A PSYCHOANALYTIC READING OF TONI MORRISON'S *A MERCY* AND GLORIA NAYLOR'S *THE WOMEN OF BREWSTER PLACE* AND *MAMA DAY*

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JUNE, 2015

DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this Thesis entitled "**A PSYCHOANALYTIC READING OF TONI MORRISON'S *A MERCY* AND GLORIA NAYLOR'S *THE WOMEN OF BREWSTER PLACE* AND *MAMA DAY*"** has been carried by me in the Department of English and Literary Studies. The information derived from the literature has been duly acknowledged in the text and a list of references provided. No part of this thesis was previously presented for another degree or diploma at this or any institution.

_____	_____	_____
Name of student	Signature	Date

CERTIFICATION

This thesis entitled "**A PSYCHOANALYTIC READING OF TONI MORRISON'S *A MERCY* AND GLORIA NAYLOR'S *THE WOMEN OF BREWSTER PLACE* AND *MAMA DAY*"** by TOYIN, TIANAH TOLUHI meets the regulations governing the award of the degree of Master of Arts in Literature of the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, and is approved for its contribution to knowledge and literary presentation.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to GOD ALMIGHTY, in whose hands my life is hidden. **FATHER**, this is yet another of your wonders in my life.

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To God be all the glory for the successful completion of this research work. Indeed, He gives strength to the weak and wisdom to those who lack understanding.

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ABSTRACT

The study of Psychoanalysis over the years has helped to reveal the relation between the mind, language and personality trait which are not easily observable or revealed in our regular acts and use of language. By placing much emphasis on literary elements such as metaphor, metonym or symbols, literary psychoanalysis has contributed to the exploration of repressed thoughts, motives and feelings and their uses as narrative techniques. This to a very large extent determines individual behaviours. In this study, a Psychoanalytic Reading of 'the Unconscious' and Trauma in Toni Morrison's A Mercy and Gloria Naylor's The Women of Brewster Place and Mama Day; Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung psychoanalytical critical models are employed in the analysis of the selected texts. Each of them has addressed human personality from different directions. While for Freud, most human behaviour traits are motivated by factors which the individuals are not even aware of which he calls 'the unconscious', such as the childhood experience; For Jung, human personality and identity can be revealed when we pay significant attention to myths and other similar symbols that reoccur in our history which he calls archetypes. Using these psychoanalytical postulations, this study establishes that though socio-political, historical and cultural factors influence personality traits (motives and actions) of characters in the selected texts, the unconscious which is not easily discernable equally plays significant roles to establish a more complete and fuller process of human behaviour. These characters are significantly 'types' as they represent individuals or collectives in the African American society. Hence, their portrayal in this study is ultimately aimed at revealing the individual/collectives' personality of the African America women and their experiences. Finally, this research has arrived at the finding that conflicts involving characters' behaviours or actions can be psychoanalyzed and resolved if transformed into narratives and storytelling. This is known as "talking/writing cure".

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND STUDY

1.0. Conceptual Premise

This study shows the relationship between literary creativity and psychology especially with focus on the unconscious and trauma in Toni Morrison's *A Mercy* and Gloria Naylor's *The Women of Brewster Place* and *Mama* Day. The selected novels present characters whose behaviours, actions and inactions are 'absurd' or illogical because they are threats to either themselves or others around them. In most cases such personality traits are indications of some unaddressed psychological conflicts in the unconscious minds of those characters. A psychoanalytical reading therefore examine the characters in selected novels in order to determine how the unconscious has given rise or contributed in shaping the characters' behaviours, taking into considerations the situations and circumstances these characters find themselves. These characters are significantly 'types' as they represent individuals or collectives in the Africa American society and their portrayal in this study is ultimately aimed at revealing individual/collective personality of the African America women and their experiences.

In this study, Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung psychoanalytical critical models are employed in the analyses of the selected texts. Each of them has addressed human personality from different directions. While for Freud, most human behaviour traits are motivated by factors which the individuals are not even aware which he calls 'the unconscious', such as the childhood experience; For Jung, human personality and identity can be revealed when we pay significant attention to myths and other similar symbols that reoccur in our history which he calls archetypes. Using these psychoanalytical postulations,

this study establishes that though socio-political, historical and cultural factors influence personality traits (motives and actions) of characters in the selected texts, the unconscious which is not easily discernable equally plays significant roles to establish a more complete and fuller process of human behaviour.

1.1. Historical and Literary Background of African American

Slavery and freedom have been the predominant points of reference in the history of African America. This historical background has provided the thematic concerns of African American literature, as it forms the raw material for their creation. Morgenstern (1996:70), a literary scholar, rightly argues the inseparable link of African American history and literature with trauma narratives; she opines that "it would be difficult to teach a course on contemporary (African) American fiction without also teaching about the relationship between trauma and narrative". Trauma as an inevitable feature in African American history and writings therefore, makes the study of psychoanalysis which itself is majorly aimed at resolving trauma involving human personality traits relevant to African American literature.

During the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, which lasted for nearly four hundred years (Carson, Warner and Nash, 2007:43 cited in Miederi M. 2011:1), millions of Africans were transported across the Atlantic in chains to labour in coffee, cotton and sugar plantations in the Americas. Hundreds of thousands of slaves died in the process and Hundreds of thousands more died in the horrors of the "middle passages" and under the whips of slavery in the plantations. For example, Williams (1964: 32-33 cited in Medieri M. 2011:2) while attempting to give the statistics of slaves movement from African states says that in the year 1760 alone,146 slave ships sailed from British ports for Africa, with a capacity of 36,000

slaves. In 1771 the number of ships had risen to 190 and the number of slaves to 47,000: "it has been estimated that the total import of slaves into all the British colonies between 1680 and 1786 was over two million" (Williams 1964:33 cited in Miederi M. 2011). Similarly, Carson, Werner and Nash (2007:31) point out that:

> *For almost four centuries after Columbus voyage to the Americas, European colonizers transported Africans out of their homeland in the largest forced migration in human history. Estimates vary widely but the number of Africans who survived the trip across the Atlantic to labour in the Americas probably reached more than ten million.*

The black man's experience of slavery stands out in history as the most despicable process of human degradation. Baldwin (1985: 362), an African American author, equally attests that "for the horrors of the American Negro's life there has been almost no language", which has turned the narrative of the African American historical trauma into "a dangerous and reverberating silence". Thus, though the original members of what is now the African American community came from a diversity of backgrounds, nationalities, religions and languages, over the years they tended to cluster together taking as their unifying force their shared traumatic past and former status as Africans brought by force to a foreign country and compelled to work there as slaves.

The Revolutionary War of 1775 assured freedom to black slaves and thousands of them fought in the war. The courage demonstrated by the blacks created the first collective legend of black struggle (Carson, Werner and Nash: 2007:42). The struggle of the various abolitionist movements and the outbreak of the American civil War eventually led to the emancipation of black people. The emancipation proclamation of 1862 ended slavery in the Confederate States and the whole of the United States of America in 1865.

The emergence of African American literature which started at this period marks a significant and positive change in the history of black experience. Starting with the works of Phillis Wheatley (1753-1784), who was the first African American to publish a work of literature (Poems on various subjects, religion and Morals 1773); African American literature projects the quest for freedom, equality and recognition of their birth right as citizens of the United States. Thus, with the ability to write, literature presented itself as a vital means through which African Americans express a claim to their humanity. The historical significance is that literature has thrived as an instrument through which African Americans have been able to create their historical record or right the distorted representation of black people.

Gates, Henry Louis (1997:1 cited in Medieri M. 2011:5) chronicles African American literature into periods from historical perspective to reflect the significant developments in African American history. There were pieces of literature in the period of slavery and freedom (1746-1865) which include the vernacular tradition of the Negro Spirituals, gospels, Blues, folk Narratives, and the classical Slave Narratives; the literature of the Reconstruction period spanned the period 1865-1877; Post-Reconstruction literature spanned the period between (1878-1900); the literature of the Harlem Renaissance flourished between (1920-1940); the literature of the Civil Right took place from 1940-1960; the literature of the Black Art Movement spanned 1960-1970 and the new literature that has emerged since 1970 which is particularly significant to this study as it marks a resurgence of 'Black Women's Literature'.

On a wholesome perspective, Miederi (2011:10) summed the African American literature as "inspired and tragically built around the core experience of slavery and racism,

the quest for freedom, liberty and identity …which is given expression under different theories such as Socialist Realism, Black Nationalism and Africana Feminism". The most recent and significant contribution of African American literature is its detail exploration of the themes of black women's experience against the background of race, sex and class and the increasing works of autobiography and post-modernist experimentations. Although Black men produced literary works of high merit, in the last two decades of the twentieth century, the works of Black women dramatists and fiction writers took the spotlight in African-American literature. Black women writers like Zora Neale Hurston, Maya Angelou, Paule Marshall, Jamaica Kincaid, Gloria Naylor, Toni Cade Bambara, Ntozake Shange, Toni Morrison and Alice Walker were well represented into the newly developing canon.

1.2. Statement of the Research Problem

Criticisms of African American novels have been largely sociological. Most critics have largely approached the criticism of these novels from the perspectives of racism, sexism, patriarchy, marginalization and displacement. Consequently, a psychological study of African American novels have been sketchy though there have been contributions from some critics that tend towards psychoanalysis. However, the psychoanalytic postulation that the unconscious is a significant determinant of character formation and behaviour has not been extensively addressed in the selected works. This study therefore posits that the African American writing possesses rich discursive areas that can be subjected to psychoanalytic interpretation. Thus, the peripheral handling of the inner workings of the minds in determining character formation and character's action necessitated this study. It is

the contention of this study that just as African American novels can be subjected to sociological interpretation; they can also be subjected to psychoanalytic interpretation.

However, critics have provided adequate thematic analysis of these texts enough to facilitate the attempt to complement the efforts to unravel the unconscious processes in characters and narratives of the selected texts. These unconscious processes would assist to further unveil the factors responsible for disoriented behaviour, often glossed over in criticisms of the selected texts. This study, therefore, intends to go a step further by analyzing the unconscious of the characters and that of the texts in relation to the African American experiences. Within this concern, this thesis establishes the following propositions:

- Beyond the sociological, African American writings can also be adequately approached and understood from the perspective of psychoanalysis

- Psychoanalytic narratives provide a viable platform to explore African American authors' preoccupations with the recovery and recuperation of historical past as depicted in the selected novels

- The analysis of characters through their psychological dimensions- "the unconscious" can adequately unmask complexity of individual's acts, motives and identity.

- The "unconscious in narratives" noticeable in certain 'symptomatic points' of ambiguity, evasion or over emphasis makes it possible to discover what is not said directly or what the author did not realize he was saying.

• Psychoanalytic narratives point us not only to what happens in the novel but also to what responsibilities and actions the novel establishes for readers

1.3. Aim and Objectives of the Study

Given the concern of the psychoanalytic criticism, this study examines how the psychoanalytic elements identified can be located in the selected texts especially in the novelists' portrayal of major characters. These characters are significantly 'types', they represent individuals or collectives in the society and their portrayal in this study further reveal individual/collectives' personality and experiences of the African American women. From the aforementioned, the objectives of this study are to:

• determine the extent to which the unconscious has contributed in influencing the behavioural traits of the characters in the narratives, taking cognizance of the situations and circumstances these characters find themselves.

• demonstrate that though socio-political and cultural factors have immeasurable influence on character formation and human actions, the unconscious of the individual characters, facilitate greater understanding of behavioural traits of such individual characters.

• show that African American writings because of their history in slavery and slavery's physical and psychological lingering effects on successive generations of black Americans can be adequately approached and understood from the perspective of psychoanalysis

• suggest a psychoanalytic trauma theory as a deeper if less popularly accessible way of relating literature to social experience.

1.4. Justification and Significance of the Study

Several attempts at justifying 'unwholesome' actions or personality traits among characters in the novels under focus have often view such factors as slavery, racism, patriarchy, displacement and such other reasons that operate at the conscious level of human psyche. However, a psychoanalytic study of these works establishes that these factors require the unconscious dimensions of human formation to achieve the complete characters' personality. In this way the study reevaluates the tendency to attribute to socio–cultural and historical factors as the only reasons for the presence of disoriented characters in works of Toni Morrison and Gloria Naylor. It presents bases for adequate presentations of characters that integrate psychological aspects of human behaviour showing how the psychological structures determine behaviour.

1.5. Scope and Delimitation of Study

This study has chosen Toni Morrison's novel: *A Mercy* (2008) and Gloria Naylor's *Mama Day* (1983) *and Women of Brewster Place* (1988) given these authors literary representations and responses to various socio-historical and cultural experiences of African American societies. These experiences include the cultural dislocations of the black people in the United States of America and its effect on their psyche.

1.6. Methodology

The critical analysis of the selected texts is based on some of the postulations of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung. For Freud and Jung, the aim of psychoanalysis is to examine the unconscious as the hidden causes of neurosis in order to relieve the patient of his or her

conflict, thereby dissolving the distressing symptoms. Though, this has been heavily criticized by poststructuralist psychoanalysts like Jacque Lacan and Julia Kristeva as a mere hunt for phallic symbols (Eagleton 2008: 135), one predominant tenet of all psychoanalysts is that they seem interested in language and particularly in the unconscious in language or narratives.

Related ideas from the fields of trauma studies advanced by Cathy Caruth, Dori Laub, Shoshana Felman, and Dominick LaCapra are also built into this work to establish the theoretical approaches to and representations of psychical trauma in psychoanalysis. Journals, articles, magazines, books, unpublished dissertations and newspaper articles have been widely utilized. Besides, the internet has provided a spectrum of valuable source of materials.

1.7. Theoretical Framework

The discovery and study of human psychology and personality development in several fields of human relation, especially Psychology, Literature, Art, Philosophy, Cultural studies, Film theory and many other academic subjects originated from Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory in the nineteenth century. The psychiatric practice of this theory is called Psychoanalysis. However, Freud's influence on modern thought has been a lasting one, his views and ideas have remained a field of constant revisions and refinements, new developments have been assimilated into the old framework, with the effect that all psychoanalytic criticism has its origin in Freud's theories. Wright (cited in Anne McCarthy 1996:599) gives a comprehensive account of the changes which have occurred in this field thus: 'ego-psychology of Ernest Kris (Psychoanalytic Explorations in Art, 1964); the reader-

response work of Norman Holland (The dynamics of Literary Response, 1968); and the theories of Carl Gustav Jung (Man and his symbols, 1978) who saw the unconsciousness as a common reservoir of highly charged symbols'. Others include self-psychology which stresses the development of a stable sense of the self through contacts with others; Lacanian psychoanalysis which integrates psychoanalysis with semiotics; interpersonal psychoanalysis which "combines interpersonal with object-relations theory". These schools have dramatically different theories but most of them continue to stress influence of the past on current mental state, conduct and mode of existence.

Freud propounds that most behaviors are caused by thoughts, ideas, and wishes that are in a person's psyche but are not easily accessible by the conscious part of the mind. In other words, the brain knows things that the mind doesn't. This reservoir of conceptions of which we are unaware is called the unconscious. Psychoanalytic theory thus proposes that personality characteristics of an individual are mostly a reflection of the contents (ideas and thoughts) of the unconscious part of the mind. These ideas and thought, Freud argues, are repressed, that is, pushed out of awareness and into the unconscious, because they are threatening to self-esteem or feelings of comfort. However, the unexpected and inevitable resurfacing of the unconscious in a variety of recursive symptoms such as nightmares, compulsions, hallucinations and repetitive flashbacks in which the past is relieved almost as an exact replica of the initial event constitute a major cause of trauma or disorientation in individual personality. Hence, Sigmund Freud's whole theory of psychoanalysis is focused on resolving psychical trauma.

Aside the theory of the unconscious, other interrelated Freudian categories includes: the sexual origin of human motivation in repressed infantile incestuous desires; and the

symbolic manifestation of unconscious wishes in dreams, jokes, and errors and significantly in literary works. Using a mother-child relationship as his model, Freud's psychoanalysis explained the significance of the "unconscious" to individual psychical development. That our dependence on parents, especially mothers for food, protection and care does not stop at the biological. This is the first 'dawning' of sexuality and according to him is the first manifestation of "the unconscious' (Johnson 2003:123). The small boy will suck its mother's breast for milk, but will discover in doing so that this biologically essential activity is also pleasurable. Thus, the baby's mouth became not only an organ of its physical survival but an "erotogenic' zone which the child might reactivate a few years later by sucking its thumb, and a few years later than that by kissing and ultimately a sexual desire for its mother's body. Thus, 'pleasure' or 'desire' in Freud's analysis of human psyche is closely linked to sexuality (Johnson 2003:123).

The child is forced to repress his incestuous desire in anxious resignation because of the presence of his father which to him is an intrusion. He adjusts himself to the "reality principle", detaches himself from the mother, and comforts himself with the unconscious consolation that his father symbolizes a place, a possibility, which he himself will be able to take up and realize in the future. He is thus, introduced into the symbolic role of manhood. But in doing so, he has, so to speak, driven his forbidden desire underground, repressed it into the unconscious. Thus, according to Freud, this is not a place that was ready and wanting to receive such a desire, it is produced, opened up, by this act of primary repression. This process of maturing into manhood he called 'Oedipus complex' (Freud 1963).

The story of the little girl's passage through the Oedipus complex is also similar. She must turn back reluctantly from her desire to seduce her father. Eagleton (2008:135) opines that:

> *The centrality of Freud's Oedipus complex is the structure of relations by which we came to be the men and women that we are. It is the point at which we are produced and constituted as subjects. It signals the transition from the pleasure to the reality principle; from the enclosure of the family to society at large, from Nature to culture... Moreover, the Oedipus complex is for Freud the beginnings of morality, conscience, law and all forms of social and religious authority*

The human subject who emerges from Freud's Oedipal process above is a 'split' subject torn precariously between conscious and unconscious; and the unconscious can always return to plague it. That is, the child's individual identity especially in the sexual familial and societal networks, is made possible only by splitting off its guilty desires, repressing them into the unconscious. For Freud, the myth of Oedipus is dramatized in Sophocles' play *Oedipus Rex* and in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. In his work: *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), he argues Hamlet's inability to kill Claudius as a projection of Shakespeare's own unresolved Oedipus complex. Freud speculates that at the beginning of the play, Hamlet, like all mature males, had gone through the Oedipus stage and repressed his desires so successfully that his prime emotion was one of admiration and love of his father. The murder of his father, however, since it is in effect the realization of his childhood wish, revives his Oedipal 'thoughts' of patricides and incest, and the inner conflict which this causes makes Hamlet hesitate.

Freud, thus argues using Shakespeare that arts transmits under repression the artist's taboo drives, wishes and impulses and that the work's form is both a disguise and a 'fore

pleasure' for the forbidden desires lurking in the unconscious layer of the psyche. In his *Creative Writers and Daydreaming* (1908), Freud argues that the artistic work is a vehicle for externalizing in a socially acceptable way, a combination of the role-play games of children and the daydreams and fantasies of adulthood.

The above implies that psychoanalytic literary criticism can be developed in the study of an author's life in relation to his work or a character in the novel. This is known as psychobiography. This method of analysis starts by collecting biographical information about an author through lectures, personal letters, biographies and other documents related to the author. Using these data and the author's cannon, psychoanalytic critics believed they could theoretically construct the author's personality, with all its literal and external conflicts, and most importantly his neuroses. In his comprehensible psychoanalytic study of Edgar Allan Poe, Marie Bonaparte, a follower of Sigmund Freud, analysed Poe's canon using psychobiography.

However, in the 1950s, psychoanalytic critics turned their attention away from psychobiography to character analysis. Beyond the fact that the biographical information and the canons of a writer may not necessarily influence his work (s), some critics are of the view that characters; especially the main character in a work of art is sometimes a reflection of the author, his view and his vision. Thus, individual characters in a text become the focus of analysis. Therefore while the author creates a character, a reader recreates that same character, bringing to the text and to an individual character all the reader's past experiences and knowledge. This, according to Odiwo (2010:32), "relates to the reader-response theory which emphasizes the reader's role in interpreting a work of art". What this implies for psycho- criticism is the fact that the reader of a written text is able to supply inferences,

make some set of assumptions and fill certain missing gaps, in order to make sense of a writing or written text, especially when he applies such a subjective tool as psychoanalysis.

Another psychoanalytic approach is the archetypal criticism founded by Carl Jung and then later, Northrop Fyre. In this form of analysis, the critics examine a text in order to locate archetypes. According to Jung, these archetypes have the same meaning for all readers. For instance, the colour red signifies danger, just as water symbolizes life. The critic believes that by showing how and where these archetypes appear in the text and whether they form recognizable patterns, he or she will discover the texts' meaning. Fyre (1975:305) sees archetypes as "a symbol usually an image, which recurs often enough in literature to be recognizable as an element of literary experience. He posits that the "recurrent archetypes are just there. In this study, the conception of archetype refers to the repeated narratives or dramatic configurations, symbols, pattern of actions, character type or images".

More complex variations of psychoanalytic criticism are made with reference to the narrative or poetic structure itself, without requiring access to the authorial psyche. An interpretation motivated by French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan's remark in his work *Ecrit: A Selection* (1977) that "the unconscious is structured like a language". He reinterprets Freud's concept of the unconscious in terms of language. Freud's description of an early point in the infant's development with no clear distinction between subject (child) and object (external world i.e. mother) is according to Lacan, the 'imaginary' by which he means a condition in which we lack any defined centre of self; in which what 'self' we have seems to pass into objects, and objects into it, in a ceaseless closed exchange. In Lacan's view, if we imagine a small child contemplating itself in a mirror, Lacan's so-called 'Mirror stage", we can see how, from within this 'imaginary' state of being, the child's first development of an

ego, of an integrated self-image, begins to happen. The child, who is still physically uncoordinated, finds reflected back to itself in the mirror a gratifyingly unified image of itself and although its relation to this image is still of an 'imaginary' kind, the image in the mirror both, is and is not itself, a blurring of subject and object still obtains. This object is at once somehow part of ourselves we identify with it, and yet not ourselves, something alien. The image which the small child sees in the mirror is in this sense an 'alienated' one (Lacan 1977). For instance, he finds in the image a pleasing unity which it does not actually experience in its own body. As the child grows up, it will continue to make such imaginary identifications with objects, and this is how its ego will be built up. Thus, for Lacan, the ego is just this narcissistic process that bolsters up a fictive sense of unitary selfhood by finding something in the world with which we can identify.

According to Lacan's 'post structural psychoanalysis', "Our language" 'stands in for objects: all language is in a way 'metaphorical', in that it substitutes itself for some direct, wordless possession of the object itself. Just as the child is unconsciously learning these lessons in the sphere of language, it is also unconsciously learning them in the world of sexuality. The child's first discovery of sexual difference occurs at about the same time that it is discovering language itself. The presence of the father, teaches the child that it must take up a place in the family which is defined by sexual difference, by exclusion, it cannot be its parent's lover and by absence it must relinquish its earlier bonds to the mother's body. Its identity as a subject, it comes to perceive, is constituted by its relations of difference and similarity to the other subjects around it. In accepting all of this, the child moves from the imaginary register into what Lacan calls the "symbolic order'; the pre-given structure of

social and sexual roles and relations which make up the family and society. In Freud's own terms, it has successfully negotiated the painful passage through the Oedipus complex.

Individual personality, then, from Freud and Lacan's Oedipus complex, is a 'split' one radically divided between the conscious life of the ego and the unconscious, or repressed desired (Eagleton 2008: 135). The child must now resign itself to the fact that it can never have any direct access to reality, in particular to the now prohibited body of the mother. It has been banished from this "full", imaginary possession into the 'empty' world of language. Language is 'empty' according to Lacan because it is just an endless process of difference and absence: instead of being able to possess anything in its fullness, the child will now simply move from one signifier to another, the 'metaphorical' world of the mirror has yielded ground to the 'metonymy' world of language. Along this metonymic chain of signifiers, meanings or signifieds, will be produced: but no object (word) or person can ever be fully 'present" in this chain. This potentially endless movement from one signifier to another is what Lacan means by desire. All desire springs from a lack, which it strives continually to fill. 'Human language works by such lack: The fact that words have meaning only by virtue of the absence and exclusion of others. Language divides up the fullness of the imaginary'. Significantly, Lacan's view places meaning(s) in the hands of the reader with or without reference to the author or other external factors. Attention is drawn essentially to the act of enunciating, to how something is said, from what kind of position and with what ending view, not simply to what is said.

Thus, the dominant tenet of psychoanalysis, its being an exploration into repressed thoughts, feelings and motives of the human action in order to bring up obscure and suppressed feelings to the level of consciousness, informs its use as a narrative technique. In

his definition of psychoanalysis, Westen (1985:22) opines that a psychoanalytical reading of any literary work is one that:

> *... take as axiomatic the importance of conflicting mental processes; unconscious processes; the influence of the past on current functioning; the enduring effects of interpersonal patterns laid down in childhood; and the role of sexual and aggressive wishes in consciously and unconsciously influencing thought, feeling and behavior is the degree to which it can be considered psychoanalytic.*

Similarly Caliberg (1989:80) cited in Odiwo (2010:36) opines that

> *Psychoanalysis turns a literary work to an archaeological state, with layer upon layer of significance, whose mysteries are to be unearthed and restored; meaning is reconstructed as the material pieces emerge from the text like fragments of ancient pottery. The skillful and experienced reconstruct or arranges the pieces with a recognizable order. Some pieces will be missing, perhaps lost forever. Here, informed imagination and restored object, or the perfectly interpreted text, only remains an ideal*

Also, significant to this study is McCartney's (1996:597) view that "Psychoanalysis criticism aims to understand individuals by uncovering desires hidden deep within the mind and revealing their connections with the conscious surface, and it is this approach which psychoanalytic literary critics take to the text". He also added " for the critic undertaking a psychoanalytical reading, three Freudian categories are essential: the unconscious; the sexual origin of human motivation in repressed infantile incestuous desires; and the symbolic manifestation of unconscious wishes in dreams, jokes, errors and significantly in literary works

On a wholesome perspective, the following by Harry (1995:105) sums up the essential tenets and contributions of psychoanalytic criticism:

Give central importance in the literary interpretation to the distinction between the conscious and the unconscious mind; They associate the literary works "overt" content with the former and the convert with the latter, privileging the latter as being what the work is really about; Pay attention to the unconscious motives and feelings, whether these are those of the author or those of the character depicted in the work; Make large- scale applications of psychoanalytic concepts such as sublimation, role playing, especially as they relate to character traits and actions; Identify a psychic context for the literary work at the expense of social or historical; Demonstrate the presence in the literary work of psychoanalytic symptoms, conditions or phases such as the oral, anal and phallic stages of emotional and sexual development in infant

Though a general analysis on the development and forms of psychoanalysis is made above, two psychoanalytical critical models are employed in the analysis of the primary texts. They are those of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung. These choices are considered suitable for this analysis for some particular reasons. Firstly, the study of psychoanalysis began with Sigmund Freud, thus he is unarguably the pioneer of psychoanalysis. Though several modifications and changes by other psychoanalyst have made tremendous impart in the field of psychoanalysis, Freud's postulations is still a take-off point. Thus, his structure of the psyche; his insistence on the potency of the unconscious and the child's sexual development constitute the core of his postulations and they are very relevant to this study. The concept of 'the unconscious' and the child's sexual development are used to examine the several instances of seemingly 'absurd' actions and motives of characters in the selected texts. For instance, in Morrison's *A Mercy,* Sorrow is said to "talked out Loud when alone" (p.152); Mistress (Rebekkah) always chatted directions to herself while at some solitary task. And

Lina is also said to answer birds as if they were asking her advice on how to fly…. (p.152); all of these are revealed as the inevitable and sudden replay of what is repressed in the unconscious of the characters. In the same vein, Naylor's protagonists in *Women of Brewster Place* exhibit destructive tendencies that are against the interest of either themselves or others around them because their 'unconscious' have not be given proper outlet or duly unacknowledged. Secondly, the choice of Carl Jung's "Collective Unconscious" and use of archetypes is used to study the recurrence of myth and ritual in African American women writings as we have in Naylor's *Mama Day*

Conclusion

This chapter titled the *Introduction and Background Study* establishes the focus of this study by giving a general overview and background introduction to the field of psychoanalysis and particularly their application to the psychological makeup of characters. It equally discusses the reasons this study is necessary. The chapter establishes the theoretical and critical contexts for the research with focus on those issues that are fundamental in the malfunctioning of one's psyche, or of deviance of a character.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. The Unconscious as a Reservoir in Psychoanalysis

Freud's concept of the 'unconscious' as a reservoir of feelings, thoughts and memories that are outside of our conscious awareness has remained a predominant influence in the field of literary criticism. He argues that only about ten percent of our behaviors are caused by conscious awareness while the other ninety percent are produced by unconscious factors which continue to influence our behavior and experience, even though we are unaware of these underlying influences. He further divides the mind into three abstract categories; these are the id**,** the ego**,** and the superego to show how individual personality develops and works and how mental illnesses can develop when these are not properly developed. The id, according to Freud includes our basic instincts, inborn dispositions and urges which he said are totally unconscious; that is, we are unaware of its workings in us. It aims to satisfy our biological urges and drives such as feelings of hunger, thirst, sex, and other natural body desires and because of this the id is not rational, it aims toward pleasurable things and run away from painful things. The ego, which can be interpreted as the "self" is unlike the id, partly conscious and partly unconscious and it operates according to the reality principle**;** that is, it attempts to help the id get what it wants by judging the difference between real and imaginary. For instance, if a person is thirsty, the id might begin to imagine water and even dream about water, the ego, however, goes a step farther by trying to determine how to get some real water. The ego helps a person satisfy needs through reality. The superego includes the moral ideas that a person learns within the family and society which ensure his proper behavior and integration. The superego gives people

feelings of pride when they do something correct (the ego ideal) and feelings of guilt when they do something they consider to be morally wrong (the conscience). He proposed that healthy personality development that will fit into the human society requires a balance between the id and the superego though they are naturally at conflict with one another. That is, what we desire may not always be acceptable to others around us. The struggle between these two is an example of conflict within the mind.

Furthermore, Eagleton's (2008: 157) opines that the unconscious is "a place and non-place, which is completely indifferent to reality, which knows no logic, or negation or causality or contradiction, wholly given over as it is to the instinctual play of the drives and the search for pleasure". This shows the unconscious harbours threatening ideas to the individual and the society at large. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the content of the unconscious is derived from conscious experiences and it is on that note that this study examines the various experiences the African American women have encountered in their societies and the resulting disorientative behavioural traits as represented in the selected texts.

Brogan (1995:151) describes African American's dealings with the past as "ghost narratives". Citing instances with Gloria Naylor's *Mama Day* (1988) and Morrison's *Beloved* (1978) he opines that:

> *Ghosts in contemporary American ethnic literature ... recreate ethnic identity through an imaginative recuperation of the past and press this new version of the past into the service of the present. In doing so, these works have much to tell us about our own historical moment and the range of imaginative responses it provokes…. The ghosts haunting contemporary American literature lead us to the heart of our nation's discourse about multiculturalism and ethnic identity….*

'Ghost' as mentioned above gives a "body" to the externalize part of a character's state of mind or to the repressed or the unconscious. However, the major argument of Brogan is on the cultural and historical value of this kind of narration. They explore not only the individual psyche, but, also of a people's historical consciousness.

Similarly, Gordon (1997:8) speaks about the ghosts that haunt us, literally and/or psychologically. These ghosts, whether actual or existing only in the mind, represent memories that haunt the subject in order to be acknowledged and processed. Gordon says of haunting, "Being haunted draws us affectively, sometimes against our will and always a bit magically, into a structure of feeling of a reality we come to experience, not as cold knowledge, but as a transformative recognition". It is important to note that Morrison's writings demonstrate that there is a relationship between literary creativity and psychology especially in the portrayal of her major characters. She pays a significant attention to the unconscious acts of characters as the basis of action of conscious mind. For instance, Seth's murder of her daughter, Beloved, in order to 'keep her in a save place' from slavery in *Beloved* (1978) can only be justly interpreted or even understood by examining the unconscious processes of the action, which may not easily reveal itself because it is repressed. A seemingly 'absurd' act is also seen in Morrison's *A Mercy*. Minhae Mae pleadingly and hurriedly releases her eight year old daughter, Florens, to pay her slave master's debt instead of herself, or her little boy. She did this in order to protect her sense of human and woman dignity. She explains thus:

> There was no protection and nothing in the catechism to tell them no. I tried to tell Reverend Father. …To be female in this place is to be an open wound that cannot heal. Even if scars form, the festering is ever below… (pp. 162/163)

Florens continually judges her mother as wicked just as Seth's act in *Beloved* is interpreted as animalism by Paul D. However, Morrison invites her readers to read the minds of these characters which she presents through a series of disjointed thoughts, ellipses, omission as characterized of all trauma narratives, to have 'a second light' to their actions, thoughts and motives. In fact, she would have her readers even justify the characters' acts. Such criticism will only be feasible when psychoanalytic tools are effectively deployed as it presents suitable basis to understand and read characters hidden motives and thoughts. Thus, Morrison shows that there is difference between the conscious act, what is externally perceived of the text and character, and the unconscious act of the character. These are issues which most critics fail to address in Morrison's work that are subjects of this study.

According to Caruth (cited in Franco 2006:416) 'To the extent that history is a "wound", a reimagining of history is always in danger of succumbing to a "repetition compulsion (manifests in) allegories of excess incomprehensibility and empty utopian hope". She added that "surviving to tell the story of trauma means telling "what it means not to see". This is seen in the "ambiguities" obvious in their narration. Rachel Lee (in Iyasere: 2000: 277 in Abah 2011) adds significantly that although the gaps and ambiguities in the typical Morrison text make reading and interpretation of the work difficult" she comments: "I would argue that the more productive endeavour may be to read the ambiguities of Morrison's texts not as euphoria to be "filled by the reader but as signifiers of an unattainable desire for stable definitions and identities". Lee brings out the significance of such narrations as capable of making the readers participates in creating and even recreating meaning to the texts. It gives room for readers to suggest meanings to the texts that the author may not even realize he is saying. This is also a vital significance of psychoanalysis.

Although these unconscious factors are not easily discernable, they combine with socio-cultural factors to establish a more complete and fuller process of human behaviour. Aside repressed thoughts and early childhood experience in Morrison's character; Naylor's *Women of Brewster Place* and *Mama Day* present other unconscious factors that exact influence on characters' personality traits (motives and actions). These include forceful disconnection from love ones and ones' cultural roots respectively. These unconscious motivations provide suitable interpretation and meaning to characters' aggression and destructive love in *Women of Brewster Place* and psychological dislocation in *Mama Day*. Mattie is forcefully severed from her first love objects (her parents) when a well known good-for nothing man, Butch Fuller, whom her father had consistently warned her about got her pregnant. This results in an immature role of motherhood and a lack of proper individuation seen in Mattie's relationship with her son, Basil. Mattie's uncontrollable and extreme love for Basil and the refusal to remarry or have any intimate relationship with a man because of his company, though may appear normal, is an unconscious act of seeking to also fulfill her lost love from her parents. Thus, Basil, though, her son, he is also an object of love that Mattie needs to be fully relief of her past trauma. Therefore, instead of a mother-son relationship with a well defined responsibilities and roles, what we have is a deformed mother-son relationship with no clear line of roles and responsibilities. When Mrs Eva challenges Mattie that "No young woman wants an empty bed, year in and year out (p.37)", she secretly admitted it even though she defended herself by responding thus: "My bed hasn't been empty since Basil was born". Her response clearly portrays Basil as her son and also the found love object that satisfies all her lonely nights, taking the place of a lover and also the vacuum of her parents.

Basil as expected takes advantage of his mother's excessive love, when he jumps bail and makes his mother forfeit her house used as collateral.

Also, in the case of Mae Johnson, the loss of the love object and the search for a suitable replacement is the cause of her desperation. She resolves that she will "do just what I want to, anyway and don't care what people say" (p.57). She finds freedom only in Mattie's presence. In her presence "she has no choice but to be herself. The carefully erected decoys she was constantly shuffling and changing to fit the situation were of no use (p.58)". This put-on act by Etta clearly reveals some unresolved psychological conflict in her. One of her desperate efforts is observed when she attends Mattie's church service. She immediately sets her mind on seducing the minister/preacher. She believes that with the man, "I'm finally gonna get that rest" and the residents of Brewster place who have always whisper her name " will be humming a different tune when I show up there the wife of a big preacher" (p.70). Because of this desperate search for a love, she throws her mind and decency to the winds. For instance, she announces the fact that she is single and available to the minister after telling her that he is a widower: "I can testify to that. Being a woman alone, it seems all the more hard, sometimes you don't know where to turn" (p.68). She does not agree with Mattie that Reverend Woods is not the sort of man that is serious about settling down with a woman. Etta realizes at the end of the sexual affair with Reverend Woods that it has followed the same old pattern she has been used to over the years, and that once again, Reverend Woods has no different intention from the men she has known all her life. She walks back to Brewster Place frustrated and down spirited. Mattie Michael and Etta Mae Johnson have also lost the benefit of a father. This is generally true of the African American society where the father is mostly not an active member of the family. His presence is either

dormant or not known at home at all as Etta Mae's remarks: "All the good men are dead or waiting to be born" (p.61).

Naylor in *Mama Day* carefully contrasts the characters of Cocoa and George to draw attention to the roles of cultural pasts in determining characters' behaviours and the consequences when there is a disconnection from such ancestral roots. George is the son of an anonymous prostitute and like other boys who had also "misfitted into somebody's game plan and so were thrown away", he is raised in Wallace P. Andrews, a state shelter for boys (p.22). This institution, managed by Mrs Johnson, inevitably has deformed the behavior and perceptions of these boys. George says:

> Our rage didn't matter to her, our hurts and disappointments over what life had done to us. None of that was going to matter a damn in the outside world, so we might as well start learning it at Wallace P. Andrews…. Before coming there, we had been beaten and starved for being born (p.25)

All that George knows about himself is his name and the fact that the name was given to him by the woman who often announces to them "… I am not your mother … You have no mothers or fathers. This is not your home- it is a state shelter for boys" (p.25), George does not attach any significance to his identity. He deeply resents the fact of his rootlessness.

Meeting with Cocoa at an interview in Andrews And Steins Company and their intimate relationship thereafter offers George the opportunity to relate haphazardly the trauma of his life and the pain of his rootedness. He cherishes greatly Cocoa's curricula vitae as it contains the detail of her place of her birth, her family background/name and her place of origin, all of which is obviously absent in his own life. George demonstrates even greater excitement when he follows Cocoa to Willow Spring. He, for the first time,

experiences the joy of being in a family and seeing a communal life. He confesses his joy to Cocoa thus:

> Miss Abigail puts her hands up on each side of my face- Well, bless your heart child-and a lump formed in my throat at their gentle pressure. Up until that moment, no woman had ever called me her child….The intense envy for all that you had and the gratitude for their being willing to me belong?...(p.179)

George was deeply engrossed in the communal life that he considers remaining in Willow Spring: "…I could fish, open some sort of store at the bridge junction or …write textbooks while we raised a family. It wouldn't cost much to live down here". (p. 221).

Gloria Naylor explains that she has entered the literary scene in response to the marginalization of her group as woman and as black. She reveals in an interview with Charles Rowell (1997: 188-189) "everything I've ever lived, or ever wanted to live as a black woman comes out in my work...You came of age implicitly being told it is the white male world, and everything that's been given to us of substance, everything that has lasted, has been just that their buddies kept them in the canon". So, it is to complement the efforts of other female writers, like Zora Neale Hurston, Ntozake Shange, Paule Marshall and others who Naylor considers her role models that further helped her to realize her potential as a writer. She however singled out Morrison as her role model, hence established peculiarity in their thematic preoccupations especially in their dealings with African American history. In *Mama Day* (1988), her third and arguably her most completely realized novel so far, Naylor, like Toni Morrison, concerns herself with examining, reconstructing and redefining the past. In explicating the unconscious and psychical trauma, she turns to the supernatural such as myth as we have in *Mama Day.* This also emphasizes the difficulty of gaining access to a lost or denied past, as well as the degree to which any such historical

reconstruction is essentially an imaginative act. *Mama* Day, also offers us a compelling example of how the memory of a traumatic past even a highly mythicized version of it can be embedded in a community's group consciousness to the point that it becomes the basis for the formation of their collective identity. Assman (1995:65) notes: 'cultural memory preserves the store of knowledge from which a group derives an awareness of its unity and peculiarity.' The method employed for this perpetuation of memories has traditionally been story-telling, and a certain tendency towards mythologization.

This process of literature working through history and memory and of trauma and healing has imposed a new role on language, character and even readers as seen in the selected texts. It would be inadequate, as this study argues, to examine/interprete the roles and personality traits of character in these texts based on only socio-cultural and historical factors, (what have been identified or classified as physical or conscious factors); but must examine the subconscious or psychological formation of individual personality and most importantly the approaches by which these characters could solve their trauma and achieve wholeness (both physical and emotional balance).

Gutierrez-Jones (2001: 74 cited in Franco 2006: 419) in a study of the intersection of narrative theory and Critical Race Studies, opens up this view of psychoanalysis by emphasizing ways of how the narrative depiction of psychoanalysis and trauma may participate in a wider society. He reminds that,

> *Simply making power and injury visible in no way guarantees a more liberated society, although of course recognition of these injuries can be a crucial initial step. The key is appropriately mediating between such recognitions and the literacy that governs the interpretation of social and cultural problems generally. Without this mediation, the making visible of injury can easily be co-opted into a project in which*

conflicts are subdued or worse yet, completely robbed of their ability to generate "alternative" political thought

The above cautionary gesture points two ways: speaking 'for' those aggrieved and the need to provide methods of redress in order for the studies of injury to be effective. The readers do not end up as mute witnesses to a scene of destruction or of characters suggesting that something or someone has mourned and is now healed in or by the text but it must adequately explores what and how this happens.

Franco (2006: 419) also adds that psychoanalysis is 'a study of mourning, healing, or working through':

> *There is a current of literary criticism that advocates for and finds in literature a process that is variously called mourning, healing, working through, or redemption…. Characters, history and cultures are on the receiving end. Texts; usually novels, do the cultural work.... mourning, like bridge-building (novels build bridges across time or among cultures…) may likewise be a metaphor that points us not only to what happens in the novel but also to what responsibilities and actions the novel establishes for readers.*

More so, Peterson (2001: 169 cited in Franco 2006: 419) also adds "… these literary texts are not only about history; they are about healing the wound of history". Sharing this view, Krumholz (1992: 395-408 in Franco 2006) says that "Morrison constructs history" and that such "history-making becomes a healing process for the characters, the reader and the author". Paying attention to the function of the reader strengthens an overall analysis of how novel operates in the world at large, and also raises the question of what exactly literature and criticism can be said to do.

In sum, for any criticism to adequately justify the behaviours of characters, especially female characters in African American novels by women, adequate attention

should be given to socio-political and cultural factors as well as the psychological dimension of human behaviours. In fact, in most cases the psychoanalytic study offers a suitable framework for character analysis that complement the efforts made with analysis that focus mainly on racism, male domination and other socio-cultural factors. Johnson (2003:120) argues the complementary role of psychoanalysis thus: "psychoanalytic theory with its accompanying practical applications is unique, for it can be used with a variety of other literary theories when analyzing a text". That is, even those dominant issues such as racism, male domination that are mostly reduced to the physical causes and effects/consequences, will yield newer meanings and broader insights when the same are subjected to psychoanalytic study.

2.2. Trauma and 'The Unconscious'

Psychoanalysis as a study that is essentially aimed at resolving conflicts involving characters' personality traits by narrating or representing it in narrative forms is also known as trauma narratives. However, this study of trauma have also received an extensive development which led to the emergence of a carved-out body of knowledge known as trauma theory/ study in the twentieth century with their focus on addressing the long-term psychological and often physical effects traumatic events have on individuals as well as humanity collectively. Providing these needs led first to the establishment in 1980 of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in the diagnostic canon of the medical and psychiatric professions. Thus, the recent application and extension of the techniques and measures of trauma studies from medical and clinical to the field of literary studies is referred to as trauma narratives. This began with the works of scholars such as Dominick LaCapra, Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman, Dori Laub, Judith Herman, Roger Lukhurst, Ron Eyerman and

Geoffrey Hartman. Their major contribution to the field of literary criticism is the arguments on the possibility or otherwise of representing trauma in written form as stories or narratives.

Cathy Caruth's major contribution to trauma studies and which has remained a prevalent feature in trauma narratives is what she terms "belatedness of trauma narratives". According to Caruth (1995: 154) "The impossibility of a comprehensible story does not necessarily mean the denial of a transmissible truth". She appreciates literature as a means to bear witness to traumatic events; those events that cannot be completely known and experienced and that might have otherwise remained buried, unspoken and unheard. Relating however, the limitations of trauma narratives, she explains that the traumatic event cause a distortion in the victim's "experience of time, self, and world", in the sense that the victim suffers the impossibility or delay in remembering or recollecting trauma events at the moment it occurs and as a result isolates it memories from other normal memories and which leads to a trajectory of repetition much later after the event. This repetition manifests in various symptoms especially flashbacks and hallucinations which when it appear leads to a disrupting force or impact. This characteristic delay or "belatedness" of trauma also demonstrates that traumatic events do not fit into the structure of time. They emerge into consciousness at any point, bringing the power of the event with them. They also blurs distinctions between past and present, leaving its narration with no distinct beginning, middle, or end as shown in Morrison's *A Mercy*. Caruth (1996: 13) opines thus: *"The link between trauma and the initial missed experience leads to a model of reference that is not direct and immediate, but belated, displaced, and oblique..."*

LaCapra (2001:102) also admits that the traumatic experience can be spoken only through certain specific formal features such as fragmentation, linear disruption, and so on.

These are essential tenets visible in all trauma narratives as we have in the selected texts. He argues that trauma narratives are important in creating what he calls "empathic unsettlement," through which readers can respond effectively and sometimes come to identify with victims and by this prompted to bear witness to such trauma by taking actions against it furtherance. In fact, LaCapra believes that a trauma narrative that does not move the readers to taking actions is not a successful one.

Laub, (1992: 67) although emphasizes the possibility of trauma narratives, pointed out that the experience of reading or even relating trauma narratives by victims can lead to more trauma as this may re-open past or healed wound, what he calls re-traumatization or revictimizing when not effectively managed. Similarly, Herman (2001: 173) argues that even though putting the traumatic experience into words can help patients work through their traumas, it can also "stimulate more intrusive symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and therefore jeopardize the patient's fragile sobriety".

However, despite the arguments on the necessity to speak trauma events and impossibility or limitation of language to represent trauma in narrative forms above, trauma narrative as an essential tenet of psychoanalysis is deployed in this study to draw vivid attention to the recovery and reconstructive goals of Toni Morrison's trauma narratives in *A Mercy* and in Gloria Naylor's *The Women of Brewster Place* and *Mama Day*. In other words, the use of trauma theory reveals the minds of the selected authors to have their protagonists properly healed in the course of the narratives. Thus, through instances of ambiguities, ellipses and gaps in the selected texts, this study demonstrates the psychological conflicts in the minds of the characters and the healing processes. In her popular essay "The Unspeakable, Spoken" (1992), Morrison asserts that "… The recovery

and representation of a traumatic history previously confined to silence was instrumental to raise awareness about the injustices of the past, promote a collective sense of community and shared history, and achieve political agency". Her novels like the one analyzed here is illustrative of this process of giving voice to what trauma theorist LaCapra calls "the ghosts of the past" (2001: 215). Naylor has equally emphasized on the issue of trauma, its relevance, and the benefits that can be extracted from its recovery.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined some of the critical works done on the selected texts that have contributed immensely to this present study by providing it discursive areas to build-on and to achieving it set goals. The thematic analyses provided by these critics have facilitates the efforts to unravel the unconscious processes in characters and narratives of these texts. Critical analysis on the tenets of trauma and 'the unconscious' in psychoanalysis are also examined.

CHAPTER THREE

TONI MORRISON' S *A MERCY*: 'THE RETURN OF THE REPRESSED'

Introduction

Freud's psychoanalytic theory introduced the concept of "the return of the repressed" to explain the hidden element of human nature and what he generally referred to as the unconscious. These elements (thought, feelings or desires) he argues are hidden because they are threatening to the individual and to others. However, the inevitable and sudden replay of what is repressed in the unconscious by such means as nightmares, compulsions, hallucinations and repetitive flashbacks in all cases constitute trauma and conflict manifest in the individual behavior. Clear signs of psychological repression are shown, though in peculiar ways in all the characters of Morrison's *A Mercy*. Each of them shows the mark of a tragic past rooted in slavery experience, which, in most cases, is accompanied with their own personal and unaddressed stories of loss and pain. This study aims to show how these repressed thoughts, feelings and ideas reassert themselves from the unconscious of the characters to influence their behavior. In this regard also, it identifies the unconscious motivations for these characters' behaviours. This attempt presents bases for adequate presentations of characters that integrate psychological aspects of human behaviour.

3.1. Repressive Signs in *A Mercy*: Psychosis, Neuroses and Obsessions

As mentioned above, the first reaction towards self-defense against the damaging force of trauma is repression. This is what Morrison's protagonists namely Florens, Sorrow, Rebekkah and Lina attempt to do. Sorrow is "thought to be daft because she talked out Loud when alone but who didn't?" (p.152); Mistress (Rebekkah) always chatted directions to herself while at some solitary task. And Lina is said to answer birds as if they were asking

her advice on how to fly…. (p.152); these acts clearly reveal repressed and unresolved conflicts in the minds of the characters which manifest in their behaviours, thus constituting disorientative personalities. Eagleton's (2008:159) perceptions on psychosis best illustrate these characters' behaviours. She says: 'psychosis' occurs when "the link between the ego and external reality is ruptured, and the unconscious begins to build up an alternative, delusional reality". She adds that if the neurotic may develop a paralyzed arm, the psychotic may believe that his arm has turned into an elephant trunk (p.159). In psychosis and neuroses thought and perception are severely impaired.

"Sorrow with black teeth and a head of never groomed woolly hair, the color of a setting sun" (p.120), is the third slave aside Florens and Lina in Jacob's farm. She lived all her early years on board in ship with her father, the captain. Her trauma starts when her father 's ship was taken and everybody else, Sorrow who at this incident was in deep sleep due to the pain from the surgery that was done on her neck was left alone on the shore where the Sawyers had picked her:

> They had met beneath the surgeon's hammock in the looted ship.…when the ship foundered she did not know it, and if any unmurdered hands and passengers escaped, she didn't know that either. What she remembered was waking up after falling to the floor under the hammock all alone. Captain, her father, nowhere …Sorrow had never lived on land…. Now the memories of the ship, the only home she knew, seemed as stolen as its cargo: bales of cloth…Even the trace of Captain (her father) was dim…. (p.117)

Sorrow who does not know anything about herself was named 'Sorrow' by Sawyer's wife "…because she was abandoned (p.120)". She described Sorrow as a strange girl "… who kept wandering off, getting lost… a strange melancholy girl to whom her sons were paying very close attention…"

Other characters such as Lina and Scully have observed and shared similar strange view of whom Sorrow is. Scully says "… the look of her was daunting, complicated, distant. The unblinking eyes, smoke gray, were not blank, but waiting. It was that lying-in-wait look that troubled Lina. Everyone but himself thought she was daft because she talked out loud when alone…" (p.151). To Lina, Sorrow is misery personified "…..in Sorrow's presence eggs would not allow themselves to be beaten into foam, nor did butter lighten cake batter… (p.55)"

Like the characters of Florens and Minhae mae, Morrison presents Sorrow as a girl, who carries a history of severe trauma which has impaired her memory. In other words, the memories of her past which may be seen as a fragment of her life is either by means of unconscious repression, or conscious denial pushed into the unconscious where painful memories are buried with the hope of never visiting or remembering them. "…not then, not ever, had she spoken of how she got there or where she had been (p.49)".

However, as explained earlier, individuals suffer trauma when these memories inevitably slipped into consciousness mostly as dreams, hallucinations constituting psychical imbalance. This explains Sorrow's strange melancholy. She is often raped by Sawyer's boys and like other similar hurts; she cannot explain how they happen. Relating these painful events to Twin shows a total loss of self-recognition and human mind:

> The housewife told her it was monthly blood; …Twin and she talked about it, about whether it was the result of the goings that took place behind the stack of clapboard, both brothers attending instead of what the housewife said. Because the pains was outside between her legs, not inside where the housewife said was natural… (p. 120).

When asked her age, because she is not quite sure, she answers "I believe I have eleven years now" (p.120). This sexual abuse continues in Vaark's farm, where she has series of what Lina says is "virgin birth" (p.63).

However, the most radical demonstration of her psychological conflict and her repressed past is a severe fragmentation of self, in which she is always accompanied by an exact replica of herself. Freud calls this "a split" personality or the lack of proper individuation:

> She did not mind when they called her Sorrow so long as Twin kept using her real name. Having two names was convenient since Twin couldn't be seen by anybody else. So if she were scrubbing clothes or herding geese and heard the name Captain used, she knew it was Twin. But if any voice called 'Sorrow,' she knew what to expect. Preferable, of course, was when Twin called from the mill door or whispered up close into her ear. Then she would quit any chore and follow her identical self. (p.116)

This sudden appearance of Sorrow's invisible 'Twin' and who not surprisingly have a better knowledge of Sorrow's past identity than any other in the "exterior" world is better understood by her roles and relationship with Sorrow. First, Twin is said to join Sorrow at the time that she lost all she has: her home. …beneath the surgeon's hammock in the looted ship" (p.116). She identifies with her past, understands all her fears and she gives Sorrow all the comfort, joy and companionship she needs. "Twin…was her safety, her entertainment, her guide…. (p.119); "…With her, Sorrow never wanted for friendship or conversation. Even if they made her sleep inside, there were stories to listen to and they could steal away together during the day for strolls and larks in the forest". (p. 123).

Morrison describes the dissociative experience of Sorrow so clearly in the lines above. Obviously Twin is Sorrow's internal "person" that can only help her sense of human

value. Indeed, Twin made good impact on Sorrow especially in regaining her sense of human value and self- identity. This is evident at the birth of her last baby. Having experienced love, attention and companionship and also learnt to give same; unlike the previous babies who die at the point of birth, Sorrow jealously watches her baby with a deep sense of motherhood. Thus, having all her mind and attention on the baby, Twin is no longer needed, and she disappears leaving Sorrow self-named and no longer "concentrating on the art of escape" (p.121). She "now knows what to name her baby. Knew also what to name herself… (p.134)"; Sorrow's wandering stopped too. Now she attended routine duties, organizing them around her infant's needs. "…I am your mother" she said. "My name is complete; "she had looked into her daughter's eyes; saw in them the gray glisten of a winter sea while a ship sailed by..."

Morrison seems to remind us that dissociation as proposed by Freud is sometimes used defensively following massive trauma. Also, in the case of Lina, who had witnessed the mass execution of people in her village and carried within her memories of death, destruction, and shame, she engages in tale-telling of their historical and cultural past in order to relief herself of the horror these events have on her. In the lines below is one of her numerous tales especially as regards the blacks and their history. She tells this to buttress on Florens' action, experiences and consequences:

> … Sudden a sheet of sparrows fall from the sky and settle in the trees. So many the trees seem to sprout birds not leaves at all. Lina points. We never shape the world she says. The world shapes us. Sudden and silent the sparrows are gone. I am not understanding Lina. You are my sharper and my world as well. It is done. No need to choose. (p.71)

This story points to the position and plights of blacks. This is aimed at warning Florens from crossing the line especially as she desperately desires and searches for love and acceptance as natural longings in a cultural environment that is based on the enslavement of others. Lina points to Florens and reminds her: "We never shape the world. The world shapes us". Just as the birds fly on the trees and leaves so also is their lives as temporal and never remembered or valued.

Furthermore, through the retelling of an old story of bird eggs left by their mother to "hatch alone" (p.73), Lina reminds Florens of their lives that are similar to birds orphaned in the wilderness. Especially called for were the stories of mothers fighting to save their children from wolves and natural disasters (p.72); also, of an eagle "falling forever" and trying to protect her babies in eggs from man. This is parallel to the black female slaves' experiences especially how they are helpless in defending their female children from sexual abuse especially by slave masters who may have also abuse them sexually and even have children in the process.

3.2. Voicing it out: "The Talking-Cure"

Since Freud's psychoanalytic process is evidently and ultimately aimed at freeing trauma victims from their repressed thoughts and feelings, he provides the "talking-cure" as a narrative paradigm in his *Studies on Hysteria* (1995:Vol 2). Here, Sigmund Freud and Joseph Breuer reveal that the talking-cure process involves recollecting and reliving traumatic memories in the presence of an attentive listener, and does not include any form of analysis. However, as a narrative model, the "talking cure" may be describe as a narrative in which a trauma victim recalls the past in a confessional mode to an attentive listener who can hear and most importantly identify with the anguish with the aim of resolving the

conflict. Resolving characters' traumatic past is obviously a preoccupation particularly shared by Morrison. In her essay "The Unspeakable Spoken" (1992), she argues that one must constitute trauma experience in a language, to reorganize the painful events and retell the painful memories. Like psychoanalysts, Morrison explores the capacity of storytelling during talk therapy to represent and, by extension, reconcile psychical individual and historical trauma.

This act of the "talking-cure" is given at the opening of the story. Florens, the protagonist, says:

> Don't be afraid, My telling can't hurt you in spite of what I have done and I promise to lie quietly in the dark weeping perhaps or occasionally seeing the blood once more – but I will never again unfold my limbs to rise up and bare teeth. You can think what I tell you a confession, if you like, but one full of curiosities familiar only in dreams and during those moments when a dog's profile plays in the steam… (p. 1).

This significant event of telling her experiences, the process of which turns her into a wilderness/wildness, (p.161), clearly marked the regaining of her self- consciousness, recognition and self- acceptance; and also, the inability of Florens to say anything until now affirms Caruth's argument that trauma can only be expressed or experienced belatedly, tentatively and indirectly (1996:115). Despite these difficulties, Florens does ultimately render the episode to a desired listener, her lover: an unnamed blacksmith and the unknown listeners. The processes of such narrations, according to psychoanalysts, if (when) feasible, provides possible way to work through trauma. Morrison's *A Mercy* presents this form of narration as a means to free both Florens and her mother from their traumatic past.

Florens and her mother belong to D'Ortega, a Portuguese slave owner, who owes money to Jacob, a tradesman. Jacob goes to D'Ortega's plantation to receive his payment,

but not having the money, D'Ortega offers his slaves (p.21). Jacob, however, has made up his mind never to engage in buying slaves, but when suddenly near the house, he saw Florens' mother, Minhae mae, Jacob reconsiders the offer:

> He saw a woman standing in the doorway with two children. One, on her hip; one, hiding behind her skirts. She looked healthy enough, better fed than the others. On a whim, mostly to silence him and fairly sure D'Ortega would refuse, he said, 'Her. That one. I'll take her (pp. 23-4).

The sudden refusal to Jacob Vaark's request of Florens' mother even when he had earlier pleaded he takes his slaves to pay off his dept shows that Florens' mother, Minhae mae, is more than a house slave to the D'Ortega's family, she probably performs other services quite valuable to him. He answers: "Ah, no. Impossible. My wife won't allow. She can't live without her" (p.24). This reaction shows that "there was more than cooking D'Ortega stood to lose" (p.24). It is implied that Florens' mother is abused by him and, for that reason; she is kept around the house. During the conversation between Jacob and D'Ortega; Minhae mae's little girl (Florens) stepped from behind the mother. On her feet was a pair of big woman's shoes. Minhae mae cradling the small boy on her hip came forward. She pleads that D' Ortega would take her girl, but not her or her sucking baby:

> Please, Senhor. Not me. Take her. Take my daughter, Jacob looked up at her, away from the child's feet, his mouth still open with laughter, and was struck by the terror in her eyes. His laugh creaking to a close, he shook his head, thinking, God help me if this is not the most wretched business (p.24).

This forceful severance of Florens from her mother, a prevalent event in African American socio-cultural formation, haunts her throughout the story. She struggles with several attempts to recall and understand the memory of her mother's abandonment and of

the true reason for her rejection as a child. This leads to her inability to accept and appreciate herself for whom she is as a person as clearly shown in her behaviours in Jacob Vaark's house. Rebekkah, interpreted Florens' gestures and attitudes to the blacksmith and to other people thus:

> Well done." "It's fine." However slight, any kindness shown her she munched like a rabbit. Jacob said the mother had no use for her which, Rebekkah decided, explained her need to please. Explained also her attachment to the blacksmith, trotting up to him for any reason, panicked to get his food to him on time (p.96)

The narrator says:

> …He had already ruined Florens, since she refused to see that she hankered after a man that had not troubled to tell her goodbye. When Lina tried to enlighten her, saying," you are one leaf on his tree," Florens shook her head, closed her eyes and replied, "No. I am his tree" A sea change that Lina could only hope was not final (p.61)…We never shape the world she says. The world shapes us….I do not understand Lina. You are my sharper and my world as well. (p.71)

Judging her mother's actions as a sign of carelessness, rejection and detachment, Florens' focus is inevitably directed to finding a community or individual in whom she feels accepted and love, where she can express herself and exorcise the apparition of her mother. In other words, she feels a longing for what she is deprived of. The above shows Florens' sudden and unrestrained love and attachment to a stranger- the Blacksmith, the black man Vaarks hired to build a gate for his new mansion. At first, she finds this replacement in Lina, a slave woman she meets in Vaarks' house who "had fallen in love with her right away, as soon as she saw her shivering in the snow (p.60)", showing that both understands and sympathizes with each other. However the sudden love for the Blacksmith shows Florens'

loss of self-dignity and individuation, incompleteness; psychological imbalance; her looseness and longing for others' love, acceptance and approval.

Scully, one of the male slaves in Vaark's house had also said of Florens:

> … if he had been interested in rape, Florens would have been his prey. It was easy to spot that combination of defenselessness, eagerness to please and, most of all, a willingness to blame herself for the meanness of other (p.151)

Florens projects her feeling of abandonment by her mother into a desire for the blacksmith. This love becomes obsessive as Florens cannot live without him. She says: "With you my body is pleasure is safe is belonging. I can never not have you have me" (p.137). This desperation for the blacksmith increases: "There is only you. Nothing outside of you" (p.37); "I don't want to be free of you because I am live only with you" (p.70). As she can no longer imagine her life without him, she forgets about herself entirely, longing for a deep unbreakable bond with him and to be the center of his attention. This desire is also radically demonstrated in Florens' attitude to Malaik, a small boy that the blacksmith takes care of because like several other black children he is deprived of parental care. She sees Malaik as a threat to securing the Blacksmith total love and attention:

> Now I am seeing a little boy come in holding a corn-husk doll . . . You reach out your forefinger toward him and he takes hold of it. You say this is why I cannot travel with you…he is not to be left alone….I worry as the boy steps closer to you…As if he is your future . Not me…. (p. 136).

The presence of Malaik in the Blacksmith's cabin brings back to Florens' unconscious mind the memory of her mother's earlier decision and preference for her little boy over as slave to be given to Mr. Vaark:

> These happens twice before. The first time it is me peering around my mother's dress hoping for her hand that is only for her little

> boy. The second time it is a pointing screaming little hiding behind her mother and clinging to her skirts. Both times are full of danger and I am expel…. (p.136)

Florens at different times had experienced painful rejection from her mother (her first love object according to Sigmund Freud). On these occasions, she has confidently trusted and seeks her mother's protections from a strange man- Mr. Vaark. But instead of being guarded from her fears, her mother pleadingly handed her to Mr. Vaark to work in his farm. These memories and nightmares are so repetitive that she becomes obsessed and hurts Malaik. She fears and dreads that she will be abandoned by the blacksmith and she will be alone again, while the little boy gets to stay, reliving her past experience. Malaik becomes a projection of her brother, and she transfers her anger to him because he is being protected by the blacksmith, like her brother was by her mother. This replacement or projection in her mind is illustrated in the conflicting mix-up thoughts and an unconscious act of substituting her own brother as Malaik and vice visa:

> I am calm when you (the blacksmith) leave although you do not touch me close…You saddle up and ask me to water the bean shoots… I go there but the hens make nothing so I know a minha mae is coming soon. The boy Malaik is here….A minha mae leans at the door holding her little boy's hand, my shoes in her pocket. As always she is trying to tell me something. I rise and come to him and ask what. What Malaik, what. He is silent but the hate in his eyes is loud. He wants my leaving. This cannot happen. This expel can never happen again" (p.137).

Consequently, a healthy relationship between them becomes unattainable because of her insecurity and obsession. She is neither able to control her thoughts about her traumatic experience nor her actions in the present. She attacks Malaik with violence. Unfortunately when the Blacksmith arrives at the scene of the fight, he went first for Malaik not asking Florens anything making her the more frustrated. She explains: "I am lost because your

shout is not my name. Not me. Him. Malaik you shout. Malaik" (p.140). Florens' pains became even more unbearable when the Blacksmith calls her a slave in the following conversations, Florens says:

> …I am a slave because Sir trades for me.
> No. You have become one.
> How?
> Your head is empty and your body is wild.
> I am adoring you.
> And a slave to that too.
> You alone own me.
> Own yourself woman, and leave us be… You are nothing but a wilderness. No constraint. No mind (p.141)

The above conveys what appears as Morrison's healing therapy for Florens: "…own yourself…" The blacksmith calls Florens a slave by choice not minding her slavery experience, first, a slave to others (Vaark's family); a slave to love (her search for a place/person she belongs and she will never be expel, the blacksmith) and the worst is that she is a slave to herself (fear of rejection). He condemns Florens as servitude, lacking true human recognition and unable to love. Morrison also seems to suggest that Florens can never end her pains by looking up to others, however close, for self acceptance; that will further enslave her. She must confront and reconcile with her past. This she did by returning to Vaark's house, this time as a different person, rather bold and ready to face her past. Willard and Scully, the two male farmers in Vaark's house, seeing Florens arriving back at the farm, they "were slow to recognize her as a living person" (p.147). Without Jacob's boots – A sign that she has gained independence; no longer having the security and protection the shoes once represented (Montgomery 2011: 634). Scully, notes: 'the docile creature they knew had turned feral…she looked less like a visitation than a wounded redcoat, barefoot, bloody but proud. (p. 146).

At the end of the novel, Florens encloses herself in the big house that Jacob had built and starts to write on the walls. This acts shows to a large extent the gradual healing and recovery of Florens:

> There is no more room in this room. These words cover the floor. From now you will stand to hear me. The walls make trouble because lamplight is too small to see by. I am holding light in one hand and carving letters with the other. My arms ache but I have need to tell you this. I cannot tell it to anyone but you…What will I do with my night when the telling stops? Dreaming will not come again. Sudden I am remembering. You won't read my telling. You read the world but not the letters of talk. You don't know how to. Maybe one day you will learn. If so….come inside this talking room in the daylight. If you never read this, no one will… (p.161)

Here, the house rather than becoming of site of pain where Florens will remember her past becomes a site of power, where Florens relieves herself of the trauma that inhibits her ability to form a sense of self.

3.3. Defective Family Dynamics: The Unconscious Determinant in Morrison's Female Protagonists

The unconscious factor which is observed to influence the characters' behaviours without their knowledge as examined in this analysis is a defective Family dynamics. Not only do Morrison's female characters: Florens, Sorrow, and Lina, suffer very poor parenting, their childhood is full of uncertainties and sad situations that renders their mental balance and make-up almost impossible. Freud's discovery that some difficulties in certain individuals are related to unresolve unconscious conflicts that arise in the early stage of child development and continue into adulthood applies to all the female protagonists examined above. The fundamental relationship that always exists between a mother and her child is absent which made them to seek comfort in each other or in any other (s). Since this proper individuation is lacking, other relationships afterward suffer serious imbalance.

Through the family, represented by the father, mother, and siblings, the child attains psychological maturations. Freud identifies three stages of a child's psychosexual growth: the oral, anal and the phallic stages. At the oral stage, the child develops essential needs which include the need to be loved and stimulated. Psychological imbalance and conflicts sets-in in the child when these needs are haphazardly met or not satisfied. The child may either suffer continuous pain until the wish is fulfilled or seek for alternatives which is always not possible or shut off the pain by repressing the need. This is the point at which repression comes. However, for Florens' mother, Minhae mae, having lost a mother-daughter relationship with Florens, she seeks for a way to re-establish it back. The last chapter is narrated by Minhae mae in the first person narrative. Morrison allows Minhae mae's voice which represents black mothers, to be heard to help Florens and others (readers) who might have judge her mother a wicked being probably to justify or reconsider her act. She tells the story from her view point speaking directly to her daughter, explaining all that Florens needs to know about her actions especially that of her willingness or urgency to release her to Jacob Vaark, the farm owner.

> Neither one will want your brother. I know their tastes. Breast provides the pleasure more than simpler things. Yours are rising too soon and are becoming irritated by the cloth covering your little girl chest. And they see and I see them see….There was no protection. None. Certainly not with your vice for shoes. It was as though you were hurrying up your breasts and hurrying also the lips of an old married couple….There was no protection and nothing in the catechism to tell them no. I tried to tell Reverend Father. I hoped if we could learn letters somehow someday you could make your way…To be female in this place is to be an open wound that cannot heal. Even if scars form, the festering is ever below… (pp.162/163)

Despite Florens' mother's attempts to keep her as a child as long as possible, she is worried because D'Ortega, her slave master already started to notice her daughter. She

knows that, if Florens stays with her she is doomed to have the same fate as many other women slaves: to be abused and to serve the sexual needs of her white master. She continues to explain her actions:

> One chance I thought. There was no protection but there is difference. You stood there in those shoes and the tall man laughed and said he would take me to close the debt…I said you. Take you, my daughter. Because I saw the tall man sees you as a human child, not pieces of eight. I knelt before him. Hoping for a miracle. He said yes…It was a mercy offered by a human. I stayed on my knees. In the dust where my heart will remain each night and every day until you understand what I know and long to tell you: to be given dominion over another is a hard thing; to wrest dominion over another is a wrong thing; to give dominion of yourself to another is a wicked thing. Oh Florens. My love. Hear a tua mae (p.167)

Florens' mother sees in Jacob the only chance for Florens to escape from the D'Ortega. Though she will inevitably be abused and oppressed but she is consoled that Mr Vaarks sees Florens as "as a human child not pieces of eight". In other words, oppressed but with a sense of human recognition. As a mother, she tries to secure a better future for her daughter - a future with hope that Florens will not have to endure the cruelties she has faced.

Minha mae's cry is the cry of many black mothers who are often cruelly misjudged. Morrison's fiction is probably termed as revision of black slaves' history in the way she gives subjective voices to the enslaved ones who reveal their emotional and psychological depths. Minhae mae lamented her plights thus:

> I don't know who is your father. It was too dark to see any of them. They came at night and took we three including Bess. …There was no protection. To be female in this place is to be an open wound that cannot heal. Even if scars form, the festering is ever below (p.191).

Morrison provides an opportunity for slaves to recount their experiences in the form of personal narration or tales. This is important as the truth of slavery experience and the

reliability of such stories is best convey through the voice of one like Minhae Mae. Also, Minhae mae in rejecting her daughter, against her wish and in fact an unbearable pain for her also reveals her strong will and a form of resistance against slavery.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined Morrison's *A Mercy* to identify how repressed thoughts come up from the unconscious to influence the behaviour of the female characters. Behavioural traits such as psychosis, neuroses, fragmentation of self are considered as psychical trauma and the unconscious processes that may have influenced such behavior is identified as a defective family system. All these are explored in line with the *Freudian* idea of the unconscious, providing us with 'the perception of the hidden element of human nature and of the opposition between the hidden and invisible'

CHAPTER FOUR

TRAUMA AND 'THE UNCONSCIOUS' IN GLORIA NAYLOR'S *THE WOMEN OF BREWSTER PLACE*

Introduction

Naylor's *The Women of Brewster Place* (TWBP) portrays the residents of Brewster Place, women (characters) whom haunted by their past experiences, engage in or exhibit destructive tendencies that are against the interest of either themselves or others around them. This chapter examines the psychological trauma and the unconscious determinant of each character's behavioural trait. In the same vein, 'collective memory' and 'collective storytelling' of past trauma, the literary techniques used by Naylor in this story to voice the African American women experience are also examined from the psychoanalytic perspective as a 'healing' or reconstructive tool that creates the possibility of recovering and recuperating the past.

4.1. The 'Birth' of Brewster Place

'Brewster Place' is marked off from the rest of the world, thus, creating a world and a 'personality' of its own. This setting draws attention to the peculiar situation of the residents, primarily African American women, who live there. Thus, the physical and psychological 'birth' of Brewster Place is the individual and collective 'personality' that defines her residents. Naylor explains this in an interview, She says: "There is a reason for the wall at the dead-end street: regardless of how diverse we may be, as black women we all share two things in this country—and that is racism and sexism. And so that's what that wall represented for me, and in each of those stories that particular woman will somehow relate

to that wall" (interview by Bonetti, 2004:53-54 cited in Sarah F. V. (2013). More so, Ijeoma (1999:41 cited in Sarah F.V. 2013) asserts that "As long as these "walls" are used as barriers of exclusion, each woman will continue to exist not only individually but also collectively". Thus, although each woman has different backgrounds and directions in life, Naylor brings them to 'Brewster Place' for shared or similar reasons of dejection, isolation, forceful severance from loved ones/ objects, search for unattainable 'goods' and so on, thus, emphasizing the importance of sharing their memories and experiences:

> Cut off from the central activities of the city, the street developed a personality of its own. The people had their own language and music and codes./Their perspiration mingled with the steam from boiling pots of smoked pork and greens, and it curled on the edges of the aroma of vinegar douches and Evening in Paris cologne that drifted through the street where they stood together—hand-on-hips. Straight backed, round bellied, high-behinded women who threw their heads back when they laughed and exposed strong teeth and dark gums. They cursed, badgered, worshiped, and shared their men. ... They were hard-edged, soft-centered, brutally demanding, and easily pleased, these women of Brewster Place. They came, they went, grew up, and grew old beyond their years. Like an ebony phoenix, each in her own time and with her own season had a story (p.2)

This personal past and shared present significantly moves these women stories from a focus on individual memory to that of collective memories and histories. For Mattie Michael, the first woman in the story, who eventually becomes the backbone of the other women, her "long winding journey to Brewster place" (p.8) is the aftermath of the "sugarcane and summer and papa and Basil and Butch... a thirty-one year old story that could only be opened again in her mind" (p.8). Mattie becomes pregnant from her first sexual encounter, and as a result loses the love of her father who feels betrayed by Mattie's situation. He has done all possible best to give her the best and most importantly to keep her from folks like Butch Fuller: "I know some say I put too much store in you… But I done

what I saw fit at the time to do (p.21)". When she gets pregnant by this same 'good-for-nothing-man', Butch Fuller, Mattie's father finds it difficult to forgive and bear the irreversible disappointment. Mattie is forced to leave the home she has always known to the unknown outside world. To fill the vacuum of her lost love and forceful severance from her mother, Mattie gives all her love to her son, Basil, the only 'thing' left for her. She told her friend, Etta Johnson "I ain't looking for nothing….she stared down at her son, I got everything I need right here. And I'm content to stay put with what God gave me" (p.26). When Mrs Eva, Mattie's new found mother, questions Mattie's lonely nights saying "No young woman wants an empty bed, year in year out" (p.37), She answers "My bed hasn't been empty since Basil was born". Her "little boy who would always need her" (p.52). Mattie's behavior to her son though may appear normal but she is actually displaying her unconscious mind, a psychological conflict within her. According to Freud, such conflicts when not properly resolve will result to further trauma in the individual's attitudes. Freud coined the word "transference" to explain that our earlier formative experiences usually within the context of the primary attachment relationship especially to parents, siblings, and significant others determine our response and behaviours to certain situations in later years. This has remains one of the most powerful explanatory tools in psychoanalysis today—both in the clinical setting and when psychoanalysts use their theory to explain human behaviour.

Mattie is disappointed by Basil, who keeps late nights and would not entertain any advice from her mother. His escape from jail for which Mattie had given her house as collateral, forces Mattie to lose her home and move to Brewster Place. As a way of defending herself from these problems, Mattie busies herself trying to comfort and be of help to everybody within Brewster Place, making her a known figure. This role of Mattie as

the foundational matriarch to the other women is most clearly demonstrated in the lives of her long-time friend, Etta Mae Johnson, and in Miss Eva's granddaughter, Ciel Turner. Mae Johnson is well known by the folks of Brewster Place: "No one ever called Etta Mae, never used her "first name", Etta, except in their minds… but when they addressed her directly, it was always Miss Johnson." (p.57). Etta has fought all her teenage years to be a woman (a wife) that is well respected in the society not like other folks with poor and broken homes. But this has only led to many failed romantic relationships. Her movement to Brewster Place, into the secure arms of Mattie is motivated by the need to find a refuge and hide from her failed past and frustrated efforts. Mattie is the only one who can identify with and understands Etta's situation, and as if she is well prepare for the expected decision of her friend, Mattie is eagerly waiting to receive her back, According to Naylor:

> ... she was existing as she always had. Even if someone had bothered to stop and tell her that the universe had expanded for her, just an inch, she wouldn't have known how to shine alone. (p.60)

Etta Mae Johnson, just like the other women of Brewster place, lacks self-confidence and also never discovers that she can live through herself. Drawing a conclusion on her experience, she says to Mattie "Let's face it ….All the good men are either dead or waiting to be born" (p.61).

In the same way that Mattie identifies with the plights of Etta Mae, she does the same for Ciel, Miss Eva's grown granddaughter, who now lives in Brewster Place. Ciel is married to Eugene, who is constantly seeking reasons to abandon her especially at the point of saddling any family responsibility. When she shares the news that she is pregnant with a second child, Eugene tells her that there is no way he can support a second child and

threatens to leave. In order to avoid this, she has an abortion, and repressed the events in order not to remember them:

> All the activities of the past week of her life were balled up and jammed on the right side of her brain, as if belonging to some other woman. And when she endured this one last thing for her, she would push it up there, too, and then one day give it all to her—Ciel wanted no part of it (p.96)

When, again, Eugene threatens to leave, she struggles with the thoughts of telling him of the emotional pain of her abortion, but that would require that " she uncurl that week of her life, pushed safely up into her head, when she had done all those terrible things for that other woman who had wanted an abortion" (p.96). As she desperately pleads with Eugene who is already packing to leave, from the other room she hears a scream from her only daughter, Serena, who, attempting to follow a roach, has stuck a fork into an electrical socket. Serena's death, in addition to the abortion that Ciel never emotionally deals with, leaves her hopeless and she longs for death: "… but Ciel was not grieving for Serena. She was simply tired of hurting. And she was forced to slowly give up the life that God had refused to take from her" (p.101). Her inability to narrate her memory or even utter a word after these events justifies Dori Laub's view of trauma as an experience that can never be related fully through narratives. 'Trauma is defined by its 'radical otherness to all known frames of reference,' which situates the experience of trauma 'beyond the limits of human ability (and willingness) to grasp, to transmit, or to imagine' Laub (1995: 68). Thus, unlike Mattie, who turns her painful memories to a positive light by sharing with the pains of others, Ciel's inability to confront her past helps lead to the desperation and trauma she later endures. Mattie as expected is the only woman who could bring Ciel's back to life. Naylor buttresses this by telling us the failed efforts of other women who had earlier come to comfort Ciel.

Their attempts further increase Ciel's pain even when they share the story of their own painful and inevitable loss. And so Mattie rocks Ciel's body:

> … She rocked her on and on, past Dachau, where soul-gutted Jewish mothers swept their children's entrails off laboratory floors. They flew past the spilled brains of Senegalese infants whose mothers had dashed them on the wooden sides of slave ships. And she rocked on. She rocked her into her childhood and let her see murdered dreams. And she rocked her back, back into the womb, to the nadir of her hurt, and they found it—a slight silver splinter, embedded just below the surface of the skin. And Mattie rocked and pulled—and the splinter gave way, but its roots were deep, gigantic, ragged, and they tore up flesh with bits of fat and muscle tissue clinging to them. They left a huge hole, which was already starting to pus over, but Mattie was satisfied. It would heal. (pp. 103/104).

According to Sarah F.V. (2013: Vol 19) "What Mattie does is to help Ciel connect with something larger than herself; she connects her to a collective memory and history of women's oppression and loss. Ciel's experience moves from an exclusive individual pain, to a pain endured by centuries of women". As Wells (1990:44 cited in Sarah 2013) argues, "Through human touch, Mattie rocks Ciel across history. She becomes not an individual mother who suffers the loss of her child, but one of the multitudes of sufferers, collectively connected to mother suffering. ..." Mattie, in the images of mother and midwife, assists Ciel in rejoining the world by binding her to other victimised women who too had to find a way to exorcise the pain. For Naylor, then, collective memory can provide characters with comfort as well as a sense of feeling through which to understand their individual life experiences.

Cora Lee is another resident of Brewster Place. Life does not have any meaning for her, except in relation to giving birth to babies. She makes babies with her body like the dolls she has forced her parents to always buy as her Christmas gift yearly: 'She had gone to school until her sophomore year, when she had her first baby…. She had intended to go back, but

the babies just seemed to keep coming… always welcome until they changed, and then she just didn't understand them. (p.113). Cora Lee, from her teens with the influence of her environment, has known the "thing that felt good in the dark –and it had felt good, Mother." (p.109). Ciel's attitudes to her babies especially when they grow "beyond the world of her lap" (p.112) reveal the meaninglessness and vacuum in her act. When one of her children falls and gets tangled in fallen curtain rods and drapery, Cora Lee rather than bother about the situation with the screaming child, prefers to examine her curtain and see if it was torn. She says of the boy; "Naw, he's always falling from something. He's got a head like a rock... He's just like his father – all those West Indians got hard heads" (p.117). More so, when the same child nearly injures Kiswana by pulling the braid off her hair, we are told that: "Cora Lee almost smiled gratefully at Dorian as he raced around the door into the other room" (p.117). She told Kiswana "If I ran to the hospital every time one of these kids bumps their head or scrapes their knees, I'd spend the rest of my life in those emergency rooms. ….they are wild and disgusting and there is nothing you can do" (p.113). Furthermore, the men whom she has these children with are also said to come like shadow. They come only in the night and leave early before they are seen by anyone. When Cora returns from watching Shakespeare in the park, Naylor reveals that "She entered her bedroom in the dark and the shadow, who had let himself in with his key, moved in the bed." (p. 127).

Finally, "*The Two*" (Lorraine and Theresa) also residents of Brewster place are lesbian who seek a secluded place where their differences will be tolerated and welcome and Brewster Place initially seems to offers them one. They had From Linden Hills to Park Heights but for Theresa "Brewster Place is the end of the line for me. I am not moving anymore ...."(p.135). Lorraine unlike Theressa desperately desired to be a part of the

community. She has accepted herself for whom she is and seeks such acceptance from others. But unfortunately, everyone rejects her except Theressa who has desire her to live her life not minding others approval or disapproval and much more to defend her place in the society. Even Lorraine's father had kicked her out when he discovered that she is lesbian (p.148). Thus, rejected by the community, Lorraine suffers a terrible gang rape by the boys of Brewster Place which leads to her death.

4.2. "A Dream Deferred"

The collective identity and trauma of 'the women of Brewster Place' is also summed up in the poem Naylor wrote at the opening of the novel, a poem by Langston Hughes: 'What happens to a dream deferred?' (qtd. in Naylor *v*). She obviously introduces her story with this poem to establish a common theme among the characters. Each character has suffered a dream that was deferred or never fully realized. Ciel had said at the start of her story that dreams are the children of an idle brain (p.107). In this context, however, a "deferred dream" suggests a dream that has been buried and forgotten, when hope to improve oneself is gone. Thus, Naylor's story tells of how each character deals with their deferred dream.

Through a series of rhetorical questions used throughout the poem, Hughes explored the theme of dream and their realization. The first two lines of this poem shows that a dream could be repressed or pushed out of consciousness, like a raisin drying in the sun, until it is hard to remember: "Does it dry up/ like a raisin in the sun? The third and fourth lines reveal that a dream could actually become rotten within the person, causing pain, until it is properly healed: Or fester like a sore / And then run? In line five, Hughes says the smell of the dying dream causes general misery when they are not fully realized for the person whose dream it

was and discomfort for those with whom he or she comes in contact: Does it stink like rotten meat? Also, Lines eight and nine describe the deferred dream as a heavy load, which pulls the victim down: Maybe it just sags/ like a heavy load/. Lines six and seven throws a positive light to dream deferred. It suggests that to defeat the pain of a dream that lies unfulfilled, a person may find relieve by exerting the energy that was intended for his or her dream into creating happiness and helping others, despite internal feelings of loss: Or crust and sugar over/ like a syrupy sweet? In the last line of Hughes' poem, violent anger is depicted as another reaction to a dream deferred: Or does it explode?

Mattie Michael's dream of a live of happiness and joy is aborted by her early pregnancy to an irresponsible "no-count ditch hound" and the consequent rejection by her father, also by Basil's unruly behavior and consequent punishment by the Law. Mattie consciously turns these heart rending experiences over by creating a world of hope and happiness for herself like what Hughes described in lines six and seven of his poem. She buries her pain inside herself and becomes Brewster Place's 'caring mother', so to speak. She pours all of her energy into caring and identifying with her neighbors and helping them out. She advices them and guides them through their dilemma to ease her own heavy heart

In the case of Etta Mae, although she struggles to become a great woman in a world that does not regard black women, she painfully watches her dream shattered. "...she learned to get over, to hook herself to any promising rising black star, and when he burned out, she found another." (p.60) But then she ages and never succeeds in becoming someone great. She comes to Brewster Place, tired and old. Her dream dries up and fades just like the picture of her real self. She turns to a quieter life in Brewster Place.

Naylor uses the concept of a dream deferred to depict the individual struggles of this small group of people and to show how such a community can identify with one another and work for survival.

> …. Those who had spawned Brewster Place, countless twilights ago, now mandated that it was to be condemned. With no heat or electricity, the water pipes froze in the winter….Vermin bred in uncollected garbage and spread through the walls. Brewster Place had given what it could- all it could- to its "Afric" children, and there was just no more. So it had to watch, dying but not dead, as they packed up the remnants of their dreams and left… (p.191)

Thus, other characters Kiswana, Ciel, Etta Mae Johnson and Lorraine are samples of many African American women who still struggle to find a place of their own.

4.3. Characters and the Unconscious Motivation

Other unconscious processes aside deformed family system that was examined in the previous chapter include forceful severance from loved ones especially ones parents and the often impossible search for a suitable replacement. This is the case with Naylor's characters, Mattie Michael, Etta Mae Johnson, and Lucielia Louise Turner. They also lose the benefit of a father. This is generally true of the African American society where the father is mostly not an active member of the family. His presence is either dormant or not known at home at all as Etta Mae's remarks: "All the good men are dead or waiting to be born" (p.61). Mattie's forceful and early separation from her first love object (her mother), result to an immature role of motherhood and a lack of proper individuation seen in her relationship with her son, Basil. Mattie's uncontrollable and extreme love for Basil and the refusal to remarry or have any intimate relationship with a man, though may appear normal, is an unconscious act of seeking to also fulfill her lost love from her parents. Thus, Basil, though,

her son, he is also an object of love that Mattie needs to be fully relief of her past trauma. Instead of a mother-son relationship with a well defined responsibilities and roles, what we have is a deformed mother-son relationship with no clear line of roles and responsibilities. When Mrs Eva challenges Mattie "No young woman wants an empty bed, year in and year out (p.37)", she secretly admitted it even though she defended herself by responding thus: "My bed hasn't been empty since Basil was born". Her response clearly portrays Basil as her son and also the found love object that satisfies all her lonely nights or her bed, taking the place of a lover and also the vacuum of her parents and Butch Fuller, the man that had impregnated and abandoned her. Basil as expected takes advantage of his mother's excessive love, when he jumps bail and makes his mother forfeit her house used as collateral.

Also, in the case of Mae Johnson, the loss of the love object and the search for a suitable replacement is the cause of her desperation. She resolves that she will "do just what I want to, anyway and don't care what people say..." (p.57). She finds freedom only in Mattie's presence. In her presence "she has no choice but to be herself. The carefully erected decoys she was constantly shuffling and changing to fit the situation were of no use (p.58)". This put-on act by Etta clearly reveals some unresolved psychological conflict in her. One of her desperate efforts is observed when she attends Mattie's church service. She immediately sets her mind on seducing the minister/preacher. She believes that with the man, "I'm finally gonna get that rest and the residents of Brewster Place who have always whisper her name will be humming a different tune when I show up there the wife of a big preacher…" (p.70). Because of this desperate search for a love, she throws her mind and decency to the winds. For instance, she announces the fact that she is single and available to the minister after

telling her that he is a widower: “I can testify to that. Being a woman alone, it seems all the more hard, sometimes you don’t know where to turn” (p.68). She does not agree with Mattie that Reverend Woods is not the sort of man that is serious about settling down with a woman. Etta realizes at the end of the sexual affair with Reverend Woods that it has followed the same old pattern she has been used to over the years, and that once again, Reverend Woods has no different intention from the men she has known all her life. She walks back to Brewster Place frustrated and down spirited.

For Cora Lee, her desire to overcome loneliness leads her into ceaseless childbirths. She has become addicted to “shadows – who came in the night and showed her the thing that felt good in the dark, and left before the children awakened ...” (p.113). The ‘thing that felt good in the dark’ often brought the babies, and that’s all Cora Lee cared about. In a similar manner, Lucielia Louise Turner’s perception of life is distorted. The fact that she will do practically anything to maintain her relationship with Eugene indicates a kind of desperation discernible in someone whose sense of loss is unimaginable and of an individual who desires a replacement for what is lost at all cost. She tells Eugene as he packs his things to leave her and her daughter: “I don’t mind. We’ll make do. I’ve learned to live on very little” (p. 99).

4.4. Collective and Communal Healing

The sudden reappearance of Lorraine via dreams to every woman in Brewster place and the ‘rain’ that begins to pour on Brewster Place just immediately after Lorraine’s painful death are important imageries that point to a new dawn for the women of Brewster Place. Naylor relates that every woman dreamed that rainy week of the tall yellow woman in the bloody green and black dress. Lorraine had come back to them (via their unconscious:

dreams and hallucination) in the midst of the cold sweat of a nightmare, or had hung around the edges of fitful sleep. Little girls woke up screaming, unable to be comforted by bewildered mothers who knew, and yet didn't know, the reason for their daughters' stolen sleep (p.175). Even Ciel, who has left Brewster Place in order to leave behind the memory of her past which had all happened in Brewster Place and as a result never knew Lorraine, dreams of her, thus connecting to her and sharing in what stands as collective memory and trauma to all the women:

> …that wall and Ben… and a woman who was supposed to be me… Oh, I don't know, one of those crazy things that get all mixed up in your head. Something about that wall and Ben. And there was a woman who was supposed to be me, I guess. She didn't look exactly like me, but inside I felt it was me. ... And something bad had happened to me by the wall—I mean her—something bad had happened to her (p.179)

Surprisingly all that had happened to Lorraine and Ben at the wall was the dream that Ciel had shared with Mattie when she returns to Brewster place from Franscisco. Much more amazing is the fact that Ciel appears as Lorraine in the dream. She discards the dream as one of "those crazy dream… that get all mixed up in your head" (p.185). Although she narrates it jokingly not paying any serious attention to what she is saying other than emphasizing its crazy nature, Mattie understands and recognizes the import of all she said. It is now clearly revealed or known to Mattie and Etta as they listen to Ciel's dreams that they all share in the plights and death of Lorraine. The fact that Lorraine is a woman and she is black means that she is no longer an individual to be left standing alone; her struggles for self-recognition and acceptance however peculiar it may appear, represents their collective trauma. It suggests that they are sharing a collective memory, similar to Marianne Hirsh's concept of post memory. Hirsh (2008:106) argues:

> Memory can be transmitted to those who were not actually there to live an event. At the same time—so it is assumed—this received memory is distinct from the recall of contemporary witnesses and participants. Hence, the insistence on "post" or "after" and the many qualifying adjectives that try to define both a specifically inter-and trans-generational act of transfer and the resonant aftereffects of trauma.

Led by Mattie, the women moved by a collective consciousness, face the wall that represent their oppression, and in recent weeks, the site of Lorraine's rape and painful death and that of Ben who has gone there to rescue her, to clean up the blood that is still there: "…there's still blood on this wall. ... Blood ain't got no right still being here' (p.185); by this collective act, Lorraine (represented by the sight of her blood) no longer attract the hatred of the other women who condemn and even isolated her because she is lesbian. Naylor demonstrates that freedom from oppression can only be achieved by a collective effort. That is, the women must come together and identify with one another's trauma and memories of pain and oppression.

In an interview by Carabi, (1992: 119-120 cited in Sarah F. V. (2003) Naylor was asked if Mattie's dream of collective resistance would ever become a reality and she responded thus:

> This is going to depend on the reader. When she (Mattie) wakes up, the party is going to take place, but the clouds are coming and you know it's going to rain. Is this going to be a deferred dream? Well, I decided to let each reader decide. Will they tear down the wall? Or won't they? ... It's an open ending.

Naylor depicts the need for resistance by shared remembering. It is as the women are joined through collective memory that they best learn to re-see their personal identities and memories, while also sharing in a larger group identity.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed trauma and the unconscious in the protagonists of Gloria Naylor's *The Women of Brewster Place* to determine how the unconscious factors are responsible for these characters' actions. The analysis also delves into the psychology, history and background of each of the characters to reveal what has happened to them, which contributes to or is overly responsible for their unwholesome personality traits. Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic perspectives are deployed in this exercise.

CHAPTER FIVE

MYTH AS A REPOSITORY OF 'THE UNCONSCIOUS' AND CULTURAL IDENTITY IN GLORIA NAYLOR'S *MAMA DAY*

5.0. Introduction

In the previous chapters, the study examined the extent to which the unconscious through the means of dreams, intrusive memories, flashbacks and nightmares tends to revisit and influence the behavioural traits of the characters in the narratives, taking into consideration the circumstances these characters find themselves. This 'return of the repressed' is also shown in Gloria Naylor's *Mama Day* to manifest in myth and ritual. Naylor's *Mama Day* centres on the inevitable reoccurrence of a community's myth that becomes the pillar for the collective identity of the community and also establishes the link between their past and the future. Carl Jung's psychoanalytic mythological theory is use in this chapter to show how 'The Unconscious' work through myth and most importantly how such unconscious processes determine and shape the behaviours and personality of individual characters.

5.1. Carl Jung and Mythological Criticism

Carl Gustav Jung's (1875–1961) theory of 'collective unconscious', also known as analytic theory or analytical psychology has remained a predominant influence in psychoanalysis especially through its principal tenets on spirituality, archetypes and myths. Like other predominant developments in psychoanalysis such as 'ego-psychology of Ernest Kris; Lacanian psychoanalysis which integrates psychoanalysis with semiotics; and so on, the theories of Jung (Man and his symbols, 1978) saw the unconscious as a common

reservoir of symbols and signs that reoccurs in our history and for him were clues to understanding human personality.

Though, a well known student of Freud for several years and also a principal adherent of his theory of the unconscious, Jung's ideas deviated from Freud's. While Jung places a great deal of emphasis on the study of different cultures to show that the similarities between cultures is an indication of what it means to be human and which he called 'the collective unconscious', Freud used the term *unconscious* to apply to the hidden thoughts and ideas of one person. In Freud's view, each person has his or her own unconscious, and although they have some similarities in the structures and defense mechanisms, what is in one person's unconscious might not be in another person's unconscious. This conception is known as the personal unconscious**.** Jung's argument of the collective unconscious is drawn from the similar evolutionary circumstances and common ancestors we have as human beings. He asserts that each of us is motivated not only by repressed experiences as Freud had earlier propounded, but also by certain predominant experiences inherited from our ancestors. These include distant ancestor's experiences with universal concepts like God, mother, water, earth, that are transmitted through myths, legends, and religion so that people in every time have been influenced by their primate ancestor's primordial experiences. These elements (the content) of the collective unconscious are what Jung called archetypes**.** More specifically, he described an archetype 'as a figure…that repeats itself in the course of history wherever creative fantasy is fully manifested.' He uses the following terms: "*The self , "Shadow", "Anima",* and *"Animus"* to explain archetypes as the reoccurring figures in human traditional past.

The self: The *self* is the most powerful archetype. Jung believes that each person possesses an inherited tendency to move toward growth, perfection, and completion, and he called this innate disposition of the *self*. The self pulls together the other archetypes and unites them in the process of *self-realization*.

Shadow is the archetype of darkness and repression, representing the qualities that we do not wish to acknowledge but attempt to hide from *ourselves* and *others*. The shadow consists of morally objectionable tendencies as well as a number of constructive qualities that we are reluctant to face. It is easier to project this dark side onto others that we refuse to see in ourselves. To come to grips with the darkness within ourselves is to achieve the *realization of the shadow*.

Anima is the feminine side of men and originates in the collective unconscious as an archetype and remains extremely resistant to consciousness. Few men become well acquainted with the anima because this task requires great courage and is even more difficult to become acquainted with than their shadow. To master the projection of the anima, men must overcome intellectual barriers, delve into the far recesses of their unconscious, and realize the feminine side of their personality. Jung believes that the anima originates from early men's experiences with women including mothers, sisters, and lovers which combine into the concept of *women*. At times the archetype of anima is an image and at other times it is represented as a *feeling* or a *mood*.

Animus is the masculine side of women and originates in the collective unconscious as an archetype that, too, is resistant to consciousness. The animus is symbolic of thinking and reasoning and is capable of influencing the thinking of women yet it does not *belong* to her.

It belongs to the collective unconscious and originates from the encounters of prehistoric women with men. Animus originates from early women's experiences with men including fathers, brothers, and lovers that are combined into the concept of *men*. Both the anima and animus can influence the relationship of men and women with partners. The animus appears in dreams, visions, and fantasies in a personified form. *Great mother* is a derivative of the animus and anima. Every man and woman possesses a *great mother* archetype. The pre-existing concept of mother has both positive and negative feeling which extends to this archetype. The great mother represents the opposing forces of fertility and nourishment on one hand and power and destruction on the other. It is also known as godmother, Mother of God, Mother Nature, Mother Earth, the stepmother, and even a witch. Fertility and power combine to form the concept of *rebirth* which, itself, may be a different archetype altogether. Rebirth is represented in the process of reincarnation, baptism, resurrection, and individuation.

Living fully, Jung believes, means living harmoniously with the fundamental elements of human nature. In particular, with three powerful archetypes that composes the self. That is, the shadow, the anima, and the persona. Jung teaches that the archetypes color our world of experience and express themselves within our personalities. They influence whom we are attracted to, and become part of our art, our folklore, and the symbols that we use in our cultures. In many ways, it is probably the most mystical of all the psychological personality theories.

5.2. The Myth of 'Willow Spring'

According to Jung's postulations, Myths are essentially containers of great truths of a community or group where they are found; they are born out of the collective unconscious, hidden in the mind, and the only reliable guide to self-realization and self identity. He added that because they are part of human psyche, they direct and influence present behavior. Naylor's preoccupation with and portrayal of the myth of Sapphira Wade in *Mama Day* to a large extent concurs with Jung's views above especially as she presents this myth as the only trustworthy guide to the community's identity and wellbeing. Individual character in Naylor's story must also appreciate and identify with this myth for their progress, self recognition and cultural integration. This myth is centered on Sapphira Wade. Bascombe Wade, a slaveholder and owner of the whole island (now Willow Spring) according to the myth, had been in love with Sapphira, who, however, did not return his affections but took advantage of this to persuade him to sign the entire island to his slaves prior to murdering him. Although this myth is openly celebrated every December twenty second by what they call the "Candle Night Walk", the story that birth the myth itself is never mentioned or recounted openly just as "the name Sapphira Wade is never breathed out of a single mouth in Willow Springs" (p.4). Thus, the story and its original meaning are only preserved in the memory of the two eldest descendants of Sapphira: Miranda (Mama) Day and her sister Abigail. They also have remained silent about it, thus, subjecting the story to changes and modifications as the year pass on:

> Everybody knows but nobody talks about the legend of Sapphira Wade. A true conjure woman: satin black, biscuit cream, red as Georgia clay: depending upon which of us takes a mind to her. She could walk through a lightning storm without being touched; grab a bolt of lightning in the palm of her hand; use the heat of lightning to start the kindling going under her medicine pot... She turned the moon into salve, the stars into a swaddling

> cloth, and healed the wounds of every creature walking up on two or down on four (p.2)

Thus, the whole Island and community of Willow Springs, now belonging to Sapphira and her descendants came about as a result of Sapphira's deeds. Naylor shows that when there is a gap between any member of Willow Spring and this myth, there will also be a distortion in the character's personality and meaning to life generally. In fact, the fates of the characters are linked to their ability to listen to the voices of their culture, and to understand them. This is well illustrated in the character of the estranged child of Willow Springs native who returns to his mother's homeland with the intention "to put Willow Springs on the map" (p.7), as well as find out the meaning behind the expression 18 & 23. However, he is frustrated and unable to understand the particular character of the expression because, being a stranger to his community, he lacks his share in the collective understanding of the term and the memory related to it and also because he is not willing to listen. Naylor seems to make a profound caricature of this attempt by explaining the activities of the boy thus:

> If the boy wanted to know what 18 & 23 meant, why didn't he just ask? When he was running around sticking that machine in everybody's face, we was sitting right here-every one of us-and him being one of Reema's, we would obliged him. He could asked Cloris about the curve in her spine that came from the planting season when their mule broke its leg, and she took up the reins and kept pulling the plow with her own back. Winky woulda told him about the hot tar that took out the corner of his right eye the summer we had only seven days to rebuild the bridge so the few crops we had left after the storm could be gotten over before rot sat in. Anybody woulda carried him through the fields…(p.8)

Thus, 'Reema's boy' in his attempt to barely use his acquired knowledge of letters and history to tell what could only be known by the unwritten memory of the people and

their past, comes up with a confuse explanation of the 18 & 23 expression that has nothing to do with the history or people of Willow spring and which earns him the scorn of people in Willow Springs:

> … he had come to the conclusion after 'extensive field work'(ain't never picked a boll of cotton or head of lettuce in his life…)… that 18 & 23 wasn't 18 & 23 at all — was really 81 & 32, which just so happened to be the lines of longitude and latitude marking off where Willow Springs sits on the map. And we were just so damned dumb that we turned the whole thing around. Not that he called it being dumb, mind you, called it 'asserting our cultural identity,' 'inverting hostile, social and political parameters.' 'Cause, see, being we was brought here as slaves, we had no choice but to look at everything upside-down. An then being that we was isolated off here in this island, everybody else in the country went on learning good English…. And he thought that was just so wonderful and marvelous, etcetera, etcetera… (pp.7-8)

In the mind of any member of Willow Spring who unlike Reema Boy is well integrated into the written and unwritten norms of the land, '18 & 23' is not just some mixed up set of numbers, nor merely a date as Reema's boy explained. It is their unique way of naming their traumatic past, and specifically referring to the year that Sapphira Wade, the pioneer of the Island and their 'ancestral mother' murdered Bascombe Wade to free the people from slavery. By extension, Gloria Naylor uses this expression to refer to the African American's history of trauma, oppression and hardship. Getting to know a people's cultural myth as shown in the case of Reema boy must start by asking, observing or being a part of the people's way of life. This is what Naylor suggests by saying: If the boy wanted to know what 18 & 23 meant, why didn't he just ask..." (p.8). Similarly, in the lines below, Naylor further acknowledges the collective voice of Willow Spring as the only way to interpret their culture by telling the reader: "You done heard it without a single living soul really saying a word. Pity, though, Reema's boy couldn't listen, like you, to Cocoa and George down by

them oaks- or he woulda left here with quite a story (p.10). Naylor's narrative technique of speaking to the reader/listener through the collective voice of Willow Springs allows the reader /listener the priviledge of hearing what Reema's boy couldn't. That is, to hear the tellings of George and Cocoa, Naylor's protagonists. In the words of Lamothe (2005:2) "Naylor privileges the dynamism of the island's living memory over the representations of the past attempted by inhabitants of the Western-oriented mainland". Naylor hereby posits myth as an important part of the individual and collective identity formation.

Naylor further draws attention to the cultural value of identifying with one's root or cultural past by contrasting the characters of George and Cocoa. George is the son of an anonymous prostitute and like other boys who had also "misfitted into somebody's game plan and so were thrown away", he is raised in Wallace P. Andrews, a state shelter for boys (p.22). They were thrown away because their parents have no plan for them. They are mostly black women who were abused sexually or seeking for a means of making it with white men. This institution, managed by Mrs Johnson, inevitably has deformed the behavior and perceptions of these boys. George says:

> Our rage didn't matter to her, our hurts and disappointments over what life had done to us. None of that was going to matter a damn in the outside world, so we might as well start learning it at Wallace P. Andrews…. Before coming there, we had been beaten and starved for being born (p.25)

All that George knows about himself is his name and the fact that the name was given to him by the woman who often announces to them "… I am not your mother … You have no mothers or fathers. This is not your home- it is a state shelter for boys" (p.25), George does not attach any significance to his identity. He deeply resents the fact of his rootlessness:

> Nothing like the place you came from. I was always in awe of the stories you told so easily about Willow Springs. To be born in a grandmother's house, to be able to walk and see where a great-grandfather and even great-great-grandfather was born. You had more than a family, you had a history. And I didn't even have a real last name. I'm sure my father and mother lied to each other about even their first names. How he would now years later that I might especially wonder about his? When the arrangement is to drop twenty bucks on a dresser for a woman, you figure that's all you've left behind. I had no choice but to emphasize my now, while in back of all that stubbornness was the fear that you might think less of me (pp.129-130)

Meeting with Cocoa at an interview in Andrews And Steins Company and their intimate relationship thereafter offers George the opportunity to relate haphazardly the trauma of his life and the pain of his rootedness. He cherishes greatly Cocoa's curricula vitae as it contains the detail of her place of her birth, her family background/name and her place of origin, all of which is obviously absent in his own life. Thus, George is the direct opposite of Cocoa. In fact, he fights with Cocoa whom to his amazement attaches little or no significance to her root. She makes efforts to hide her identity (her skin color) by her make-up (p.230), which is a proof of her descendant of Bascombe Wade. George demonstrates even greater excitement when he follows Cocoa to Willow Spring. He, for the first time, experiences the joy of being in a family and seeing a communal life. He confesses his joy to Cocoa:

> Miss Abigailputs her hands up on each side of my face- Well, bless your heart child-and a lump formed in my throat at their gentle pressure. Up until that moment, no woman had ever called me her child….The intense envy for all that you had and the gratitude for their being willing to et me belong?...(p.179)

George was deeply engrossed in the communal life that he considers remaining in Willow Spring to Cocoa's great resentment: "…I could fish, open some sort of store at the

bridge junction or …write textbooks while we raised a family. It wouldn't cost much to live down here". (p. 221).

While Cocoa will not make an effort to connect with her past, surprisingly, she challenges George for literally talking about anything and everything but would never mention a word about his past life. She laments thus:

> …and you could make me laugh with the stories about some of your clients, about your partner's offbeat relatives and the niece who put chewing gum in the filling cabinet And when I pressed you for your life, you'd say that you grew up in a boy's shelter, that it was hard, working your way through Columbia and getting set up in your own business. You'd mention a woman named Mrs. Jackson sometimes, the world lost a lot when she died, you said. But you'd never talk about your feelings surrounding any of that. 'Only the present has potential' is how you'd brush me off. Deal with the man in front of you. I was trying, George. But what you didn't understand is that I thought you didn't trust me enough to share those feelings. A person is made up of much more than the 'now.' (pp. 126-127)

For George and the other boys in the shelter house, only the present counts. This is what Mrs Johnson repeatedly say to them: "only the present has potential, sir" (p.23), thus, George's entire life is made up of the 'now' because he has no past like Cocoa.

More so, Miranda and Abigail's attempt to keep the Day's family history and root from Cocoa which led to the early death of George and almost cost Cocoa her life also reveals the significance of the past in influencing the present and the trauma that results when such roots are not fully acknowledge. Every "candle night Walk" celebration reminds Miranda as the oldest in the Days family the need to reveal the truth about Cocoa's real name- "Ophelia" which will also mean talking about "the other place" and the reoccurring trauma of loss and death in the Day's family. Although she has symbolically transmitted this story through the quilt she knit together using pieces of cloth she cut from every Day woman as Cocoa's wedding present, there is the need to address the past and by this heal the wound

in the past. Miranda and Abigail ponder on this when Bernice presents a rocking chair to Miranda as her candle night's gift:

> ….we ain't even told Baby Girl about… And we should, you know, Abigail. It ain't nothing to be ashamed of, it's her family and her history. And she'll have children one day… she's grown woman and her real name is Ophlia. We don't like to think on it, but that's her name. Not Baby Girl, not Cocoa…(p.116).

The death of George and the eminent loss of Cocoa forces Miranda to go back to the root/past that she has always repressed in order to save the life of Cocoa and also to prevent more death in the future:

> George done made it possible for all her Candle Walks to end right here from now on; the other place holds no more secrets that's left for her to find. The rest will lay in the hands of the Baby Girl — once she learns how to listen. But she's grieving for herself too much now to hear, 'cause she thinks that boy done left her. He's gone, but he ain't left her. Now, another one who broke his heart 'cause he couldn't let her go. So she's gotta get past the grieving for what she lost, to go on to the grieving for what was lost, before the child of Grace lives up to her name. (pp. 307-308)

Although Cocoa grieves over the death of George now, what she must grieve over is the history of her family which is the only way to finally end her pains. She needs to become aware of the reoccurring deaths in the history of her family as a means to put an end to the repetition. She will learn about Sapphira Wade, the Day's ancestral mother, about her true story and most importantly her part in this story and the role she must play:

> Miranda holds her candle in the direction of the waters that carry his ashes: I can tell you now about this here night….My daddy said that his daddy said when he was young, Candle Walk was…I can't tell you her name [Sapphira's], 'cause it was never opened to me [Miranda]. That' s a door for the child of Grace to walk through. And how many, in any, of them seven sons were his? Well, that's also left for her to find. And you'll help her, won't you? She says to George. One day she'll hear you, like you're hearing me. And there'll be another time —that I won't be here for — when she'll learn about the beginning of the Days. But she's gotta go away to come back

> to that kind of knowledge. And I came to tell you not to worry: whatever roads take her from here, they'll always lead her back to you. (p.308)

What was passed on to Cocoa was not just the history of Sapphira and the myth of Candle Walk but significantly the mystical and spiritual power of Sapphira as they expect the Days power and authority to continue with and through her.

Cocoa's recovery commences when she returns to her family graveyard to talk with George. She tells him about their roots and family traditions, the gap that George continually calls Cocoa's attention to. And yet, the recovery process has not been fully completed as she still struggles to explain to her son, whom she named after George and the one who needs to hear the story, the whole events:

> …I called my son inside…and told him that he was named after a man who looked just like love. He frowned for a moment….and said, That's all? I could trust myself to do anything but nod….I guess one of the reasons I've been here so much is that I felt if we kept retracting our steps, we'd find out exactly what brought us to this slope near The Sound. But when I see you again, our versions will be different still. All of that would have been too complicated to tell a child. Mama Day was right — give him the simple truth. And it's the one truth about you that I hold on to. Because what really happened to us George? You see, that's what I mean — there are just too many sides to the whole story. (pp. 310-311)

Cocoa is only a part of a whole comprising the family and also the community at large; she can only work through her own personal trauma of rootlessness by coming to terms with the historical trauma she has inherited. As typical of all trauma narratives and trauma characters, such as Florens in Morrison's *A Mercy* and Mattie Micheal, Etta Johnson and others in Naylor's in *Women of Brewster* Place, Cocoa struggles to tell her past for, at the end of the narrative, she has not yet gotten to all the sides of the story, which is the necessary—yet difficult—part for trauma recovery process to fully take place, as Miranda once tells George:

> ….Just like that chicken coop, everything got four sides: his side, her side, an outside, and an inside. All of it is the truth. But that takes a lot of work and young folks ain't about working hard no more. When getting at the truth starts to hurt, it's easier to turn away. (p.230)

Thus as seen in the previous chapters, this avoidance of pain and repression is common in victims of trauma, and it is one of the main causes for psychological trauma and disorientative behaviours. Hence, the significance of the recovery of the past and the coming to terms with one's personal and collective history and roots.

5.3. "Quilting" and "Earth Mothers": Archetypes for Cultural Memory

Yet, more predominant influence of the 'collective unconscious' and archetypes in Naylor's *Mama Day* is seen in the symbolic images of "quilt" and 'Earth mothers'. These are effectively used to depict cultural past and memory and to establish the link between the past and present. Mama Day (Miranda) makes it her sole duty to sustain and keep the traditional and cultural values of her ancestors especially from the forces of Western tradition. She engages in the traditional practices of midwifery, as in the case of Bernice and Ambush's search for a child. More so, her power in making charms/ medicine is demonstrated in her retaliatory encounter with Ruby who poisons Cocoa's hair, which nearly costs Cocoa her life. However, her most outstanding effort is seen in the making of a quilt, a symbol of cultural memory as a wedding gift to Cocoa and George:

> The old walnut clock in Abigail's living room ticks away as Miranda's silver needle slips through the layers of padded cloth: the curve of each ring is fixed into place by sending the needle down to the bottom and up….The overlapping circles start out as golds on the edge and melt into oranges, reds, blues, greens, and then back to gold … A bit of her daddy's Sunday shirt is matched with Abigail's lace slip, the collar from Hope's graduation dress, the palm of Grace's baptismal gloves. Trunks and boxes from the other place gave up enough for twenty quilts: corduroy from her uncles, broadcloth from her great-

> uncles…The gingham is almost rot and don't cut well, the threads fraying under her scissors….The homespun is wrapped over and basted along the edges of the gingham. She can shape the curve she needs now. …How many- if any- of them seven sons were his? But the last boy to show up in their family was no mystery; he had cherished another woman who could not find peace. Ophelia. It was too late to take it out of the quilt (p.138)

Naylor's vivid description of the double-ring quilt sewn by Miranda and Abigail above draws attention to the richness and significance of the quilt. Quite obvious and known to Cocoa, this quilt was not created merely to be a wedding present, but a significant family object that shows and celebrate the fact that there will be further generations of this cultural act to be passed down through a line of Day-women. Cocoa affirms this '...I also knew they hadn't gone through that kind of labor just for me…They had sewed for MY grandchildren to be conceived under this quilt…. (p. 147).

Significantly, the materials for sewing the quilt are pieces of clothes that Miranda cuts from the old ware of the members of Days' women. By doing this, she calls back the past memory of the Day women especially those that have died and the events associated with their death. In other words, each piece cut from the Days' women old wear brings back their memory and most importantly establish the link of the past with the present. It reveals the ancestral root of the Days' family, especially in relation to Sapphira Wade, a conjure woman who is also the possessor and ancestor of Willow Spring. Sapphira is revealed to have seven sons who in turn 'fathered' seven sons. The seventh son then gives birth to three daughters, Miranda (the eldest), Abigail and Peace. Peace drowns in a well at an early age, while their mother Ophelia runs mad as a result. Abigail gives birth to three daughters and names one of them Peace, who incidentally also dies young. Her second daughter who is named Grace is the mother of Cocoa (Ophelia), or Baby Girl. The third daughter is Hope,

who had been Mama Day's favourite niece, but who also dies young with her little daughter, Willa, at a Christmas Eve fire. Thus as Miranda makes the quilt, an act that takes her a whole night, she reflects on the lot of Days' family, she concludes that:

> we ain't had much luck with the girls in this family... No, not much luck at all. It was peculiar when she thought on it, and she didn't think on it much. Most all of the boys had thrived….Three generations of nothing but girls, and only one left alive in this last generation to keep the Days going- the child of Grace (p.39).

So it is obvious the position of Cocoa as the only survivor "one left alive in this generation to keep the Days going" (p.39). Mama Day and Ophelia (Cocoa) or Baby Girl therefore come from a lineage of a woman, whose personality in the course of time has become mythic. Remarkably, she ends the curve with the piece from Sapphira Wade "….It doesn't help to listen to the clock, 'cause it's only telling her what she knew about the homespun all along. The woman who wore it broke a man's heart…" (p.138). Thus, Cocoa is symbolically weaved into the families past, present and the future. In fact, her name, 'Ophelia' is to bear the memory of the oldest woman in the Day family:

> Grace Samantha Day: I gave the first and only baby my grandmother's name. Ophelia. I did it out of vengeance. Let this be another one, I told God, who could break a man's heart. Didn't women suffer enough?... If I had known then what I was knowing all along, I woulda named her something else. Sapphira. My grandmother only softly broke a heart. My great-great-grandmothar tore one wide open. (p.151)

The reoccurrence of death of Day women and the pains they give to their husbands as we have in the case of George and Cocoa is traced back to the Days' family.

It has been noted by many other critics that the beauty and utility of quilting, a time-honoured art-form of African American women especially during slavery, lies in voicing the suppressed but undying creativity of African American women. It is a method of expression

as well as a visual representation of the collaborative efforts of the women (Lau, 1999). Quilting, therefore, has remained and passed into African American literary tradition as showing the resourcefulness and strong will of African Americans, a symbol of their improvisation and survival. Thus, it reoccurrence in Naylor's *Mama Day* is not surprising.

Mattie Michael, Naylor's protagonist in *The Women of Brewster Place* (*TWBP*) is examined alongside with the character of Miranda in *Mama Day* to show the predominant archetypical figure of 'Earth Mothers" in Naylor's writings as well as in African American women writings. As mentioned earlier, archetypes run across cultures and are noticeable in their recurrence in literary works. In Naylor's interview with Kay Bonetti (1990:55 cited in Lucie Procházková 2012: Motherhood and Sisterhood in Gloria Naylor's Novels) she raises a salient meaning and the roles of 'Earth Mothers'. Naylor explains that Mattie's role/characterization came into being in response to the needs of another character, Lucielia Louise Turner:

> … The work began with that rocking scene. And I had written that as sort of a catharsis for myself. I was going through what I considered as being a great deal of pain. And I imagined a woman who would be feeling pain that intensely but for other reasons. And I sat down and wrote that. And what I had hoped for was a kind of earth mother to just knock down this door and come sit here on this couch and just rock. I wanted to be rocked out of my pain. And that's how I invented Mattie Michael in that scene.

From this interview, the archetype of an 'Earth Mother' in Naylor's fictions appears to be a kind of a healer of the soul, someone who willingly and effectively helps other people to overcome unbearable psychological and physical pain. Such individuals are definitely indispensable in a community like Africa America where we have generational and collective trauma embedded in their socio-political and cultural history. The 'Earth Mothers' are quite unique in the sense that they bear similar and even more pains than others, but they

are only comforted to live on and face the future by helping others who are going through similar events.

‘Earth Mothers’ have also much broader meanings and functions apart from their roles as healers. They are known for their wisdom and most importantly they possess supernatural abilities, embody fertility and are closely associated with nature. They also earn the respect of others for these abilities. Mattie and Mama Day demonstrate these abilities especially as Naylor portrays them as matriarch under whom leadership and strong maternal supports the community of Brewster place and Willow Spring respectively survive. For instance, among several other special abilities, Sapphira "could. . . grab a bolt of lightning in the palm of her hand" and "use the heat of lightning to start the kindling growing under her medicine pot" (p.4). Mama Day, during the course of the novel, causes lightning to strike an enemy's house, uses chickens to impregnate a barren friend, and ultimately saves her great-niece Cocoa from an early death.

Significantly both Mattie Michael and Miranda Day have their predecessors in the novels. This is important as it shows the roles of ancestors and demonstrates that such wisdom and knowledge are transmitted from generation to generation. In case of Mattie Michael, it is Mrs Eva. Although Mrs. Eva is not Mattie’s relative, she offers her a home and influences her greatly. She encourages and helps Mattie to move on with her life. Mama Day‘s predecessor is Sapphira Wade, a great grandmother whom she does not know but she naturally inherits her special abilities which earn her the name Little Mama although she was still a child. Sapphira as midwife, mother, matriarch, and archetypal Mother, embodies maternality. These strength and knowledge of nature are passed on to Cocoa from Sapphira Wade.

Thus, because of the importance of preserving wisdom, similarly as Mattie and Mama Day had their predecessors, they also have their successors, namely Lucielia and Ophelia respectively. Both characters, Mattie Michael and Mama Day, as well as their predecessors, Miss Eva and Sapphira Wade, confirm Naylor‘s emphasis on strong maternal leaders in African American communities. When such women are missing, the communities cannot function well. Indeed, Naylor draws attention to the role and place of these women in the community in her interview with Carabi (2004: 114 cited in Lucie Procházková 2012: Motherhood and Sisterhood in Gloria Naylor’s Novels) while describing the hometown of her parents:

> Angels Carabi: From the beginning of your work, you create a sense of place, a sense of community where people interact.
>
> Gloria Naylor: For various reasons, I am drawn to this sense of community. What makes a writer do what he or she does derives from so many rivulets of influences. I come from a very large, close-knit, and extended family. … Besides, family and class community is my communal history as a black American. Our survival today has depended on our nurturing each other, finding resources within ourselves. The women in Robinsonville, Mississippi, who dealt with herbs, for instance, played a crucial role in our community. They weren‘t just magical women, they had a definite medical purpose, because you could not depend on the outside hospitals to take care of your needs. So people grew up within a community that birthed you and laid you away when you died. Community is what I know and what I feel most comfortable with.

Morrison (1984: 343) in an essay titled "Rootedness: The Ancestor as Foundation " *Black Women Writers (1950-1980)* cited in Dorathy Perry Thompson: Gloria Naylor's *Mama Day* and the New Renaissance: Zora as Mother (41) discusses the role of 'Earth Mothers' as ancestors. She writes:

> There is always an ancestor there, and these ancestors are not just parents; they are sort of timeless people whose relationships to the characters are benevolent, instructive, and protective, and they provide a certain kind of wisdom. How the character responds to that presence interests me. Some of them, such as Richard Wright, had great difficulty with that ancestor. Some of them, like James Baldwin, were confounded and disturbed by the presence or absence of an ancestor.

For example, in Morrison's *Song of Solomon*, Milkman suffers most from the loss of contact with his ancestors. He recovers from a life of dissipation only when he reclaims his ancestral past. Thus, the key to Milkman's redemption lies in reclamation of a female ancestor, Pilate, who is, subtly but unmistakably, delineated as a conjure woman: she can turn a man into a rutabaga and change her stature to meet her needs.

Franklin (1969:32) cited in Dorathy Perry Thompson: Gloria Naylor's *Mama Day* and the New Renaissance: Zora as Mother (41) also explains that manifestations of ancestor worship sometimes involved certain fetishes. Holy objects such as bones of the dead, consecrated pieces of wood were contained in a structure set aside for worship. The blood of chickens, sheep, goats, or human beings was offered to appease the gods. He opines thus:

> It was devoutly believed that the spirit that dwelled in a relative was deified upon death, the spirit continuing to live and take an interest in the family of the deceased. The spirits of the early ancestors had been free to wield an influence for such a long time that they were much more powerful than the spirits of the more recently deceased; hence, the devout worship and the complete deification of the early ancestors.

Similar mystical figures appear in Naylor's *Mama Day*. Miranda Day is recognized as the most powerful conjurist on the island. She performs the rituals that saved her great-niece Cocoa who is hexed by Ruby, a jealous wife, using a cane (reminiscent of African wood fetish) which has been in the family for years. She is said to sit "on the veranda all night, her hands never ceasing the oiling and rubbing of John-Paul's walking cane and Bascombe Wade's ledger" (p.293); the ritual demands that George should go to into a chicken coop with the ledger and the walking cane. Miranda tells George: " You gotta take this book and cane in there with you, search good in the back of her nest (the oldest hen in the coop), and come straight back here with whatever you find" (p.295). On another occasion, she twirls a serpent- engraved walking stick between her knees, "watching the *carved snakes* wind themselves down into the floor and up into her hands" (p.266). Besides these, Cocoa also points out the mysteries behind the Days' 'other house': "…an old house with a big garden. It is the oldest house in Willow Spring. The house that Bascombe Wade builds, where Sapphira, the slave he marries had murdered him. The reoccurrence of death in this house makes Miranda abandon it:

> That house had known a lot of pain. And more than what you talked about: your great-grand mother, Ophelia, losing her baby daughter at the bottom of a well… Your grandmother hating the place so much she hadn't set foot there in over fifty years. No there was something more, and something deeper than the old historical line slave women and their slave masters…he had claim to her body, but not her mind? Yes, that house resonated loss. A lack of peace… (p. 225).

Miranda's conjure apparatus also includes "root working" garden, a wooden comb that her father crafted.

Conclusion

The use of myth as an essential factor in determining individual or characters' behavior and collective identity is discussed as the core of Naylor's focus in *Mama Day*. In this regard, this chapter has deployed archetypes and collective unconscious in Carl Jung's psychoanalytic postulations to examine the characters in Naylor's *Mama Day* and their behavioural traits. The predominant role of archetypes as tools of cultural past is examined in Naylor's portrayal of 'quilting' and 'earth mother' in the story.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study has examined Toni Morrison's *A Mercy* and Gloria Naylor's *Mama Day and The Women of Brewster Place* from the psychoanalytic perspectives with significant attentions to trauma and the unconscious. Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung's postulations and prescriptions have been employed in this study. For Sigmund Freud, most human behaviour traits are motivated by factors which the individual are not even aware which he calls 'the repressed' or 'the unconscious'. For Carl Jung, human personality and identity can be revealed when we pay significant attention to myths and other similar symbols that reoccur in our history which he calls archetypes. Each of these postulations is really unique and significant in the sense that it revealed human personality from different directions. However, the presence of the unconscious is an essential tenet that links the various shades of psychoanalysis together.

The findings of this research are as follows:

• Psychological conflicts in characters' minds showing in their behaviours, actions or motives as seen in the selected texts can be resolved if transformed into narratives and storytelling. Although this is originally used in the clinical field to make trauma victims express their emotions, their dreams and their fears as a means to re-enact and properly reconstruct the past but is now use in the literary field especially in trauma narratives. This is examined in this work as "talking/writing cure". Morrison, for instance, at the close of *A Mercy*, presents Florens writing her life's story into the walls of Jacob Vaark's house. Here, the house rather than becoming a site of pain where Florens will remember all her pasts, becomes a site of relief, where Florens relieves herself of burdens that inhibits her ability to

form a sense of self. Likewise, Gloria Naylor's *Mama Day*, in line with Jung's postulations advocates proper reconnection and reintegration into the cultural past as the only way of overcoming individual and collective past trauma. A good family structure is also seen as fundamental to the psychological and physical wellbeing of individual in all the examined texts.

• A psychoanalytic reading places readers in a position to recreate or create meaning in the text. It affords a critic the opportunity of creating a childhood or a past for a character in order to properly interprets or understands their present.

• A psychoanalytical reading provides new insights in understanding African American fiction written by women.

• Finally, the study has demonstrated that a 'balanced' character analysis is only possible when the psychological and social aspects of the character are integrated in an analysis.

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