sup> that:

When Black women discovered a political context that involved both race and gender, our history in this community took a special turn, and our literature a quantum leap toward maturity and honesty.<sup>20</sup>

Women writers like Paule Marshall tried to integrate questions of race and gender in their fiction. Zora Neale Hurston's legacy of questioning and observing the community and the gender roles inscribed within it was carried on by Paule Marshall, but because of the diasporic theme of her novel, the racial question and its repercussions on the community are more prominently addressed. Thus *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* (1969) tries to project the community of Bournehills and its residents as victims of white capitalist oppression and depicts how colonialism sometimes affects the inner lives of the members of a community. Alex Haley's *Roots* (1976) on the other hand, is an epic saga of a novel in which a young man's search for his roots takes him to the African mainland where he attempts to trace his forefathers and thereby retrace the racial outrage of the Middle Passage. Although written in

1976, this novel acquired cult status for a long time to come, and it can be taken as a representative text which fulfils the requirements of the Black studies programme especially in its aim to inspire a sense of collective destiny.

**Black Pride in Marshall's *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* and Alex Haley's *Roots*.**

In trying to find a thematic unity in Paule Marshall's novels, Michelle L. Taylor has remarked :

One of the most important unifying themes in Marshall's oeuvre is the interconnectedness of Africa-descended people throughout the diaspora. Though she takes as her primary focus the migratory journeys between the Caribbean and North America, she is nonetheless interested in the shared past represented by the African homeland .<sup>21</sup>

Paule Marshall converts to her novelistic purpose the ideology which pervaded the nationalist movements of the decade. Memory of the racial past, acknowledgement of racial history and attempts to link the American Blacks with their African homeland featured in the agenda of every Black movement at this time. The fictional Caribbean island of Bournehills becomes the centre for a white research project in *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*. The island of Bournehills, is the chosen place where the research team tries its best to implement certain schemes of modernization. The community of Bournehills is timeless, however, in the sense that it appears to be insulated from the modern civilization. Marshall, through her use of folk history, seems to suggest that it is this community's ability to connect with the past and value the ancestral history of the island which enables it to survive.

The characters in the novel can be divided into two broad groups - the natives and the outsiders. It is the outsiders and their response to the lifestyle of the island which bring out the resilience of the community- a community which has managed to survive in spite of all the odds, even though it is divorced from Western Civilization.

A group of outsiders come to the island as part of the research project is to understand the island in their own limited ways. Saul, the lead researcher, studies the community with his usual meticulousness. Allen, with his fondness for figures and data, tries to rationally explain the things he encounters. Harriet fails to understand the islanders and mechanically follows their lifestyle. The families depicted in the novel are not regular ones. There is Merle, a single woman with a mysterious past, who runs a boarding house and treats the entire village of Bournehills as her extended family. There is Leesy who lives by herself, but her son Vere returns to the island from America, thoroughly infatuated with American automobiles. There are also a couple, Stiger and Gwen with their ever growing brood of children, who seem oblivious to the difficulties surrounding their lives. Marshall depicts the community as neither a perfect nor an ideal one.

From the beginning, Merle's apparently bohemian persona promotes the idea of a shared communal existence. Merle Kinbona knows everybody in the island and makes it her business to help them out. Her loquacity is punctuated by her enigmatic silences. Merle's character represents the fractured psyche of the BLACKS, on the one hand in her attempt to find a sense of community by treating everybody in the island as her family; and on the other hand in her inability to escape her tragic past and her failure as a wife and mother. The racial past is also forever present in the lives of the islanders from Bournehills. The past is embodied in the stormy seas which surround Bournehills and Marshall describes it thus:

It was the Atlantic this side of the island, a wild -eyed, marauding sea the color of slate, deep, full of dangerous currents, lined with row upon row of barrier reefs, and with a sound like that of the combined voices of the drowned raised in a loud, unceasing lament and - all those, the nine million and more it is said, who in their enforced exile, their Diaspora, had gone down between this point and the homeland lying out of sight to the east. This sea mourned them.<sup>22</sup>

Black Nationalist movements during the 1960s had addressed the issue of the value of Black folk history in fostering Black pride. In the case of Bournehills folk history, especially the rebellion of Cuffee Ned, becomes a perennial source of the community's pride. The islanders enact this rebellion during the carnival as it remains the solitary instance when one of their population had stood up to the white colonizers. The memory of Cuffee Ned and his feat therefore helps the community to preserve their history and overcome the racial trauma of the Middle Passage. According to Eugenia Collier :

The novel, then, is...Marshall's ever-broadening vision of the relationship of the individual with the community. A vision that links Black culture in the western Hemisphere with its African past and the promise of the future, it sees this Black culture as different from Euro-American culture, which has been the oppressor, and which itself has been diminished by that role, and proposes that the hope for the future lies in honoring this past and using it as the basis for unified action. In this unity is power.<sup>23</sup>

Thus Marshall's emphasis is on the *people* and their unity as a source of power. Marshall's ideology is in consonance with the basic tenets of those movements which sought to highlight the importance of Black history in the formation of Black national identity. In varying degrees, the people of Bournehills try to preserve some sense of the past by bearing witness to their racial history.

If read in the context of the Black Power movements, Marshall's quest for a unified vision is also a departure from the protest novels of the earlier period. The individual is perceived strictly as a part of the community. Unlike Hurston or Wright, Marshall refrains from endowing her protagonists with heroic features or personalities. As has already been mentioned, there is no typical nuclear family in the novel. It is Merle Kinbona who tries to bind the entire community through her philanthropic projects. When Merle Kinbona is described at the beginning of the

novel she is shown in all her eccentricities. She wears a vivid dress of abstract tribal motif and adorns herself with a profusion of ear-rings and bangles. The narrator's observation of Merle's outfit is concluded with a remark which throws significant light on her character :

She had donned this somewhat bizarre outfit, each item of which stood opposed to, at war even, with the other, to express rather a diversity and disunity within herself, and her attempt, unconscious probably, to reconcile these opposing parts, to make of them a whole. Moreover, in dressing in this manner, she appeared to be trying..., to recover something in herself that had been sense and certainty of herself as a woman perhaps.<sup>24</sup>

Merle's failure at being the ideal wife and mother has probably affected her sense of womanhood. Her persona, as Marshall constructs it, can be defined as that of a 'woman of resistance'<sup>25</sup> — to use Elizabeth Ann Beaulieu's phrase already cited in the first chapter. This resistance may strikingly appear in her unconventional way of dressing but is more evident in the ways in which 'she tries to reinterpret' herself and her history in the given environment of the community of Bournehills.

In the first chapter of the novel, Marshall tries to establish some links between Merle and the island of Bournehills. Her face gives the impression of being depleted or despoiled like the worn hills of the island:

Her face, especially in repose or when she was silent (which was seldom), confessed that something of great value had been taken from her. It looked utterly bereft at times. What saved it (and this only in part) was the inner sunlight her eyes gave off. This said some vital center remained intact. And this duality, this sense of life persisting amid that nameless and irrevocable loss made her face terribly affecting, even beautiful.<sup>26</sup>

Perhaps Marshall's description of Merle is symbolic of the spirit of Black women everywhere — their sense of loss and their willingness to survive. Merle embodies this duality in her character while displaying a sense of Black pride. Her

loquacity and her eccentric dress are strident attempts to emphasize the Black identity, much like the Black Power supporters. Yet Marshall roots Merle's duality in her sense of insecurity and her inability to play certain roles subscribed to by the Black community.

Like the supporters of the Black Power movement, Merle too is shown to take an active interest in BLACK history. Vere's mother Leesy informs her son that Merle had been expelled from the local school because she was teaching the history of the rebellion of Cuffee Ned, rather than the history written down 'that told all about the english'.<sup>27</sup> But Merle had refused to teach it because she believed that such history 'made it look like Black people never fought back.'<sup>28</sup>

Like the manifesto of the Black Power movements of the erstwhile decade, Merle is also determined to revive interest in Black history, which would involve revising the white academy's written history. She is an enigma to the islanders because of her past, of which they know very little. Her active involvement in the Bournehills community brings her into proximity with the group of anthropologists led by Saul.

Saul is an outsider to the Bournehills community. But in his character Marshall tries to present a man who is White and yet committed to rescuing the racial heritage of the island. Saul's affinity to Merle starts out from his sense of personal loss and his tragic past. During one of their first meetings Merle takes Saul to a nightclub and points out all the local characters of the community, but Saul only notices the anguish in her tone when she talks about the tribal girls being exploited by white tourists. He is astute enough to understand that Merle's anger is all the more

intense because it stems from some deep emotional scar which she might have sustained as a result of similar exploitation. Thus Saul deduces that:

She might have been condemned to tell the tale - and something in her eyes, a doomed obsessive glint, did put him in mind of the old mariner in the poem he had read as a boy. She, too, might have been witness to, victim of, some unspeakably inhuman act and been condemned to wander the world telling every stranger she met about it.<sup>29</sup>

Saul's kinship with Merle is consolidated when she invites him to address the islanders and explain to them all about his project. Saul's anthropological project steadily turns into an enterprise to revive the economy of the island, especially with his involvement in the Cane Vale Sugarcane Factory. Vere and Allen also identify with the island. In one of their research trips all of them come together in a moment which makes them connect almost like a family:

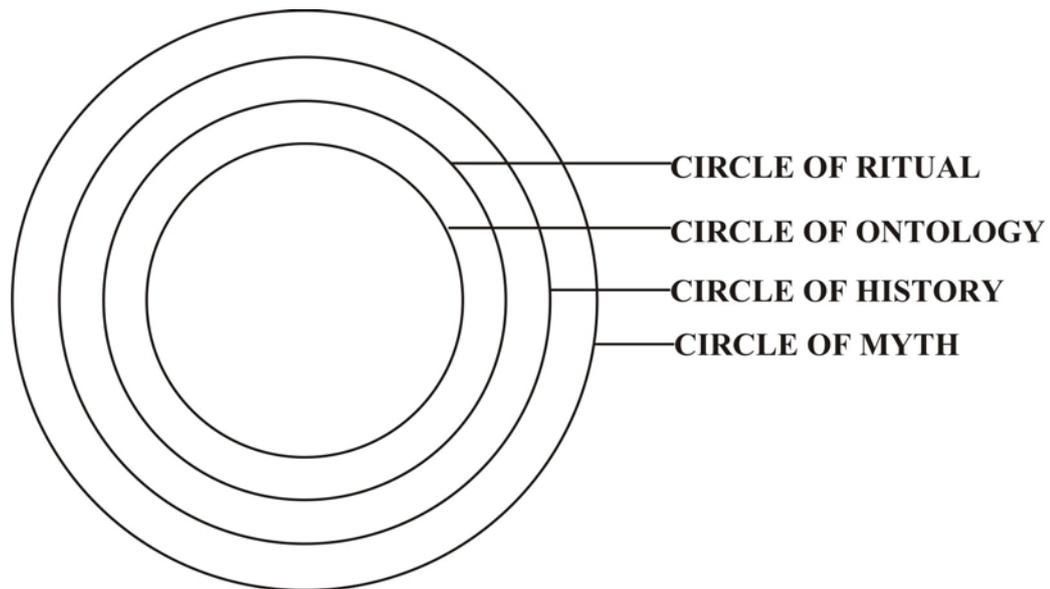
Their small gathering almost suggested a reunion: the coming together of the members of a family who had been scattered to the four corners of the earth and changed beyond recognition by the same still. They might have been searching for each other for a long time, seeking completion. And they had met finally (although it was too late and could only last a moment), here on this desolate coast, before this perpetually aggrieved sea which, even as they stood questioning Vere about the places he had worked in America, continued to grieve and rage over the ancient wrong it could neither forget nor forgive.<sup>30</sup>

This episode in the novel is significant, because Marshall tries to suggest that there can be a sense of family and community with the whites as well. But the sea which had witnessed the trauma of the Middle Passage makes it difficult for the people to forget or transcend their painful past. The Americans might feel at home in this island but such moments of kinship would only be transitory. Though the possibility of interracial connection exists, such a connection can only be tentatively achieved, at least at this point of time in history.

Merle, as Marshall establishes at the very outset, is as emotionally scarred as the island of Bournehills has been. Merle is the protagonist of the novel, yet Marshall tries to give her character a rare dimension by characterizing her differently from such BLACK women who were supposed to embody the Black maternal discourse of power. For the most part of the novel, Merle is an activist who cares for the community and the environment. More importantly, she chooses this role by making herself believe that her community is her family. Black women and the question of their position were relegated to the background in the political ideology of the 60s. Through Merle, Marshall seems to suggest that the politics of race and women-centric issues are not mutually exclusive. Merle is a precursor to the emergent women of the 90s, especially in her commitment to activism.

Merle was born out of wedlock. Her father Ashton Vaughn had provided for her as well as her mother, but did not give her the acknowledgement she craved. Merle's mother was murdered under mysterious circumstances when Merle was but a child. She had witnessed the murder and some instinct made her believe that it was her father's men who had perpetrated the crime. Merle carefully avoids referring to Ashton Vaughn as her father and grows up without any positive male influence. Moreover, her mother's absence is also a significant aspect of her development as a human being. It can be said that Merle's search for a family leads her to embrace the community of Bournehills. The common people of Bournehills feel that Merle is really involved with their problems and will take their side when she talks to them and convinces them about the feasibility of the project. Merle is rather like the latter day womanists, who would place primary importance on racial welfare rather than on issues of women's empowerment.

In Paule Marshall's novel we see the kind of fiction that Alexis De Veau had described as an attempt to understand the ('self multiplied in terms of the community'),<sup>31</sup> already cited in the first chapter. Hortense. J. Spillers in her essay '*The Chosen Place, The Timeless People: Some Figuration on the New World*'<sup>32</sup> has offered a diagrammatic representation of the association between individual and community that takes place in the novel :



Spillers adds as explanation :

I think it is correct to say that the work is agent-centred, as the diagram suggests that the circle of ontology or the point at which we locate character becomes the comprehensive ring on an interlocking sequence of changes. This locus designates the nuclear or fundamental unit of more encompassing relationships that open out, in turn, into the realm of the timeless, here represented by the circle of myth. Between the outermost and the innermost is poised the world of human history, and the realm of history is figuratively repeated in the daily activities of the community through its ritualistic and symbolic play. Therefore, ontogeny here repeats phylogeny: the individual both makes and is made by the collective history, as we also imagine, that this subtle shimmering and shading of meanings continuously obverts. The characters embody, therefore, a noble synecdochic purpose because they are the part that speaks for the whole, just as the whole is configured in their partialness.<sup>33</sup>

Thus the individuals in Marshall's novel are subject to the world of myth and history. The carnivals and rituals represent the symbolic history of the island, in which most of the inhabitants participate. Some characters like Lyle Hutson and George Clough do not participate in the island's history and therefore, in spite of being residents of Bournehills, are not really a part of its community. The islanders, through the enactment of Cuffee Ned's rebellion every year, and Merle through her method of teaching history, participate in the collective history of the race. Yet each has one's own point of reference by which he/she can best identify with the island. Merle's love for the blighted Westminster tree which miraculously sports yellow blossoms, and Leesy's talking with the family's dead ancestors, are exemplary points where the island's history and human history co-exist peacefully. At another level, however, the island's ancestry and folkways also doom Vere's capitalist dream of owning a Bentley. He dies in a fatal accident while taking the car out on a test drive.

Saul and Allen try to convince the inhabitants of the island that their research project will not endanger the community's history or tradition. But Saul is of Jewish origin and he is also able to understand what racial oppression is all about. However, Spiller's diagrammatic representation of Marshall's plot, with its inmost circle of ontology which is the Bourne island, does function as a model in which the people who belong to Bournehills are the only ones privileged enough to feel its subsequent orders of ritual, history and myth. Although Saul's philanthropic zeal is real enough, Leesy quite early in the novel predicts doom for their project, since she believes that research projects promising change were futile in a community that was set upon its ancient folkloric ways. Leesy, while communing with her dead ancestors, remarks:

But I wonder why these people from Away can't learn, yes... Every time you look here comes and the set of them with a big plan... And they always got to come during crop when people are busy trying to get them few canes out the ground and over to Cane Vale, always walking about and looking, the lot of them, like they never seen poor people before. I tell you they's some confused and troubled souls you seen them there ...<sup>34</sup>

The Bournehills project, in a roundabout way, awakes in Saul a 'memory of his Jewish ancestry, which his mother had taken great pains to impart.'<sup>35</sup> Saul's presence in the island is Marshall's way of acknowledging that the circle of myth and the circle of history are so powerful that they may affect you even if you do not belong to a particular group. Saul is reminded of his mother's version of Jewish history while staying in this Caribbean Island:

But although her story had been suspect and had even ceased to impress him after a time.... it nonetheless came to stand in his child's mind for the entire two thousand year history of exile and trial, including the Nazi horror which was still to come when he was a boy. Moreover, her tale, in assuming the proportions of an archetype, a paradigm, in his youthful imagination also came to embody, without his realizing it,.. all that any other people had had to endure. It became the means by which he understood the suffering of others. It encompassed them all.<sup>36</sup>

Marshall's comment on Saul's state of mind is significant. These lines not only reveal a certain convergence of interests in subaltern histories everywhere, it is also important because Saul is a white man but Marshall's characterization of him is intended to encourage the feeling that compassion is possible across the racial divide.

That Saul and Merle both feel compassionately about the island's tragic past is perhaps because they feel guilty about their inability to perform the roles of 'husband' and 'wife' within their respective families. Saul speaks to Merle about his first marriage with a Polish woman and the time he was in South America with his wife. His youthful idealism had made him immerse himself in fieldwork to the

exclusion of everything else. His wife's miscarriage and consequent death, as he tells Merle, were in some ways related to his negligence about her health. It was his wife's death that made him question his allegiance to his academic pursuits without shouldering the responsibilities of his family. Merle on the other hand, had found happiness with her husband and her daughter but it was her youthful indiscretion that eventually broke up her marriage. She had been involved with a white woman who had sponsored her in her student days. This woman tries to Blackmail Merle but fails. She then tells her husband about their affair, which angers her husband so much that he rejects Merle and moves out, taking their daughter away with him. Both Saul and Merle, significantly, fail in the relationships that are interracial. Marshall describes Merle's lesbian relation in terms of a white / Black hierarchy. The attitude of Merle's female lover is akin to the condescension of the Blacks by the white. After Merle's troubled relations with her white father, this white woman had totally disillusioned her about the prospects of racial equality, which clearly could not be attained even in an interracial lesbian relationship. This is also, perhaps, Marshall's way of defining the limits of lesbianism, which Black womanist writers later advanced as the most satisfactory model of relationship for women.<sup>37</sup>

The same ideology of white dominance also accounts for the failure of Saul's second marriage with Harriet. Harriet tries to use her position as a white woman to control Saul's involvement in the research project. After hearing about Saul and Merle's affair she tries to intervene and succeeds in stopping the funding for the

Bournehills project. This angers Saul and makes him reject Harriet, thus precipitating her suicide. Merle and Saul try to fill the personal emotional vacuum of their lives by investing in community building projects. But in their attempts there is also a fatalism which makes them feel that their efforts will not be worthwhile. In their relationship with one another they try to act as equals without conforming to stereotypical expectations of masculinity or femininity. However, their idyllic relationship comes to an end when the Cane Vale factory closes down. Merle and Saul realise that their community building endeavours have failed. Merle suffers a nervous breakdown; Saul also decides to leave the island after Harriet's suicide, having come to terms with his inability to translate his vision into a dream for the whole community. The Bournehills community fails to become a symbol of sustenance and ends up being one which barely survive at the physical level of physical existence. Perhaps this is because the islanders cannot achieve spiritual survival in the midst of the island rapidly becoming a Eurocentric space. Lack of stability within the family and the restlessness of trying to negotiate between the past and the present also become detrimental to the sustenance of the community.

At the end of the novel, Saul and Merle part ways. Merle decides to go to Africa and reestablish the links with her estranged daughter. Saul, having seen that personal initiative does not translate into effective social change, leaves Bournehills. He decides to go into classroom teaching rather than fieldwork. Both of them, however, feel that just as a community needs to reconnect with its past, so to bear witness (the way Bournehills did during its annual carnival), an individual needs to confront and come to terms with the past. Merle's journey towards Africa is not inspired by racial motives or pan-Africanist beliefs but a desire to claim her

position as a mother, if not a wife. Yet her survival, and more importantly, her revival is aided not only by the community but by a white man Saul.

Giselle Liza Anatol, in her discussion of Marshall's novel *Browngirl, Brownstones*,<sup>38</sup> points out that like one of her characters, Marshall is more interested in addressing racial problems as the member of a diasporic community rather than by conceding to the individualism of the American Dream. Later on, the womanist perspective in Black women's literature would also try to incorporate this view. As in *Browngirl, Brownstones* so also in *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*, Marshall speaks on behalf of the Blacks as a diasporic community. Merle's quest for self-identity is related to her community building efforts across the racial divide. It is only at the end of the novel that she chooses to prioritize her personal life which can only be resumed after her return to Africa.

In her book, *Black Women, Writing and Identity: Migrations of the Subject*<sup>39</sup> Carol Boyce Davis elaborates on the same point, stating that Marshall, by choosing Barbadian settings, appears to be quite positive about the possibilities for crossing borders, spanning cultures, establishing a "Black Atlantic" and finding a "Self".<sup>40</sup> Although the Black aesthetic movement as well the civil rights movement had marginalized feminist discourse, Marshall was able to unite questions of identity with those of the community in her novel. By a clever interweaving of the circles of myth, history and ontology, she imparts to the novel a local as well as a universal character.

Joyce Owens Pettis in her essay 'Toward Wholeness in Paule Marshall's Fiction'<sup>41</sup> affirms that Marshall is one of the very few who:

adds consideration of gender and class to what happens to her characters. Moreover, she contrasts physical and material survival in Eurocentric spaces with spiritual affirmation that can be acquired through cultural embrace and connection. She likens problems such as identity, insecurity and spiritual malaise to psychic fragmentation and moves toward acquiring wholeness through identification with African origins... Without writing *overt historical fiction* [italics mine] frozen in the specificity of an epoch, Marshall has written fiction that is historical because it both recognizes and addresses the influence of the past upon the lives of the present.<sup>42</sup>

Thus characters like Harriet and Vere identify too much with Eurocentric culture and tradition, whereas Saul (though born and raised in Eurocentric culture) and Merle (who was educated in the West) embrace the culture of spiritual affirmation. Saul and Merle are examples of evolved manhood and femininity, but Marshall herself seems to be evasive about acknowledging the power of the family in sustaining the community. Perhaps Marshall does not want to propose a single formula either for personal deliverance or for sustaining the community. The concentric circles of Spiller's diagrammatic representation of Marshall's novel, have the circle of ontology at their very core. The characters which move outwards finally migrate to the center. Despite everything, this centripetal force itself must be evidence enough of the significant role of the family in healing wounds.

Alex Haley's *Roots*, on the other hand, has an overtly historical background but is also a saga of the Black family in American history. Haley creates a tour-de-force of a novel which can be read as a family saga, a project for Black history and an attempt to trace the African origins of the Black American existence. The novel encompasses the Middle Passage, Slavery and Civil Rights period, as it follows Haley's project of tracing his family's roots back to the African tribal past. Unlike Marshall's novel, however, Haley fails to consider questions of race and gender relations pertaining to the evolution of the community. Nevertheless, the work

acquired cult status following its publication and serialization for television. Although it claims to be historically specific, the novel raises doubts about the observance of historical authenticity. In fact, the novel can be regarded as a conscious attempt to foster Black pride, which was a persistent endeavour of the Black historical/nationalist discourse of the 60s.

Haley himself countered the charges about historical authenticity by stating that he had employed the technique of 'faction'<sup>43</sup>- where the combined both fact and fiction. Haley's *Roots* inaugurated an interest in African ethnicity and genealogy which continues to this very day. A recent issue of the *Ebony* magazine reviews Henry Louis Gates Jr's work which chronicles the search for Oprah Winfrey's roots.<sup>44</sup> Winfrey is a television talk show host who rose to fame in the 1980s, but she has engaged relentlessly in projects which helped African Americans to trace the roots of their African American families.<sup>45</sup> ABC television dramatized Haley's novel in their twelve hour mini-series and this production further consolidated the 'Roots' phenomena.<sup>46</sup>

Haley was considerably influenced by Malcolm X's separatist nationalist ideology, but what we see in *Roots* is an effort to affirm racial pride by concentrating on 'family history'. Racial pride could not be addressed as a serious issue for the Blacks unless the Black youth were familiarized with the racial past and Black ethnicity. *Roots*, therefore, qualified as a text that fulfilled the requirements of the Black Studies programme.

A'Lelia Bundles, in her article 'Looking Back at the Roots Phenomenon',<sup>47</sup> comments on the way in which *Roots* was able to influence popular Black imagination and provide a set of positive Black characters, which acted much more

effectively to bolster Black self-esteem than any meticulously designed Black Power Movement programme. She remarks :

Before the *Roots* phenomenon, most Americans - Black and white had few media images to counter the Tarzan version of Africans and the 'Gone with the Wind' depiction of African American slaves... By tracing seven generations of his own family to the Gambian village of Juffere, Haley had turned whatever lingering shame Black Americans felt about Africa into pride. Equally as important, his story had challenged many white Americans' long held belief that Blacks were intellectually inferior with no history or culture worth recognizing...Haley's family story became a quintessentially American story.<sup>48</sup>

In her book *Rock my Soul: Black People and Self Esteem*,<sup>49</sup> African American cultural critic bell hooks has tried to examine the psychological impact of low self-esteem on the entire Black race. Haley's *Roots* can be read as a project to build up Black self-esteem. The first half of the novel is devoted to the African past of Kunta Kinte, starting with his birth in the spring of 1750, in the village of Juffure on the coast of Gambia in West Africa. The very first chapter introduces the reader to a significant ritual, the ritual of naming the child, which becomes a motif for reiterating African-American ancestry in the novel. Most of the rituals that Haley describes in the first half of the novel, serve to familiarize the reader with communal living and the rudimentary Islamic religious cult that the Gambians followed.

This rite of passage for the young male is a ceremonial one and is described in great detail. Interestingly, Kunta's initiation into manhood comes only after he appreciates in full measure his responsibility to preserve his family's name when he, along with the other younger men from his tribe, sing their 'men's song' to pay respect to the griot visiting their village. The words of the song are :

“One generation passes on ...Another generation comes and goes...  
But Allah abides forever.”<sup>50</sup>

Later, in the privacy of his hut, Kunta wonders:

The past seemed with the present, the present with the future ; the dead with the living and those yet to be born ; he himself with his family, his mates, his village, his tribe, his Africa .... Perhaps, he thought this is what it means to become a man.<sup>51</sup>

It is significant that Haley associates Kunta’s awareness of himself as an individual within the community with his ability to perform the role of a responsible male. The griot’s narration emphasizes the man’s role as ‘father’ as the most important one, because he would then bring forth his progeny through marriage and thereby perpetuate his race. After this momentous realization, Kunta’s manhood training begins in earnest. Regarded in the light of the kind of criticism that African American males have been subjected to since the 60s, Haley perhaps consciously wanted to project the African American’s role as father and family man as sanctified by his ancestral religion.

One must remember that 1964 was the year of the publication of D. Patrick Moynihan’s report, *The Negro Family: A Case for National Action*.<sup>52</sup> Moynihan had declared that:

At the heart of the deterioration of the Fabric of Negro society is the deterioration of the Negro family.<sup>53</sup>

He went on to add that such deterioration was due to the balance of power within the family, which was predominantly matriarchal and nullified the role of males. Michelle Wallace in her study *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman*<sup>54</sup> has defined the Black Macho as a ‘post Moynihan’<sup>55</sup> 60s phenomenon, where Black men were reclaiming their manhood and simultaneously rejecting the plea of women to grant them the ‘womanhood’<sup>56</sup> that was long overdue. Haley’s strategy

of narration in *Roots* foregrounds Kunta's journey from manhood to old age. He follows the same pattern with the succeeding generations, and the women are shown as 'wives', 'sisters' and 'mothers'. By delegating men to be the worthy descendants of the African tribes capable of 'bearing witness', Haley seems to have been a part of the project of perpetuating this image of the 'Black Macho'.

True to his sweeping, epic style, Haley describes masterfully the transatlantic voyage of Kunta and the other slaves captured and brought to America. The graphic images of this chapter of Black history, the 'Middle Passage', had never been recounted in fiction with such startling clarity. After his arrival in America Kunta is sold to a plantation owner, but manages to escape only to be taken captive by another, a more benevolent one. It is in this farm, as a slave of Mr. Waller that Kunta tentatively starts to engage with other slaves and finds a new sense of community in living with the other slaves.

Kunta does not have a family to call his own. After having been a slave for a considerable length of time, he realises that he has lost a lot of his African heritage. Once again, Haley refers to Kunta's desire to be a family man and sire children in order to preserve his African heritage. In fact this is the one hope that he nurtures in his heart. The absence of a communal environment saddens him, but he makes friends with the 'Fiddler' and others whom he carefully describes as 'brown', signifying that they were born American. At the age of thirty four Kunta decides that he must set about having his own family as he accepts the fact that he may never see his Gambian folks again. He realises:

He had been in the white man's land as long as he had in Juffere. Was he still an African, or had he become a "nigger", as the others called themselves? Was he even a man?... he had no sons of his own, no

wife, no family, no village, no people, no homeland almost no past at all that seemed real to him anymore – and no future he could see.<sup>57</sup>

Kunta marries Bell and they have a daughter. After the baby's birth Kunta takes her to the open and performs the ceremony of birth as was performed by the Gambians. The birth rite performed by Kunta is his way of ascertaining Kizzy's place as a descendant of the Juffure tribe. The ceremony becomes symbolic of the American born child's claim to African ancestry. But Haley concludes this episode by recounting that 'Kizzy' actually became listed as 'Kizzy Waller' in Mr. Waller's plantation records.

Kunta is unable to prevent Kizzy's assimilation into plantation life as a slave child as she becomes Master Waller's property. Kizzy is made to learn the English alphabets and is trained to be a housekeeper. The only way Kunta is able to instill in her a sense of her African roots is by making her learn the Mandinka dialect. Thus the dual heritage of Kizzy, the African one from her father and the American one from her mother, forms her identity as an African-American.

The novel then alludes to the various sporadic movements for self-determination among the slaves, finally leading to the Civil War, as the American family of Kunta also progresses generation-wise. Kizzy is sold off for aiding a slave to flee the plantation. She is raped by her new master and later gives birth to a child (George). Kizzy, however, repeats to George the tale of Kunta and passes down to him the story of survival as she learned from her father. The novel moves on to trace the life of George's sons and daughters, and the eldest, Tom, is the head of the family at the time of Emancipation. Tom is aware of his African roots but he is at the same time an American too. Haley shows him to be the perfect family man, as he is a loving son and father, but his business acumen also makes him an able

provider for his family. Tom's friendship with a white man called Old George shows how the kinship networks underwent a change in America as more and more Black families started moving away from the racist environment of the South.. Tom trusts Old George and in their relationship there is none of the Black-white tension of the old South. Tom is the first Black man in the family who successfully pursues the American Dream, migrates to the North and becomes a prosperous businessman.

The last sections of the novel appear to be rushed as Haley tries to pack a wealth of information about his ancestors and finally comes down to his place in the family tree as the great grandson of Tom. Haley's treatment of gender relations in the novel is rather sketchy. In his epic span we get to see the Black man and woman coming together to form a family, but it is always the male who gets first place in the novel. Women's victimization under the system of slavery is treated only cursorily in Bell's account of the sale of her daughter and Kizzy's rape. The women are usually in the background, providing support to the family structure. In order to emphasize the survival of their Africanist legacy, Haley seems to have forgotten to list the strategies of survival employed by the womenfolk, and their ability to serve the community in a host of roles such as surrogate mothers and soul- sisters. Haley's method of narration prioritizes the son over the daughter. Even in the case of Kizzy, she becomes the bearer of the paternal legacy which her father imparts to her. Although her mother suffered as a slave when her first born was taken away from her, it is Kunta's legacy as an African that is given more importance during Kizzy's upbringing. Thus the maternal principle is subordinated, and the daughter becomes important only as an agent in perpetuating the Africanist roots.

Later in the novel the focus shifts to Tom, as the son who best represents the Gambian legacy and has sufficient knowledge of the African dialect. Only towards the end of the novel does Haley get around to acknowledging his debt of gratitude to the women in his family. He speaks of the stories and anecdotes recounted by his mother and his aunts during family reunions as being the primary feedback for his novel. But here again, in his hurried mention of family rituals as the repository of racial memory, Haley seems unmindful of the fact that the women in his family had long been performing the important task of 'bearing witness' to their racial legacy. He is more willing to attribute the success of his endeavour to the African griot rather than to the women in his family.

James Baldwin's review of *Roots* signifies its place in the world of American letters. He wrote in his essay 'How one Black Man.....'<sup>58</sup> :

*"Roots"* is a study of continuities of consequences, of how a people perpetuate themselves, how each generation helps to doom, or helps to liberate, the coming one ---the action of love, or the effect of the absence of love, in time it suggests with great power, how each of us, however unconsciously, can't but be the vehicle of the history which has produced us.<sup>59</sup>

It cannot be denied that Haley's *Roots* was one of the seminal novels that helped to strengthen the feeling of diasporic consciousness within the Black community. But unlike Marshall, Haley does not interrogate the subtle structures of racial subjugation and gender discrimination which have impeded the growth of the Black community and family. Haley's portrayal of Black masculinity in the character of Kunta does not have the psychological depth of Marshall's characterization of Merle in *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*. Kunta does not evolve into an agent of resistance as Merle does. Perhaps Haley's zealotry to make his novel a fitting vehicle for the

ideology of Black power made him unmindful of addressing issues of gender and racial inequality which remain integral part of the Black American experience.

Marshall's epigraph to her novel tries to capture the extent of the racial wrongs perpetrated on the Blacks. Taken from the Tiv of West Africa it says:

“Once a great wrong has been done, it never dies. People speak words of peace, but their hearts do not forgive. Generations perform ceremonies of reconciliation but there is no end”.<sup>60</sup>

Marshall's characters bring out the truth of this tragic statement. Merle, Vere, Allen and Leesy are fractured individuals whose lives are affected by their inability to succeed in familial roles, but more importantly, staying within a power structure limits their freedom to create their own community. Merle, it may be said, is able to transform Bournehills into a 'safe space'<sup>61</sup> (to use Hill Collins' term), if not completely, yet substantially enough. Also, Marshall's creation of Merle can be regarded as an attempt to give visibility to Black women, who had been ignored by the Black Power movements. Merle makes it possible to envisage the Black woman's contribution to the nationalist ideology of Black Power movements in her capacity for social mothering. Merle's engagement with the Bournehills Research Project, the Cane Vale Sugar Factory, and the island's history shows her to be more concerned about building self-esteem and understanding the need to be responsible members of the Black community than any of Haley's characters. Actually, in her attitude, Merle anticipates the womanist protagonists of Alice Walker's novels.<sup>62</sup> Haley's *Roots* fails to negotiate the intricate questions about identity that would naturally arise when the racial history of Blacks is written. But *Roots* did enhance interest in the Black family as an institution, and not only for its emotional relevance to Black Americans.

The next part of this chapter deals with Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and James Baldwin's *If Beale Street Could Talk*—two novels which critique the role of the Black family in aiding young people in the process of self-actualization. These novels emphasize the need to rectify modes of perception within the Black community and family in order to achieve 'Black Power', addressing issues of family and ethnicity as well as racial politics and gender inequity, and thus uniting the concerns of Haley and Marshall. But both the novels are interested in looking at the Black communities from within, so as to understand their fractured and ambiguous aspects. In this regard they share the approach of Martin Luther King who criticized the concerns of 'Black Power', pointing out that a more humane and universal perspective was required to solve the racial problem.<sup>63</sup>

**The Black Family in Times Of Duress : Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* and James Baldwin's *If Beale Street Could Talk*.**

Eugenia Collier, in her essay 'The Closing of the Circle: Movements from Division to Wholeness in Paule Marshall's Fiction',<sup>64</sup> remarks:

Marshall's works reveal a progression from the divided individual self to the self-made whole through merging with the community. The concept of the community is ever-broadening, moving from the Barbadian community in Brooklyn in the first novel to, ultimately, the entire African world, past, present, and future in the last.<sup>65</sup>

Collier further adds that all this is done deliberately with an aim to discover 'the essential collective Black self'.<sup>66</sup> In *The Bluest Eye* (1970), published only three years after *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*, Morrison attempts to do something very similar but her gaze is much more critical. Morrison observes a small town Lorraine in Ohio and the life of a Black girl, Pecola, to explore the feasibility of discovering the 'essential Black self' (to use Collier's phrase). More importantly, the

gender relationships within the community are highlighted so as to impress upon the reader the individual damage sustained when one failed to merge with the community. It is this aspect of her work which was lauded by the Permanent Secretary (Sture Allen) on behalf of the Nobel Prize Academy in their Citation of the 1993 Prize for Literature<sup>67</sup>, which Morrison won. They affirmed that Morrison:

... regards the African presence in her country as a vital but unarticulated prerequisite for the fulfillment of the American Dream...[she] has given the Afro-American people their history back, piece by piece. In this perspective, her work is uncommonly consonant. At the same time, it is richly variegated...Toni Morrison's novels invite the reader to partake at many levels, and at varying degrees of complexity. Still the most enduring impression they leave is of empathy, compassion with one's fellow human being.<sup>68</sup>

It is to Morrison's credit that she could look critically at her community and the men and women who are a part of it, even while writing at a politically turbulent time.

In a conversation with Gloria Naylor<sup>69</sup>, Morrison recalls how she came upon the idea of *The Bluest Eye* and how it was her response to the 'Black is Beautiful' slogan, which was also a part of the Black Power movements. Choosing to concentrate on the tragedy of a young Black girl whose ugliness made her 'invisible' to the community, Morrison defends her project by saying that Pecola's tragedy could have happened to any young girl. She recounts for Naylor the way in which she tried to respond to Black Power movements and how the currency of the 'Black is Beautiful' slogan gave her the perfect opening for starting on her project of reclaiming their history. Morrison remarks:

It was'nt that easy being a little Black girl in the country... it was rough. The psychological tricks you have to play in order to get through - and nobody said how it felt to be that. And you knew better. You knew inside better. You were not the person they were looking at. And to know that and to see what you saw in other people's eyes was

devastating. Some people made it, some didn't and I wanted to explore it myself.<sup>70</sup>

Thus Pecola in her daily existence encounters this look in other people's eyes, and most especially in the eyes of the people of her community. Pecola does not have these 'psychological tricks' at her disposal that might help her survive. The Dick and Jane primer gives her the glimpse of a world unattainable by a Black girl and yet she invests faith in this false standard of the white nuclear family. Thus from the beginning, Pecola's quest for selfhood is doomed. Pecola's tragedy is heightened because she falls a victim to the concept of physical beauty as a virtue. Through Claudia's narration Morrison critiques the white - western civilization's tendency to treat beauty as a virtue.<sup>71</sup> Pecola's self-esteem is undermined by such a tendency. The adage 'Black is Beautiful' ceased to have any meaning for Pecola, because even within the community she was regarded as the ugliest Black girl amongst all the other Black girls. Pecola is further alienated when her own family judges her by the same set of standards.

Claudia, Pecola's friend and one of the narrators, describes her childhood memories with a lot of warmth. Claudia's family is also not the type represented in the Dick and Jane primer. But she feels loved by her family. Claudia's family lived in a cold house with daily threats of eviction by the landlord, but she recollects her mother's presence as the redeeming aspect of her memories. Her mother's vigil over her sick bed, her loving hands and even her scolding persist in Claudia's memory as warm 'Alaga syrup'.<sup>72</sup> Morrison upholds Claudia as the narrator precisely because she has survived her girlhood and can articulate Pecola's story from a different perspective. Perhaps Claudia's emotionally well-knit family is able to give her the self-esteem needed to protect young Black girls from the

psychological abuse that they encounter nearly everyday in a white, racist society. Claudia's family, the way Morrison depicts it, is not a dysfunctional one. Claudia and her sister grow up as self-possessed young girls because their family is able to create an atmosphere of love without having to conform to a Dick and Jane version of the Black family.

bell hooks has noted in her book, *Rock My Soul*, that Black families can bring up emotionally strong children if they do not engage in 'gender warfare'<sup>73</sup>, which she feels has been encouraged by the white patriarchal structures of power. The family ability of Claudia's family to rise above gender warfare makes her emotionally stronger. Pecola's parents are Pauline and Cholly, whose self-esteem has been damaged by their inability to define themselves within the Black community. Both of them are emotionally trapped by the white society's standards of beauty and behavior signifying femininity and masculinity respectively. This becomes an obstacle that prevents their self-actualization, which in turn converts their family into an emotionally handicapped one. Claudia speaks of Pecola's father being considered as an animal by the community because he had burnt down his house and cast his family outdoors.

Morrison in one of her interviews, has spoken about man-woman relationships in the Black community to point out their differences from the normative concept of a family in America, especially in the light of Black liberation movements. Morrison criticizes the rhetoric of such movements as they have misrepresented the roles of Black men and women. She remarks:

I was not impressed with much of the rhetoric of *Black men about Black women* [italics mine] in the sixties, I didn't believe it... one of the characteristics of Black women's experience was that they did not have to choose between a career and a home. They did both...But either

because or in spite of the duress, the relationship between Black men and Black women in those days was much more a comradeship than the romantic love it got to be later as a result of the infiltration from the other culture. They worked with each other. Sometimes they complained about things, that there was some central thing that was bigger than they were, that they were doing. It had to do with raising children, with being morally coherent people... That's what's lacking in the echo that I hear in the Black feminist thing, it's not the goals that I object to, it's not any of that, it's just that it seems not to question what's behind the desperate need to love only one person. It's not the comradeship of past generations, its romantic-love- eternal.<sup>74</sup>

Clearly enough Pauline and Cholly do not share any of this comradeship. Particularly in the case of Pauline, Morrison observes her enslavement to the white ideals of beauty and 'romantic love' as documented in western films. This desire to 'love only one person' is present in Pauline, but it does not transform into love for Pecola because the moment she sees her, she knows that Pecola is ugly. Instead, she chooses to lavish love and affection on the white girl who is her charge in the house where she works. This trait is manifested in Pecola, too, and her almost slavish devotion to Shirley Temple and her blue eyes. Thus Pauline and Cholly are incapable of bearing the responsibility of Pecola. Pecola's limited understanding makes her feel that if only she had blue eyes she would be loved by her mother. But it is only her obsession for being called pretty and thereby feeling loved which damages her self-esteem. Claudia's parents, on the other hand, have their share of quarrels but their comradeship is evident especially in the way in which they come together to throw off their tenant for molesting their daughter.

It is therefore no wonder that Claudia is unable to understand Pecola's desire for white dolls, Mary Jane candies and all things which bear the motif of the blonde, white, blue-eyed girl. When Pecola comes to stay with the McTeers, Claudia notices the way she sits holding a cup with the picture of Shirley Temple on it. Claudia confesses that she hated the Shirley Temple dolls which were given

to Black girls at Christmas and the way they were expected to love them, cuddle them and mother them. Claudia, instead, wanted to be loved and pampered for Christmas herself, to listen to her grandmother's stories and her grandfather's violin. Claudia's desire is related to the circles of reciprocal love that Black families should ideally provide for their children. Christmas and Thanksgiving are earmarked for celebrating family ties in the American tradition. Claudia longs for the festive season because it is an occasion for celebrating love and cherishing familial bonds. But her childish longing for Christmas is also the desire to enjoy the festival in a uniquely 'Black' way so that she is able to transcend the white, bourgeois fashions of Christmas, such as owning a Shirley Temple doll.

But Claudia soon modifies her stance. As she grows up she realises that she has to love the Shirley Temple dolls. Her hatred for the Shirley Temple dolls turns into 'fraudulent love'.<sup>75</sup> Claudia is the narrator who tells Pecola's story in retrospect, and Pecola's isolation is related with the isolation of Pauline and Cholly. Pauline and Cholly's story is recounted by an omniscient narrator who makes it clear that, like their daughter, they are also victims of white racist behavior, although in a different way. After their marriage they share no comradeship and hence bequeath the legacy of this isolation to their daughter. Pauline Breedlove walked with a visible shuffle, the result of an accident. She was good at housekeeping and enjoyed looking after her smaller brothers. When she met Cholly Breedlove he seemed to be an incarnation of her ideal man. After the marriage, they migrated North, but very soon her dreams floundered; she was isolated by the community of the North and her husband started losing interest in her and the family. At this point she started seeking solace in visits to the movies and became thoroughly infatuated with the idea of physical beauty. Before Pecola's birth she had constructed an image of her daughter who would be as

pretty as she wanted her to be. But when Pecola was born, Pauline's maternal love was already tainted by the impossible standards of beauty which she had internalized through her education in the movies. She says about Pecola :

Pecola look like she knowed right off what to do. A right smart baby she was, I used to like to watch her... But I knowed she was ugly. Head full of pretty hairs, but lord she was ugly.<sup>76</sup>

This instance also conveys the power of white controlling images of beauty to alienate something as strong as Mother Love, thereby affecting the basic bonds of the family. It may be worthwhile to remember Morrison's comments about Black women to recognize that she had characterized Pauline as a 'weak' woman and as a cautionary model of fraudulent love. Perhaps this is Morrison's way of showing how difficult it is to transcend the controlling images of a dominant patriarchal culture since they permeate all spaces in the interpersonal domain of Black social life .Patricia Hill Collins'<sup>77</sup> hypothesis, that such oppression requires a revolution in the interpersonal relations of power, does hold true as a feasible solution to the problems of Black families which are in love with the white ideal of beauty. It may be the only solution for those who believe absolutely in the ideal of romantic love which, according to Morrison, the Black feminist movement inadvertently sanctioned by stressing on the redeeming aspect of a single man's love. In a question posed by Anne Koenon about her comment that romantic love was the most dangerous idea, Morrison answers :

Also, who wants it, romantic love? The women who would want it are precisely the kind of women I would never like to be. In other words, it's a complicity between master and servant first of all, is the assumption that it is possible for men to give it to you, and second that you would want to accept something from another human being totally, that you didn't want to get the world for yourself.<sup>78</sup>

Morrison finds such behaviour detrimental to Black feminist discourse because it encourages women to lean on others. Black women, according to Morrison, have been so actively involved in family building at different levels (and community building around it), that a fixation on romantic love would damage their intrinsic strength. In the same interview she chooses to highlight how the mammy stereotype had been created by the white academy to undermine the terrific strength of Black women in the bygone years.<sup>79</sup>

Pauline Breedlove is weak because she is too vulnerable to the illusions of romantic love and cannot draw upon other resources of love within herself. She is also unable to be a strong mother because of her infatuation with the ideal of beauty. In other words, she is a victim of the ideology that pervades Eurocentric traditions of love. Later in the novel, Claudia's imagining a beautiful Black child to be born to Pecola is Morrison's way of showing that Black and beautiful can coexist, and that Black mothers can make this coexistence possible by the strength of their love. Pauline Breedlove, because of her slavish adherence to white ideals of beauty, ceases to provide love and care to her children. In her dedication to restore order she seems to manifest symptoms of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder.<sup>80</sup>

She introduces this order in her employer's house but never to her own home or family which remains a space that she ignores like her daughter, because it fails to conform to her ideals acquired from the white culture. Pauline's loveless life isolates her from her community and family, something which Morrison feels rarely happened in a Black community. Thus Pauline fails to convert her home into a safe space and further jeopardizes Pecola's fragile identity.

In an interview with Robert Stepto,<sup>81</sup> Toni Morrison explains her characterization of the Black community as committed to mutual sustenance. She says:

My tendency is to focus on neighborhoods and communities. And the community, the Black community---I don't like to use that term because it came to mean something much different in the sixties and seventies, as though we had to forge one - but it had seemed to me that it was always there, only we called it the "neighborhood". And there was this life-giving, very, very strong sustenance that people got from the neighborhood. One lives, really, not so much in your house as you do outside of it, within the "compounds", within the village, or whatever it is . And legal responsibilities, all the responsibilities that agencies now have, were the responsibilities of the neighborhood. They felt that you belonged to them. And every woman on the street could raise everybody's child, and tell you exactly what to do and you felt that connection with those people and they felt it with you.<sup>82</sup>

What Morrison is talking about here has been described elsewhere as the Black 'spirit family'.<sup>83</sup> It is significant how Morrison, in the Breedloves, creates a set of Black people who cannot relate to each other, much less to the community. But what is most remarkable is the way Claudia becomes the articulate kinswoman survivor capable of criticising the community's role in disowning Pecola and making her almost invisible.

Pecola tries to find mother-surrogates, but without success. Morrison's treatment of the Pauline Pecola relationship is one where there is none of the stern matriarchal presence in the house that inspires both love and awe, as in the relationship between Claudia and Mrs. McTeers. Pauline does not inspire in her children any love and encourages them to call her 'Mrs Breedlove'. Pauline herself must have felt her ugliness decimating her entire identity, and therefore she failed to instill a sense of self worth in Pecola. In her book *Communion*, bell hooks had theorized<sup>84</sup> that positive self-love eventually translates into relational love. But Pauline's lack of self-love limits her possibilities of exploring relational love.

Pauline's alienation from the community and her inability to be a strong mother cut off every source of love that a woman can desire.

In *The Bluest Eye*, the episode which portrays the extent of estrangement between mother and daughter occurs midway through the novel, when Pecola visits her mother's employer's house and sees a little girl like Shirley Temple. Pecola is awed by her beauty and when she drops a bowl of hot apple cobbler on herself accidentally, Pauline rushes out only to comfort the girl instead of administering to the burns of her daughter. Pecola seeks maternal attention from the three town prostitutes and whatever little affection she gets is from them and Claudia. But as we see, that is not enough.

Cholly Breedlove completes Pecola's tragedy by his incestuous rape. Morrison, in an interview, admitted to her fondness for 'lawless'<sup>85</sup> characters as it gave her the scope to observe what happens to them when they are pushed towards the edge. Also in an interview with Claudia Tate (1983),<sup>86</sup> she admitted that she had deliberately given out the plot that Pecola was going to have her father's baby, at the beginning of the novel, so that readers could approach Cholly. She says:

I want you to *look* at him and see his love for his daughter and his powerlessness to help her pain. By that time his embrace, the rape, is all the gift he has left.<sup>87</sup>

Morrison has repeatedly stated that the Black woman's strength is inherent and by trying to analyze Cholly's act of rape she makes an attempt to understand the agony of Black manhood in its powerlessness. She definitely does not attribute Cholly's feelings of worthlessness to the 'Emasculation'<sup>88</sup> theory popularized by Moynihan's socio-economic critique of the status of the Black family, with the woman being the economic centre of power. As she tells Robert Stepto:

...But Black women have held, have been given, you know, the cross. They don't walk near it. They're often on it. And they've borne that, I think, extremely well. I think *everybody knows, deep down that Black men were emasculated by white men, period.* [italics mine]<sup>89</sup>

She sees the charges against Black men, like abandonment of family, as being sociologically engineered by white, patriarchal literary traditions. According to Morrison they form a character pattern, perhaps a stereotype, which she defines as being a free man. But this freedom also means stretching and perhaps rejecting society's expectation of responsible male behaviour. In Black societies 'free men' like Cholly proliferated because of lack of guidance. Morrison says. :

'.... In a way, they sort of---through neglect of the fact that someone was not there---made up themselves [an absence of a father figure]. They allowed themselves to be whom ever they were. Cholly, of course, lives a very tragic life, tragic in the sense that there was no reward, but he is the thing I keep calling a "freeman", not free in the legal sense, but free in his head. You see, this was a free man who could do a lot of things, and I think it's a way of talking about what some people call the 'bad nigger' Not in the sense of one who is carousing but that adjective 'bad' meaning, you know, bad and good. This is a man who is stretching, you know, he's stretching, stretching, he's going all the way within his own mind and within whatever his outline might be. Now that's a tremendous possibility for masculinity among Black men. They may end up... being also unemployed. They may be in prison. They may be doing all sorts of things. But they are adventuresome in that regard... Cholly has done every thing in his life. So that by the time he met Pauline, he was able to do whatever his whims suggested and its that kind of absence of control that I wanted--you know, obviously, that I'm interested in characters who are lawless in that regard. They make up their lives or they find out who they are.'<sup>90</sup>

Cholly's lack of guidance makes him the free man that he is. In spirit he can be likened to Hurston's Tea Cake, but unlike him Cholly never really does love anybody. Also, this freedom gives him the absence of discipline needed to cultivate oneself into socially accepted roles like those of husband, father, as sanctioned by every community. Morrison further explains that such 'masculine' behaviour as characterized in this strength of 'free men' is not without its historical precedents. In

fact she cites the Ulysses story with its journey motif as a relevant example. In the same interview she tells Stepto :

But that going from town to town or place to place or looking out and over and beyond and changing and so on that, it seems to me, is one of the monumental themes in Black literature about men. That's what they do. It is the Ulysses theme, the leaving home. And then there is no one place that one settles. I mean, one travels. And I don't mean this in the sense of the Joycean character or even in the sense of just going off to find one's fortune in the classic sort of fairy tale, going off to see where the money is. But something else. Curiosity! what's around the corner, what's in the valley, what's down the track... And in the process of finding, they are also making themselves. *And in sociological terms that is described as a major failing of Black men--- they do not stay home and take care of their children, they are not there* [italics mine] that has always been to men one of the most attractive features of Black male life.<sup>91</sup>

In another interview about Black men and the facile objectives of the women's liberation movement, which asserts a woman's right to choose motherhood and at the same time criticizes the Black man's inability to father, Morrison says :

If she [the woman] chooses to have it, [the baby], the man can choose to ignore it and that is a double edged sword. If she doesn't have to be the mother and manufacture it, then obviously he doesn't have to be the father. And this is a liberty Black men have always taken...And I think that is called abandonment of the family or something. On the other hand Ulysses abandoned his child for twenty years and he didn't go anywhere since he was just hanging out over there with the Sicilians. But he is considered a hero!<sup>92</sup>

In the light of Morrison's beliefs about Black manhood, we can see why she wants readers to understand Cholly's relationship with Pecola rather than judge him.

The circumstances in Cholly's early life contributed to what he became. As Morrison believes that white men emasculated Black men, in Cholly's case she gives a graphic example hat of his first experience of lovemaking with his girlfriend Darlene ,which becomes a key to his further dissipation. While they are together, a white policeman chances upon them and commands them to complete the 'sexual act'

under the glare of his flashlight. Thus Cholly's sexual initiation is affected by a white man. He is filled with a sense of his own impotence and this marks his behaviour towards the opposite sex forever. He leaves the town afraid that Darlene might be pregnant, and goes in search of his own father. But Cholly's father is a free man too, and readily disowns him. Thus he grows up 'dangerously free'. Morrison describes this state as follows:

Cholly was free. Dangerously free...He was alone with his own perceptions and appetites, and they alone interested him.<sup>93</sup>

This 'freedom' makes him fail Pauline as a husband. Towards his children too, he is unable to be given any proper parental attention. Morrison remarks:

Having no idea as to how to raise children, and having never watched any parent raise himself, he could not even comprehend what such a relationship should be. As it was, he reacted to them, and his reactions were based at the moment.<sup>94</sup>

Bell hooks regards the aloofness of men in current culture as a result of the emotional bankruptcy engendered by patriarchal culture, which teaches that masculinity entails the suppression of love and its manifestations. Given such an ideology, cases like Cholly's will be all the more common as the result of growing up in an emotional vacuum, further complicated by the racial divide. It is in one such moment, when the 'free spirit' looks upon Pecola and feels love, compassion and pity, that his reaction makes him approach her in the only way he was capable of reacting to women. He rapes Pecola and the former hatred he had felt towards Darlene returns. Even at this moment, his 'freedom' makes it impossible for him to consider the ramifications or repercussions of his action. White patriarchy had tainted Cholly's belief in love, and his own culture's freedom had made him a person who remained strangely unaccountable to the community and the family.

In this regard, one must remember bell hooks' distinction between patriarchal masculinity and feminist masculinity (cited in Chapter 1). American mainstream novelistic tradition seems to unconsciously endorse the former. As hooks puts it:

Patriarchal masculinity insists that real men must prove their manhood by idealizing aloneness and disconnection. Feminist masculinity tells men that they become more real through the act of connecting with others, through building community.<sup>95</sup>

Pecola's tragedy is complete when the community preacher Soaphead Church sexually molests her and, by means of a fake magic ritual makes her believe that she really has a pair of blue eyes. Pecola retreats to her private world, no longer aware that for the town she is all but dead. She thus becomes an invisible presence.

At the end of the novel an adult Claudia shoulders the burden of accountability as she indicts the community for what they did to Pecola. This new form of bearing witness<sup>96</sup> becomes both an interrogation and an indictment of the community. Through Claudia, Morrison seems to suggest that the Black community cannot afford to cast the victims of white racist patriarchal ideology into oblivion. Bearing witness, therefore, also begins to mean the task of assuming responsibility.

In the following discussion of James Baldwin's *If Beale Street Could Talk*, I will try to establish how it is possible to transcend the limitations within a Black community, even under a climate of duress. The community in Baldwin's novel offers a blueprint of how men and women can change to confront white racist oppression effectively and also to culturally enrich themselves and their family. It is interesting to see that while Morrison criticizes the pitfalls of patriarchal masculinity, what Baldwin documents is pretty much the same as bell hooks' expectation from feminist masculinity.<sup>97</sup> As hooks defines it:

Feminist masculinity offers men selfhood uncovering the essential goodness of maleness and allowing everyone, male and female, to find glory in loving manhood.<sup>98</sup>

Toni Morrison, in one of her interviews, has clearly defined the difference in the approaches of a Black male writer and a Black woman writer. But James Baldwin seems to be exceptional in that he does not conform to what Morrison describes generally as the Black male writer's stance. In a conversation with Alice Childress<sup>99</sup> she remarks:

I think there are different things operating on each of the sexes Black men...frequently are reacting to a lot more external pressures than Black women are. For one thing they have an enormous responsibility to be men...Men define their masculinity by other men, and they're keenly aware of this in much of their writing. They're so busy quote "proving something" unquote ...<sup>100</sup>

In an interview with Judith Wilson<sup>101</sup> Morrison reiterates:

I think the men have been addressing white men when they write. And it's a legitimate confrontation they're men telling white men what this is. But the women are not trying to prove anything to white men.<sup>102</sup>

Baldwin's *If Beale Street Could Talk* has a female narrator and Baldwin successfully exonerates himself from the charges which Morrison makes against Black male writers. In fact, in his celebration of family and community, Baldwin exudes the 'joy' which Morrison finds characteristic of Black women's writing. Rather, it is Morrison's sombre portrayal of Black girlhood in *The Bluest Eye* which lacks joy. Tish and Fonny, the couple in Baldwin's novel are aware of racism, but they strive to create their own family in spite of it. Baldwin's treatment makes one aware that gender roles within the community need to be revised, but more importantly he seems to consider family as a universal, humane institution rather than a specifically Black one. Baldwin seems to be suggesting that there are ways of dealing with racism other than the angry protest of Richard Wright.

Baldwin's hero Fonny is a struggling artist and the heroine/narrator is a young Black girl named Tish. At the beginning of the novel, they find themselves in a situation not uncommon for young Black couples in Harlem. Fonny has been wrongly implicated and imprisoned on a rape charge, and Tish, his girlfriend, is pregnant. However, as the incidents in the novel unfold Baldwin seems to project the possibility that family and community can evolve into a support system necessary for a race that has been subjected to years of racial injustice.

We observe in Baldwin's novels an attempt to rectify and transcend the violent rhetoric of the 60s and 70s. Like Richard Wright in 'The Blueprint for Negro Writing',<sup>103</sup> Baldwin demarcated methods or narrative strategies which needed to be employed towards this end. In his essay 'The Creative Process',<sup>104</sup> we see an attempt to transcend the narrow political rhetoric of Black power to champion a more universalist perspective. Baldwin seems to be advocating Martin Luther King's ideology when he speaks for a 'world wide fellowship'<sup>105</sup> and 'an unconditional love for all men.'<sup>106</sup> In fact he goes as far as to affirm that the alternative to community must only be 'chaos'.<sup>107</sup>

It is no wonder then that the love which Tish and Fonny share is a kind which chooses community over chaos. That Tish does not consider abortion and Fonny doesn't use violent means to get out of jail are significant, because given the same circumstances, most Black couples would have done so. To make them an exceptional pair, Fonny's character is given distinct traits of the suffering 'Christ-hero,' who goes through long hours of soul searching. Jerry Bryant observes this stereotype of Black manhood and comments:

The nonviolence of the forgiving Christ meant a moral superiority that provided Blacks worthy to enter the Christian civilization as full

partners ... to identify with Christ was to state a claim on being human, a status denied of Blacks in freedom as well as slavery, Since the brute was alleged to comprise more of the Black nature than of the white, any adequate Black image under construction had to include an answer to the case against African Americans.<sup>108</sup>

Although Bryant observes this character type as being present in nineteenth century fiction, Fonny's gentle, non-violent nature fits such a conception of manhood and is perhaps an epitome of the pre-requisites bell hooks desires for a feminist masculinity. Moreover, Fonny is a young Black artist without any addiction problems prevalent in the Black brotherhood. Fonny's redeeming feature seems to be his love for Tish and his willingness to be a responsible partner and father. This is evident in the way he goes to meet Tish's father immediately after they consummate their relationship. Baldwin was positive about the potential of love in being able to overcome the 'existential abyss'<sup>109</sup> which people in the Black community invariably faced. Fred Standley points out this aspect of Baldwin's work and also quotes from his essay, 'The Male Prison,' to explain what Baldwin meant by love. As Baldwin clarifies:

What is the nature of such love? Love takes off the masks we fear we cannot live within and know we cannot live without. I use the word 'love' here not merely in the personal sense but as a state of being, or a state of grace---not in the infantile American sense of being happy but in the tough and universal sense of quest and daring and growth.<sup>110</sup>

The group of characters in *If Beale Street Could Talk* try to achieve this growth through love, especially Tish and Fonny. As the characters in the novel rally to secure Fonny's freedom, they bolster Tish's hops by repeating over and over again that she is a cherished member of her family and that her unborn child would always be loved. Fonny's quest to be a better man is also aided by his love for this unborn child. Remarkably enough, family imparts in them a sense of being capable of spiritual growth.

In the first pages of the novel *Tish*, the teenage narrator, describes her visit to Fonny's prison to announce her pregnancy. Although Fonny is dejected he brightens up visibly when he hears the news of his girlfriend's pregnancy. This is exactly how Tish had predicted he would react. She observes:

...for those few seconds while he was out there by himself away from me, the baby was the only real thing in the world, more real than the prison, more real than me.<sup>111</sup>

It is evident that Baldwin wants to characterize Fonny as a man who cherishes and looks forward to being a father and provider. Tish also praises his endurance. She remarks:

And I'm not ashamed of Fonny. If anything I'm proud. He's a man. You can tell by the way he's taken all this shit that he's a man.<sup>112</sup>

Fonny's calm, collected and controlled demeanour makes Tish commend him as a man. He is certainly not a free man like Cholly because he acknowledges his responsibility. Baldwin creates a character like Fonny, perhaps as an ideal type, who is a likely candidate for initiating change in the model for Black masculinity (as popularized in white fiction) with its emphasis on dissipation and irresponsibility. Baldwin states in one of his essays 'Take Me to the Water'<sup>113</sup> how he was impressed by the heroism of the southern Blacks. He observes:

Their heroism was to be found less in large things than in small ones, less in public than in private... What impressed me was how they went about their daily tasks, in the teeth of southern terror.<sup>114</sup>

Clearly, what Baldwin characterizes as manhood has none of the violent rancour or bitterness of Wright's protagonists, or even Ellison's invisibility. It is the willingness to assert oneself in spite of all the odds. The calmness of Fonny and his supreme self control might be considered white cultural traits. As Bryant observed in *Victims and Heroes*, the Christ figure in Black literature sometimes emulated white

virtues.<sup>115</sup> But Baldwin looks at it in a different manner. In his study of homosexuality in American society, 'Freaks and the American Ideal of Manhood',<sup>116</sup> Baldwin criticizes essentialist notions of Black manhood or manhood, in itself for that matter. He seems to anticipate bell hooks' concern in *The Will To Change*, because he talks about the need to acknowledge the 'androgynous in every individual'.<sup>117</sup> The need to love or be loved should, according to bell hooks,<sup>118</sup> be incorporated in images of men in order to revise patriarchal notions of manhood. As Baldwin sees it:

...we are all androgynous, not only because we are all born of a woman impregnated by the seed of a man but because each of us, helplessly and forever, contains the other - male in female, female in male, white in Black and Black in white.<sup>119</sup>

Thus Fonny's capacity to love gives his masculinity the necessary androgynous dimension. Also, his patience makes him a Christ like figure, and his quiet heroism in forgiving his friend Daniel gives him a rare dignity. Moreover, he does not exhibit any deviant modes of behaviour like drinking, gambling or womanizing - thus conforming more and more to the Christ model. Through Fonny's character Baldwin is able to achieve a Black feminist approach to literature which, according to Barbara Smith, consists of the realization that the 'politics of sex...the politics of race and class are crucially interlocking factors'.<sup>120</sup> But it is a different case when it comes to the women characters, especially Tish.

Tish and Mrs. Hunt represent two different kinds of maternal character. However, Baldwin's treatment of these characters leaves something to be desired. In her essay 'Women: Chaos and Redemption',<sup>121</sup> Bonnie J. Barthold identifies certain goals in the fiction of Black men and women. According to her:

In fiction, women share with men a No Man's Land of temporal chaos, in which the central need is to redeem time and thus reshape dispossession into a community and continuity of heritage.<sup>122</sup>

With this agenda in mind, she tries to point out certain female stereotypes found in Black literature, ranging from the mule to the priestess. According to her, Tish conforms to the stereotype of the 'Woman' because her pregnancy functions as a symbol of life to reinforce the 'mythic vision' of a Black community. She comments on Tish's role in the novel:

In short, Tish is portrayed as the ideal instrument through which all Black men may be freed from imprisonment of time and allowed to celebrate a heritage. The ideal woman, she is given as foils two non-Woman figures—the hysterical "rape victim" and the woman who would sacrifice her spiritual posterity to fit the values of the white world. Baldwin implies that if the Black community offered the world at large a description of its women, the portrait would consist mainly of two types—the woman (Tish) and the non-woman (the Puerto Rican woman and Fonny's mother). This binary portraiture ignores the contingencies suggested by history and by other Black writer's portraiture of women, especially perhaps those drawn by women writers.<sup>123</sup>

Barthold's analysis of the characters as 'types' of the 'woman' and 'non-woman' reveals an essentialist quality in Baldwin's female characterisation. Tish's pregnancy and her readiness to be the mother of Fonny's child makes her more of a woman. Just as in Haley's *Roots* Kizzy's birth is celebrated because she is Kunte Kunta's heir, so also Tish is valorized as a woman because she makes it possible for Fonny to realise his dreams of fatherhood.

In contrast to Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, the women characters in Baldwin's novel form a kind of hierarchy with Tish at the highest level embodying a set of traits which are parallel to those of Fonny. At the lower end of this hierarchy, are Fonny's mother and the 'rape victim'. Baldwin's gaze is not critical enough. Unlike Morrison, he does not go into lengthy analyses of the motivations of Black women characters and is content to make do with stereotypes like that of Fonny's mother. Nowhere is there any attempt to understand some of deeper implications of

Fonny's mother's stereotype of a 'sanctified' woman, and a reader feels that Baldwin fails to see such a character as influenced by the controlling images propagated by white literature. Tish refers to Mrs. Hunt (Fonny's mother) as a 'Sanctified woman' and it is clear that Baldwin's irony is directed at the strong, Black mother figure. Tish chooses to highlight Mrs. Hunt's piety which has become an oppressive burden for her son as he has to go to the church regularly to please her. As Tish narrates the story we get the distinct impression that Fonny's mother's religious observances could not save Fonny from the ill effects of ghetto life. It was his father's guidance which did so.

Venetia K. Patton in her work, *Women in Chains*,<sup>124</sup> has analyzed the cardinal virtues of piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity as propagated in nineteenth century literature and later used subversively by Black women writers. In this instance, Mrs. Hunt's piety somehow makes her less attractive as a woman, especially to her husband. Fonny speaks sarcastically of her devotion to Christ and alleges that she was the reason why his parents did not have a happy, physically satisfying marriage. Baldwin readily dismisses Mrs. Hunt's piety as life-denying and accounting for her conservative outlook on life. As if it is in consequence of this flaw that she fails as a mother, a wife and a lover.

Baldwin's appraisal of Mrs. Hunt's character has a few glaring omissions. We never get to know the trauma of being subjected to the marital rape which Fonny represents as due to his mother's frigidity. He does not try to interrogate or analyze Mr. Hunt's lack of understanding towards his wife. Mr. Hunt simply remains one of those victims of the American Dream, a Black man who could not succeed in life.

Neither does Baldwin consider Mrs. Hunt's overt piety as a strategy of resistance to the domination of her husband. On the other hand, it is also significant how selectively Baldwin applies his criteria of distinction between a 'Woman' and a 'Non –Woman'. Tish exhibits the purity, submissiveness and domesticity but lacks the piety of a Woman. Nonetheless, she is an incarnation of the ideal Black woman. Also relevant is the contradiction in the portrayal of Tish's mother, who essentially is also a religious woman. She even asks the rape victim to retract her statement since it is the correct Christian thing to do. (As Barthold has noted in her classification of woman and non-woman; a woman as a category includes females who celebrate motherhood and this biological function becomes an almost spiritual dimension as in traditional Africa.<sup>125</sup>) She is not a non-woman, perhaps because she supports the prospect of single motherhood and believes in the innocence of Fonny. Very fortuitously the rape victim miscarries her own baby, in a somewhat bizarre manner of what can only be interpreted as a divine indictment of her action of framing the innocent Fonny.

Baldwin is ready to characterize Tish's family as a regular one compared to Fonny's dysfunctional family because of her father, mother and sister. She admits being attracted to Fonny because he embodied all the traits which young Black men seldom exhibited. More importantly, Tish also admires Fonny's heroic qualities since he cultivated them while living in a family with such a mother and such a couple of sisters. Here also Tish's judgment betrays her superior attitude and her inclination to see the Hunt family as a dysfunctional one. However she never stops to consider the possibility that the reason for such a rare occurrence might be found in Fonny's religious training initiated by his mother.

Fonny's willingness to embrace responsibility puts him above such characters as Daniel who is a victim of white oppression. The jail marks a rite of passage for Fonny and though he knows he is about to become a father, Tish observes:

He has moved not away from me but he has moved. He is standing in a place where I am not.<sup>126</sup>

Thus Tish realises that there is a growing distance between the two of them. In some ways Fonny also becomes a 'free' man when he is put in jail as he grows more and more into a self centered person capable of defining himself.

Tish's description of Fonny now arises out of her observation of his becoming a much more self-contained man by and by. He has none of the Black man's restlessness and his spiritual calm is a far cry from the anger and passion of his Black ghetto brothers. Fonny seems to have been transmuted totally into a Christ figure. Fonny's masculinity at this point becomes very hard to define. He promises Tish that he is going to be a better man when he comes out of prison and Tish remarks:

He is fighting for his life. He sees his baby's face before him, he has an appointment he must keep, he will be here when the baby gets here.<sup>127</sup>

Fonny's actual resistance begins when he is in jail. He resists being raped; is placed in solitary confinement but he becomes all the more determined to become a father to his unborn child. He establishes his identity in this process by abstaining from violence and becomes a very different hero than the ones we see frequently in urban/ ghetto novels. The novel ends on a symbolic note, with the birth of Tish's baby. The baby's cry is described as heralding a new generation. Tish emphasizes the relentless energy of the baby's cry:

And, from far away, but coming nearer, the baby cries and cries, cries like it means to wake the dead.<sup>128</sup>

Born into a family that extends beyond its parents, and arousing a deep sense of responsibility in an absent father, perhaps this baby will not become a victim of the American Nightmare( to use Malcolm X's phrase).<sup>129</sup>

Emmanuel S.Nelson<sup>130</sup> suggests that the idea of finding selfhood and strength through community ,a recurrent trope in Black fiction is most elaborately, developed in *If Beale Street could Talk*:

Here the family—symbolic of community—emerges as a source of enduring strength to the individual. The Rivers family...is united in love and commitment; therefore it is able to offer stiff collective resistance to external oppression. The various members of the Rivers family as well as Fonny Hunt emerge as proudly individualistic characters, but they are eager to unite communally to launch a ceaseless battle for justice. Baldwin's implication is clear: one ought to establish one's individual identity and find one's centre within oneself, not in opposition to but in harmony with one's communal identity. From such self-definition comes strength for the individual as well as the community. In other words, the individual while strengthening the community draws strength from it in return... He implies that one can bridge the void of otherness and achieve a genuine sense of self only through identification with the humanity within all men and women. And in a real sense, all of his works constitute a magnificent assertion of the human spirit that unites the family of mankind.<sup>131</sup>

This is what happens in the gradual transformation of Fonny. Thus Baldwin follows to the letter Martin Luther King Jr's programme of appealing to the human spirit transcending the racial consciousness, in order to create a society based on love and tolerance.

## Conclusion :

This chapter focuses on certain characters whose relationships to their family and community affect the novels in which they feature. Merle's restlessness and her search for a cause to champion signify the vacuum in her personal life. A more important fact is personal involvement that is required to solve the racial discord. Although the Black Power Movements had marginalized the Black woman's role, Merle's character is the first tentative attempt to involve women in racial/social issues. In her desire to help the community, Merle has distinct similarities with Alice Walker's Meridian Hill in *Meridian*.<sup>132</sup> It may be mentioned in passing that this kind of maternalist socialism was also prevalent in American white Feminism as derived from the legacy of Charlotte Perkins Gilman.<sup>133</sup> But in the end, when Merle goes in search of her family, Marshall seems to suggest that the personal experience of motherhood is as important as maternal social responsibilities, if not more. Patricia Hill Collins in *Black Feminist Thought*<sup>134</sup> has remarked, that Merle Kinbona (like Janie in *Their Eyes were Watching God*) is one of the pioneering attempts by Black women writers to create characters which could successfully counteract controlling images fostered by white literature.

Morrison's characters, like Pecola, Claudia or Mrs. Breedlove, are the result of a much more intensive study of racism. Questions of class, gender and sexual difference converge in *The Bluest Eye* as Morrison tries to depict the peculiar strengths and flaws within a Black family and the Black community. Morrison is clearly indicting the Black community for victimizing Pecola. The community's hypocritical attitude is especially evident in the way they disown Pecola, not only because she is ugly but also because she is poorer than other Black girls. A woman

of mixed colour gets honoured because she has the economic status required to live in a pretty house with curtains and a pet, thereby replicating the white image of an ideal home very close to the one described in the Dick and Jane primer. Morrison clearly disparages the Western heroic tradition because of its individualistic bias:

Critics devoted to the western heroic tradition - the individual alone and triumphant - see Sula as a survivor. In the Black community she is lost.<sup>135</sup>

Here we see Morrison's attempt to critique the American Adamic tradition which is but a variation of the individualistic Western tradition. Elsewhere she has said :

If the race is to survive it has to take care of its own - that's not an agency's job.<sup>136</sup>

Though Claudia may survive, she has a burden of guilt and shame in not being able to help Pecola survive. Claudia knows that the community can never ever be able to exonerate itself from its ostracization of Pecola. Like the marigolds that seem not to thrive in their soil, certain lives will not flourish; Pecola's life is similarly blighted. Morrison is aware of her role as a critic of Black society. She tells Gloria Naylor that *The Bluest Eye* was all the more powerful in its evocation of Blackness because no agenda of the Black Power Movement could convey the message as forcefully as Morrison's Pecola did. Morrison had wanted to say :

Look at what happens when you make a little Black girl invisible.<sup>137</sup>

And she did succeed brilliantly. Pin-Chia-Feng sees Pecola's tragedy as 'a parental legacy of racial neurosis'<sup>138</sup>, affirming how insidious such a neurosis can be and how catastrophic its consequences.

Thus Marshall and Morrison's novels appear to highlight two necessary aspects of Black women's lives, apart from the obvious one of bearing witness:

1) They portray a number of characters who partially articulate various periods of consciousness in the history of an African and American people.

2) The solidarity with progressive Black men although they struggle against them on issues of sexism.

Thus Merle, Claudia, Leesy and Cholly all articulate various aspects of Black history. Morrison's appraisal of a character like Cholly Breedlove and Marshall's depiction of Saul (a white Jew) bring out the second aspect of women's writing very well.<sup>139</sup>

Haley's and Baldwin's women characters leave a lot to be desired in terms of their attributes as individuals within a family or community. As has already been observed, heroes like Kunta in *Roots* and Fonny in *If Beale Street Could Talk* realize Black manhood from different perspectives. Baldwin's work, especially with its harping on the unconditional love of the family, is important in this regard as he feels that such love brings about the strength amongst Black men to endure and resist, Baldwin also has a number of Black father figures in his novel. These are Tish's father, Fonny's father and Fonny himself. As has already been discussed, Baldwin does not exhibit critical insights into the roles of Black women as mother, wife etc. He examines the fathers, and father-son as well as father-daughter relationships with relative ease. There is Tish's father who is a caring Black man lending support to his wife as well as daughter. Moreover, he has a lot of patience in that he does not get angry at Fonny and Tish's sudden decision to get married and celebrates when Tish informs him of her pregnancy. Fonny's father, on the other hand, is a portrait of the Black man as a victim. He enjoys a meaningful relationship with his son but his emotional estrangement from his wife and

daughters makes him a very bitter man. His suicide at the end of the novel may be attributed to the fact that he has been unable to save his son from going to prison in spite of his innocence. Finally, Fonny's character, as has already been discussed, bears shades of the Christ hero in his cultivation of endurance and fortitude. There is an attempt to transform him into a universal figure embodying non-violence and therefore his role as a family man becomes more effective. Nevertheless, this ideal of the Black family man in Baldwin's novel needs to be explored against contemporary standards. The cruel statistics of the era might suggest that Fonny actually will not turn up for his appointment with his son in spite of his best intentions.

Though Merle and Claudia are women of resistance, Morrison, Marshall, Haley or Baldwin have not given any critical insights into the role of the Black wife in the domestic space within the family. Morrison seems interested in it, but she is looking more for the individual flaws in Pauline and Cholly that subvert a fulfilling family life. Marshall looks upon the role of a white wife Harriet only and Baldwin reduces it in the polarized characters of Mrs. Hunt and Mrs. Rivers.

These novels show an important development on the literature of the previous generation (Chapter 1) because they indicate that now the questions of community and family are of greater importance than the individual's coming of age. They do not make any overt proclamations, but they do respond to the currents of political thought by insisting that the Black heritage needs to be reclaimed, and that the task should begin with first exploring the connections of Black men and women with their family and community rather than with any religious or political movement. In this era, when Black thought was governed by an urgency to shape nationalistic discourse, Black women were advancing towards 'womanism' by concentrating not only on ethnicity

but also on issues relating to gender inequality in the Black family and community. This in turn led to the prospering of a distinct feminist discourse, the objective of which was to analyze gender relations within the Black family more meticulously than was possible for Black male scholarship.

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17. Nathan Hare 'Questions and Answers about Black Studies' in *Modern Black Nationalism*, pp. 160-171.
18. Ibid., p. 160.
19. Stephen Henderson, 'Introduction' in *Black Women Writers: a Critical Evaluation (1950-1980)*, ed. Mari Evans and Stephen Henderson (New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday 1984).

20. Ibid., pp. xxiii – iv.
21. Michelle L. Taylor, 'Paule Marshall (1929 -)' in *Contemporary American Women Fiction Writers: An A to Z Guide*, eds., Laurie Champion and Rhonda Austin (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2002), p. 218.
22. Marshall, *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*, p.106.
23. Eugenia Collier, 'The Closing of the Circle: Movement from Division to Wholeness in Paule Marshalls' Fiction' in *Black Women Writers (1950-80)*, p. 310.
24. Marshall, *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*, p.5.
25. Elizabeth Ann Beaulieu, *Black Women Writers and the American Neo-slave Narratives: Femininity Unfettered* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1999), pp.137-157.
26. Marshall, *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*, p.5.
27. Ibid., p.32. Cuffee Ned was the only local hero of Bournehills. He had started the Pyre Hill revolt and had fire to the castle of a colonized and slave-trader called Percy Bryam. The hill on which the castle stood was believed to have burned for five years before being transformed it into a pile of ash which the islanders called Pyre Hill. Marshall refers to Cuffee Ned's rebellion in order to emphasize the token attempt at resistance by the islanders.
28. Ibid., p. 32.

29. Ibid., p.89.
30. Ibid., pp. 109-'10.
31. Alexis De Veau, 'Paule Marshall—In celebration of our Triumph' in *Essence X* (May 1980); 96,used as epigraph in Barbara Christian's essay 'Trajectories of the Self', cited in Chapter -1.
32. Hortense Spillers, '*The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* : Some Figurations on the New World ' in *Conjuring : Black Women, Fiction and Literary Tradition*, ed. Marjorie Pryse and Hortense Spillers, (Bloomington : Indiana University Press, 1985), pp. 152-171.
33. Ibid., p. 154.
34. Marshall, *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People*, p. 142.
35. Ibid., p. 64.
36. Ibid., p. 164.
37. Same sex relationships within the black community have been treated in black fiction but the ideology of power or dominance does not operate within it. Lesbianism is more like a consolidated sisterhood especially as depicted in the novels of the 80s and 90s. Barbara Christian discusses this in her essay 'Trajectories of Self'.
38. Giselle Liza Anatol, 'Caribbean Migration and the New World Novel' in *Cambridge Companion to the African American Novel*, p. 72.Anatol discusses Marshall's novel *Browngirl, Brownstones* in this context.

39. Carol Boyce Davis, *Black Women, Writing, and Identity: Migrations of the Subject* (New York: Routledge, 1994).
40. Ibid., p. 74.
41. Joyce Owen Pettis, 'Toward Wholeness in Paule Marshall's Fiction' (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1995) rpt. in *Modern Black Writers* ed. Manitou Wordworks (Detroit: St. James Press, 2000), p. 460.
42. Ibid., p. 460.
43. Ronald W. Davis, 'Roots: The Saga of An American Family' in *Masterpieces of African American Literature* ed. Frank N. Magill (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), pp. 489-492.
44. *Ebony*, February 2007, p. 30.
45. Henry Louis Gates, Jr, *Finding Oprah's Roots: Finding Your Own* (New York: Crown Publishing Group, 2007). In the PBS Home Video based on the book (*Finding Oprah's Roots*, PBS Home Video, 2007) Winfrey offers the viewers advice on researching one's roots with the guidance of genealogists Tony Burroughs and historian John Thoraton. (Source: [www.Shoppbs.org/sm\\_pbs\\_finding\\_opraha\\_roots\\_finding\\_your\\_own\\_dvd\\_p.2589151.html](http://www.Shoppbs.org/sm_pbs_finding_opraha_roots_finding_your_own_dvd_p.2589151.html)):Internet. Accessed on 9 November, 2008.
46. Roots miniseries received 36 Emmy Award nominations. It went on to win nine Emmys, a Golden Globe and a Peabody Award. Source. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roots\\_\(TV\\_miniseries\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roots_(TV_miniseries)). Internet. Accessed on 11 August, 2009.

47. A'Lelia Bundles, 'Looking back at the roots phenomenon' in *Black Issues Book Review* Fairfax: July/Aug 2001. Vol. 3, Iss. 4, pp.1- 12, available from <http://proquest.com/pqdweb;Internet;accessed on 19 December, 2006>.
48. Ibid., p.12.
49. bell hooks, *Rock My Soul : Black People and Self Esteem* (New York : Atria Books, 2003).
50. Haley, *Roots*, p. 105.
51. Ibid., p. 105.
52. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *The Negro Family: The case for National Action* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor, 1965).
53. Ibid., p.75.
54. Michelle Wallace, *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman* (London: John Calder, 1979).
55. Ibid., p. 13.
56. Ibid., p. 13.
57. Haley, *Roots*, p. 283.
58. James Baldwin, 'How One Black Man Came To Be an American' in *James Baldwin: Collected Essays*, (New York: Library of America, 1998). Also appeared in *The New York Times Book Review*, September 26, 1976, pp.762-765.

59. Ibid., p. 765.
60. Marshall, *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*, p. 1.
61. Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 2000), p.110.
62. Alice Walker's, *The Color Purple and Meridian* are good examples of novels with womanist protagonists.
63. Martin Luther King, Jr. makes this point in his essay 'Where Do We Go From Here?' while critiquing the Black Power Movement as 'nihilistic' (p. 582) and urging the black community to desire 'world wide fellowship' which would promote 'unconditional love' (p. 632). Page numbers cited as they appear in the collection, *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King Jr.* ed. James M. Washington (New York: Harper Collins, 1986).
64. Eugenia Collier, 'The Closing of The Circle: Movements from Division to Wholeness in Paule Marshall's Fiction' in *Black Women Writers*, ed. Mari Evans and Stephen Henderson, pp. 295-315.
65. Ibid., p. 295.
66. Ibid, p. 295.
67. Professor Sture Allen, 'The Nobel Prize in Literature' in *Nobel Lectures: Including Presentation Speeches and Laureates' Biographies. Literature (1991-1995)* ed. Sture Allén (Singapore: World Scientific Co. Ltd, 1997), pp. 41-42.
68. Ibid., p. 41.

69. Toni Morrison, 'A Conversation: Gloria Naylor and Toni Morrison' ,interview by Gloria Naylor (from the *Southern Review* 21 (1985): 567 – 93') in *Conversations with Toni Morrison*, ed. Danille Taylor – Guthrie (Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 1994) p. 188-217. Also, Morrison's statements are echoed in Amy Jacques Garvey's essay 'I Am a Negro—and Beautiful, in *Modern Black Nationalism*, pp. 57-58.
70. *Ibid.*, p. 199.
71. Throughout *The Bluest Eye* Morrison uses excerpts from the Dick and Jane Primer which portrays a white nuclear family. Pecola's own family is a very different one and her inability to relate to the primer confuses her even more. Morrison's view of the white western civilization cultivating beauty as a virtue is elaborated in her interview. 'A Conversation: Gloria Naylor and Toni Morrison', in *Conversations with Toni Morrison*, p. 188-217.
72. Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*, p. 7.
73. hooks, *Rock My Soul*, p. 134.
74. Toni Morrison, 'The One Out of Sequence' interview by Anna Koenen in *Conversations with Toni Morrison*, pp. 72-73.
75. Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*, p. 167.
76. Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*, pp. 97-98.
77. Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, pp. 287-288.
78. Toni Morrison, 'The One Out of Sequence' interview by Anna Koenen in *Conversations with Toni Morrison*, p. 70.
79. *Ibid.*, p. 82.

80. Obsessive Compulsive Disorder is a chronic anxiety disorder most commonly characterized by obsessive distressing intrusive thoughts and related compulsions. Compulsions are tasks or “rituals” which attempt to neutralize the obsessions...The phrase “obsessive-compulsive”...is often used in a informal “manner to describe someone who is meticulous..always fixated on something or someone. Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/obsessive-compulsive\\_disorder](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/obsessive-compulsive_disorder);Internet;accessed on 9/11/08.
81. Toni Morrison, ‘Intimate Things in Place. A Conversation with Toni Morrison’ interview by Robert Stepto in *Conversations with Toni Morrison*, pp. 10-29.
82. Ibid., p. 11.
83. Kalamu ya Salaam, ‘Spirit Family of the Streets’ in *These Hands I Know: African American Writers on Family* ( Kentucky : Sarabande Books Inc, 2002), p. 235.
84. hooks, *Communion*, p. 32.
85. Toni Morrison, ‘Intimate Things in Place. A Conversation with Toni Morrison’, interview by Robert Stepto in *Conversations with Toni Morrison*, p. 19.
86. Toni Morrison, ‘ Toni Morrison’, interview by Claudia Tate in *Conversations with Toni Morrison* pp. 156-170.
87. Ibid., p. 164.
88. Toni Morrison, ‘Intimate Things in Place. A Conversation with Toni Morrison’, interview by Robert Stepto in *Conversations with Toni Morrison*, p. 17.

89. Ibid., p. 17.
90. Ibid, p.19.
91. Ibid., p. 26.
92. Toni Morrison, 'Complexity: Toni Morrison's Women' interview by Betty Jean Parker in *Conversations with Toni Morrison*, pp. 60-66.
93. Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*, pp. 125-126.
94. Ibid., p. 126.
95. hooks, *The Will to Change*, p. 121.
96. Toni Morrison, 'A Conversation with Toni Morrison', interview by Bill Moyers in *Conversations with Toni Morrison*, pp. 262-274. Morrison tells Moyers that the primary role of a novelist is to bear witness to 'what is' even if it means stretching one's imagination and handling themes/characters which are new and unusual (p. 273).
97. hooks, *The Will To Change*, pp. 107-124. hooks elaborates on feminist masculinity and patriarchal masculinity in these pages.
98. Ibid., p. 124.
99. Toni Morrison, 'Conversation with Alice Childress and Toni Morrison' interview by Black Creation co-editors in *Conversations with Toni Morrison*, pp. 3 – 9.
100. Ibid, p. 7.

101. Toni Morrison, 'A Conversation with Toni Morrison' interview by Judith Wilson in *Conversations with Toni Morrison*, pp. 129 – 137.
102. Ibid., p. 132.
103. Richard Wright 'The Blueprint for Negro Writing' in *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature* ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Nellie Y. McKay (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. 1997), pp. 1380 – 88.
- 104 James Baldwin 'The Creative Process' in *James Baldwin: The Collected Essays* (New York: Library of America, 1998) pp. 669-672.
105. Martin Luther King, Jr, *A Testament of Hope: Essential Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr*, p. 632.
106. Ibid., p. 632.
107. James Baldwin 'The Creative Process' in *James Baldwin: The Collected Essays*, p. 672.
108. Bryant, *Victims and Heroes*, p. 54.
109. Fred L. Stanley, 'James Baldwin: The Artist as Incurable Disturber of Peace' in *Critical Essays on James Baldwin*, ed. Fred L. Standley and Nancy V. Burt. (Massachusetts : G.K. Hall & Co, 1998), p.51.
110. James Baldwin, 'The Male Prison' in *Notes of a Native Son* (New York: 1964), p. 128.
111. Baldwin, *If Beale Street Could Talk*. p. 5.
112. Ibid., p. 8.

113. James Baldwin, 'Take Me To The Water' in *James Baldwin: The Collected Essays*, pp. 353-403.
114. Ibid., p. 393.
115. Bryant, *Victims and Heroes*, p. 54.
116. James Baldwin, 'Freaks and the American Ideal of Manhood' in *James Baldwin: The Collected Essays*, p. 814 – 829.
117. Ibid., p. 814.
118. bell hooks, 'conclusion', *The Will to Change*, pp. 169-188.
119. James Baldwin, 'Freaks and the American Ideal of Manhood' in *James Baldwin: The Collected Essays*, p. 828.
120. Barbara Smith, 'Toward a Black Feminist Criticism in *Black Feminist Cultural Criticism*, ed. Jacqueline Bobo (Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2001), p.13.
121. Bonnie J. Barthold, 'Women: Chaos and Redemption' in *Black Time Fiction of Africa, Caribbean and the United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981).
122. Ibid., p. 99.
123. Ibid., p. 121.
124. Venetia K. Patton, *Women In Chains: The Legacy of Slavery in Black Women's Fiction* (New York : State University of New York Press, 2000), p. xvi.
125. Barthold, 'Women: chaos and Redemption' in *Black Time*, p. 117.
126. Baldwin, *If Beale Street Could Talk*, p. 206.

127. Ibid., p. 207.
128. Ibid., p. 213.
129. Malcolm X ‘The Bullet or the Ballot’ in *American Protest Literature*, p. 357.
130. Emmanuel S. Nelson, ‘James Baldwin’s Vision of Otherness and Community’ in *Critical Essays on James Baldwin*, pp. 121 – 125.
131. Ibid., p. 124.
132. Alice Walker, *Meridian* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976).
133. ‘Charlotte Perkins Gilman’ in *The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women: The Traditions in English* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1996). Gilman had argued that the subordination of the female sex had been necessary in the past for human evolution, but that in the twentieth century masculine assertiveness had to be complemented by a female culture grounded in co-operation and nurturance. She favoured materialist socialism to biological motherhood.
134. Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, p. 68.
135. Toni Morrison, ‘The one out of sequence’, interview by Anna Koenen in *Conversations with Toni Morrison*, p. 68.
136. Toni Morrison, ‘A Conversation with Toni Morrison’, interview by Judith Wilson in *Conversations with Toni Morrison*, p.131. Morrison also critiques the individualism of Western literary discourse in *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and Literary Imagination* (New York: Vintage, 1993).
137. Toni Morrison, ‘A Conversation :Gloria Naylor Toni Morrison’, interview by Gloria Naylor in *Conversation with Toni Morrison*. p. 201.

138. Pin Chia Feng, 'The Gaze of *The Bluest Eye*' in *The Female bildungroman by Toni Morrison and Maxine Hong Kingston : A Post Modern Reading* (New York : Peter lang, 1998) rpt. in *Feminism in Literature: A Gale critical companion*, Volume vi : 20<sup>th</sup>. Century, (Detroit: Gale, 2005),pp.253-266.
139. bell hooks , *Communion*, pp.178-192.In these pages hooks speaks about the need to have progressive black men in the community who can eschew drastic violence and sexism.