

Shifting Identities of Blacks: An exploration of the selected Novels

Dr. Ravi Rani, Lecturer in English Government Degree College, Chodavaram, Anakapalli District, Andhra Pradesh, India.

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Abstract:

In the wake of the recent struggles of all marginalized communities against the dominant powers, a study of the Black- American Novelists Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, Alice Walker and Toni Morrison who formed the vital links that break away all negative stereotypes and establish the Black Self Concept as the triumph of exploited people everywhere is very relevant. The discussions in this book are based on Jungian psychology that a man's unconscious urges him to a realization of his full potential as an individual and social being. Besides the psycho-social, political and economic factors the Black Self Concept is deeply rooted in the combined oral and literary traditions of the Afro-Americans. The term 'Black' is written in capital letter to suggest the race and not the black colour. It is hoped that scholars of Afro-American Literature and psychology will find this book useful.

Keywords: Shifting, Identities, Blacks, exploration, selected Novels

Introduction:

As a literary form, the novel is highly accessible to all kinds of persons in all climes and times. Since the narrative mode is often straight and simple, the readers find the process of understanding easy and enjoyable. Another reason for its popularity is the fulfilment it offers to the writer and the readers in terms of storytelling. It is part of man's instinct to be interested in people, to tell and listen to stories. The novel is a highly wrought medium for supplying this kind of vicarious pleasure. Fiction is the handiest form of literary entertainment since it is a pocket theatre in which human tragedies and comedies are enacted with the least of fuss and paraphernalia. As a

mirror held up to human nature, the novel is an authentic and reliable reflection of lived reality. It is a valid document of human experiences relevant to all times. "The: narrative or storytelling tradition is an ancient Sub-Saharan, African as well as Greco-Roman means for symbolically expressing both a personal and a collective relationship to a social and metaphysical universe.

The novel which is one of the most widely-read forms of literature now, was almost unheard of as a special art form until the seventeenth century. Henry James in his essay "The Art of Fiction" declared in 1888 that a novel is in "its broadest definition a personal, a direct impression of life." We may consider the novel as a fictional prose narrative of considerable length, which portrays characters and actions representative of real life in a continuous plot. The novels the loosest of all literary forms. Unlike the drama, it is free from all limitations of stage and setting. This freedom enables the novelist to give a complete and eclectic representation of human life. We are made familiar with the motives and feelings of mankind, to imbibe our ideas of virtues and vices from practical examples, and are taught how to face injustice and overcome grief. D. H. Lawrence has called the novel "the one bright book of life" and explains that "the novel as a tribulation can make the whole man alive trembles. Which is more than poetry, philosophy or any other book tribulation can do "The greatness and practical usefulness of a novel," says Walter Allan, lies "in its unremitting work of involving the reader himself in the moral life, inviting him to put his own motives under examination, suggesting that reality is not as conventional education has led him to see it. It has taught us, as no other genre cover did, the extent of human variety and the value of this variety."

Even novels, written with the avowed purpose of entertaining, give the reader some idea of the writer's interpretation of life. Through the choice of his characters, the way he arranges them and the

experiences he makes them undergo, he expresses his emotional relation to the universe. Often novelists have claimed that their conscious intention in writing a novel is the promotion of some general principle or philosophy of life. Psychological analysis has often revealed that the actual work may sometimes be at odds with the novelist's avowed intentions. Modern critics argue that there is much more to a novel than authorial intent and that no text can possess any fixed meaning. According to the deconstruction theory, every text has as many interpretations as it has readers because every reader imposes his own meaning into the text and hence, in a sense, creates or recreates the works he reads. All great novels possess genuine human interest and are concerned with the writer's sincerity to his self and his experiences as well as the impact social events have on his mind. Thus the novel becomes an extremely comprehensive and eclectic form of literature.

2. American Fiction Based on the peculiar historical experiences and the influences of European fiction, we can consider American fiction to have evolved roughly through three phases before, during and after the two World Wars. The vastness, vitality, humor and optimism of American fiction cannot, of course, be fully brought out in this brief mention of a few of its most important novelists. Critics generally choose *The Power of Sympathy* written in 1789 as the first American novel. This was followed by twenty or so novels, claiming upon the title page that they were founded on facts. Most of them, however, follow Samuel Richardson, the English novelist. The sentimental novels were generally narratives of domestic life. In America it was the time of the dawn of national consciousness, industrial prosperity, increase in literary activities and love of transcendentalists like Thoreau and Emerson. With Fennimore Cooper, the American novel became known throughout the world. His books were translated into many languages and people often learnt all they knew of America, its history, forests and seas from him. Nathaniel Hawthorne infused meaning into the narrative structure of his great novels. As in his *Scarlet Letter*, he is preoccupied not with the sin of illicit love but the consequent sins of hypocrisy and revenge, and their effect on the soul. The period of the Civil War was a time of great unrest and turmoil. Among the domestic sentimentalists who became very popular in the eighties Harriet Beecher Stowe (*Lance? ohm's Cabin*, 1852) deserves special mention. Abraham Lincoln greeted her as "the little

lady who made this big because of the great influence her book had on the War. As a story of * the high-minded black slaves, *Once* film stimulated world concern for the status of the Negro in America. Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* with its mixture of allegory and symbolism was highly hailed by the critics. Mark Twain is one of the better known figures of American fiction. His popularity rests largely on the novel, *The Adventure of Huckleberry Finn* (1885) which is an amusing narrative evoking laughter to castigate manners and morals. It was Mark Twain who began the literary lineage that paved the way for great novelists like Hemingway.

Significance

The human psyche is forever striving towards greater individuation, seeking emotional and intellectual clarity in a world that seems to grow increasingly impersonal, contradictory and meaningless. The search for "Self" fulfilment becomes all the more remarkable in the novels of the Afro-Americans because (of their increasing sense of alienation and isolation due to racial, political, social and economic prejudices. All the four novelists taken up for in-depth study here, Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, Toni Morrison, and Alice Walker provide profound insight into the Afro-American predicament in all its deeper, personal, moral and historical significance. Few Afro-American writers have been able to conceive of characters possessing the whole, complex ambiguity of human beings as they do but their most outstanding contribution is their movement towards a certain measure of self awareness as the ground for new self concepts that would no longer be dominated by painful encounters with the white world.

The study is significant in that it goes into the very depth of the Black American's experience in America, right from slavery, the fight for civil rights and the continuing struggle against colour prejudice. The concept of self of the Afro-Americans as emerging from the experiences, dreams and achievements of the characters as portrayed through symbols, myths and fantasies or simply the style and language of the narrative, reveals the collective unconscious. Thus the effort to establish a new self-image from a psychological view point adds to the diversity, richness and value of the research. To achieve complete development of a self, what psychologists call individuation, there must be a total integration of the conscious and the unconscious aspects. Thus the conscious and unconscious ways of the search for selfhood have been explored in detail.

This dissertation is a comparative study of both men and women writers, taking into account their various roles from childhood to adult life and to parenthood. This study, it is hoped, will be able to break through the stereotyped images of Black men and women and evolve a new concept of the Black self as one that will be able to confront the challenges of the modern world successfully.

Justification

Though a number of studies have recently been made about different aspects, themes and styles of Black American literature the theme of the self concept has not been handled before in such detail. This study explores and analyses the conscious and unconscious ways of the search for selfhood. The four major Afro-American novelists selected have been very influential in altering the traditional concepts about the Blacks.

Purpose

In the wake of the international interest in the marginalized and ethnic groups of people all over the world, the study of the Black Diaspora is of special interest. The purpose is to add to the increasing awareness of the struggles of the less privileged race, class or gender. Such a comparative study of the conscious and unconscious attitudes of men and women writers taking into account the various roles of the characters in the novels, from childhood to parenthood has not been attempted before. Thus the study has the avowed purpose of adding to the fund of knowledge relating to ethnic and subaltern studies.

5. State-of-the-art Review The works of the four authors taken up for study here have attracted national and international attention resulting in a fine crop of book-length and non-book length studies, research papers and articles, causal references and referential points of umpteen kinds. Of these the more important ones may be mentioned here as an overview of secondary sources. The publication of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* was followed by many favorable reviews. A few full length books were also written, Alan Nadel's "Invisible Criticisms: Ralph Ellison (2nd Edition) The American (Common) Man and the American (Common) Man" being the most remarkable of the recent ones. Upon

Ellison's death in 1994. Roger Rosenblatt says he re-read the novel as "an appeal for self-reliance." James Baldwin's *Another Country* was highly praised but his *Journals* won him a lot of disapproving criticism. William J. Weathersly evaluates him as an artist in his book *James Baldwin*

: Artist on the other side of the award of the Nobel prize for literature to Toni Morrison in 1993, there has been an immense output of articles revealing an increasing interest in Black womanist studies in books and journals like *The Black Scholar*, *Black Writer*, (*Contemporary Literary Criticism*, *Contemporary Authors*, *Director*, *Of Literary Biography*, *0*, *dissertation Abstracts International*, *the Southern Review*, *College Languages Association Journal*, *The New York Times*. (*Monocle of Negro Education*, *Allooloo and Journal of American Studies*, *c. Iyunolu Osage* reviews Morrison's *Beloved* as an application of psychoanalytic material to call attention to the "double status of the African American as a split subject traversing the boundary between the visible and the invisible, the corporeal and the spiritual, the conscious and the unconscious," and what Alan Nadel has called "role of maternal history in the definition of self." No study in Black American fiction can be complete without a perusal of Bernard W. Bell's *The Afro-American Novel and Its Tradition*. Articles and reviews relating to these authors keep

Objectives

The primary objective of this Research is to discover an ideal self concept becoming the Blacks marked by self esteem. Another objective is to compare and contrast the various aspects of the self as revealed in the fictional universe of the four representative Afro-American novelists and decide how far they have overcome the need to protest to the white community for the damage done to their sense of self. As a third objective, attention is focused on the effects of the collective unconscious on the psyche of the average Afro-American. Despite all the obstacles, fears and terrors, the meanness and pain imposed on him, a man's unconscious prompts him to realize his human potential to the full. The various ways it adopts to bring conscious resolution and individuation are examined. The Black literature seems to criticize the rigidity and constraint imposed on those who try to attain wholeness as persons. The literature implies that society's definition of a person, whether man or woman, should agree with their own self concept. Only then will he be able to overcome the psychological effects of repression resulting in unconscious guilt, evil or even violence. Thus the fourth objective is to relate the Black person's self to that of his society and how they act and re-act upon each other. In this context it

Would be worthwhile to look upon the act of writing itself as the Black American's assertion of his

self. It is incredible that these men and women who were brought to America under inhuman conditions, sold like cattle, forced to breed, to have their children snatched away, exploited and tortured beyond endurance did not altogether lose their sense of self. The fifth objective is to analyze how far the characters in the novels with their burden of sorrow and guilt are able to rise to the heights of spiritual awareness. In spite of all adverse conditions these Afro-Americans could still rise, above self-hatred and even retain their sense of justice, love and compassion. How their folklore and traditional beliefs taught them to deal with the self depreciation of defeat and the self assertion of struggle and the self fulfilment of success is also part of this study. It is wonderful that many of the Black writers could see in their peculiar predicament a universal significance and celebrate the triumph of Black man's spirit as the triumph of humanity in general. The last objective is to examine their efforts to re-affirm faith in the fundamental values of humanity like love, self-esteem, justice and freedom.

Scope

The scope of this study is limited to the novels of the four post-war Afro-American novelists, Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, Toni Morrison and Alice Walker, covering the period from 1952 to 1998. An in-depth study of the novels of Ellison and Baldwin which move beyond naturalism towards the neo-realistic and the modernistic novels of Walker and Morrison will be made. The study is confined to a close reading of Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952), Baldwin's *Just Above My Head* (1979); Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (1970), *Sula* (1973), *Song of Solomon* (1977), *I, Rigoberta Menchú* (1982), *Beloved* (1987) the prose works of the authors having a direct bearing upon the research will be made use of. It would also include a brief sociohistorical survey of the Blacks in America.

Hypothesis

The main effort in the project is to find out the sources of the Black self concept and the process the ideas of C.J. Jung have been used. According to Jung there are many images in the unconscious which usually do not appear in dreams or works of art until the conscious life becomes false or one sided. Jung believes that the psychic structure of man, like the anatomical, shows traces of the earlier stages of evolution it has passed through. Perhaps this explains the deep unconscious fear and mistrust the Blacks have for Whites and their inability to develop a united strong confident self concept. Alice Walker

defines a "nigger" as a Black person "who believes he or she is incapable of being responsible for his or her actions, that the white folks are to blame for everything including his or her behavior." This implies a total negation of self as if a "nigger" is a nobody, a nothing. The American racial system has instilled in the Afro-American not only physical but psychological enslavement to such a degree that they were totally dependent on the Whites even for their image of their own self.

Since Ellison's *Invisible Man*, the Afro-American writers of the nineteen fifties, especially the novelists chosen for the study, have been urging Black men and women to stop being "niggers" and to become Black men and women. The protagonists in their novels are all men and women alienated in some way from themselves, their tradition or their past. These characters either do not know who they are or cannot accept what they are. Some such encounter with the unconscious through symbolic folk persons or mythological motifs takes them to a past that had been destroyed by centuries of cultural rape. Hope of reconciliation with conscious reality and thus achieving a whole self lies in recognizing the inherited values of that tradition and sometimes in overcoming what is oppressive in it. All these writers seem to testify to the pain not only of the conscious life but also memories of those images buried deep in the unconscious mind. They try to define themselves, to come to terms with reality and this often leads to a search for roots. It is acceptance of the past that gives them self-confidence about the future. As Darwin T. Turner remarks "a confident people must have a transcendent vision of what might be a vision drawn not only from their triumph but even from their despair.

All the four writers have succeeded in fusing "history and mythology into a new reality that enshrines Blacks' efforts to maintain their humanity," despite the damaging forces imposed on their concept of self. They have not only explored and celebrated the past but have recreated that history to virtually re-define the Black self-concept in such a way as could be used as prototype or blue print for the future. The ideal self-concept is that "sensitively focused process of opposites, of good and evil, of instinct and intellect, of passion and spirituality." The emerging Black self-concept, it is hoped, will be a more creditable, comprehensive, healthy and eclectic concept, freeing them from all racial inhibitions. "The historical quest of Black Americans, their principal canonical story" as Bernard W. Bell

remarks "is for life, liberty and wholeness, the full development and unity of self and the Black community as a biracial and bicultural people, as Americans of African descent."⁴⁶ In short, the Black American must be able to idealize himself as Black. The research attempts to prove that a new self concept with appropriate emphasis on the conscious and the unconscious is being synthesized in the Afro-American society partaking of the historical, mythological, psychological and contemporary social factors of existence as reflected in the novels of Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, Toni Morrison and Alice Walker.

Theoretical Foundations

For the purpose of the study we shall be depending largely on Jung's theories relating to the collective unconscious and individuation. The psychology of 'the self will be elaborately made use of. The study will be an effort to grapple with the many contraries implied in the primary materials, the novels of all the four writers - inner feeling, outer gesture, intention, pain, ecstasy, singularity and collectively to discover reality as it is behind appearances. The techniques of deconstruction, neo-historicism and sociological theories have been used appropriately as part of textual analysis.

Methodology

A detailed study has been made of the primary sources to find new meanings and interpretations. A psychological analysis has been made of the characters in the novels as they come to terms with the many complexities, paradoxes and ambivalence of life especially of being Americans of African ancestry. Secondary sources namely book length studies, articles in periodicals, private letters, interviews and films have been made use of. It is sought to situate these works not only within the writer's personal biography or within a specific historical situation but within the collective biography or racial history of the generations. This research is a psycho-social and sociocultural exploration of the evolution of the Black concept of the self in the light of and with the help of literary theories of varied kinds.

Analysis:

During the second phase, in the period between the two World Wars the American novel began to show signs of great vitality. Henry James, Edith Wharton, Ellen Glasgow, Dorothy Canfield and Willa Cather are all luminaries of the period. Sherwood Anderson, influenced by the new

psychology, focused on the inner life of man in the machine age. The Nobel Prize for literature to Sinclair Lewis was hailed as recognition of the American fiction on the world scene. The twenties were also the time of Hemingway novels though he won the Nobel Prize only in 1954. Mention must also be made of William Faulkner who's *The Sound and the Fury* is an American classic. A number of Black American writers also emerged on the scene during this period. The rise of democracy, science and technology, naturalism and philosophy, the impact of the World Wars, new concepts of materialism and literary techniques are all evident in the fiction of the interwar years. The third phase comprising the novelists of the post-war period reflects the rapid social changes, the doubts. Questionings and the frustrations of the times. Robert Penn Warren and Saul Bellow are considered by many critics as the most gifted American novelists of modern times. Warren's quest of the nature of the self represents the more thoughtful currents of the novel in recent times. Warren recognizes that the self is in the society and that society is based on moral values. Saul Bellow also uses the search for identity as a recurrent theme in his novels. Most of the novelists of the post-war period have brought intolerable injustice and social blindness before the public conscience demonstrating a sense of responsibility to brotherhood and integrity of the self

The Black American Literature

The Black American literature can be considered a special entity having its own identity. Validity, reasons and rules of existence. The justification for a separate treatment of the Black American literature lies in the unique historical experiences the Black Americans have had to undergo. Generations of brutal oppression form the background against which the Afro-American must try to express himself. He was very much conscious that to the white American he was an oversimplified clown, a primitive beast incapable of any responsibility, lacking intelligence and even deep emotion. The Black woman was either the dumb domestic servant or the immoral woman with witch-like powers. It is no wonder that the Black writers either submitted to the fantasies of the Whites or indulged in a strong denial of the half-human status thrust upon them. "The quality of a writer's imagination, the genetic and psychological factors that shaped his personality and determined the atmosphere of his inner being, and the occurrences, large and small, that fed the store from which he

drew the substances of his art are all factors that influence a writer's work. In the early stages of its development Black American literature remained mostly derivative, imitative and virtually an extension of the mainstream American literature. But it began finding its own voice and shaped up its own destiny by emphasizing its identity, uniqueness and specific congenital features in the attempt to move away from the white-dominated American literature

In the beginning, the Afro-Americans had not been able to escape the influence of the broader stream of American social and intellectual development. The pioneer Black American writers and artists tended to imitate the white cultural standards and attainments. The eighteenth century Black American woman, Phyllis Wheatley, wrote heroic couplets in the style of Alexander Pope the world of the early novelists William Wells Brown, Frank Webb and Francis Ellen Watkins was modeled upon that of such Anglo-Saxons as Pope, Carlyle, Mill and Byron. The pattern was established by Joel Chandler flares who wrote stories about Uncle Remus, and Harriet Beecher Stowe who wrote Uncle Tom's Cabin. The hero in all these narratives was "simple, childlike, uncomplicated, loyal and a repository of homespun wisdom." a person approved of by the white people. These early works were not completely devoid of protest. Wheatley wrote of "the diabolic dye that set the Black man apart and the novelist portrayed the sufferings of the middle class Black characters barred from their rightful place in American society. "at the protest was kept within the bounds of the genteel tradition. Robert A. Bone describes these novels as a "juxtaposition of gentility and protest that is utterly incongruous." The early novelists were abolitionists, who, "in fighting the cause of emancipation adopted almost in total the mannerisms, language and world. - 10 view of the white allies. The period between 1800 and 1865 was one in which a solution to slavery was regarded as a solution to all the problems between Blacks and Whites. When the abolition of slavery did not automatically bring about a new society altering the status of Blacks, they received a great shock As a result, during the fateful years of the reconstruction no major work was produced. Doubts regarding the American ideals were raised by a number of Black writers in the 1920s in the beginning of the Harlem renaissance. The disillusionment suffered by Blacks after the great migration from South to North had a profound effect on the Black American novel. Many novelists tried to

explain the failure of American system as a failure of the freed Blacks to attain the culture and material acquisition of the Whites. Langston Hughes, in *The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain*, suggested that the Black writer confront the problem posed by a loss of faith in American society not high creating divisions but by rewriting the formula that defined the function and objectives of African-American literature." He dreamt of a Literature in which the Afro-American's hopes, fears and anxieties, are truthfully depicted. Thus Rudolph Fisher and Claude McKay view the history of America, and Langston Hughes describes in fiction the ways of the white folk. After World War II, there has been considerable change in the attitude of the Black American writers. They no longer aspire to be like white men but try to renew tales with everything African. The Afro-American novel began to make its mark during this period The Black American novelist's chief concern is to get his humanity recognized and later to establish his own identity. In 1938 Richard Wright had published a collection of short stories called *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (hydrdn dealing with the pathetic situation of the Black slaves, stressing the brutality and viciousness of the white man in his relations with the Black man paving the way for the resurgent Black fiction. Feeling that this work was too sentimental, Wright next decided to write a novel "no one would sweep over," as he himself said. And this is what he achieved in *Native Son*, a searing account of a young, uneducated Black boy who inspired by his good intentions, commits murder and is eventually executed. *Native Son* cannot be rated a great novel despite its historical importance as the best of the protest tradition, because it is more propaganda than literature

The New Voices

It was only in the late twentieth century that novelists began to deal truthfully with the history, culture and sociology of the Black masses and to express openly the anger and resentment. Thus the novelists of this period ushered in a new age of truth and realism repudiating the idea that the novel should be used as a mere vehicle for protest. Each contributed to the steady eroding of the romanticism and futile faith of the earlier writers and to purge himself of the hatred which consumed the works of many of the most talented of Black writers Each succeeded "in seeing newer visions, of moving back into the past, of coming to grips with the terrors and joys" of life in America. Four of the most

prominent of these new voices have been chosen for the purpose of this study. At this juncture let us introduce the authors in their proper perspective. Ralph Waldo Ellison has been acclaimed a major American author on the strength of a single novel, a collection of essays and several short stories. His elegance was -part of a profound self-esteem and construction; it involved his being simultaneously worldly and parochial, a citizen of world literature and of streets and corners only he knew about." Ellison's *Invisible Man* marked a break in the tradition of Black American novel in its movement away from naturalism and propagandist themes and a movement towards "the rediscovery and revitalization of myth, legend and ritual as appropriate sign systems for expressing the double consciousness" of the modern Black experience. The sufferings of the Black Americans, Ellison seems to say, have brought wisdom, and it is this that Ellison wishes to impart to his readers. -'In its breadth, its sweep, and above all in its humanity the invisible hlun is a great novel.'." In terms of growth and development of the American novel it occupies a place higher than any other novel by a Black writer. James Baldwin, a leading political spokesman of the Negro revolt, has been almost as effective as Ellison in making a stunning impact on the cultural life of Black America. Well-known as an essayist, playwright and novelist, Baldwin with his apocalyptic vision and new stridency of tone in the entire discussion of American race relation has brought about a major breakthrough in the American imagination. He believes that what happens to them By the 1960's the cumulative effect of works such as *Invisible Man* along with a resurgence of Black nationalism made Black culture acceptable to the majority of Americans. Writers like Toni Morrison and Alice Walker no longer felt impelled to define Black cultural identity in contrast to white culture. They emphasize the various forms of Black culture, its past and its present in their own cultural context. Toni Morrison, the second American woman and the first Aft-o-American to be awarded the Nobel Prize for literature, with her immaculate narrative style has created for herself a place among the few select writers of the world. She has succeeded in transcending race and sex in her novels and in breaking all the myths and stereotyped images of Black women. Alice Walker too in her poems, stories and novels breaks fresh ground, in her bold feministic approaches to the depiction of Black woman as an individual struggling towards freedom and self-hood.

In attempting self-definition the characters in the novels ask their respective communities what is expected of them. I've response reveals much about each community's sense of womanhood and adulthood. These writers have begun to project the image of woman as capable of transforming the very content of their own communities. The impact of the white culture is that "it inflicts psychic terror upon them,!" (the Blacks). Hut the "definition of the community does not come.

Solely from its confrontation with the white culture." In his fear of the present, conscious really, the Afro-American turns to the promptings of his inner psyche which urges him to overcome the terror by understanding the collective past history of his race thus paving the way for a bolder and newer self-concept. "By revealing the fantasies, myths, and dreams of the characters in the novel. These novelists attempt to penetrate the historical.. 19 subconscious. Despite the differences among them, all four of these novelists share the desire to create a new image of the Black man in America, an image that would explode all the myths of their inferiority and give them pride and dignity Each of these Afro-American novelists, Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, Toni Morrison and Alice Walker, however individualistic and original they may be, are writing from a collective experience true to them and only to them as Afro-Americans and writers. Their works testify to the pain not only of their conscious. Personae lives but traces of those memories buried deep in the dark recesses of the unconscious because they are too terrible to be acknowledged. They write from a need to transform circumstances, to assert a life-giving vision of human destiny. The act of writing itself becomes an assertion of self- "a vehicle toward ~individuation through the recording in language of past experiences, and the creation of order and freedom from .920 chaos of a dominated slave self. All the four novelists deserve to be studied in depth for bringing out a new self-concept that +III transform the future generations of Blacks

The central concepts in the title may now be explained. First, the Self-concept. Ross Stanger in his book of *Personality* mentions that any given individual may be described in terms of his characteristic temperament or feeling reactions, particularly such generalized tendencies as optimism, pessimism, depression or excitability. "With greater precision he can be pictured in terms of specific emotional responses, complexes and phobias as also in terms of his habitual patterns of rationalization,

identification, compensation and social rule. Stanger argues that all this yet leaves one with a feeling of incompleteness as if something essential was missing. He explains that what is lacking is the inner feeling of individuality or the self-concept. According to him, the self-concept is that which unifies one's temperament. One's complexes, political attitudes and habits in social interaction. "It is the awareness of oneself as a continuing entity within these varying situations and action patterns.

Pillsbury defined the self as a group of concepts originally developed to represent the different lines of division "between the man and others, between the mental and physical processes and between the more mechanical and the more spontaneous forms of action." The self has three aspects, the physical, the mental and the self-revelatory action. According to the Swiss psychologist Carl Gustav Jung, "if the unconscious can be recognized as a co-determining factor along with consciousness and if we can live in such a way that conscious and unconscious demands are taken into account as far as possible, then the centre of gravity of the total personality shifts into position. It is then no longer in the ego which is merely the centre of consciousness but in the hypothetical point between conscious and unconscious which is the self."²⁴ By consciousness Jung means the relatedness of psychic contents to the ego in so far as they are sensed by the ego. Relations that are not sensed by the ego may be called unconscious. There exist a great many psychic complexes which are unconscious i.e. "not related to the ego in a perceptible way."²⁵ For the purpose of this study, we can consider that three entities are crucial to the making of man's self-hood: the conscious, tangible awareness of one's strengths, weaknesses, capabilities, achievements, plus the intangible components of the unconscious mostly supported by the racial past and collective legacy belonging to the heritage, plus the impact of the environment on the working of the person's mind with a decisive role being played by the process of volition.

The Collective Unconscious The terms "Conscious" and "Unconscious" as they are used in this study may next be elaborated upon. Consciousness is our own self as we know in our thoughts, feelings, desires and passions. Jung groups consciousness roughly into five elements: life aims, (the overriding aim most people have in life to become a doctor, a pilot etc.) desires, (aims for specific things like good body or pretty women)

instincts, (the way we eat food not because we are hungry but because it is meal time) habits, (the things we do without thinking. like smoking) and principles, (social moral or conventional rules which are in our mind all the time within which we perform). Most people will have these elements in their mind and usually they are able to maintain a balance between them. A person often sacrifices one for another. For example, for the sake of his life aim to become a doctor he may sacrifice his desire for a luxurious life. All these elements are part of the consciousness, what Kierkegaard called "immanence". Jung distinguished between the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious. "The personal unconscious consists of all those psychic contents that become unconscious, either because they lost their intensity or were forgotten, or because consciousness was withdrawn from them which is called repression. It also includes sense impressions which never had sufficient intensity to reach consciousness but have somehow entered the psyche. In the case of the Afro-American growing up in the white-dominated, race-conscious, brutal, nihilistic world, there were so many painful, shameful and unpleasant incidents every day of his life, that repressing them in the unconscious was the only way to keep his sanity and integrity intact.

James Baldwin has often mentioned that he had a strong unconscious desire to overcome the dominating influence of his over-strict father. His novels are an elaborate exploration of the theme of repression, guilt complex and inferiority complex due to racial discrimination. Ellison's hero too, in spite of his avowed determination to conform to white standards of behavior is unconsciously looking for equality and freedom. Ellison focuses on the mythology of Black survival and transcendence through fusing folkloric allusions with the picaresque mode. Like Baldwin, he too emphasizes that one's personal history and racial history must merge. Toni Morrison and Alice Walker examine at length the various means of transcending the awful effects of racism, sexism and classism in the conscious and unconscious mind of the women protagonists. They too resort to rhetorical and linguistic devices to underscore the need for Black Americans to seek knowledge of their personal and racial histories. In addition to these personal unconscious contents, there exist other contents which do not originate in the personal acquisitions but in the inherited possibility of psychic functioning in general, namely, in the inherited brain-structure. These are "the mythological

associations--those motives and images which can spring anew in every age and clime, without. Historical tradition or migration."It is these contents that Jung calls the collective unconscious. The contents of the collective unconscious are not peculiar to one individual "but to many, at the same time, i.e. either to a society, a people or to mankind in genera^l." They include the general concepts of right. The state, religion and science. It is not only concepts and ways of looking at things but also feelings and thinking bound up with certain

Collective ideas of God, motherland, social rituals and so on that can belong to the collective unconscious. In the same way, "sensation or manner of sensing, and intuition, are collective which are peculiar to a large group of men at the same time. It was Jung's intimate acquaintance with the phenomena of schizophrenia which led him to understand that the patient's, delusions and hallucinations couldn't very often be explained as connected with his personal history. His deep knowledge of mythology and religion helped him to recognise that the collective unconscious consists of mythological motifs or primordial images to which Jung gave the name Archetypes. Archetypes are not inborn ideas but typical forms of behaviour which present themselves as ideas and images once they enter the consciousness. "The conscious mind not only recognizes and assimilates the external world, through the senses but it also translates into visible reality the world within us."²⁹ All the most powerful ideas in man's history in science, philosophy, religion and ethics have been created by consciously adopting and applying these archetypes to reality. The novels of all the four writers chosen for study are replete with such chance encounters, peculiar folk persons, inexplicable incidents, mythological figures in dreams, the folk music of the Blacks, blues or jazz which suddenly thrust upon the protagonist his/her identity as a racial being, sharing a common collective past. According to Jung the archetypes that have the most frequent and most disturbing influence on the ego are the shadow, the anima and the animus. By shadow Jung means the sum of all those unpleasant qualities we like to

Hide or the negative side of our personality. It need not be wholly bad, it may just be somewhat inferior, undaunted and primitive. It may sometimes contain childish or undeveloped or immature qualities which make life exciting but which convention forbids in an adult. The shadow is a moral

problem that challenges the whole ego or personality. When a person becomes conscious of it, he is forced to recognize the dark aspects of his personality as present and real. This is a kind of pre-requisite for any kind of self knowledge and usually it meets with a lot of resistance from the individual. It is this refusal to acknowledge the evil or dark aspects in one's self that makes the Whites project the shadow archetype on the Black men. The widespread fear of the Black men as rapists of white women was perhaps such an attempt to deny any evil sexual lurking in the white self. Jung explains that no man can be so masculine that he has nothing feminine in him. The reality is that even very masculine men have a carefully guarded, hidden and soft emotional life. The repression of feminine traits and inclinations causes these contra-sexual demands to accumulate in the unconscious. The archetype present in men is called the anima. As the man is compensated high a feminine element, the woman is also compensated by a masculine archetype. Thus the masculine imprint present in the unconscious of women is called the animus. Jung points out that when an individual leads a life that is totally one-sided, the repressed tendencies in the unconscious try to force themselves into the conscious mind. Those vague dim stirrings, feelings, thoughts and sensations which have no demonstrable flow towards the object, from the continuity of conscious experience, but well up like disturbing, inhibiting or at times beneficent influence from the dark depths, from the background and underground of consciousness which in their totality constitute one's perception of the unconscious life."³¹ these so called accidental inhibitions, fancies, moods, vague feelings and fragments of phantasm occasionally spring up and disturb the accomplishment of concentrated work in the normal life. Because of the lack of conscious control or restraint, these unconscious factors ferment, add, gain in vigor and force themselves out in the behavior of the individual in surprising combinations - violence, cruelty, honesty, sense of justice and so on. The archetypes may appear in dreams or in works of art and make the individual conscious of the drawbacks of his life and try to restore the psychic balance of the individual or the community. In the patriarchal, male oriented, power-obsessed, mechanical society of America, the feminine elements of love. Tenderness, and creativity are often lacking. This is a detailed exploration of the appearance of such feminine archetypes in the conscious mind and the protagonist's attempt to patch up the fragmented,

displaced or lost selves to form a single whole integrated self. The appearance of a Black woman as goddess in? Hr Baby or the navels less mythological figure of Pilate in Song of Solomon are such archetypes that force the characters to confront the one-sidedness or incompleteness of their life.

Individuation Jung gave the sub title "The Psychology of individuation." to his book affirming the essential principle of his philosophy. To Jung the psyche is a world analogous to the outer world with the same destructive and constructive forces. "The individuality is the central coordinating principle of this realm, analogous to royalty in the nation. According to Jung the individuality is universally present but it exists mainly in the unconscious presenting itself in dreams and fantasies. Individuation is a principle which has to be created out of the unconscious by accepting it as a deliberate and conscious aim Individuation "is a process of differentiation, having for its goal the development of the individual personality." It is the process of forming and specializing the individual nature as a differentiated being from the general collective psychology. In a sense, individuation is a natural necessity because its extensive hindrance or it's exclusive leveling to collective standards involves a definite injury to the individual's vital activity. Too much suppression may lead to neurosis, misuse of drugs or in some extreme cases to suicide Individuation always seems to find itself more or less in opposition to the collective norm but on closer examination "the individual stand point is found to be differently orientated but not antagonistic to the collective norm."³³ Any society which hinders the individuality of its members cannot survive for long Since the individual is not only a simple, separate being but also part of a collective relationship, "the process of individuation must clearly lead to a more intensive and universal collective solidarity, and not to mere isolation. The process of individuation clearly highlights the Black man's search for a viable identity as an African and an American at the same time. Though the duality seems at first to be irreconcilable, tearing him into parts and pieces of conscious and unconscious bits, his ultimate triumph comes from learning to be a part of and yet against the various dominating factors of his life thus individuation leads that Black towards a collective and universal solidarity.

The womanish concept of self as revealed in the works of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker. The Black feminist movement has been found to diverge

from the white feminist movement in certain fundamental aspects although the Black feminism was initially an offshoot of the European and American radical forms. The Black female writers feel their white counterparts can never really understand the triple burden suffered by the Black women as poor. Black and female. Moreover, though they boldly expose the gender discrimination and the brutalities practiced by their own Black men, they did not envisage a world devoid of men as did the more radical forms of European and American kminism. Alice Walker implies that a woman should be free to love another woman because only a woman can truly understand another woman. 'The Importance of female bonding is considered very essential for a woman's self concept as revealed by heroines like Sula in Sulu and Celie in The ('olor f'zrrpl,. Alice Walker and Toni Morrison deserve to be extolled for destructuring all past stereotypes of woman as the strong castrating matriarch, the seductress or the victim of male brutality. They broke fresh ground in evolving the new concept of the Black woman's self in raising her to divine status and yet portraying her as capable of destruction as Eva and Sula are. It is inferred that they deserve to be praised for freeing the image of the Black women from all bondage of custom, tradition and convention, both from within and without the community.

Conclusion

A large number of studies have been conducted to give an objective, sociological, political, economic and psychological account of the three hundred-year-old process of acculturation, comprehending the Afro-American individual in the white-dominated American soil. But it is to the literature of the Afro-Americans that one turns to find meanings that have eluded these studies. As Alain Locke, one of the great students of Black life in America, observes, "More sensitively, and more truly than the conscious conventions of journalism and public debate, do these relatively unconscious values trace the fundamental attitudes of the American mind." For in studying Black-American fiction we also understand the peculiar ways the dominant culture adopted to totally undermine the Black man's concept of his self as a virtuous, strong, independent, intelligent, cultured and individualistic human being. Considering the history of the slavery of the Black man in the United States, it seems hardly surprising that the concept of the stereotype should dominate the literature and the criticism of the white or Euro-American. Being "from the beginning a figure of

moral debate, historical controversies, the anomaly in a democratic society from whose accusing presence we (the Euro-Americans) could not flee except through chromatic fantasies, the negro has always been more of a formula than an human being." The bulk of mainstream white literature except a few exceptions like Melville, Twain or Faulkner, presented the Blacks in restrictive formulas as the contented slave, the brute nigger, the comic negro, the tragic mulatto and the exotic primitive. "All these stereotypes whether flattering or denigrative are marked by exaggeration or omission, all agree in stressing the negro's divergence from white Anglo Saxon norms, and all are consciously or unconsciously pressed into the service of justifying racial proscription."z It was in the 1920's during the Jazz Age when all things African gave impetus to the Negro-Renaissance that a few studies about the images of the Blacks were made. Many of these critical works, like the early fiction, were devoted to perpetuating the assumptions of the Black man's irresponsible nature, his complete absorption in the present moment, his whimsicality, his deep-laid superstitions and inability to react against his enslavement. In 1926, Alian Locke, in his article in the Modern Quarterly announcing the emergence of the "New Negro" claimed that the days of aunts, uncles and mammies were gone.. He showed how the "negro" as savage stranger, comic peasant, scapegoat, bogey or pariah was not the result of mere literary faddism but based on the unconscious needs and fears of the white race, part of the self-justifying formula for the unjustifiable crime of slavery. From a mere weak imitation of the Euro-American novels and romances, a confirmation of the Oedipal Syndrome, the pendulum of the Afro-American fiction then swung to the extreme end of blaming the whites for everything that was unpleasant or unsatisfactory in the Black world. The Black protest novels created a violent image of the Afro-American as the personification of hatred, fury and revengeful attitude, a mechanical creature who wants to dash out the brains of every white man

It was at this juncture that writers like James Baldwin, Ralph Ellison, Alice Walker and Toni Morrison stepped into the literary arena. They not only analysed the stereotypes and negative images but succeeded in doing away with these images in their realistic and innovative handling of theme, style and narrative. But for these Afro-American novelists, the Black self-concept would never have broken away from the degrading stereotypes and the

resultant half human status. These novelists employ the novel as symbolic acts to explore the disparity between American myths and American reality, and they do not approach the narrative tradition from the same ideological perspective as their predecessors. That approach towards the Black self-concept is more radical, individualistic and exploratory than all past efforts. Moreover in the sociocultural changes of the post-war America, Ellison, Baldwin, Walker and Morrison, as members of the largest ethnic minority group in the United States share a common tradition. They seek to establish "their personal and national identities within and against the distinctive pattern of values, orientations to life and shared historical memories they acquired from and contributed to Afro- J American culture. Resins the psycho-social, political and economic factors, their self-concept has its roots in the combined oral and literary tradition of Afro-American culture. It is at the same time a concept part of which is consciously or unconsciously adopted from Western culture and developed to suit their quest for status, power and identity in a racist, capitalist, patriarchal American social environment. By examining the conscious and unconscious factors, psychological, social, historical, cultural and personal elements that create the Black self-concept they have freed it from almost all restraining past, humiliating or derogatory connotations. Toni Morrison especially after winning the Nobel Prize has been translated into many languages and read and discussed throughout the world. By transcending the issues of racism and sexism, Alice Walker and Toni Morrison in their treatment of the Black self have raised it to proud place of universal significance. As already stated the purpose of this study has been to examine the conscious and the unconscious aspects of Black self-concept as revealed in the novels of the above mentioned four post-war Afro-American writers. One never fully understands one's own self by a deliberate act of the will. For there is nothing like pure conscious volition, as exemplified in the celebrated psychological concept of Jung's Window. We always share our "conscious will with racial. Ancestral, gendered unconscious or observing other. Agreeing with Jung's theory of individuation, we consider the self as a point between the conscious and the unconscious.

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