

**‘What it is to be a man’:
Beyond Stereotypes of African American Masculine
Identities in Selected Works by Toni Morrison.**

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I, _____ declare that

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As the candidate's Supervisor I have approved this dissertation/thesis for submission:

Signed: _____
Professor Cheryl Stobie

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Abstract

This dissertation comprises a literary investigation of the way in which Toni Morrison is able to transcend stereotypes associated with African American masculinity within a selection of her works namely, *Song of Solomon*, *Tar Baby* and *Paradise*. I apply Carl Jung's transcendent concept of the paradoxical Self as a lens through which to analyse Morrison's different representations, illustrating how this concept affects the formation of identity and an understanding of masculinity. I also make use of Frantz Fanon, who suggests that Jung's concept of the Self is a way in which black men are able to understand their experience of the world, in that such an experience is paradoxical in nature. It is this paradoxical experience of the world that I argue Morrison highlights in her male characters. In examining Morrison's representations of masculinity, I also illustrate the intersection of race and gender and how this intersection affects identity creation, given the unique position that African American men occupy within American society.

Introduction

Passion is never enough; neither is skill. But try. For our sake and yours forget your name in the street; tell us what the world has been to you in the dark places and in the light. [...] You, old woman, blessed with blindness, can speak the language that tells us what only language can: how to see without pictures. Language alone protects us from the scariness of things with no names. Language alone is meditation. “Tell us what it is to be a woman so that we may know what it is to be a man¹. What moves at the margin. What it is to have no home in this place. To be set adrift from the one you knew. What it is to live at the edge of towns that cannot bear your company.” (Morrison, 1993: 206)

Toni Morrison’s acceptance speech for being awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1993 recounts the story of a conversation between an elderly African American woman and a group of children. In their hands they hold a bird and ask her to ascertain if the creature is alive or dead. Being visually impaired, she sternly admonishes them that she does not know. But the children will not be brushed aside and implore her to answer them. Their request is far more complex as they long to understand her particular world and her experience of it: “Tell us what the world has been to you in the dark places and in the light. [...] Tell us what it is to be a woman so that we may know what it is to be a man. What moves at the margin” (206). The significance of this story lies in the value of sharing knowledge and more importantly, creating an understanding of others’ experiences of the world. Moreover, in this sharing, there are connections forged between people through the experience of language. Morrison refers to this connection in her address “Unspeakable Things Unspoken” as she suggests African American people “are the subjects of [their] own narrative, witnesses to and participants in [their] own experience, and, in no way coincidentally, in the experience of those with whom [they] have come in contact. [They] are not, in fact, ‘other’” (1988: 133). She highlights that, while one participates in one’s own life, one also participates in the lives of others. I base my project on this desire to understand others’ particular experiences of the world.

¹I use Toni Morrison’s 1993 acceptance speech for the Nobel Prize in literature as inspiration for this project as well as its title, which was created in March 2009. I would like to note the existence of the journal article similarly entitled “‘What Does It Mean To Be A Man?’ Codes of Black Masculinity in Toni Morrison’s *Paradise* and *Love*” by Mar Gallego published in 2009. However, my use and acknowledgement of the phrase “What it is to be a man” is taken directly from Toni Morrison’s speech. However, Mar Gallego’s title that includes the words “What Does It Mean To Be A Man?” is inspired by a question posed by critic Gloria Naylor in her reflection on Black masculinity in an essay titled *The Men of Brewster Place* (Gallego, 2009-10: 49).

A central concern that I want to explore is “what it is to be man,” and, in particular, an African American man. The reason that I wish to do so is that, as recently as 2008, in their article entitled “On Manliness: Black Masculinity Revisited,” Gilman Whiting and Thabiti Lewis point out that very few disciplines, whether public, private or cultural, have much to say on the subject of African American masculinity with regard to a critique of its representations (3). Additionally, “there is a dire need to provide alternative images of black men to counter the media-contrived images of who and what [they] really are” (Farrakhan in Whiting & Lewis: 1). The election of Barack Obama, the first African American man, as the President of the United States of America has further fuelled the desire for a re-imagining of the concept of African American masculinity as well as the need to dispel the various stereotypes associated with African American men. In her article “Just Joking? Chimps, Obama and Racial Stereotype,” Dora Apel argues that a post-racial America simply does not exist. She cites the displeasure of many at the candidacy and election of Barack Obama, suggesting that his election has evoked “a concomitant racial backlash in the form of allegedly satirical visual imagery” (2009: 134). The most infamous of these images includes a cartoon (focused on President Obama’s proposed economic stimulus package) printed in the *New York Post* on February 18th, 2009, depicting a dead and bleeding chimpanzee with two policemen standing over the animal, with one saying to the other: “They’ll have to find someone else to write the next stimulus plan” (quoted in Apel, 134). Apel further comments such imagery is employed to dispel anxiety about race through an employment of old racial stereotypes that suggest both the cultural and intellectual inferiority of African American people (134). Thus, a belief of superiority quells any potential fear as it is “neutralised” (134). The debate over the use of stereotyped imagery is not confined to the United States.

Here in South Africa, debate has raged around a controversial portrait named *The Spear* by artist Brett Murray. The painting portrays South Africa’s current president, Jacob Zuma, with his genitals exposed. Gillian Schutte, in her article “The President’s Penis,” argues that the focus on the President’s genitals is not necessarily a mere commentary on his perceived indecent behaviour, but rather it is “the grotesquely huge

Black male ‘dick-ness’ that resides somewhere in the deep collective consciousness of the White psyche” (2012). In other words, her argument centres on the concern that the black man becomes a highly sexualised being. Schutte makes the point that:

Colonial discourse created this hype around a Black primal and uncontrollable sexuality. Indigenous people were perceived by the European colonisers as wild and rampantly sexual and the enslaved Black man was constructed as a cultural savage, a religious heathen, and socially inferior. (2012)

Schutte here highlights the use of a vile stereotype as a means to deem the black man as inferior. The discussion surrounding this painting was fuelled with contrasting opinions and Michael Coulson suggests that the President’s “own history makes his private life fair game” (quoted in Spector, 2012). However, Schutte’s argument cannot be disregarded. The continuing prevalence and use of racial, gendered and sexual stereotypes is precisely why I believe my project would be worthwhile at this juncture. Clearly, a need exists to investigate such crass, old stereotypes. More specifically, I would like to examine the possibility that there are alternative and potentially positive images of African American masculinity within a selection of works by author Toni Morrison.

Having already articulated that Toni Morrison highlights the connectedness between people and that African American people “are not, in fact, ‘other’” (1988: 133), as well as suggesting the need to investigate these stereotypes and the provision of alternative images of African American masculinity within literature, I intend to examine the way in which Toni Morrison transcends the stereotypes associated with African American masculinity within a selection of her works to represent a variety of complex masculinities. I would like to begin by giving a brief overview of my project and I will elaborate more fully on this overview later in this chapter. David Magill notes that, in Morrison’s work, she is able to present a plurality of masculinities without resorting to mere stereotypes (2003: 202). My interest lies in how Morrison goes about achieving this in her works *Song of Solomon* (1977), *Tar Baby* (1981) and *Paradise* (1997). I make use of Carl Jung’s concept of the paradoxical Self to analyse Morrison’s representations, as well as using critical race and gender theory, in order to

demonstrate the impact that these concepts have on the formation of identity and an understanding of masculinity. I start with Frantz Fanon, who suggests that Jung's idea of the Self is the only way in which a black man is able to understand his experience of the world, given that such an experience is paradoxical in nature (1952: 61). Morrison highlights this paradox in her male characters as each attempts to create a sense of masculinity and form an identity. Jung's idea of the Self – a unified and whole personality – underpins the basis for a struggle within the subject and thus assists in the formation of identity. The reason for these propositions lies in Jung's notion that the Self is in a constant state of paradox or struggle as it attempts to realise its full potential. Jung argues that the Self constitutes the conscious ego of the subject as well as the unrealised and unconscious part that is made known to the subject in various ways such as dreams, behaviours or events (Hart, 1997: 91). In this way, tension arises between what the Self realises it is and what it can actually be. Furthermore, in discussing African American masculinity it is important to understand how gender and race influence the formation of the Self. My project will endeavour to do so through understanding the position and importance that both concepts occupy.

Having highlighted the problematic and complex position that African American men occupy in constructing a sense of self, as well as the continued prevalence of stereotypes, I will illustrate various representations of masculinities in a selection of Toni Morrison's work, as well as exploring the way in which such African American masculinities are created. My project will attempt to occupy a space that has been relatively overlooked by academic study. It will also explore the idea of the self by suggesting that the self exists in a state of paradox, and in this struggle a complex sense of self is created. It will not disregard the notions of race and gender and in this regard, my research will focus on the interface between theories as applied to particular contexts. My project will seek to answer a set of critical questions. Firstly, I wish to examine some of the dominant stereotypes associated with African American masculinity and examine why such stereotypes exist and continue to be prevalent. Secondly, given Magill's argument that Toni Morrison is able to create a plurality of masculinities, I wish to examine how she then transcends these stereotypes in order to achieve this plurality through the lens of Jung's concept of the Self. Thirdly, I wish to

examine, in this transcendence, how she is able to achieve alternative images as opposed to the aged stereotypes associated with African American masculinity.

As an area of study, questioning and understanding oneself and accompanying experiences occupy an important area of research, not only for researchers but for those who wish to understand themselves and their particular experience of the world. In looking at African American masculinity more particularly as an area of study, Whiting and Lewis furthermore suggest that a relatively rich body of work regarding African American masculinity has been produced from many noteworthy scholars (2008: 1). They note that W. E. B. Du Bois's 1903 study *The Souls of Black Folk* set the standard for the way in which such scholarship is produced today, as the study attempted to expose the ways in which African American masculinity was impacted upon by various physical, mental and structural conditions (2). Whiting and Lewis suggest that literature on African American men provides a means for exploration of manliness and manhood. Notable feminist critics such as Patricia Hill Collins, bell hooks and Toni Morrison herself have also attempted to engage with the conceptualisations of African American masculinity through analyses of the impact of mental and social conditions upon African American men (3). While an abundant body of critical material on Toni Morrison's works exists, I believe the value of my project lies in there being a paucity of studies that specifically engage with the notions of stereotypes associated with African American masculinity within her work. Heidi Mizra suggests that the representation of black masculinity is not something that is focused on consciously in academic study (1999: 137). In addition, she notes that this lack is consciously mirrored in everyday practice where the plight of African American men is simply glossed over (137). Morrison herself advocates that studies in what she terms "African Americanism" should be rooted in the ways that a "nonwhite, Africanist presence and personae have been constructed – invented – in the United States" (1992: 90). With regard to literary representations of African American men, Josep Armengol postulates that men have been "universalised" rather than gendered (2007: 77). In this universalisation, it is plausible that individuals are left with little room in which to explore their particular and unique experiences of masculinity. The value of a project of this nature is expressed in Armengol's opinion that "there are not

many ‘positive’ or ‘alternative’ images of masculinity in American literature” (80). In this project I hope to change this perception by examining a plurality of masculinities within Morrison’s work. Moreover, Armengol suggests that exploring such representations within literature influences the field of masculinity studies, as these representations reflect the ever changing context within which men live (79).

In relation to African American men, their personal experiences remain of importance. Arthur Flowers documents his personal experience in America through questioning just what it means to occupy this position in his piece “Rickydoc: The Black Man as Hero”. He says “Im from the oldschool. If race is conquered and oppressed their men were weak. Say what? Thats right. Weak men. Including me. So just what does it mean to be a strong black man?” [*sic*] (Flowers, 1995: 262). What Flowers highlights here is the intense struggle that African American men face in trying to come to terms with their own identities in relation to their context and those around them. Additionally, he highlights the need for a sense of responsibility on the part of men to defend their race, and that failure to do so renders one “weak” (262). In his final analysis, Flowers surmises that “each man has to decide for himself. In his own context. Just what it means. To be a strong black man” (262). This emphasises not only the responsibility that he feels African American men must take on, but also the importance of making a personal choice with regard to how one creates one’s identity.

As an author, Toni Morrison is concerned with the way in which African American people are represented and how they view themselves. She advocates the importance of the choice that individuals have in how they go about creating their identities. Justine Tally notes that one of Morrison’s most important tenets, as writer and critic, is that ignorance is no excuse for the choices that people make (2007: 1). More to the point, Morrison’s work is informed by her experiences as a woman and as an African American (Furman, 1996: 3). Morrison states that she “writes the kinds of books she wants to read,” suggesting her focus as an author lies in what interests her rather than in subjects that are popular with readers and publishers (3). Her work, therefore, cannot merely be seen as an act of self-gratification, but rather she strives to make her readers think about themselves and the particular world they live in. Morrison believes

that the responsibility of the artist is to “bear witness” to the past in order to create stories that convey cultural knowledge (4). According to Jan Furman, Morrison is able to achieve this through the interaction found in “the folkways that echo the rhythms of African-American communal life” (4). This suggests not only Morrison’s concern for the art of writing, but her sense of responsibility in exploring and representing the experiences of others. For Morrison, race operates as a metaphor “crucial to American literature and culture” (Pozorski, 2003: 277). Her work is an attempt to escape racially inflected language that seeks to render African American people inferior (277). Following on from the writings on Frantz Fanon, Morrison documents how this inferiority stems from the values of America’s white patriarchal system which she deems the “master narrative” that situates black people as inferior (277). Pozorski argues that many of her characters embrace this system, and, as a consequence, are imbued with a sense of inferiority generated from “dominant racial stereotypes and whites’ projection of racist shame” (277). My project aims to grapple with this sense of inferiority.

In particular, one of Morrison’s other topics of interest is gender and how both men and women experience it. She examines the situations of African American men and women (Furman, 1996: 7). In this examination, Morrison has attracted her fair share of criticism as she stands accused of creating “female victims [and] castrating women” (Mayberry, 2007: 1). Her response is that black women have borne their burdens “extremely well” and that they have had nothing to do with the apparent emasculation of black men (quoted in Mayberry: 1). To understand Morrison’s view of masculinity, it is therefore necessary to understand her view of femininity. She suggests that black women have been the scapegoat for the suppressed frustration and rage of black men (2). Morrison does not seek to absolve black men of responsibility for these responses, but rather requires one to recognise the importance of the racist historical context in which people attempt to create a sense of identity (2). Thus, for Toni Morrison, both black men and women are inextricably connected to one another (1). Susan Mayberry argues that Morrison’s female characters explore the possibility of creating a new kind of feminism that acknowledges the impact of a historical context steeped in racial prejudice on the creation of identity (3). In doing so, Morrison acknowledges the

complex position that both black men and women occupy. Thus, to examine her male characters is not at the expense of her female characters. Rather, it is necessary to recognise the inter-connection between them (14). Much critical attention has been devoted to Morrison's female characters in works such as Carmen Gillespie's *Toni Morrison: A Literary Reference to her Life and Work* (2009), Linden Peach's *Toni Morrison: Critical Contemporary Essays* (1998), Nellie McKay's *Critical Essays on Toni Morrison* (1988) and Barbara Smith's *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology* (1983), but far less to her male characters, and the particular focus of my project and space constraints preclude a detailed comparison. Furman suggests that Morrison's male characters, like all her characters, "transcend sociological stereotypes and trample convention as they walk outside of societal norms" (1996: 7). I explore this transcendence in a selection of Morrison's work and more particularly, how she goes about achieving this.

In looking at Toni Morrison, David Magill highlights that she views masculinity as a "key concern" for African American culture (2003: 202), and, as a part of that concern, explores "the possibilities for Black men to imagine a different conception of masculine identity" (202). Morrison acknowledges that gender, race and class all play a role in the practice of manhood, and masculinity is then recognised as a social invention rather than a biological given. I suggest that Morrison presents multiple individuals who each suffer their own conflict between how they are expected to behave and what they actually desire to be. She presents the anxieties felt by African American men regarding their own sense of a masculine self that is rooted in their heritage of slavery and continued through individual and structural racism (202). However, Morrison also critiques the individual men who accept such definitions of masculinity and use it as an excuse to avoid their responsibilities (203).

I have mentioned that Carl Jung's theory of the Self provides a lens through which African American masculinity can be explored, Marcellus Blount and George Cunningham (1996: ix) conclude that a "danger" exists in contemporary criticism separating the discourses and impacts of race and gender upon African American masculinity. More simply, it is impossible to articulate a discussion without

understanding the influence these discourses have on creating a sense of self. In his paper “Against Bipolar Black Masculinity: Intersectionality, Assimilation, Identity Performance, and Hierarchy,” Frank Cooper argues for an intersectional approach to discussing contemporary African American masculinity. The importance of such an approach, he suggests, is the theory’s insight that “identities are always formed at the place where categories of identity meet” (2006: 863), as people are “all always raced, gendered, sex oriented, and so on” (865). More to the point, such categories remain hidden from scrutiny as they are accepted norms within the United States, and therefore one is not aware of the privilege that one category may hold over another (864). Intersectional theory therefore articulates and focuses on what it means for multiple categories to interface at the same time (864). The consequences of intersectionality are far more severe when an individual must confront multiple categories at once. Cooper argues that African American men occupy a unique position in that they are privileged by gender as men, and yet they are subordinated by their race (870). Robert Staples highlights the problematic nature of the privilege of gender as he assumes that African American men are “crippled emotionally” when they are unable to achieve a patriarchal ideal that supports the idea that masculinity involves a certain “autonomy and mastery of one’s environment” (quoted in hooks, 1992: 96-7). bell hooks suggests that African American men have done little to question these norms of autonomy and mastery associated with the norms of masculinity (96). As a consequence, the relationship between African American men and women remains fragmented and problematic in that men attempt to assert themselves over women in order to achieve the sense of freedom and power that they do not receive from an inherently discriminatory system operating in mainstream American society. From this paradoxical position African American men attempt to form an identity.

Having given a brief overview of my project at the beginning of this chapter, I will now expand on the concepts that I have mentioned. In his chapter “The Negro and Psychopathology,” Frantz Fanon poses the question of how a black man is to understand his experience of the world if that experience is constantly paradoxical in nature (1952: 61). He notes that every society or “collective” has channels through

which anxiety in the form of aggression can be released (61). Such channels can take the form of games or plays (61). Fanon refers to such an example in which children in the Antilles colony were exposed to magazines created by white men for white boys. In these magazines, the white boy is positioned as the explorer and the Negro² is positioned as the “the Evil Spirit, the Bad Man” (62). This speaks to the development of crude stereotypes associated with black men. The white boy is to be admired and the black boy is to be feared. Given that the victor is often identified with as a role model, Fanon’s contention is that such mixed messages render an individual with a fragmented sense of self that is confused (62). Furthermore, he highlights the reciprocal nature of racism and culture. He postulates that Carl Jung’s idea of the Self is a way that assists a black man in understanding himself and his experiences of the world. He suggests that the Negro seemingly identifies with the white man through consistent exposure to “all-white truth” (63). In this exposure, an individual (whom Fanon depicts as masculine) adopts a ‘white’ attitude and is then seemingly made inferior as he adopts a way of existence that is distinctly not his own, suggesting his existence is paradoxical in nature, as his own way of being is rejected and rendered worthless in favour of an existence that he struggles to identify with (63). Fanon highlights the way in which the conscious ego of the subject is bombarded with the message that his own way of existence is not acceptable, despite the subject’s inherent connection to his own particular way of existing. He sacrifices his way of being for that to which he does not belong, and his sense of self and identity is crafted through his interaction with the world (65). The significance of this is that an African American man’s experience appears to be mediated through a belief that his own understanding of how to exist and interact with the world is inferior and therefore not of value. Fanon argues that if the way a man engages with the world produces certain beliefs and behavioural patterns, then it is plausible to suggest that racism is given a cultural element (1956: 19). Making the same point as Richard Delgado that racism diminishes an individual’s sense of self through feelings of worthlessness and self-hatred, Fanon warns that “the object of racism is no longer an individual man but a certain form of existing” (20). An individual man is then rendered an object with little

²Although I am aware that the word “Negro” is now considered pejorative, I make use of it in the context in which Fanon uses it, as it was considered a neutral term at the time of publication in the 1950s.

value placed on his way of existing through his appearance, modes of dress and language. A man is then left very little with which to create a sense of coherent identity. Such men's experiences are paradoxical in nature as they struggle between their own way of existing that is deemed worthless through systematic and cultural racism and through an acceptance of an "all white truth" (1952: 63).

So how then is an African American man to understand himself and his experience of the world? How does an individual form a coherent sense of identity if he receives messages from his interaction with others and the world that suggest his mode of existence is not desirable, and if he is then merely reduced to a stereotype? I suggested earlier in this chapter that Toni Morrison was able to present a range of masculinities without resorting to mere stereotypes associated with African American masculinity. I propose that Morrison presents a range of characters who struggle in creating a sense of masculinity and identity as she highlights a psychological paradox in her male characters, which can be illuminated by reference to ideas developed by Carl Gustav Jung. Born in 1875, he is described as a "man of the millennium" (Christopher & McFarland Solomon, 2000a: xix). Christopher and McFarland argue that Jung's work in the twentieth century offers a means for humans to understand and gain insight into their own situations (xix). They further highlight that his value lies in tackling what they define as the "big" subjects, including understanding the human psyche and how a personality grows and develops (xix). However, I acknowledge that Jung has been subject to some criticism, and the use of his theory of the Self and its various elements could be considered contentious. With regard to the analysis of Toni Morrison's work, J. Brooks Bouson draws on Claudia Tate's argument that psychoanalytic theory has been largely avoided by black intellectuals as a method to examine literature (2003: 34). Tate argues that psychoanalysis does not take into account the lived and social reality of people as it is relegated to the background (34). However, Bouson counters this by postulating that Toni Morrison, only well too aware of the social pathology of race, examines not only the consequences of such prejudice but also has a special focus on the world of the individual and how he or she exists within their particular family or community (34). Having earlier mentioned that Morrison advocates a

collective approach to gender, I examine an individual's existence within his or her particular context, as s/he relates to others.

With regard to Jung and his view on gender, John Beebe notes that Jung did not publish a single work devoted entirely to the psychology of men or specifically how a man undergoes psychological development (1989: vii). Moreover, Beebe argues that even Jung's theory of a universally applicable archetypal world could not detract from the notion that Jung was interested in how the notion of gender contributed to his own personal development rather than how the process occurs (vii). This is not to suggest that Jung had no particular theory on gender, but rather that it was not focussed on as a separate psychological process. Singer Harris proposes that gender roles are culturally established, and therefore Jung would have been biased by his own culture (1996: 8). However, she further highlights that gender is "implicated in discussions" of the anima and animus archetype (8). Archetypes occupy the space between the mind and matter (39). They seek to order the perceptions that one has of the world within the total psyche (of which the Self is a part) of the individual (40). Jung's approach is based on the existence of syzygy or opposites within the personality, of which the anima and animus archetype is one (40). For Jung, one encounters the "anima historically above all in the divine syzygies, the male-female pairs of deities," and he asserts that "these syzygies are as universal as the existence of man and woman" (1954: 59). While the anima is the feeling function of a man, the complexity of this archetype is that Jung postulated it as contrasexual in nature, citing the example of the mother/son relationship, and therefore difficult to assimilate in the personality (Singer Harris, 1996: 50). Indeed, Jung notes in his chapter "The Syzygy: Anima and Animus" that one is able to "behold the secret conspiracy between mother and son, and how each helps the other betray life" (1951c: 11). This is because the "Anima/Animus is often connected with the concept of longing or desire for the other, originating in the child's (incestuous) desire for the opposite-sex parent" (Singer Harris, 1996: 51). Additionally, the gendered aspect of the anima and animus focusses on the perceptions of strangeness of the other gender. One seeks out what one does not have, and the anima archetype comes into effect when one recognises what one does not possess, and it is demarcated as the other or as strange (50). Furthermore, the realisation of the

animus is problematic. Singer Harris suggests that Jung created it for the sake of symmetry (50). For Jung, it is conceivable that if a man were to have an anima component then a woman should have a corresponding component, in the form of the animus. Jung muses: “since the anima is an archetype that is found in men, it is reasonable to suppose that an equivalent archetype must be present in women” (1951c: 14). For Jung, it is clear that a polarising dichotomy exists between the anima and animus and by their definition, men and women. Although it useful to acknowledge and think about these ideas, it is necessary to note their limitations. Firstly, the animus is a fairly unexplored concept given Jung’s own relationships with women as well as his cultural bias (Singer Harris, 1996: 197). Secondly, the contrasexual nature of the anima and animus concepts distorts the potential for rational thinking in women and emotional processes in men (197). Christopher Hauke notes that more contemporary criticism of Jung’s thoughts on gender centres on its essentialist nature in that it polarises men and women and does not take into account the social and historical context in which individuals live (2000: 114). Singer Harris argues that the concept of anima and animus has more recently been used as a means for the individual to “incorporate aspects of an archetypal ‘other’” rather than focusing on the gendered nature of the concept (1996: 198). Hauke suggests, despite its limitations, there is nonetheless relevance to examining Jungian theory within a present-day context, as a user may adapt its concepts to render the theory more “malleable” (2000: 117). Stephen Gross feels that current critics and their critiques of Jung’s work are obligated not to rehabilitate his reputation or the apparent shortcomings of his work and ideas, but rather to seek out the creative within them in order to understand contemporary phenomena (2000: 73). I aim to employ this approach of seeking the relevance in Jung’s ideas with regard to using his theory of the Self.

Jung’s concept of the Self lies at “the centre and the circumference of [his] psychology” (Colman, 2000: 3). Jung believed a whole personality to be the ultimate goal towards which all human beings strive, in that the Self’s presence is a part of all human endeavours (3). For Jung, attainment of the Self could be likened to discovering the divine power within oneself as the centre of one’s being (3). In this way, Colman highlights that Jung’s concept of the Self differs from Western definitions of the self in

that such definitions focus more on a sense of self or means of having a sense of self (3). For Jung, this kind of conceptualisation was merely part of the consciousness. The Jungian Self, however, always refers to that which transcends mere consciousness (3). In other words, it aspires to be greater than one's conscious understanding of having a sense of self (3). In addition, the Self contains a number of complexities and paradoxes inherent to the total psyche (4). In this way, the concept of the Self proves to be a useful framework with regard to exploring one of my central questions, which is how Toni Morrison is able to transcend stereotypes associated with African American masculinity in that the Self, by its very nature, is transcendent. Samuels, Shorter and Plant, in interpreting Jung, explain that the psychological concept of the Self is an "image of man's fullest potential and the unity of the personality as a whole" (quoted in Singer Harris, 1996: 23). The Self is made up of various aspects of "which the conscious ego is only one essential part" (Hart, 1997: 91). The conscious ego, as defined by Jung, is a "complex factor to which all conscious contents are related" (1951a: 3). The conscious ego is the centre of consciousness to which all personal acts of consciousness are subjected (3). In other words, individuals mediate their experience of themselves, others and the world through the conscious ego. By definition, consciousness has no limits and only finds a limit when it comes into contact with that with which it is not familiar, and the unfamiliar is then defined as the unconscious (3). Part of this process involves the act of mediation. Mediation is a method used to seek the content of the unconscious (Welwood, 1977: 4). It is not merely an interior process but rather an individual must be thought of as "an ongoing process that is always in *relation to* situations" (8). These situations can be both internal and external (8). The unconscious is then "limitless" by definition and makes itself known in various forms such as dreams, behaviours and events (Hart, 1997: 91). The Self (as an image of the individual's fullest potential) then urges the subject towards achieving its full potential (91).

Jung suggests that the relationship between the Self and the conscious ego is "not only the centre, but also the whole circumference which embraces both conscious and unconscious; it is the centre of this, just as the ego is the centre of consciousness"

(1936: 41). The Self then functions as the regulator of the subject's conscious ego as the subject's total personality attempts to come to self-actualisation. As Jung argues:

The self, in its efforts at self realization, reaches out beyond the ego-personality on all sides; because of its all encompassing nature it is brighter and darker than the ego, and accordingly confronts it with problems which it would like to avoid. [...] The experience of the self is always a defeat for the ego. (1955: 545-6)

The role of the Self is then proven as it urges the subject towards attaining its full potential (Hart, 1997: 91).

Jung argues that realising this full potential involves a form of acknowledgement of the unwelcome side of the personality, known as the Shadow (92). The Shadow is defined by Jung as a "moral problem that challenges the whole ego-personality" (1951b: 8). In attempting to come to full consciousness, one must recognise "the dark aspects of the personality," as this is an essential act to acquire "any kind of self knowledge" (8). The dark aspects of the personality refer to that which has been barred from the consciousness and then seeks to be known within consciousness (Hart, 1997: 92). The possibility exists that, in an individual's attempt to become fully conscious and aware, there exists a tension between the opposing tendencies of the Self and the Shadow (95). Jung proposes that the tension must be endured, as holding both will result in a solution that satisfies both tensions known as fulfilment of the Self (95). As Jung states, "from this [apparent tension] we see the luminous power of the self, which can hardly be experienced any other way" (1955: 546). In attempting to form the Self, there exists a paradox between the conscious ego, the unconscious and the Shadow as a person attempts to achieve selfhood. In terms of my research these ideas are particularly useful in that this imbalance suggests an individual in a constant state of tension in the formation of identity. While an acknowledgement of the Shadow allows an individual to acquire self-knowledge, there are consequences for not acknowledging it. Jung postulates that, even though the acknowledgement of the Shadow can be assimilated by consciousness, "there are certain features which offer the most resistance to moral control and prove almost impossible to influence. These resistances are usually bound up with *projections*" (1951b: 9). Projection functions as a defence

against anxiety in which the individual transfers his or her emotions or thoughts that are too difficult to deal with onto another person or third party (Singer Harris, 1996: 115). The effect of projection is to “isolate the subject from his environment” (Jung, 1951b: 9). A projection may then exist as “uncriticized datum of experience, and is recognized for what it is only very much later, if ever” (Jung, 1955: 488). Thus an individual may never acknowledge his or her Shadow, rendering his or her sense of self fractured.

Furthermore, Jung suggests: “If I want to understand an individual human being I must lay aside all scientific knowledge of the average man and discard all theories in order to adopt a completely new and unprejudiced attitude” (1957: 250). This foregrounds the need to understand the creation of the Self as complex, as well as the need to view another’s particular world without prejudice. One sees the tension of the paradoxical nature of identity formation in Morrison’s male characters as their conscious egos are constantly influenced by their specific contexts and as a result, they become aware of the Shadow of their personalities. Morrison is able to transcend the stereotypes of African American masculinity as she demonstrates these complexities that exist within her male characters in creating this sense of self and hence an understanding of their masculinity. I make use of Jung and the concept of the Self in a very specific way, as I am aware that Jung has been critiqued for not substantiating some of his work, most notably his work on gender, with clinical study (Whitehead, 2002: 28). Indeed, Jung’s belief that the concepts of femininity and masculinity are rooted in “timeless truths” does not fit in with my earlier discussion that such concepts are not rooted in universal ‘truth’ but rather are constructed, culturally located and constantly evolving. My focus lies in emphasising the paradoxical nature of the Self in that the Self is constantly evolving as the conscious, unconscious and Shadow aspects of the personality interact with the world in an attempt to achieve a sense of self. Singer Harris points out that Jung’s statements tend to vary with their context, as truth is a relative concept, and his concepts can only be understood within the context that they are used (1996: 21).

Although I am aware that the Self is an ahistorical idea, I am also aware of the role of both gender and race in discussing African American masculinity, as both have an

impact on the conscious ego of the subject and influence the way in which an African American man may view himself and also his experience of the world. Moreover, I wish to point out that I use these ideas within a specific historical and cultural context and I must remain sensitive to this. One of the ways in which to remain aware of and sensitive to the role of race in the formation of identity is through the theory known as the cultural unconscious, articulated by Jungian scholar Joseph Henderson. While Jung foreshadowed this concept, Henderson defined it as a consciousness that comprises “the elements that all members of a culture carry in their psyches as a result of experiences [...] unique to their group” (Singer Harris, 1996: 31). Henderson expands on this, saying that it is “an area of historical memory that lies between the collective unconscious and the manifest pattern of the culture” (1990: 103). It is necessary to acknowledge the lived experience of an individual as the cultural unconscious contributes as a part of the Self. In terms of African American masculinity, it is essential to bear in mind the racist societal conditions as well as the prevalence of racist stereotypes in which men attempt to form an identity.

In order to understand the problematic nature of the representations of African American men, it is necessary to understand what is meant by ‘stereotype’. Gordon Allport defines ‘stereotype’ as “an exaggerated belief associated with a category. Its function is to justify (rationalize) our conduct in relation to that category” (1954: 191). He points out that a stereotype is not a category. Rather it is a fixed idea associated with that category (191). In the case of African American men, Allport argues that a stereotype takes hold when associations are imposed as a “fixed mark” upon a category (192). For example, African American men are ‘fixed’ with the judgement of being “musical, lazy, superstitious, or what not” (192). Therefore a stereotype functions as an easy simplification of an individual and a means to either accept or reject a category. Such over-simplifications render the individual fragmented and left with little on which to forge his or her identity. In the case of African American men, such stereotypes are based on race, and as Richard Delgado argues, the consequences of racial stereotyping are severe (2000: 131). Such stigmatising may render individuals vulnerable to severe psychological damage that includes feelings of isolation, humiliation and self-hatred and, as a consequence, this fractures their relations to

others and the world at large (132). An individual would potentially struggle to create an identity that was not fractured by such damage.

In the case of African American men, bell hooks argues that there has never been a time since the transportation of Africans to the “New World” when African American men have not been angered by the prevailing culture’s romanticised stereotypes, yet they have done very little to challenge these notions (1992: 87). She suggests that, as far back as the nineteenth century, slavery did little to create a consensus of masculinity with which African American men could identify. Instead, they were denied the chance to be “men” within the constraints of white-dominated norms of masculinity, and such norms became the yardstick by which the progress of black men could be measured (90). Furthermore, the images that emerged from testimony regarding slavery promoted the idea that African American men were concerned with hard work and assuming the responsibilities of providing for and protecting their families (90). Therefore, the notion that African American men were seen as “lazy” within the public sphere is surprising, given their desire to work (90). But the insistence and re-enforcement of such stereotypes allowed the easing of white consciences towards the contribution made by slave labourers towards the economy (90). However, within the private sphere, African American men wished to assert themselves and be seen as patriarchs of their own households, yet they could not achieve this without African American women’s conforming to accepted gender roles (92). While they recognised the importance of the roles women had fulfilled in terms of their contribution to the abolition of slavery, African American men “continued to believe that women should be subordinate to men” (92). African American women, however, did not wish to conform to these roles or be subordinate to their male counterparts. They had endured the horrendous domination of white patriarchal rule during slavery and therefore did not desire such domination to continue (92). African American women found themselves occupying a contradictory position with regard to gender roles. They did not wish to be dominated by their male counterparts, yet they wanted African American men to be both providers and protectors (92). After the end of slavery, enormous conflict erupted between men and women as individuals sought to be independent (92). The problematic position that both African American men and

women found themselves occupying with regard to gender roles is clear. With the advent of capitalism, gender roles within American society further shifted in that the notion of an African American man as head of his own household faded (93). More than ever before men were expected to fulfil the role of “breadwinner”, and a man’s earning capacity determined to what extent he could rule over his household (94). This influenced the way in which men and women viewed not only themselves but one another, with regard to expectations and the desire to fulfil expected gender norms within a white-dominated, patriarchal society. Moreover, this impacted on the private sphere, in that men felt it was the role of women to keep a household as well as take on the responsibility of child rearing (95). This was only further fuelled by the belief that parenting is “women’s work” (hooks, 2004: 104). Thus, to be an involved father is not masculine. In these ways, the impact of slavery and the advent of capitalism have left African American men with a fractured sense of self that has lingered into the present.

M. Bahati Kuumba echoes hooks’s idea, suggesting that African American men in the United States have been dually positioned as both victim and victimiser in relation to prevalent constructs of manhood and masculinity (2006: 228). In terms of being victims, African American men have not been given the chance to create a sense of masculinity that could be identified, as manipulation of masculinity has become a way in which racial oppression can be justified (228). As victimisers, African American men have done little to dispel negative stereotypes entrenched with regard to African American masculinity. In addition, a lack of acknowledgment of the problematic nature of gender roles between African American men and women poses a problem as gender roles represent a site of serious conflict (228). As a result of this, the development of African American masculinities has been linked to overriding Western constructions of masculinity (229). This construction is based on the idea that, for men to be considered men, they have to be dominant, aggressive, the breadwinner and white. In the foreword to *Speak My Name: Black Men On Masculinity and The American Dream*, August Wilson suggests that the way in which contemporary African American men view themselves is vastly different from the ideas, conceptions and stereotypes perpetuated by nineteenth century slavery ideologies and the ensuing ideologies of twentieth century America, although little has been done in the present

day to question these assumptions and stereotypes (1995: xii). As I mentioned earlier, hooks highlights this fault line by suggesting that work done to question or interrogate these conventions is insufficient and, although African American men are highly angry at being associated with these assumptions, they too have done little in dispelling such myths (1992: 89). As hooks suggests, African American men are frequently portrayed as perpetual “failures” that are “dangerous, violent and sex-crazed” (89). Trey Ellis notes that:

Black men are this nation’s outlaw celebrities. It doesn’t matter what other modifiers also describe our individual essences – mechanic, police officer, left-handed, Virginian, kind, gangbanger, tall – ‘black man’ overrides them all and makes us all, equally, desperadoes. (1995: 9)

What Ellis highlights here is the way in which race and gender affect the creation of a sense of masculine self as well as the way in which African American men are viewed more generally. They are not viewed as individuals, and little positive exists on which to build a sense of identity. He further supports this point by suggesting that:

American society as a whole, however, tars us all with the same brush. We have become the international symbol for rape, murder, robbery, and uncontrolled libido. Our faces on the news have become synonymous with anger, ignorance, and poverty. (10)

This only serves to illustrate the highly problematic nature in which African American men are represented and viewed. In addition, the question endures as to how African American men view themselves and if it is possible for African American men to create a consensus of what constitutes masculinity if current representations are merely based on stereotypes.

It is also necessary to examine the concepts of ‘gender’ and ‘masculinity’. Firstly, there is a need to make the distinction between the terms ‘sex’ and ‘gender’. The term ‘sex’ refers to the fixed and biological characteristics of a person’s physical make-up, i.e. whether one is a man, woman or intersexed. In an encapsulated form, gender refers to the malleable traits or characteristics associated with each sex, i.e. masculine or feminine traits. In exploring the term ‘gender’ more closely, Raewyn Connell suggests

that the construct is taken for granted in everyday life (2009: 5). A person is defined as a man or woman and each gender is associated with specific traits and characteristics. The distinction consciously and subconsciously made between the two categories of masculinity and femininity only perpetuates the belief that such a distinction is normal and natural and as such, anyone that does not follow the “natural” order is, by definition, abnormal (5). Connell highlights here that gender is not a fixed and given state, but rather it is a response to the influence of society and society’s attempt to “normalise” behaviour. Becoming a man or woman is “a condition actively under construction” (5). Therefore, to become a gendered person, i.e. for a man to become a man, such a journey would entail a certain amount of ambiguity and anxiety as a person attempts to fulfil an expected role. Connell highlights society’s impact upon gender construction and she advocates that people construct themselves as masculine or feminine. Connell says: “we claim a place in the gender order – or respond to the place we have been given – by the way we conduct ourselves in everyday life” (6). The significance here is that gender can be considered a response and choice by an individual to the circumstances and environment he or she exists in. This idea is noteworthy in terms of identity construction in that it suggests the potential difficulties an individual may face in trying to establish a sense of ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’.

Given the constructed nature of gender, the term ‘gender’ itself is both complex and difficult to define. Connell notes that the term has been in use since the 1970s, and although it has never been universally accepted, it has been used to denote the whole field of study (9). However, most discussion regarding gender emphasises the apparent dichotomy between men and women. Connell postulates: “Starting from a presumed biological divide between male and female, [society defines] gender as the social or psychological difference that corresponds to that divide, builds on it or is caused by it” (9). The idea of a dichotomy is both fed and perpetuated by the belief in a strict division between male and female. More commonly, ‘gender’ refers to the cultural differences between men and women based on biological division (9). However, such a definition is hugely problematic. According to Connell, life does not divide merely into two realms and as such, one’s character is not divided into one or the other (10). Similarly, a definition that is based on a dichotomous understanding of the term

'gender' excludes the possibility of the differences that exist between both men and women (10). If gender is considered a choice on the part of the individual in response to his or her particular situation, then it is possible that no two individuals would respond in the same way. It is necessary to understand 'gender' in terms of relations. Connell highlights the need to understand gender as a "pattern of our social arrangements, and in the everyday activities or practices which those arrangements govern" (10), as opposed to a mere dichotomy or biological given. Society's conceptualisation of gender is one that is cultural by nature in that it is rooted in an individual's chosen behaviour in response to his or her surroundings. I believe this idea has great relevance in terms of my project in that it highlights the element of choice as well as difference in response on the part of the individual with regard to constructing a sense of 'gendered' identity. This is significant as it suggests the need to understand individuals within their specific context, which is necessary given the complex nature of creating a sense of African American masculinity, which I will elaborate on a little later.

So how then is the term 'masculinity' defined and constructed? Connell points out that while all societies may have a cultural account of gender, not all subscribe to a general conception of 'masculinity' (2005: 67). Todd Reeser suggests that establishing the definition of masculinity is not necessarily possible, given its vast and multifaceted influence in everyday life (2010: 17). It is conceivable that a single and fixed definition would be highly problematic. Rather, Reeser argues that masculinity is "constantly created and challenged in numerous ways" (18). Connell proposes that one's behaviour tends to indicate what is assimilated with the ideas of what it is to be 'masculine' or 'feminine' (2005: 67). This implies that a man who behaves differently is considered 'unmasculine' in that he does not subscribe to the 'norm'. For example, such an individual may be peaceful as opposed to violent, or passive as opposed to dominant. Reeser notes that, given the pervasive nature of masculinity in that it is often thought of as a fixed and biological given, means that little thought is devoted to it consciously (2010: 1). Rather, he suggests that 'masculinity' is noticed when it appears one does not adhere to the norm (1). Reeser says "a crying man might seem like such an oddity that we cannot help but think about his masculinity (or lack thereof)" (1).

What Connell and Reeser argue against is the problematic nature of a binarist usage of the concept of 'masculinity'. Connell further notes that masculinity is relational in that it cannot exist without the concept of 'femininity' (2005: 68). Having earlier suggested the inter-connectedness between Toni Morrison's male and female characters, I find this idea significant as it articulates the need to conceptualise both categories together. Cultures which do not divide men and women into polar opposites in terms of character do not then have a conception of masculinity in the sense of its modern term usage (68). Once again, creating a given definition of the term 'masculinity' is problematic in that its definition differs between various cultural contexts. Furthermore, Connell points out that the concept of masculinity is a fairly recent historical product and, in discussing the concept, one must be aware of "doing" gender in a culturally specific way (68). Michael Kimmel suggests that "putting manhood in historical context presents it differently, as a constantly changing collection of meanings that we construct through our relationships with ourselves, with each other, and with our world" (1996: 5). In terms of my project, this is necessary to bear in mind, given the increasing awareness that not just one kind of 'masculinity' exists and that there is little in the way of a set definition for the concept, as it is constantly evolving.

Increasingly, an awareness of the intersection between gender, race and class highlights the potential for the creation of multiple masculinities (Connell, 2005: 76). As a consequence of this awareness, Michael Awkward suggests that the study of multiple masculinities has "emerged as one of the new centres of humanistic critical inquiry" (2002: 291). Connell argues that there needs to be scrutiny of the way in which such an intersection operates, in that one individual's experience of masculinity may differ from another's (2005: 76). Additionally, Stephen Whitehead notes that a "fixed" definition of masculinity is not possible, given the awareness of the roles that gender, race and class play in creating multiple representations of masculinity (2002: 33). Whitehead also argues that understanding African American 'masculinity' cannot be done without recognising the way in which the concept of 'black' is represented, in that dualistic thinking of the term, employing categories of black and white, only serves as a simplification of the concept (69). Rather, race must be viewed as a

contributing factor towards an understanding of a representation of masculinities, as it influences how one views oneself, others and the world at large.

Presently, Athena Mutua suggests that twenty-first century social processes produce and support the concept of ideal masculinity within American society (2006: 13). The “masculine ideal” is founded in binary thinking prevalent in Western thought (12). Furman argues that Morrison resists such simplistic binaries (1996: 6). Examples of such dualistic thinking include white-black and male-female, where such dualities are placed in a hierarchy, with the first considered positive and the second negative (Mutua, 2006: 12). Therefore, traits associated with masculinity, such as strength, dominance and competition, are seen as socially valuable, and the traits associated with femininity are seen as less desirable. These gender traits are considered culturally acceptable and are fixed by American societal norms, and they form the basis of a masculine ideal (12). This suggests that ideal masculinity is hegemonic in nature, as men are not described as they actually are, but rather they are defined in terms of the acceptable norms associated with gender. There are few means for men operating within societal forces to determine what is acceptable and what is not in terms of creating their own sense of a masculine ideal. This prevalent masculine ideal is constructed in opposition to the concept of ideal femininity, which suggests that women are seen as weaker, passive and emotional (12). Thus, the closer one is to the accepted norms of masculinity, the more privileged one will be. But these hegemonic ideals and attaining them are problematic as they are not only gendered in nature, but they are also racialised and classed (13). Men are afforded the opportunity to attain dominance and fulfil their roles as provider and leader through policies geared towards these goals. However, American society has historically only afforded such opportunities to certain men – those who are white and own property (13). Nevertheless, through time, space and the lived experience of people, the boundaries of what constitutes an ideal male have tended to shift (13). For example, Clyde W. Franklin II argues that African American men “were considered boys until the 1960s, when they became nominal men” (quoted in Mutua, 13). Therefore, there has been some expansion in defining what it means to be a man, given that masculinity is increasingly conceived as a construction rather than merely a biological given.

Nonetheless, Mutua suggests that the ideal man still implies a “white heterosexual male” who is not a person “but an ideal,” and a man’s masculinity is then measured by how close he comes to achieving this ideal (13). Although the ideal is hegemonic, the boundaries that constitute masculinity vary through people’s experiences and interaction with society and its ever-changing ideas and experiences (13). It can be argued that the ideal is highly problematic as it is monolithic. Having already mentioned Connell’s belief that it is possible for multiple masculinities to exist, Mutua argues that this is so through an examination of the lived experiences of men.

Masculinity, though, represents a site of power which is a social phenomenon (16). It is exercised and institutionalised through political, economic and social arenas (16). Mutua highlights the overriding role that gender plays within society. Harold Cruse notes that, while America prizes the individual, the nation is “dominated by the social power of groups, classes, in-groups and cliques – both ethnic and religious” (quoted in Mutua: 16). Domination is considered a central tenet of the practice of masculinity and exercised through a range of tools that seek to exclude women as well as certain men. In terms of African American men and the idea of a masculine ideal, Mutua argues that no certified consensus exists as to their positioning within what is considered the masculine ideal (18). Mutua maintains that for African American men, racism prevents them from benefiting from the privileges afforded by masculinity, highlighting their oppression via gendered racism, which accounts for the stereotypes associated with African American men “because they are both black and men” (18). However, Mutua argues that, at the intersection of the concepts of gender and race, African American men are privileged in terms of gender, as seen in the conditions of black men and women in terms of job opportunities, wages, education and so on (18). Moreover, the relationships between African American men and women are potentially problematic, as African American men seek to assert themselves over women in an attempt to achieve some sense of autonomy, in order to fit in with the masculine ideal that men are dominant and strong (18). Mutua points out that criticism of African American men’s gender privilege underplays the role of gendered racism which is accountable for the various stereotypes associated with African American men (18). An awareness of the highly problematic confines that African American men experience in which to

create a sense of identity highlights the burden of discrimination they shoulder based on their race, as well as in attempting to achieve the masculine ideal.

My project will explore how Morrison represents her male characters as they attempt to achieve their full potential through an exploration of the Self, as well as remaining aware of the constraints of race and gender. Although Morrison's rich *oeuvre* offers a vast field from which to pick, the selection of my texts is based on a desire to examine what Toni Morrison has to offer in terms of masculinity in *Song of Solomon* (1977), *Tar Baby* (1981) and *Paradise* (1997). Firstly, each of the three novels is published in a different decade. One of the things I wish to examine is how Morrison's view of masculinity develops over time and the variation that is offered over such a time span. Secondly, I wish to explore the journey of the individual as he attempts to achieve a sense of masculine self, not as single entities but rather in relation to each character's wider community, social and historical context, and how the Self then operates as a lens through which a sense of identity may or may not be achieved.

My first novel for consideration is *Song of Solomon* (1977). I am aware that *Sula* (1973), Morrison's Nobel Prize winning work, is published in the same decade and that its omission may seem confusing. However, Mayberry notes that *Song of Solomon* is Morrison's "unequivocal testament to [her] praise of men as it celebrates the vitality and truth of what she calls the free black male" (2007: 71). Morrison suggests that, in this novel, men interest her in a way they had not done previously (71). With its clear focus on masculinity, this novel is the means with which to begin my particular study of representations of masculinity. In *Song of Solomon*, the character of Milkman Dead highlights the struggle of an individual as he attempts to find a sense of self. He struggles between his quest for home and place, and dealing with the burden of an absent father, which has affected not only him individually but his family for generations. He is radically torn between his own desires and finding a place within his own community. In analysing this novel I examine the ways in which the absence of the father influences the struggle to attain selfhood. I suggest that Milkman is torn between repeating mistakes made by past generations of the Dead family and what he is capable of becoming. A significant step made by Milkman is to stop searching for

gold and instead search for that which is missing in his life, that which Morrison terms his “ancient properties” (Morrison, 2005b: 306). His visit to Shalimar provides the reader with an opportunity to glimpse various modes of African American masculinity, with an emphasis on community. Given that Milkman Dead’s journey becomes a journey for a sense of self, it is fitting that it is included in this project for an analysis of his transcendental journey in which, I argue, he not only re-claims his ancient properties but lays claim to a new future.

The second novel that the study focuses on is Toni Morrison’s *Tar Baby* (1981). Although *Beloved*, published in 1987, is omitted from my study, it is no less valuable. However, one of my points of interest in *Tar Baby* is that, unlike *Beloved*, it is the first of Toni Morrison’s novels to be set outside the boundaries of the United States as well as being set within it. I examine the possible role this may have on the creation of the protagonist Son’s sense of identity. Mayberry suggests that Toni Morrison’s fourth novel, *Tar Baby*, remains “oddly disturbing to most readers,” as Morrison attempts to engage with the mythmaking process (2007: 116). In *Tar Baby*, Son struggles to find his place in the world as he escapes a fishing boat to be washed up on Isle des Chevaliers, and a relationship with the educated and beautiful Jadine complicates this search. This relationship culminates in a shocking moment as he rapes her. Here, I examine the role of violence often associated with African American men, and suggest that Son is conflicted as he has nothing in which to root himself as a person. In this novel, Morrison offers a critique of succumbing to violence as a method to exert power and to maintain that sense of power. I also make reference to the journey undertaken by Son and Jadine and suggest that part of the downfall of their relationship is caused by their interaction with one another’s experiences of being ‘American’. In addition, Morrison seeks to question the concept of what it means to identify as an American and as an African American within a society that is dominated by white men. Mayberry argues that “with the male characters especially in *Tar Baby*, Morrison challenges this white concept of Americanness” (118). The relevance of this novel within my project lies in its exploration of the self in relation to others, particularly within a wider community. I suggested earlier in this introduction that a sense of masculine identity is created rather than a fixed given, and this novel provides the

opportunity to explore the Self through Son's relationship with Jadine and their environment.

In Toni Morrison's seventh novel, *Paradise*, she "discounts the American dream. [The novel] insists on the impossibility, even the danger, of earthly perfection" (223). Set in fictional Ruby, the men of the town feel duty-bound to protect themselves and all they hold dear against the 'wayward' womenfolk who live on its outskirts. The novel has been criticised for its apparent hatred towards men, yet I believe that this criticism is invalid, as Morrison creates tension between those who do and do not support this mission. I aim to explore the idea of the individual and collective struggle that African American men face in defending the "honour" of a community as well as the burden of history and what role the cultural unconscious plays in this. I also wish to examine the notion of patriarchy and the ways in which it is employed as a means of control. Including this novel for my project also assists my exploration of the Self in that the novel, through the twin characters of Steward and Deacon Morgan, offers a means to examine the tensions that exist within the Self in relation to interference from external influence. In this case, I argue it is Steward Morgan who interferes in Deacon Morgan's transcendence to a discovery of Self. Yet their responses to the shooting of the women of the Convent offer a means to explore the Shadow within the Self. Additionally, the novel (not unlike *Song of Solomon*) offers the opportunity to examine the burden of responsibility that falls on the shoulders of men in order to maintain and preserve a sense of history and place.

In conclusion, I wish to be aware of my own position as researcher within this project. In reading texts about the representations of African American people, I am aware that various markers of my own identity (given that I am not an American and that I am a white woman) may possibly prove to be contentious with regard to a project of this nature. However, I feel that this project is interesting in light of the current discourse here in South Africa and beyond that I articulated earlier in this chapter. I also feel that with the limited amount of critical material regarding the specific interrogation of racial stereotypes that impact upon the representations of African American men within literary discourse, this project will be of value. As Ruth Arber articulates in her

paper “Defining Positioning within Politics of Difference: Negotiating Spaces ‘In Between’”: “Participants in the study are silenced, and [...] the last word remains with the uncontested and privileged interpretations of the author” (2000: 45). With this in mind, I acknowledge the differences between myself and the subjects of my study. However, Toni Morrison suggests that readers and writers are left “bereft” if criticism of the function and representations within are “too polite or too fearful” (1992: 91). Therefore, I am aware of my relative outside positioning in my discussion of Toni Morrison’s texts and her representations of African American men. Finally, I wish to examine the role that Toni Morrison has as an author and her social awareness in the creation of literature. Is there a weight of responsibility to be considered for an author? As Morrison herself suggests, there is little wrong with being aware. She is both passionately “aesthetic” and “highly political,” and these currents inform her work (2005a: xi). The “problem” of being “political” is merely an artistic one (xi). I explore this role of social responsibility.

Chapter One

“If you surrendered to the air, you could *ride* it”: Identity, Flight and *Song of Solomon*

The fathers may soar
And the children may know their names (Morrison, 2005b: Epigraph)

“Too much tail. All that jewelry weighs it down. Like vanity. Can’t nobody fly with all that shit. Wanna fly, you got to give up the shit that weighs you down.”
(179)

Toni Morrison’s *Song of Solomon*, her third novel, was published in 1977 within a climate of political and historical uncertainty in the United States of America. The outcome, vision and ideals of the nonviolent Civil Rights movement of the 1960s and later Black Power movement of the 1970s were in danger of becoming obsolete as their leaders were “harassed, jailed, murdered” (Brenkman, 1994: 57). Even with the hope inspired by the election of democrat Jimmy Carter in 1976, there was little offered in the way of a path forward for African American rights. Thomas Reeves argues that even though Carter tried to portray himself as compassionate, his leadership was ultimately unproductive as he refused to listen or negotiate with both houses of Congress, leaving government deadlocked (2000: 224). In this uncertainty and in need of a new direction, many African American writers sought a means to reconstruct the debate of how African Americans could move forward (Brenkman, 1994: 58). The debate revolved around the question of what was required of a writer. More specifically, the concern lay in whether a writer was required to create “useful visions and representations” and if so, how these representations could be “usable to whom [and] for what” (62). John Brenkman further notes that African American writing found itself “caught up in the specific history of African Americans and of race in America,” while engaging with the “multiculturalism and the modernity of contemporary American society” (62).

Having earlier mentioned Toni Morrison’s concern with the representation of African Americans and given the desire of African American writers to engage in a new debate with regard to creating useful representations, I believe it is conceivable that she

achieves this as she breaks for the first time with her traditional foregrounding in a female locus in *Song of Solomon*. Instead, Morrison harnesses a male locus through the journey of protagonist Macon “Milkman” Dead. In doing so, she is able to explore and offer a new version of a male narrative (Woolliams, 2008). The above epigraphs that accompany and that are within the novel, speak to the idea of flight and travel of African American men (and fathers in particular). This desire for flight offers a wealth of opportunities in the form of better or worse lives for themselves, their families or the chance for discovery. Michael Awkward notes that the novel has a dual function in that it not only acts as a means through which to preserve the tradition of African American folktales, wisdom and beliefs, but also as an attempt to engage with contemporary times in which new wisdom may be acquired and passed on to future generations (1990: 483). In this engagement with the preservation of the past as well as engagement with the present, it stands to reason that potential conflict may arise in trying to amalgamate the two together. In the case of the novel, such journeys of discovery may have positive or negative outcomes in their undertaking. Morrison highlights the wealth of opportunities afforded from flight yet she is aware that such opportunities come at a price, not least of all for the children who are left behind. In order for children to attain a sense of selfhood, they require the stability of the family unit, but this is not always provided, given the possibility of abandonment by parental figures. With regard to the novel, the first epigraph foreshadows the complexity of four generations of the Dead family, as each generation has suffered the loss or absence of a parental figure, either physically or emotionally. This loss has affected the following generation, none more so than Milkman Dead. Throughout the novel, one is made aware of Milkman’s disillusionment with life in general. This disillusionment acts as a perpetual catalyst in his search for identity, as well as a desire for a connection to his community and ancestors (Mills, 2003: 315).

Although the novel functions as an examination of an experience of African American masculinity and how this relates to the role of community and an acknowledgement of one’s roots within an individual’s life, Morrison believes that *Song of Solomon* is a departure from her previous work in so far as “men are more prominent” as they “interested” her in a way that she “hadn’t thought about before” (quoted in Watkins,

1977: 45). Moreover, in *Milkman Dead*, she wanted to create a character that had to start from the beginning of a learning process without the desire, on his part, to learn. Morrison says: “to watch that person learn something was fascinating to me as opposed to watching the man who already was that perfection” (quoted in Koenen, 1980: 75). The significance here lies in Morrison’s desire to create a character that undergoes some form of journey and in addition, experiences a learning process. Furthermore, an individual undergoes an inevitable struggle in order to achieve a complete sense of self. A part of this struggle is the need for the individual to acknowledge the role of community in his or her existence, as well as that of his or her ancestors (Magill, 2003: 202). Guth highlights that a central concern for Morrison is to examine the sometimes problematic role of the past with an individual’s present (1993: 575). Thus the question of who one is, is linked very much to where one has come from. In relation to the novel, Milkman’s search is not merely based on a shift in his world view but also functions as reclamation of his past (579).

Additionally, the novel provides a means to examine the loss of fathers (Matus, 1998: 72). In looking at African American men and the role of fatherhood, Dowd argues that “men’s identities as fathers do not exist in isolation from their identities as men” (quoted in Neal, 2005: 112). What Dowd further postulates is that, as long as accepted definitions of masculinity continue to view parenthood as a feminine domain, men will struggle to develop a sense of fatherhood (112). hooks articulates this idea by suggesting that many children are emotionally neglected and abandoned by their fathers (2004: 103). The stereotype that African American men simply do not take parenting seriously prevails, and this is only enforced by African American men unquestioningly believing in the norm of patriarchal discourse that parenting is “women’s work” (104). This, more often than not, is the result of the belief that it is ‘unmasculine’ to be an involved father. In the novel, each generation suffers a significant loss or ‘flight’ of the parental figure whether it be physical or emotional abandonment, and the impact of this is passed on to future generations. But, for Toni Morrison, flight (of fathers) functions as a central concern and “heartbeat” of the novel (1988: 155). Flight, for Morrison, while acknowledging the potential dangers, offers “change, an alternative way, a cessation of things-as-they-are” (156). In relation to the

novel, the idea of flight offers Milkman another view of the world and selfhood. I wish to examine the idea of loss more generally, but more than that, how the metaphor of flight offers new possibilities for creating a sense of self and how these concepts of loss and flight then impact on Milkman's search for a sense of masculine self. Dorothy Lee postulates that *Song of Solomon* demonstrates a man's search for self and transcendence, yet the novel is imbued with the "specifics of a black American experience" (1982: 64). Images of flight offer a means through which self-knowledge can be attained via transcendence as Milkman learns to fly (64).

In a brief overview of this chapter, I explore how Jung's concept of the Self is applicable to the journey of Milkman. Jung's view is that, as the conscious ego is the centre of consciousness (1951a: 3), it mediates individuals' experiences of themselves, others and the world. Milkman's conscious ego is mediated from an early by the influence of his parents who advocate the disconnection from their roots as African Americans, despite his awareness and need for a different kind of life, which suggests the working of his unconscious. In his relationship with his family, he learns and actively rejects his ties to the African American community. This is learned primarily from his relationship with his father, who abandons his own ties to his community through an adoption of the belief that it offers an inferior way to live. It highlights Fanon's claim that consistent exposure to an "all-white truth" (1952: 63) entails individuals adopting an existence that is not their own, as their own existence is rendered valueless through consistent erosion by racism. I argue that Pilate not only influences Milkman's conscious ego in that she offers a very different worldview from that of his parents, but she also represents Milkman's connection to his unconscious, as the amalgamation of these two assists in his discovering selfhood. In a sense, these two influences offer Milkman's conscious ego a very paradoxical view of the world and consequently, himself. As Tidey points out, Morrison highlights the differences between the Dead family who, on the one hand, embody very Western-orientated characteristics, and on the other hand, the African resonances of Milkman's aunt, Pilate (2000: 55).

In attempting to form the Self, there exists a paradox between the conscious ego, the unconscious and the Shadow as a person attempts to achieve selfhood. For Milkman, the Shadow of his personality is seen in his adopting of the views of his parents, while it is his unconscious desire for a different kind of life, a chance for flight, which he struggles with. Thus Part Two of the novel focuses on his trip to Danville and Shalimar that furthers this flight as he discovers his independence as well as acknowledging his faults, and this search leads him to establish his connection to his ancestors and community. Having given a brief overview of this chapter, I now move on to an in-depth analysis of these ideas.

The notion of flight is prevalent from the opening of the novel after the leap of Robert Smith off the roof of No Mercy hospital. In interpreting Jung, Henderson suggests that the symbolism³ of flight is connected with a period of transition in one's life (1964: 149). It serves to demonstrate:

Man's need for liberation from any state of being that is too immature, too fixed or final. In other words, [it concerns] man's release from – or transcendence of – any confining pattern of existence, as he moves toward a superior or more mature stage in his development. (149)

In fact, Awkward argues that Morrison, in writing *Song of Solomon*, “suggests that masculinity has become a virtual prerequisite for participation in transcendent action” (1990: 484). Therefore, the notion of flight powerfully symbolises a need for change and freedom. Mr Smith leaves a note expressing his desire for such a shift: “I will take off from Mercy and fly away on my own wings” (Morrison, 2005b: 3). His desire to fly suggests a sense of wanting freedom away from the constraints of his current life to create a path that is entirely his own, and forge a sense of independence. Morrison herself professes that his leap cannot be “understood as a simple, desperate act, the end of a fruitless life, a life without gesture, without examination” (1988: 156). Mr Smith

³It is necessary to examine my use of the term ‘symbolism’. The term ‘symbol’ (as used by Jung) refers to “something that is for, represents, or denotes something else (not by exact resemblance, but by vague suggestion)” (quoted in Singer Harris, 1996: 55). However, Jung was careful to distinguish between ‘signs’ and ‘symbols’. For Jung, ‘symbols’ are “an intuitive idea” (1922: 70). Symbolism is the process through which ordinary experiences are interpreted and meaning is gained by the subject as these experiences come to represent far more than their simple face value (Singer Harris, 1996: 56). I use the term symbolism with an emphasis on gaining meaning from face value experiences.

is not given a large audience, merely those who are “unemployed, the self-employed and the very young” (Morrison, 2005b: 4). The lack of attention his desire for flight receives is notable, as little suggests his capability for such a thing, and he shows little need to do something so out of the ordinary in this community. His flight foreshadows the birth and life of Macon “Milkman” Dead. It is his mother, Ruth Foster Dead, dropping her basket filled with rose petals, who appears to attract the attention of most people in the street as she spies Mr Smith on the roof. The petals spread as they are blown “up, down, and into small mounds of snow” (5). In a sense, the petals represent the blood that will be spilled as Mr Smith falls from the roof. His blood is spilled amongst the petals where Ruth Dead goes into labour and gives birth to Milkman. Symbolically, their blood is then connected, as perhaps Mr Smith passes his desire for flight on to the newly-born Milkman. The imminent leap of Mr Smith is in stark contrast to the atmosphere on the street, as it is described as “nice and gay” (5), as people, both young and old, work to catch the petals. This atmosphere is broken by a woman breaking into song, “O Sugarman done fly away... Sugarman done gone... Sugarman cut across the sky... Sugarman gone home...” (6). The song re-establishes the seriousness of what is going to happen as the crowd becomes transfixed at what is before them. But this is contrasted with their musings about Mr Smith as a person. He “wore a business suit for his work, but his house was no better than theirs. He never had a woman that any of them knew about and said nothing in church but an occasional ‘Amen’” (8). This emphasises the way in which Mr Smith was not really thought about, no more so than the average person. In fact, his leap is described as “the most interesting thing he had done” (9). The singer moves to comfort Ruth Foster, advising her to stay warm as “a little bird’ll be here with the morning” (9). The little bird in question is young Milkman Dead who is born shortly after Mr Smith’s leap. The comparison of Milkman to a little bird foreshadows young Milkman’s desire for a different kind of life, and symbolically the “wings” are passed from the dead to the newly born. However, this belief in flight is crushed as Milkman “discover[s], at four, the same thing Mr Smith had learned earlier – that only birds and airplanes could fly” (9). In this discovery, he “los[es] all interest in himself” (9). The inability to fly leaves him without anything to believe in, and he withdraws into himself. At this point, flying for Milkman is simply flying. He has yet to realise its significance in the range of

possibilities that it offers him. This is seen in his pondering of “why he ha[s] to stay level on the ground” (10). Being the first African American baby born in No Mercy hospital, Milkman is immediately positioned as different. This is only emphasised in exploring his relationship with his family members as his “wings” are metaphorically clipped. The kind of impact that the Dead family has on young Milkman is clear, as his consciousness is mediated by their views. The Dead family is ruled with an iron fist by Milkman’s father, Macon Dead, through fear and violence.

This atmosphere of fear and violence is immediately felt, as the quiet of the house is not peaceful, “for it was preceded by and would soon be terminated by the presence of Macon Dead” (10). He is described as “solid, rumbling, likely to erupt without prior notice,” and as keeping “each member of his family awkward with fear” (10). The image here is of a man intent on ruling his family with an iron fist, as “his hatred of his wife glittered and sparked in every word he spoke to her,” and his disappointment in his daughters “sifted down on them like ash” (10). Ruth and daughters Lena and Corinthians accept this as his criticism acts as the “the single excitement of their day” (11). This contempt extends to his sister Pilate. He reminisces that “at one time she had been the dearest thing in the world to him. Now she was odd, murky, and worst of all, unkempt. A regular source of embarrassment, if he would allow it. But he would not allow it” (20). Macon’s deep concern with appearances is evident as well as his desire to maintain control over his existence. This concern does not come from a sense of arrogance but rather fear of the “white men in the bank – the men who helped him buy and mortgage houses – discovering that this raggedy bootlegger was his sister” (20). This only highlights the irony of the situation that Macon finds himself in. As he attempts to build his own business, he is still at the mercy of the “white man”. As Murray postulates, Macon is duped by the little status that he is offered to lord over his fellow African Americans, as it is dependent on his tenuous position between white capitalists and segregated African Americans (1999: 127). One then sees the paradoxical position that Macon occupies in that he is influenced by those who give him a sense of position as opposed to fostering a sense of connection to his own community.

Moreover, Macon is deeply concerned with maintaining control. In a sense, his sister represents the very type of flight he despises, as he does not wish to be different. Guitar Bains points out to Milkman: ““But I don’t have to tell you that your father is one very strange Negro. He’ll reap the benefits of what we sow, and there’s nothing we can do about that. He behaves like a white man, thinks like a white man”” (Morrison, 2005b: 223). This disconnection, on Macon’s part, from his own community is clearly seen in his dealing with Mrs Bains, one of his tenants. When she enters his office to request that extra time be given for overdue rent, he recalls the circumstances rather than recalling who she is: “Macon Dead remembered – not the woman, but the circumstances at number three. His tenant’s grandmother or aunt or something had moved in there and the rent was long overdue” (21). She has been left to take care of some children, but her pleas fall on deaf ears as he brushes off her requests: ““Can they make it in the street Mrs. Bains? That’s where they gonna be if you don’t figure out some way to get me my money”” (22). She responds by appealing to his sense of connection, ““No, sir. They can’t make it in the street. We need both, I reckon. Same as yours does”” (22). Macon does not respond to her plea, even when she appeals to him as a father or highlights that they all find themselves in a difficult situation. This illustrates his greedy nature as well as suggesting his disconnection from his own community. As she departs, Mrs Bains remarks that “a nigger in business is a terrible thing to see. A terrible, terrible thing to see” (22). The implication of this statement is two-fold. Firstly, it foregrounds the problematic effects of isolating oneself from one’s community. Macon is then an example of how this isolation forces a disconnection from his identity. Secondly, in this instance, Morrison offers a critique of the situation that men like Macon find themselves in. If they adhere to the system of white capitalist rule, then they run the risk of isolating themselves from their community and their roots of identity. If they do not adhere to the system, then they are left with very little chance to advance.

The paradoxical nature of Milkman’s upbringing is also clearly seen in his mother, Ruth. From his conception Milkman is seen as a desperate means (on Ruth’s part) to forge an unbreakable connection with her husband, Macon. Ruth muses: “Her son had never really been a person to her, a separate real person. He had always been a

passion” (131). In the de-personification of Milkman, his identity is then inherently rooted in the needs of other people, instead of his being given a chance to be his own person. Furthermore, Milkman represents a means for Ruth to maintain some form of control over her husband, in that Milkman forms a bond between mother and father onto which she is able to project the love that she is not able to give her husband. As Storhoff remarks, Milkman acts as a connective agent between his parents, as his presence creates an unhappy balance between them (1997). Despite Macon’s number of attempts to abort the baby, he is unable to do so, and Ruth is able to maintain some modicum of control over her abusive husband, who belittles her efforts as a wife and mother. Her “passion” for her son is also seen in the giving of his nickname “Milkman”. At the age of four, she still breastfeeds Milkman. Again this highlights her desperate need for affection in the form of her young son, as she “rose up out of her guileless inefficiency to claim her bit of balm” as “something else (was) needed to get from sunup to sundown” in the form of a “gentle touch or nuzzling of some sort” (Morrison, 2005b: 13). The breastfeeding acts as a means for Ruth to get such affection, as “one of her two secret indulgences” was breastfeeding her son (13). The act enables her to receive the affection she does not receive from her husband. The young Milkman comes to her “reluctantly,” as a “chore” (13). This suggests his attempt to placate his mother in fulfilling her wishes and needs. She, in turn, “felt him. His restraint, his courtesy, his indifference, all of which pushed her into fantasy. She had the distinct impression that his lips were pulling from her a thread of light” (13). One is invited to feel sympathy for Ruth in this moment, as her desperation and desire to be of use are overwhelming. This sympathy is only increased when she is caught breastfeeding by Freddie the janitor, as shame does not spring to mind, but “the terror” and “quick realization” that “she was to lose fully half of what made her day bearable” (14). Freddie in no way eases the predicament, and is quick to christen the young child “Milkman” as he spreads word to other neighbourhoods of his discovery, including “Ruth’s neighbourhood” but also “to Southside, where he lived and where Macon Dead rented houses” (15). Macon is none the wiser about how his son acquires his nickname, although it does little to endear his wife and son to him, as he is certain that “this name was not clean” (15). The nickname and act of naming are symbolic in a sense in that they suggest nourishment, yet Milkman is not nourished, as he is not able

to shake the name. The act of breastfeeding satisfies his mother's needs rather than his own. He is not able to assert his own desires in this regard. Bev Hogue argues that Milkman, at the beginning of the novel, is marked by his lack of self-awareness and ignorant of his exile from his family name and cultural heritage (1996: 123). Yet he is unable to achieve wholeness until he begins a search for something new (123).

But this indifference and exile are carried through Milkman's childhood as he is caught between his father's violent outbursts, obsession with appearances and the need to constantly prove his success, and his mother's overbearing need for affection. This is clearly demonstrated in the rides in the Packard that the family take on a Sunday. For Macon, the rides "had become rituals and much too important [...] to enjoy. For him it was a way to satisfy himself that he was indeed a successful man," and for Ruth, it was to "display her family" (Morrison, 2005b: 31). For both parents, it is merely a show. For Milkman, it is simply a "burden" (31). He sees little during the ride as he is seated symbolically between his parents, but he has little desire to see what is behind as "riding backward made him uneasy" (32). It is "not knowing where he was going" that troubles him (32). Even as a child, Milkman has a deep desire for flight forward, which suggests an urge to break free of the constraints around him. This is highlighted on one of the trips, when he feels the need to urinate and his sister Lena takes him to do so. He accidentally splashes her with urine as, startled by her footsteps behind him, "he'd turned around before he was through" (35). Lena is deeply upset, but for Milkman, "it was becoming a habit – this concentrating on things behind him. Almost as though there was no future to be had" (35). One notes how he is seemingly smothered, with little chance to create his own sense of self, as he is concerned with the little opportunity that is available for him to do so. Furthermore, what Milkman searches for remains elusive, as he is at the mercy of his overbearing parents and his consciousness is overshadowed by their needs and way of life.

However, in contrast to his relationship with his parents, Milkman's first meeting with Pilate signals a dramatic shift in the mediation of his conscious ego. Guth comments that Pilate functions as an opposition to Macon Dead, as she provides Milkman with a sense of self that is based on "inner strength and self-determination" rather than simply

the acquisition of power that Macon advocates (1993: 581). Thus, Milkman's conscious ego is mediated with a different world view. Pilate functions as a representation of the archetypal anima within his unconscious as she symbolises a different kind of existence⁴. As Milkman says, "at twelve [he] met the boy who not only could liberate him, but could take him to the woman who had as much to do with his future as she had his past" (Morrison, 2005b: 36). Having been forbidden by Macon to visit Pilate, Milkman and Guitar are "spellbound" by all the "unbelievable but entirely possible stories" about her (36). Pilate is described as "all angles" with "knees, mostly, and elbows. One foot pointed east and one pointed west" (36). Her appearance symbolically offers a wealth of different directions. She represents the chance for flight in this multitude of directions. At that moment, Milkman realises that "Nothing – not the wisdom of his father nor the caution of the world – could keep him from her" (36). This intrinsic link has spanned his life, as it was Pilate singing when Mr Smith leapt to his death. She holds the key to Milkman's future. In Milkman, a change in his demeanour is evident as he lays claim to who he is when she acknowledges that she knows his father. Guitar asks if she is his sister and she responds that she is "the only he got. Ain't but three Deads alive" (38). In this moment, a fire is sparked in Milkman as he shouts at her "I'm a Dead! My mother's a Dead! My sisters. You and him ain't the only ones!" (38). This is ironic as Milkman admits that he had never laid claim to the name before as he had always "hated" (38) it, but in Pilate's presence he refuses to be ignored, or rather, he refuses to be removed from a group to whom he feels connected. In this moment Milkman lays claim to his name and in doing so, he is able to begin laying claim to who he is. In this meeting with Pilate, Milkman learns of his father and Pilate's childhood. Pilate suggests that Milkman would have liked Macon back then, as he "was a nice boy and awful good" to her (40). However, she and Macon witnessed the murder of their father as he was blown up into the air while attempting to protect his land. Sympathy for Macon is increased here, as Pilate acknowledges that he saved her when they were children: "Hadn't been for your daddy, I wouldn't be here today" (40). In a sense, he became

⁴ While I do not venture into a detailed discussion of the archetypal anima at this stage, I wish to highlight its significance in terms of providing Milkman with a means of exploring his unconscious i.e. the provision of an alternative to view to that of his father's prevalent world view. As highlighted in my introduction, archetypes order perceptions of the world within the psyche. Thus, I argue that Pilate counters the perception that Milkman has of the world by offering him a different point of view.

the parent to both himself and Pilate. Thus, one begins to understand why his mind is “sharpened with hatred” (15). His anger and violence are perhaps symptomatic of his own childhood. John Bradshaw points out that “all parents who have not worked through their own childhood will re-enact it on their own children” (quoted in hooks, 2004: 109). Toni Morrison suggests that there should be a certain amount of sympathy for Macon as he is (as are most of her characters) “complex. Some are good and some are bad, but most of them are bits of both” (quoted in McKay, 1983: 145).

In visiting Pilate, Milkman realises that he has met someone with the same stature as his father in that:

At fifty-two, Macon Dead was as imposing a man as he had been at forty-two, when Milkman thought he was the biggest thing in the world. [...] But today he had seen a woman who was just as tall and who had made him feel tall too. (Morrison, 2005b: 50)

Milkman begins to believe in someone other than his father or mother as Pilate gives him a chance to use his voice. One sees this as he dares to speak back to his father: ““You treat me like I was a baby. You keep saying you don’t have to explain nothing to me. How do you think that makes me feel? Like a baby, that’s what. Like a twelve-year-old baby!”” (50). Macon reacts angrily, but is thrown off guard by his son questioning him about his own father’s treatment of him at age twelve. In Macon’s recollection of working with his father, Milkman notices how his father’s voice sounded “different” as it was “less hard” (52). Working with his father allowed Macon a sense of peace in his life, but witnessing his father’s murder has left him scarred. But years of emotional turmoil have hardened Macon, and Milkman is left without an explanation as to why he must not see Pilate. At the end of this exchange, Macon stamps his authority on his son, once more proclaiming that it is time he “started learning how to work,” as Pilate “can’t teach [him] a thing [he] can use in this world” (55). It is here one learns Macon’s philosophy on attaining selfhood. The only way to attain it is to acquire things. As he states, ““Let me tell you right now the one important thing you’ll ever need to know: Own things. And let the things you own own other things. Then you’ll own yourself and other people too”” (55). Macon’s beliefs that

materialism and a need for control over others are evident as he feels these are the means to attain a sense of self. Thus Milkman's conscious ego as a child is marked by the two contrasting views he receives. From his parents, his belief of self is founded in the idea that the way to be socially mobile is to acquire as much money and as many things as possible. From Pilate, it is founded on the connection one has to the past. The paradox within these two views is evident as Milkman struggles with each, as well as his unconscious desire to fly.

If Milkman's childhood is marked by his desire for more freedom and a concern that he has no kind of future, working for his father negatively influences his consciousness, as he takes on his father's beliefs that selfhood is to be attained through an embracing of what society has to offer and a rejection of his roots. In a sense, his father's influence clips Milkman's wings, as Milkman no longer focuses on his desire for a different kind of life. He recalls that "life improved [...] enormously after he began working" (56), as it gives him a chance to interact and "get to know the people Guitar knew so well" (56). The tenants trust Milkman, as he is young and friendly or rather, "just the opposite of his father" (56). In this sense one is able to see Milkman's attempt to be his own person, separate from his father and the reputation his father has in dealing with his tenants. However, he is unable to escape his father's influence entirely, as seen in a visit to Feathers's pool hall with Guitar. Milkman is reminded of his association, as Feathers wishes to have nothing to do with him and does not want him in his establishment. As Guitar argues with Feathers, one notices how Macon's reputation precedes him, as well as Milkman's inability to be seen as an individual:

"What his daddy do to you?"
"Nothing yet. That's why I want him outta here."
"He ain't like his daddy."
"He ain't got to be like him – *from* him is enough." (57)

This exchange demonstrates the way in which Macon easily influences his son's existence without being present. Milkman is unable to be seen as an individual rather than the son of Macon Dead. By the time he reaches the age of fourteen, Milkman notices that his one leg is shorter than the other. He refuses to admit this to anyone,

seeing it as a shortcoming, and in time develops a strut “of a very young man trying to appear more sophisticated than he was” (62). This is merely to cover up what he sees as a “burning defect” rather than the strut that others see. He hides it, as he “feared his father, respected him, but knew, because of the leg, that he could never emulate him” (63). In a sense, he is crippled under the smothering influence of his father as he is unable to assert himself. Milkman’s desire to appear like his father is evident, yet he cannot be because, in Milkman’s mind, his father is without imperfection. But Milkman attempts to differ from his father as much as possible: “Macon was clean-shaven; Milkman was desperate for a moustache; Macon wore bow ties; Milkman wore four-in-hands” (63). This clearly demonstrates the paradoxical nature of the relationship between Macon and Milkman. Although Milkman respects his father, he also desires his own sense of self. Macon is thrilled to have his son work for him, as it meant “his son belonged to him now and not to Ruth,” and “it made his business more dignified” (63). This highlights Macon’s emphasis that ownership is equated with selfhood. In addition, he believes that he has taken control away from his wife over their son.

The relationship between father and son is tested over an incident at the dinner table as Milkman punches his father for hitting his mother. Macon’s response is one of shock as he believed, “after years of creating respect and fear wherever he put his foot down, after years of being the tallest man in every gathering, that he was impregnable” (67). Instead, he now looks at his son who is taller and younger than he is. In this moment a shift occurs in dynamics as the now twenty-two-year old Milkman takes on the characteristics of his father as he responds to his father with violence. Yet, in this moment, one notes how Milkman acts independently for the first time. As he muses: “he had won something and lost something in the same desire. Infinite possibilities and enormous responsibilities stretched out before him” (68). Lee suggests that Milkman is still unable or unwilling to take on the burden of this new maturity (1982: 66).

It is as if the fear with which Macon has ruled, is transferred to Milkman in this moment. His contradictory feelings towards his father are evident, as he “both feared and loved” him (Morrison, 2005b: 69). Milkman’s transformation into a young adult

and his father's influence are clearly seen in the relationships he has with other people, particularly women. He believes that sleeping with Hagar has softened him, as it propelled him to defend his mother. But, to Milkman, Hagar "became a quasi-secret but permanent fixture in his life. Very much a tease, sometimes accommodating his appetites, sometimes refusing" (97-8). Here, it is evident he simply uses her. Morrison offers an illustration of Milkman's need to learn more. In his relationship with Hagar, he refuses to take responsibility, as he tries to think how to end their relationship, which she clearly feels more strongly about. He chooses to end it by getting cash out of the safe and writing her a letter. Milkman's attachment to materialism is emphasised once more, as he unconsciously emulates his father in using money to escape the relationship. His desire for escape from responsibility is only further highlighted in his conversation with Guitar, who reminds him of who he is and where he has come from. Guitar is at pains to remind Milkman that possessions are not what make a person. This is seen in his argument that "if things ever got tough, [Milkman would] melt. [He's] not a serious person [...]" (104). Again, Milkman shrugs off the criticism and refuses to completely acknowledge the truth in what his friend has said as he muses: "Maybe Guitar was right – partly. His life was pointless, aimless, and it was true that he didn't concern himself an awful lot about other people" (107). Milkman's unconscious is evident here as he realises that his life is not as fulfilled as it could be. Yet he shrugs the criticism off as his consciousness (having been influenced by his father and external environment) plays a role in his dismissal.

These incidents demonstrate to the reader the emergence of the Shadow within Milkman's personality. Milkman becomes unconcerned with those around him and their thoughts, and relies on materialism to get what he wants, and his desires for a different kind of life, represented by the image of flight, are pushed aside. However, Milkman is ignorant of these dark aspects of his personality, and this ignorance culminates with his robbing of Pilate. Milkman's consciousness is constantly bombarded by his father's opinion that money is the only means with which to achieve a semblance of freedom. As Macon says, "'You'll own it all. All of it. You'll be free. Money is freedom Macon. The only real freedom there is'" (163). This is in response to Milkman's request for a loan so that he might take a trip and "be on [his] own"

(163). Milkman's unconscious desire in this case is to get away on his own without the assistance of his father or anyone else. His need for independence is clear as he seeks to be free of the influence of his father and the responsibility placed on him by his circumstances. His father rejects Milkman's request, leaning on the excuse that he needs him to run the business, but his interest lies in the green sack that Milkman reveals to be hanging in Pilate's house. Macon believes that the sack contains some gold that they stole as children from a man whom Macon murdered. He then presses Milkman to retrieve the gold, promising him that "you can have half of it; go wherever you want. Get it. For both of us" (172). Once again, Macon's obsession with the material is highlighted, yet the gold foreshadows what is to happen. Without Milkman's being aware, it acts as a catalyst for him in that it pushes him into the realm of self-discovery. He enlists the help of Guitar who desires a share for his political activities and involvement in the Seven Days⁵.

Milkman views the task of stealing the gold as an experience filled with "both fun and fear" (177), illustrating the struggle he has with the paradox that the gold presents. Little thought is given to the fact that he is about to commit a crime, and he gives no thought to how this might negatively affect other people. To Milkman, the gold represents a means to escape. This is clearly seen in his desire for "New people. New places. Command" (180). He is clearly uncomfortable and unhappy with potentially ending up like those closest to him, as "he wanted to beat a path away from his parents' past, which was also their present and which was threatening to become his present as well" (180). His unconscious desire to "beat his own path" and for flight is represented through the sighting of a peacock while he and Guitar are on their way to Pilate. Once more, he rekindles his joy of flight as he notes: "'Look – she's flying down.' Milkman felt again his unrestrained joy at anything that could fly. 'Some jive flying, but look at her strut'" (178). Milkman feels a connection to the bird, yet he examines how it struts around (not unlike the strut he himself has acquired). Guitar explains it is a male bird that is unable to fly as it has "too much tail. All that jewelry weighs it down. Like vanity. Can't nobody fly with all that shit. Wanna fly, you got to

⁵ As Guitar ages, he becomes far more aware of politics and joins a group called Seven Days. They carry out murders against innocent white people in retaliation for the murders of African American people.

give up the shit that weighs you down” (179). In a literal sense, the bird is unable to fly as it cannot with such intricate tail plumage. Yet metaphorically, the bird represents what Milkman has become. He is weighed down by his concern for pleasing himself, his lack of concern for others and his obsession with materialism. His current state will keep him from “beating his own path,” as it offers nothing of substance with which to discover oneself. It is plausible that, to create a sense of self, Milkman cannot remain isolated and concerned with materialism.

Unknown to Milkman and Guitar, Pilate watches as they steal the sack. The sack contains some bones, but the gold is nowhere to be found. Macon is angered by his son’s failure and the involvement of Guitar in the plot, as he believes that mentioning his name would have released Milkman from jail: ““Soon as you told them your name they would have let you go”” (203). Milkman has very little with which to build his own identity here. It is still rooted in his parents’ name. Macon is also angered that Pilate rescues them, as “the idea of having to depend on [her] to get his son out of jail humiliated him” (204). This only highlights his concern for himself and his appearance. Milkman’s interest in finding the gold dwindles as he believes it to be a crazy scheme. He reflects, “If anybody even mentions the word ‘gold’, I’m going to have to take his teeth out” (206). Again, Milkman loses interest in his desire to move towards a different kind of life. His desire to move forward and create his own identity is hampered by his comfort in what he has around him.

A conversation with his sister Lena acts as a catalyst in pushing himself towards a new self. She forces Milkman to become aware of the undesirable parts of his personality. Jung suggests that this kind of examination is necessary for self-knowledge (1951b: 8). Drunk, Lena accuses Milkman of treating his mother and sisters badly as she recalls the urination incident when they were little children. But as adults, she is now mindful that “there are all kinds of ways to pee on people” (Morrison, 2005b: 214). Milkman is aghast when she hits him, and she tells him that he has always made life difficult for them, ““You’ve been laughing at us all your life. Corinthians. Mama. Me. Using us, ordering us, and judging us: how we cook your food; how we keep your house”” (215). She goes on to demand, ““Where do you get the *right* to decide our lives?”” (215), as

his mother and sisters are older than he is and have done a great deal to take care of him. She insists that she will tell him, despite his not wanting to know, and says:

“I’ll tell you where. From that hog’s gut that hangs down between your legs. Well let me tell you something, baby brother: you will need more than that. I don’t know where you will get it or who will give it to you, but mark my words, you will need more than that.” (215)

Lena’s anger only serves to highlight what has held Milkman back, and that is his belief that materialism and lack of concern for others are the only way to achieve anything. She succinctly points out that resting on his merit as a man alone will not get him very far. She further drives home the point that Milkman has become like their father: ““You are exactly like him. Exactly”” (215). The irony, as discussed earlier, is that Milkman’s relationship with his father is paradoxical in nature, in that he fears and loves him at the same time. Macon has only imparted the belief to Milkman that possessions and money are a means to attain selfhood. In doing so, Macon’s influence has rendered Milkman selfish and valuing very little, including those around him. Furthermore, Milkman has allowed himself to be weighed down, as his conscious ego has subscribed to the ‘ideals’ extolled by his father and the world at large.

Part Two of the novel affords Milkman the journey his father denied him in Part One. In a sense, Milkman is granted his wings once more. As Guth points out, “the two stages of Milkman’s journey – Danville, Pennsylvania, and then Shalimar, Virginia – reflect Milkman’s initiation into [another] mode of reading [his worldview]” (1993: 581). It also serves as a means for Milkman to explore his conscious ego and unconscious. Having mentioned earlier in this chapter that who one is, is linked to one’s past, I argue that Part Two offers Milkman a chance to look backwards and to understand who and where he has come from. Milkman decides to continue his hunt for the gold without informing his father, who is convinced that Pilate may have hidden it in the cave near their father’s farm, Lincoln’s Haven, in Danville, Pennsylvania. Milkman’s not informing his father is significant in that it demonstrates his keenness to stand on his own feet. He confides his desire to Guitar before he leaves for Danville: ““Yeah. Yeah. By myself. I need to get out of here. I mean I really have

to go away somewhere” (Morrison, 2005b: 221). Milkman’s burning desire for flight is only magnified in this conversation with Guitar. Guitar senses his friend’s low ebb and asks him: ““Why you so low? You don’t act like a man on his way to the end of a rainbow”” (221). Milkman responds by saying, ““I hope it is a rainbow, and nobody has run off with the pot, cause I need it”” (221). On the surface, one notes that his journey still has much to do with acquiring the gold. However, a deeper reading suggests the rainbow and pot symbolise the potential for a discovery of a new life that he appears to crave, and which will spark a re-connection to his community and ancestors. This is evident in his next statement in which he says, ““I just know that I want to live my own life. I don’t want to be my old man’s office boy no more”” (222). Milkman is aware of his need for something more, suggesting the interpretation of Jung by Henderson that flight is a symbol of man’s “need for liberation” (1964: 149). Milkman is re-awakened from his previously numbed condition of accepting his life as it is, particularly under the direction of his father. In this new awareness, his needs are no longer simply material. However, he remains convinced that the money will allow him the freedom he so craves, hence his enthusiasm about finding the gold.

When Milkman arrives in Danville, he has no plan to speak of, only the knowledge of what he has been told. Milkman does not fit into his surroundings and little suggests whether the outcome of his trip will be successful or not. As the conscious ego is the means by which individuals mediate their world and consequently their experiences of themselves, Milkman has to re-orientate his conscious ego, as he has no frame of reference with how to deal with this visit. His unconscious plays a role, as he has no blueprint other than that of his life ruled over by his father in Michigan. His appearance brings a great deal of attention, as he wears his “beige three-piece suit, his button-down light-blue shirt and black string tie, and his beautiful Florsheim shoes” (Morrison, 2005b: 227). His appearance is symbolic of his old self as he clings to the materialism of his life in Michigan, yet in this environment, he simply attracts unwanted attention. In realising he has little means with which to track down Circe, he asks a stranger for assistance and is pointed in the direction of Reverend Cooper. Upon arrival at Reverend Cooper’s, he is left feeling awkward as he meets the Reverend, as “he had never had to try to make a pleasant impression on a stranger before, never

needed anything from a stranger before, and did not remember ever asking anybody in the world how they were” (229). This signals a re-orientation of Milkman’s conscious ego as he becomes aware of the need for other people and in addition, the need to connect to other people. Moreover, when he “apologetically” announces that he is Macon Dead, he receives a favourable reaction to it as the Reverend proclaims ““I know your people!”” (229). Milkman’s positive reaction is significant as he muses over it. This signals a shift in Milkman’s view because he is content that his family name is well known. As he sits with Reverend Cooper, he listens to the story of how Macon and Pilate were cared for by Circe after the murder of their father, but in this telling of the tale Milkman is captivated and feels “a glow” as he had only “half listened” to previous recollections of the same event (231). Milkman reflects that being in the place where the story takes place contributes to making it seem “real” rather than “exotic” or “something from another world and age” (231). His conscious ego begins to shift towards having a new appreciation for his family history as well as appreciation for others as he genuinely listens to what the Reverend has to say. Milkman uses his time in Danville to collect more memories about his family, which people are happy to supply: “They talked on and on, using Milkman as the ignition that gunned their memories. The good times, the hard times, things that changed, things that stayed the same” (235). Perhaps the most striking story is that which he collects regarding his grandfather, Macon Dead I. People remembered him as “tall, magnificent,” and his death, to Milkman, seemed “the beginning of their own dying even though they were young boys at the time,” as Macon “was the farmer they wanted to be” (235). Milkman here gains insight into the kind of man his grandfather was and he is able to reflect on his father’s relationship with his grandfather as something sacred and meaningful, rather than his assumption that his father boasted when speaking of working with his grandfather:

His own father’s words came right back to him: “I worked right alongside my father. Right alongside him.” Milkman thought then that his father was boasting of his manliness as a child. Now he knew he had been saying something else. That he loved his father; had an intimate relationship with him. (234)

One feels an increased sympathy for Macon through Milkman's reflections as he recalls his father's words, "'Something went wild in me,' he'd said, 'when I saw him on the ground'" (234). This reflection not only functions as a means to give the reader more insight into Macon, but it also demonstrates a new depth in Milkman in that he is able to place his recollections into perspective. His thought processes appear to have a new found-depth as he views his family in a new light. Milkman's unconscious then becomes his consciousness as he begins to piece together his family's history. In collecting these stories, his conscious ego is then mediated by the way his ancestors lived their lives.

Milkman's visit to Circe completes his time in Danville, and is significant as she is able to fill in the missing pieces with regard to his grandparents. Much like Pilate, Circe connects Milkman to his past and ancestors. In a sense, she functions as a way to mediate Milkman's consciousness, as he is able to learn from her. He learns that she is very much alive and still stays in the mansion of the Butlers, the family responsible for the death of Milkman's grandfather. Upon meeting him, Circe mistakes Milkman for his father and appears to "lose all interest in him" upon discovering that it is not "[her] Macon" (241). Once more, Milkman is at the mercy of his father's reputation, yet this does not upset him, and he goes on to question her about his grandmother. One learns that Circe was unable to save his grandmother while she gave birth to Pilate: "Never lost one either. Never lost nobody but your mother. Well, grandmother, I guess she was" (243). Milkman further learns that his grandmother, Sing, "loved too hard" in Circe's opinion (243). Milkman quietly compares Sing to Hagar's attempts at loving him as he "thought about this mixed woman's great-grand-daughter, Hagar, and said, 'Yes. I know what you mean'" (243). Without appearing to realise it, Milkman successfully connects his past and present, suggesting his re-connection to and appreciation of those who have come before him. A connection is made between his conscious ego and unconscious state. Yet, this revelation makes Milkman aware of his shortcomings in that Circe admonishes him: "'You don't listen to people. Your ear is on your head, but it's not connected to your brain'" (247). Here, part of Milkman's Shadow is revealed. His inability to listen keeps him from connecting to others. His intention to continue his journey to the cave suggests the shifting of his conscious ego

as he questions Circe about the cave where he believes the gold to be, and learns that it is where the remains of his grandfather were put: “That’s where they dumped Old Macon’s body” (244). Milkman is intrigued and asks where the cave is, as he feels “there’s something [he] can bury properly” (245). Milkman demonstrates a mental shift, as the gold no longer holds his interest, but rather a re-connection to his past.

As he reaches the cave, he is “blinded by the absence of light” (251). This is ironic in that his search involves the need for clarity. Yet the gold is not the first thing on Milkman’s mind as he begins to search the cave. Rather, he questions where the bones of his grandfather lie: “But where were the bones? Circe said they dumped him in here” (251). Milkman’s new focus is significant here. He chooses to focus firstly on laying claim to his past rather than the potential of gold. This is unlike the child Milkman, who remained unsettled about looking backwards. But perhaps this is the point that Morrison is trying to make about creating a sense of self. It is not an individualistic endeavour. The gold becomes a secondary thought as he is unable to discover where the bones lie. In this sense his search for self becomes part of his consciousness, as material pursuits no longer interest him. He continues to search the cave and is unable to locate the gold. Instead he discovers “no fat little pigeon-breasted bags of gold. Nothing. Nothing at all” (252). He is angered by this discovery. His motivations have changed in that the “pot” that he hoped to find is not there, and neither are the remains of his grandfather.

Milkman chooses to visit Virginia as he follows the steps of Pilate, his guide to a re-connection to his past: “She took the gold. To Virginia. And maybe somebody in Virginia would know. Milkman followed in her tracks” (258). This highlights the connection between Pilate and Milkman as he is guided instinctually by her footsteps. Milkman is still struggling with the paradox presented by the freedom that the gold potentially promises and his desire to know more about his family. As Jung points out, a tension must be endured as a subject attempts to come to full realisation (Hart, 1997: 95). Milkman’s visit to Virginia is contrasted with that of his visit to Danville. His conscious ego is once more mediated by that which he is unfamiliar with. Trying to find Charlemagne, he ends up discovering it is called Shalimar. The contrast with

Danville is evident in his first exchange with Mr Solomon in Solomon's store. He is acutely aware that he has possibly "struck a wrong note" (Morrison, 2005b: 265) as he comments on the loveliness of the women he has come across on the street. The other men respond by shuffling their feet and staring at him. A lack of respect is clearly not tolerated in this exchange. Their intolerance of him is further heightened when he wishes to purchase a car. The narrator intimates: "In fact they had been. They looked with hatred at the city Negro who could buy a car as if it were a bottle of whiskey because the one he had was broken" (266). Milkman realises that he has insulted them, as "he hadn't found them fit enough or good enough to know their names, and believed himself too good to tell them his" (266). In a sense, it appears as if Milkman has reverted to the way in which his father behaves with others. This speaks to the paradox that Milkman appears to still be struggling with as his conscious ego is mediated by this new interaction. However, in Virginia, he is not fêted. Rather he is tested by the younger men who gang up on "the Negro with the Virginia license and the northern accent" (266). The ensuing argument that is broken up by Solomon suggests an initiation for Milkman. He has nothing to rely on but himself, as the young men of Shalimar are not impressed by his family name or mode of dress or speech. He engages in this fight and "did the best he could with a broken bottle, but his face got slit, so did his left hand, and so did his pretty beige suit" (268). Milkman's disrobement from his previous self is symbolic. He will bear the scars of this fight, as he is inducted amongst these men as they literally leave him marked. In a metaphorical sense, he is disfigured but will heal with time. His pretty suit is slashed, suggesting he is stripped of his former self. This episode is a reminder of Guitar's proclamation that, in order to fly, one cannot be dragged down by masculine vanity or rather, the patriarchal past, that weighs one down. This initiation further tests Milkman's manhood as he has to rely on himself, without the weight that his name and suit carry.

However, he is not let off easily as one of the elder men approaches him. Milkman's assumption is that "they would test him, match and beat him, probably, on some other ground" (269). Instead, he is invited by Omar to go on a bobcat hunt. Guth suggests that this is Milkman's most significant experience as he "learns to 'read blind' in the tradition of his forefathers" (1993: 582). Much like his experience in the cave,

Milkman is rendered sightless by the dark. Awareness of the unconscious occurs when the conscious comes into contact with that which it does not know. In this case, the dark is symbolic of what Milkman does not know. Yet the hunt allows him the chance to reflect on his position:

He began to wonder what he was doing sitting in the middle of a woods in Blue Ridge county. He had come here to find traces of Pilate's journey, to find relatives she might have visited, to find anything he could that would either lead him to the gold or convince him that it no longer existed. How had he got himself involved in a hunt, involved in a knife-and-broken-bottle fight in the first place? Ignorance, he thought, and vanity. (Morrison, 2005b: 275-6)

For the first time, Milkman reflects on his vanity and that it gets in the way of making a good impression on the men in Shalimar. He was "blinded" by the "glow of hero worship (twice removed)" (267) in Danville, and this hero worship has kept him from connecting with those in Shalimar. He muses:

It sounded old. *Deserve*. Old and tired and beaten to death. *Deserve*. Now it seemed to him that he was always saying or thinking that he didn't deserve some bad luck, or some bad treatment from others. He'd told Guitar that he didn't "deserve" his family's dependence, hatred, or whatever. That he didn't even "deserve" to hear all the misery and mutual accusations his parents unloaded on. Nor did he "deserve" Hagar's vengeance. (276)

Milkman becomes aware of his inherent selfishness. In having these thoughts, he is finally engaging with the "dark aspects" (Jung, 1951b: 8) of his personality. As Jung intimates, this is necessary for the subject in order to achieve his or her full potential. This is illustrated when Milkman says:

They were troublesome thoughts, but they wouldn't go away. Under the moon, on the ground, alone, with not even the sound of baying dogs to remind him that he was with other people, his self – the cocoon that was "personality" – gave way. He could barely see his hand, and couldn't see his feet. He was only his breath, coming slower now, and his thoughts. The rest of him had disappeared. So the thoughts came, unobstructed by other people, by things, even the sight of himself. (Morrison, 2005b: 277)

In this moment Milkman appears to take flight. He is no longer weighed down by the burdens of his previous self. He shrugs his vanity off as he realises that "there was

nothing here to help – not his money, his car, his father’s reputation, his suit or his shoes” (277). Finally, he realises that he has to rely on himself fully through a re-connection to others and to the earth. The hunt acts as a rediscovered rite of passage for Milkman as he forms a re-connection to the earth and is no longer concerned with wondering why he “had to stay level on the ground” (10). He has to rely on himself entirely, and through this reliance he discovers his own sense of power, rather than other people like his father or his possessions. Instead, in a sense, being level with the ground and at peace with himself makes him as contented as if he were flying. This is seen in his thought that he was:

Exhilarated by simply walking the earth. Walking it like he belonged on it; like his legs were stalks, tree trunks, a part of his body that extended down down down into the rock and soil, and were comfortable there – on the earth and on the place where he walked. And he did not limp. (281)

As he refers to his childhood limp, it is evident how far Milkman has come. He no longer needs to differentiate from his father or to keep his strut as he revels in his own sense of self. The bobcat that is caught is then skinned and cut up. As this takes place “a peacock soared away and lit on the hood of a blue Buick” (283). This symbolises Milkman’s past as he has become weightless through the stripping away of his reliance of others and materialism. He has stripped off his “vanity”. His unconscious search for change has now become his part of his consciousness as he realises a reliance on materialism will get him nowhere.

The final completion of Milkman’s flight takes place when he confides the purpose of his visit to the men. He tells them of his aunt Pilate having lived in the area, and ironically one of the men confuses her name saying ““Ha! Sound like a newspaper headline: Pilot Dead. She do any flying?”” (283). Once more, the connection between Milkman and Pilate is evident as she is associated with flying. His meeting Susan Byrd (yet another reference to flight), who lives near Solomon’s Leap, only furthers the flying motif, but Milkman is left disappointed as “there’s nothing here to know, no gold or any traces of it” (292). The significance here is that Milkman is not able to add to his story. Rather, the lesson of the importance of the connection to others is

remembered by Milkman, who reflects: “It wasn’t true what he’d said to Susan Byrd: that it wasn’t important to find his people. Ever since Danville, his interest in his own people, not just the ones he met, had been growing” (293). Here lies the heart of Milkman’s search for self. His desire for a new way of life has brought him back to his African American roots and a new understanding of the people in his life. He recalls this as he watches a group of children begin to sing:

That old blues song Pilate sang all the time: “O Sugarman don’t leave me here,” except the children sang, “Solomon don’t leave me here.” Milkman smiled, remembering Pilate. Hundreds of miles away, he was homesick for her, for her house, for the very people he had been hell-bent to leave. (300)

Here, Milkman appears far more emotionally developed as he acknowledges those whom he has left behind. He realises how problematic his treatment of them has been. This suggests that his conscious ego has shifted, as he has realised his selfishness in denying them his time and affection. As he listens to the group who continue to sing he is finally able to piece together the final pieces of the story of his family’s history. In their singing of “Solomon don’t leave me here,” he realises that “These children were singing a story about his own people! He hummed and chuckled as he did his best to put it all together” (304). Milkman realises that his grandfather Jake was the son of the legendary Solomon, the only African slave to fly across the ocean⁶. Milkman is a descendant of a line of those who take flight. In relation to an interpretation of Jung, flight offers a change to those in need of liberation. Wilentz proposes that flight, in this case, does not offer a universal symbol of transcendence but rather “a collective symbol of resistance by a specific group within a socio-historical context” (1989-90: 21). In the case of Solomon, it was to avoid the state of slavery. For Milkman, this revelation sparks a new hope in him. He shares his euphoria with his girlfriend, Sweet, as they jump into the river:

⁶ Wilentz comments that the legend of the Flying African is common within the American diaspora as slavers’ reports recounted the slaves who jumped overboard to avoid a life of indenture (1989-90: 22). The legends suggest that slaves flew back to Africa rather than be forced into a state that they regarded as too permanent (21).

“He could fly! You hear me? My granddaddy could fly! Goddam!” He whipped the water with his fists, then jumped straight up as though he too could take off, and landed on his back and sank down, his mouth and eyes full of water. Up again. Still pounding, leaping, diving. “The son of a bitch could fly! You hear me, Sweet? That motherfucker could fly! Could fly! He didn’t need no airplane. Didn’t need no fuckin tee double you ay. He could fly his own self!” (Morrison, 2005b: 329)

Milkman’s euphoria stems from the notion that his grandfather was able to fly and in doing so, his grandfather was able to become the master of his fate with nothing weighing him down. Finally, this moment gives Milkman his own wings as he embraces his connection to his people. Yet, it is also marked by his realisation of the painful consequences of this flight (Awkward, 1990: 496). While he is fulfilled by what he discovers, he realises that the flight denies him the chance to be responsible in that it leaves others behind. But the flight of his great-grandfather gives Milkman the hope of a destiny that is entirely his own. Furthermore, his connection to others and the realisation that Solomon tried to take his son Jake with him focuses Milkman’s attention on the fact that he is inherently connected to others, for better or for worse: “Perhaps that’s what all human relationships boiled down to: Would you save my life? or would you take it?” (Morrison, 2005b: 331). In the same way that Solomon and Jake refused to let others take their lives, so now Milkman refuses to allow his former disconnection to his roots and vanity to take him from him.

The end of the novel is prophetic, as he and Pilate stand together to lay his grandfather’s remains to rest. Having been followed by Guitar, still angry as he believes Milkman has the gold, Pilate is shot dead by the bullet that was meant for Milkman. He sings to her, “Sugargirl don’t leave me here/Cotton balls to choke me/Sugargirl don’t leave me here/Buckra’s arms to yoke me” (336), echoing her singing of the Sugarman song at his birth, sealing the connection between them. She has embodied the other within his unconsciousness and with her guidance, he comes to realise that he has always loved her, as “without leaving the ground, she could fly” (336). Although the interpretation of Jung suggests that flying symbolises the need for transition (Henderson, 1964: 149), Pilate is able to fly, even as she is connected to those around her without the weight of masculine vanity. For Milkman, the implication

for his sense of self is that flying provides him with the means to achieve a consciousness not rooted in other people, but with other people, as well as the glory of being able to rely on his own ability to create his own power, the realisation he acquired during the bobcat hunt. Certain in his belief, he leaps into the air demanding of Guitar, ““You want me? Huh? You want my life?”” (Morrison, 2005b: 337). As Pilate has saved him, he then offers his own life to Guitar: “It didn’t matter which one of them would give up his ghost in the killing arms of his brother” (337). Through this act, Milkman denies Guitar the chance to take his life without his consent. As Milkman notes, “now he knew what Shalimar knew: If you surrendered to the air, you could *ride* it” (337), suggesting that if one is to achieve a sense of independent self rooted within one’s heritage, one is then able to fly without the burden of vanity. Death is not the significant factor here. Surrendering to the air is surrendering to the immaterial and to life itself (Lee, 1982: 70). Thus for Morrison, preserving the old and creating the new becomes a quest for the “deepest knowledge” (70). The discovery of selfhood is achieved through an acknowledgement of both the pain and hope that the idea of flight offers, while acknowledging the need to learn from others.

Chapter Two

“The men. The men are waiting for you”: Understanding the Inclination Towards Identity and Violence in *Tar Baby*

“Correct,” [Son] said. “The problem is not Valerian. The problem is me. Solve it. With or without me, but solve it because you ain’t going anywhere. You sweep me under the rug and your children will cut your throat. [...] [W]hen a black woman treats me like what I am, what I really am, you say she’s spoiling me. You think I won’t do all that company shit because I don’t know how? I can do anything! Anything! But I’ll be god-damned if I’ll do that!” (Morrison, 2004: 269-70)

The end of the 1970s in the United States saw a bitterly contested presidential election fought between Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan. Many conservative Republicans felt that America desired a change in the direction of the country, given the perceived lack of leadership under the former President Carter, and hoped that the newly-elected President Reagan would be able to deliver it (Reeves, 2000: 231). Socially, however, Ronald Reagan courted little respect from civil rights leaders. He had been in opposition to many civil rights laws, and received the lowest number of African American votes “of any candidate in history” (237). Douglas Tallack notes that amongst black writers and artists, the 1960s and 1970s saw a push towards the preservation and creation of a history that African American people could engage with as uniquely their own, as well ensuring that their history would not be forgotten (1991: 277). In response to this push, the early 1980s saw noted academic scholars and writers like bell hooks, Henry Louis Gates and Cornel West publish works that actively engaged with political matters from a base of academic discourse, as opposed to just a creative one (278).

In a continued response to this climate of need for the preservation and recreation of African American history and assertion of rights, I suggest Toni Morrison’s fourth novel, *Tar Baby*, first published in 1981, constitutes yet another number of firsts for the author. In the same way that she is able to break with tradition in *Song of Solomon*, *Tar Baby* is her first novel set outside of Ohio, as well as exploring interactions between white and African American characters. Nicole Aljoe notes that *Tar Baby* explores the relationships between people, with a particular focus on the relationships

between African American men and women and the impact that culture has on these relationships (2003: 343). In an examination of the complexities of these relationships, there is further focus on how such interactions impact on the creation of identity and how such creation can be problematised by this interaction. The novel is further complicated by its seeming lack of “wholeness” because of an absence of a single character that carries the central vision of the novel, as well as its fragmented narrative structure (Moffitt, 2004: 12). Letitia Moffitt suggests that this leaves readers confused as they are introduced to a set of apparent stereotypical characters in terms of gender, race and class at the beginning of the novel, and at its end, a set of questions is left unanswered (12).

In spite of this lack of wholeness, the novel appears to focus on a central relationship: that is, the tumultuous and ultimately fractured relationship between lovers William “Son” Green and Jadine Childs. Son, a drifter from Eloë, Florida, has escaped from a fishing trawler to end up on the Isle des Chevaliers. He hides in the holiday home of Valerian and Margaret Street. After he is discovered hiding in Margaret’s closet, he is invited to stay at L’Arbe de la Croix by Valerian. Here he meets Jadine Childs, niece to Ondine and Sydney Childs, who work for the Streets. They become lovers, and the above epigraph at the beginning of this chapter is part of an argument that occurs at a critical moment within their relationship. Son accuses Jadine of trying to change him and of abandoning her connection to the African American community. In relation to this, Moffitt suggests that criticism of the novel pits each character against another in an attempt to discover the central focus or message of the novel (13). Thus, the relationship between Son and Jadine is often portrayed as Son encapsulating the beliefs that Morrison herself advocates, and Jadine as being critiqued for her apparent rejection of her African American heritage (13).

However, I feel that this relationship deserves a more nuanced reading, as it plays a central role in Son’s creation of a masculine self. Morrison makes use of the myth of the tar baby⁷ as she explores this relationship. Linden Peach argues that the story has

⁷ Originally the myth developed in Africa and appeared in nineteenth-century American literature as an African American response to slavery (Peach, 2000: 88). There are different versions of the tale,

acquired fresh meanings with time (2000: 89). Toni Morrison comments that “at one time, a tar pit was a holy place, at least an important place, because tar was used to build things” (quoted in LeClair, 1981: 122), suggesting that there are positive associations to be made with tar. However, she notes that “the tar baby [...] is a black woman. The rabbit is a black man. He is determined to live in that briar patch, even though he has the option to stay with her and live comfortably, securely, without magic touching the borders of his life” (quoted in Dowling, 1979: 53). There are negative consequences to the concept of tar. In relation to the novel, I feel Son realises his desire for “magic” in his life through his relationship with Jadine. Matus argues that the novel complicates the assignment to any one character of specific roles in relation to the myth (1998: 98). Thus, one cannot help being aware of the undercurrent of tension within Son and Jadine’s relationship and the impact that their differing views on identity have on their relationship. Morrison points out:

Many of the problems modern couples have are caused not so much by conflicting gender roles as by the ‘differences’ the culture offers. That is what the conflicts in *Tar Baby* are all about. Jadine and Son had no problems as far as men and women are concerned. They knew exactly what to do. (Quoted in McKay, 1983: 147)

In a sense, their different views assist in contributing to the demise of their relationship as well as the tension that eventually manifests itself as violence. Given the novel’s overt use of stereotypes, I examine this tension and manifestation of violence more closely.

John Powell argues that, in the United States, violence is viewed as a means of control and an assertion of a man’s masculinity (2008: 313). Michael Kimmel comments that “male socialisation is a socialisation to the legitimacy of violence” (quoted in Armengol, 2007: 81). Both critics highlight that masculinity is equated with violence

although few elements have changed. In Chandler Harris’s Uncle Remus plantation stories, Brer Fox (representative of a white farmer) sets the tar baby up in the middle of the road to trap Brer Rabbit (representative of an African American slave), and the Rabbit accuses the tar baby of being ‘stuck up’ as it does not respond to the Rabbit’s friendly overtures (88). Thus the Rabbit strikes the tar baby and becomes ensnared in the tar. In order to escape, the Rabbit convinces the Fox to throw him into the briar patch which he is fearful of although it is his preferred habitat (88). In his cruelty, the Fox does so and the Rabbit is ‘lickety-split’ able to escape (88).

and is seen as a legitimate means to assert oneself. Armengol further points out there is little surprise (in this legitimacy of violence) that American literature is littered with violent men (81). Furthermore, men remain ignorant that masculinity is privileged over femininity as the mechanisms that make it a privilege remain unexplored (76). This is only further complicated when one looks at the continued prevalence of the stereotype that African American men are inherently violent. In looking at the complex situation they find themselves in with regard to this stereotype, Powell notes that African American men are:

Left to differentiate not only between sanctioned structural violence and the unsanctioned violence they experience in the home and the streets but between these and the social expectation of their own violence as well, both as their supposed nature and as the expected expression of their masculinity. (2008: 313-4)

This highlights the paradoxical nature of the struggle that African American men endure in terms of what they personally experience, how they experience violence and society's expectation that their response will be intrinsically violent. bell hooks, in looking at African American men and violence, also argues that domination is a means with which men are able to achieve a sense of manhood (2004: 56). This violence towards women is based on sexism that legitimises men's right to dominate their female counterparts (56). In the case of African American men, hooks suggests that the stereotype of African American men being violent developed from the fear of contact between the races before integration became an accepted norm (67). White people sought to remove themselves from the mistreatment and abuse of black bodies by conversely projecting their fears onto black bodies, giving rise to the 'fantasy' of the black male rapist (67). However, hooks further comments that sex is a means with which to assert the sense of freedom that African American men are usually denied within mainstream society (74). Violence against African American women is acceptable as they "must be kept in check" (57). In his paper "African American Men and Intimate Partner Violence," Earl Smith argues that violence between intimate partners is a tragic irony in that it alienates men from those who seek to protect them from the hardships they experience in the real world (2008: 157). Moreover, the racism that African American men experience leads to the frustration they feel, and

potentially, this frustration is taken out on their partners. Violence is a strategy to attain some form of freedom and control over their partners (160).

However, this frustration does not acquit African American men of the responsibility of the choice they have in their response to others and their own situations. For Toni Morrison, violence “comes too easily,” and even with the best intentions, one “can do enormous harm, enormous harm” (quoted in Bakerman, 1977: 41). What Morrison highlights here is the importance of choice that men have in their lives. Professor Henry Louis Gates comments on this tension and the need for men to take responsibility:

It’s important to talk about life chances – about the constricted set of opportunities that poverty brings. But to treat black people as if they’re helpless rag dolls swept up and buffeted by vast social trends – as if they had no say in the shaping of their lives – is a supreme act of condescension. (Quoted in Smith, 2008: 164)

In relation to the novel, I wish to examine the relationship between Son and Jadine and how this impacts on his attempt to create a masculine sense of self. In my introduction I touched on Jung’s work regarding gender, and in this chapter I would like to examine the role of archetypal anima and animus within the creation of the Self. Having already devoted some discussion to the critique surrounding the essentialist and stereotypical nature of this archetype, I feel that it is applicable in terms of what Singer Harris suggests as recognition of an archetypal “other,” rather than focussing simply on the gendered aspect of the archetype (1996: 198). According to Elphis Christopher, the anima and the animus function as “symbolic modes of perception and behaviour within the psyche” (2000: 37). Jung defines this more clearly as he argues that “every man carries within him the eternal image of woman, not the image of this or that woman but a definite feminine image” (1934: 198). This image is unconscious and to Jung, it is an “inherited system of psychic adaptation” (198). Likewise, a woman also has an “inborn image of man” (198). Jung emphasises the importance of individuation whereby an individual becomes more of himself or herself. Thus, part of achieving a full Self involves an acknowledgement of this other within the unconscious. But in looking at the notion of the recognition of an “other” within one’s unconscious, Jung

argues that “every psychic process has a value quality attached to it,” and that each individual is “affected by the process” (1951d: 33). The value indicates the degree to which the subject “becomes involved and so comes to feel the whole weight of reality” (33). In other words, the degree to which a subject comes to realise the presence of the “other” within the totality of his or her psyche, indicates to what end a subject is able to become whole. The archetypal other has both positive and negative aspects in that dominance of either leaves an individual bound to experience disconnection from the Self (Christopher, 2000: 39). For example, Jung says that “the darkness which clings to every personality is the door into the unconscious” (1950: 123). In order to overcome this negative aspect, it is necessary to examine the role of the Shadow. He further notes that the Shadow and the Self “are psychic factors of which an adequate picture can be formed only on the basis of a fairly thorough experience of them” (1951d: 33). In order for a subject to attain any kind of self-knowledge it is necessary for him or her to examine the Shadow aspect of the Self.

In terms of the relationship between Son and Jadine, I feel that the idea of an archetypal other and a need to examine the Shadow are particularly useful in terms of an examination of their relationship. Much like Milkman Dead’s attempt to form a masculine sense of self, Son’s attempt is also a process of learning. From the outset of the novel, Son’s apparent lack of rootedness is evident, yet he maintains firm ties to his heritage, which is primarily seen in his relationship with Jadine. His conscious ego is mediated by her apparent rejection of her African American roots, which creates tension with his own views. Her lack of connection to her heritage stems from the mediation of her conscious ego by her experiences of travelling, modelling and education. Conflict occurs in Son and Jadine’s relationship as each has a different view with regard to their cultural heritage. Through their relationship, each is made aware of this view and how this view then impacts on their sense of self. Son is introduced as seemingly detached from a tangible sense of self and his commitment to his roots remains strong, while Jadine appears to have deserted her heritage. In an attempt to introduce one another to their different worlds, tension is created between the two as Son struggles with the paradox presented by Jadine’s view that clashes with his own.

Son struggles with Jadine's attitude towards being an African American, as well as her numerous attempts to indoctrinate him into her way of life, and this affects his sense of self. In a sense, she represents the mythical tar baby as she attempts to ensnare him, which he consistently resists. His subconscious anger is manifested as they escape from Isle des Chevaliers to New York as well as when they return to Son's hometown of Eloe, Florida. Jadine functions as a means for Son to realise who he is. However, her attempt to change him acts as a catalyst in the destruction of their relationship, which culminates in his raping her. Duvall comments that this heinous act of violence is often missed out by readers, as the text works to construct Son as non-violent through its questioning of stereotypes regarding African American male sexuality (1997: 335). I would like to suggest that this act of violence is a means by which Son is able to extract himself from her desire to control and change him. In a sense, it represents the Shadow of his personality. In addition, his attack on Jadine can be seen as a critique of the problematic nature of different beliefs about heritage and identity. Morrison notes of Son and Jadine: "They had a problem about what work to do, when and where to do it, and where to live. Those things hinged on what they felt about who they were, and what their responsibilities were in being black" (quoted in McKay, 1983: 147). His choice to join the blind riders signals a realisation on his part that Jadine and her world would not offer him the kind of autonomous selfhood he seeks. Rather, he realises that his unconscious desire is to maintain a sense of freedom, as this freedom will allow him to create a sense of self. Thus I move on now to explore the complexity of Son's creation of a masculine sense of self by examining the text with an in-depth reading.

In contrast to the prophetic birth of Milkman Dead, Son's lack of apparent wholeness is symbolised in the reader's first introduction to him as the novel opens with the words "He believed he was safe" (Morrison, 2004: 3). The words only serve to foreshadow Son's journey, as his safety is not guaranteed by stepping off the boat and escaping it. His name or any real sense of his history is not given in this introduction. Even the ship he is on is named as the *H. M. S. Stor Konigsgaarten*, suggesting that Son, by contrast, has little in the way of a background. A lack of anything tangible about his character or reasons for escaping the ship in the first place is highlighted. He

is “carefully casual” as he goes below to the quarters, as “he [has] no things to gather – no book of postage stamps, no razor blade or key to any door” (3). These items, symbolic of travel, masculinity and freedom, would merely weigh him down. It suggests the need, on his part, to be unburdened and not tied down. His conscious ego is not mediated by any sense of materialism. As he stands on the edge of the boat, in order to jump off, he chooses to trust “what his feet could tell him more than what his hands could” (3). He must place faith in his feet that will propel him forward. His character is marked by his faith that he puts in his own instincts rather than anyone or anything else. Once in the water, Son boards another boat, only to depart once more. He goes onto the boat’s deck and exchanges “stares with the moon” and sees “the stars” (7). He is certain of what he sees in the sky, although he sees little of the land before him. The land’s history is a torrid one, as “three hundred years ago” it “had struck slaves blind the moment they saw it” (7). Son is metaphorically blinded in that he knows not where he will land. Yet ultimately, it is part of his destiny. Son hides in the home of Valerian Street, and his presence turns the well-ordered world of L’Arbe de la Croix upside down.

By contrast, the reader’s introduction to Jadine is defined by her appearance of stability in terms of her place in the Street home. She is well taken care of by her uncle and aunt, whose faces are “bright with pleasure” when she enters the room (37). One senses her peace with the island, as she is able to sleep well, noting ““The night air is incredible. It’s like food”” (37). The bond she has with her Aunt Ondine, whom she dubs Nanadine, is strong. Ondine loves “it when her niece call[s] her that – a child’s effort to manage ‘Aunt Ondine’” (38). Jadine is remembered as a child rather than the adult she now is, demonstrating a sense of disconnection from her relatives. This is also seen when her uncle questions the “work” she does, because he does not consider “exercising. Cutting pictures out of magazines. Going to the store” (39) work. Although Jadine appears to be close to her aunt and uncle, there is also distance between them because they do not understand her way of life. Sandra Paquet comments that Jadine, as an orphan, is alienated from her African American roots through her upbringing as she is sent away to schools through the assistance of Valerian Street (1990: 500). As a result of this, Jadine’s values are different, as seen in

her uncle's dismissal of the activities that she engages in because they are centred on materialism. Through these details one becomes aware of the potential struggle that Jadine has in her identity, as her conscious ego is influenced with messages that her heritage as an African American woman are not to be valued. She appears to suffer from what Paquet terms "cultural orphanage" in that the subject loses his or her roots when African Americans attempt to become upwardly socially mobile (499). Her upbringing in New York and Paris has denied her the base of her African American roots, and thus her relationships with those closest to her and the world at large remain problematic, as her rejection keeps her from connection with them.

The problematic nature of Jadine's acceptance of this mentality is made clear through the revelations of the visions she experiences. Although she may appear secure, it is simply an appearance. This appearance is then shattered by the dream she has. She dreams of large hats and wakes frightened by what she has seen:

Large beautiful women's hats like Norma Shearer's and Mae West's and Jeanette MacDonald's although the dreamer is too young to have seen their movies or remembered them if she had. Feathers. Veils. Flowers. Brims flat, brims drooping, brims folded, and rounded. Hat after lovely hat sailing hat surrounding her until she is finger-snapped awake. (Morrison, 2004: 44)

The significance of this dream lies in the symbolism it has. Jadine is not able to relate to the actresses, as she has little knowledge of them, for they are not rooted in her identity. Yet they are the means by which she judges beauty. The wearing of a hat suggests protection, yet in this scenario the hats do not offer that to her. They appear to smother Jadine, probing her subconscious to discover what she is trying to hide from. Each represents the differences in her personality as she grapples with her identity. Her struggle and further alienation are only highlighted when she recalls a real incident that occurred in Paris. She describes it as "one of the happiest days of her life" in that she had been chosen as a model for the cover of *Elle* magazine, had three male suitors and had received a satisfactory report for her oral work (44). Once more, Jadine's focus on materialism is highlighted as she values the ideals of appearance and achievements. This is further highlighted with the reflection that modelling agencies "gave what they believed was a nineteen-year-old face the eyes and mouth of a woman of three

decades” (45). Much like Macon Dead at the mercy of white land owners, Jadine too remains at the mercy of these agencies as one realises here the way in which Jadine’s very body is manipulated through the simple act of posing for a picture. Her self-image is fractured because it is merely based on her appearance. Her experience in a supermarket stirs up unfamiliar emotion in Jadine. While she is shopping, she comes across another woman in the supermarket. She describes the woman as a “vision” who was:

Much too tall. Under her long canary yellow dress Jadine knew there was too much hip, too much bust. The agency would laugh her out the lobby, so why was she and everyone in the store transfixed? The height? The skin like tar against the canary yellow dress? (45)

Jadine’s immediate focus rests on the stranger’s appearance. She judges her with the critical eye of the agency rather than seeing her as a fellow woman. She compares the skin of the woman to tar, noting that it is darker than her own. This “vision” of a woman provides a paradox for Jadine. Her conscious ego focuses on the aesthetics that she has been influenced to focus on of the woman in front of her, and yet she is utterly transfixed by the woman whom she sees, perhaps suggesting her unconscious desire to connect with her. As Paquet postulates, Jadine becomes aware of the “ancestral relationship” that she is estranged from (1990: 507). This woman reminds Jadine of that which she has lost (Badt, 1995: 567). Jadine becomes aware of the other as she seeks to gain some understanding from this experience. This is seen in her turning her cart around and “telling herself that she wanted to reexamine the vegetables” (Morrison, 2004: 45). It is rather the woman whom she prefers to follow, suggesting the role of her unconscious as she is transfixed, yet is unable to understand why that is so. Jadine focusses her attention as the woman leaves:

She would deny it now, but along with everybody else in the market, Jadine gasped. Just a little. Just a sudden intake of air. Just a quick snatch of breath before that woman’s woman – that mother/sister/she; that unphotographable beauty – took it all away. (46)

In this moment Jadine unknowingly appears to forge a connection with this woman. She recognises the connection they share as women as she acknowledges the woman’s

beauty, as it is too great to be manipulated by photograph or agency. Yet she is isolated from this woman as she is fearful that the woman will take something from her. Her breath symbolises her life, and Jadine fears that this will be taken from her. The woman turns to Jadine and shoots “an arrow of saliva between her teeth down to the pavement” (46). The illusion of a bond is shattered for Jadine as the woman rejects her. But Jadine remains confused as she is unable to decipher why the woman’s act of spitting on her has concerned her so much:

She couldn’t figure out why the woman’s insulting gesture had derailed her – shaken her out of proportion to [the] incident. Why she had wanted that woman to like and respect her. It had certainly taken the zing out of the magazine cover as well as her degree. (47)

In this moment Jadine is left affected by what Jung terms the “value quality” of a psychic process (1951d: 33). She is left deeply shaken by the experience, yet she lacks the necessary knowledge to question or understand what has happened. She partially realises that what she sees as important is not necessarily to be valued. Her achievements alone are not of great value. This incident acts as a catalyst in spurring her retreat to the comfort of L’Arbe de la Croix to be with her aunt and uncle.

Son and Jadine meet on Isle des Chevaliers. It is Son who ultimately becomes a means for Jadine to attempt to understand her experience and reclaim her heritage. Much as Milkman’s meeting Pilate in *Song of Solomon* opens him up to a voyage of self-discovery, Son represents this for Jadine. As Terry Otten notes, Son forces the residents of L’Arbe de la Croix to confront themselves and the world in which they live (1989: 65). But this confrontation is complex in *Tar Baby*, as it examines the intimate relationship between a woman who has been alienated from her roots and a man who is imbued with aspects of folk life and culture (Paquet, 1990: 501). Paquet suggests that “Son invades L’Arbe de la Croix, but while the household thrives on Jadine’s presence, it cannot accommodate Son and Jadine as polar opposites at the same time” (509). This is proved through the course of the novel. Although they love one another, they are simply not able to exist comfortably with one another. Their first meeting takes place as Son enters Jadine’s room uninvited, it is interesting to note the

use of stereotypes from the outset, as his smell alerts Jadine to his presence in her room. Moffitt argues that the use of stereotypes shakes up the order that exists within the house (2004: 15). To the rest of the household and particularly Jadine, Son “is the manifestation of the black pariah in Western culture, the terrorizing black male, the supposed rapist of white women” (Otten, 1989: 65). Son is reduced to a mere scent, suggesting his presence is penetrating in nature in that it stirs Jadine’s senses. She first catches sight of him in her mirror: “She moved a little to see what the mirror reflected behind her. There he stood in mauve silk pyjamas, his skin as dark as a river-bed, his eyes steady and clear as a thief’s” (Morrison, 2004: 113). In this moment Jadine’s assumption is that Son clearly intends taking something from her. Much like the woman in the market, she is aware of the aesthetics of his appearance. Jadine focuses on his hair, suggesting it “looked overpowering – physically overpowering, like bundles of long whips or lashes that could grab her and beat her to jelly. And would” (113). She once more assumes that he is prone to violence simply based on his appearance. The fact that they are alone in her bedroom seems to heighten her fear as there are “no shadows” (113), yet she still feels threatened as she struggles “to pull herself away from his image in the mirror” (114). Once more, one is aware of Jadine remaining transfixed by an image. It mirrors her treatment of the woman in the market in that one senses her unconscious stirred by whom she sees. However, this is tempered by her thought that “this man had been living among them (in their *things*) for days” (114). Her seeming curiosity is overwhelmed by her contempt. Son, on the other hand, attempts to treat this meeting casually as he suggests that he was only “saying good morning” (114). With these words Jadine is able to be “freed at last from the image in the mirror” (114), suggesting her preoccupation with what she sees. They argue about the door being open, as she would have preferred him to knock. But his response is to “close his eyes to her without shutting the lids, and what was left of his smile disappeared into his beard and the riverbed darkness of his face” (114). No explanation is given for why Son reacts as he does, yet Jadine is convinced that she “shouldn’t make him angry” (114). Once more, she assumes that he is prone to anger, and if he is prone to anger then he may be prone to violence. He acknowledges the seal-skin coat that she received as a gift, and Jadine is embarrassed and keen to ensure that he does not touch it as she “did not want him to” (114). The coat, a gift from Ryk,

her Dutch fiancé, is symbolic of her Eurocentric self in that it is completely out of place on the island. Her aunt Ondine suggests that there is something fearful about the coat, but Jadine is convinced that it is “seductive” (112). The coat on Jadine functions as a tangible barrier between her African American self and European self. Up until this point, it has been Son with the power in this interaction. However, this imbalance of power shifts when Jadine introduces herself:

“Don’t be funny. What *is* your name?”

“What’s yours?”

“Jade.”

He shook his head as though he knew better.

“Okay. Jadine. Jadine Childs.” She reached for a cigarette. (115)

One notes the importance of names to Son. He does not accept the shortened version of her name, suggesting the importance he places on people being complete. He takes a cigarette from her and in lighting up, he coughs. Jadine notes how “for the first time [he] look[s] vulnerable” (115). It is symbolic that, up until this point, it has been Son who has perhaps unknowingly held the power in this scenario as Jadine “grabbed the leashes” (115).

The consistent shift in power dynamics is further highlighted as the conversation goes on. Yet she is forced to drop the upper hand once more as he questions her about being the copper Venus:

“Who’s the copper Venus?” he asked her.

Jadine dropped the leashes. “Where did you see that?”

“I didn’t see it. I heard it.”

“Where?” She could not find them, they were gone.

“The woman who comes to work here. She talks to herself out in the washhouse.”

Now she had them again, safely back in her fingers. “Mary. It must have been Mary.” Jadine laughed. “That was a publicity thing. When I was modeling they called me that. I wonder how Mary knows about it. I don’t think she can even read.” (115)

One sees here not only Jadine’s contempt for those whom she considers below her, but one also notes the power dynamic that is evident between Son and Jadine. Their

conversation is dictated in terms of power and who has the upper hand, rather than a conversation of equals. He is intrigued by her modelling career as she shows him her pictures: “After flipping the pages for a few seconds he came to a four-page spread of her in other poses, other clothes, other hair, but always the same wet and open lips” (116). Jadine reacts with satisfaction as “she [holds] on tight to the leashes” (116). Once more, she maintains control of the situation as Son is unable to look at her as “the pictures are easier. They don’t move” (117). The significance here is that Jadine is reduced to an image once more. It is easier for Son to deal with an image as it does not interact with him. It simply is as it is. In a way, he is able to maintain some sense of control over the situation. He is able to see her the way he wishes to see her, much like “the way [she was] when he used to slip into her room and wait hours, hardly breathing himself, for the predawn light to bring her face out of the shadows” (117). One could say that this functions as a foreshadowing of the relationship between the two, as they engage in a battle, with Jadine attempting to introduce Son to her world and his attempt to bring her into his world. This is further fuelled by his desire to “breathe into her the smell of tar and its shiny consistency” (120). His desire to acculturate her is most striking as it mirrors the image of the tar-coloured woman in the market. It is Son’s desire to “tar” Jadine, as if in an attempt to bring her back to her African American heritage. Having mentioned that Matus suggests that the novel complicates the assignment of roles with regard to the myth of the tar baby (1998: 98), I note that the myth is distorted, as Son appears to mould Jadine into the tar baby. Son appears to gain a sense of control over Jadine in that he is able to manipulate her sense of identity. Yet he only does this via her dreams as he attempts to influence her unconscious.

However, his reaction to her photos shifts as his frustration at her lack of awareness or appreciation of her roots is shown in his asking her how much “dick” she had to suck in order to obtain such wealth. She responds by “trying to kill him with her fists while her mind raced to places in the room where there might be a poker or a vase or a sharp pair of shears” (Morrison, 2004: 120). His response is not to defend himself but rather “he [catches] her wrists and [crosses] them in front of her face” (120). Son’s restraint is clearly evident as he does not attempt to defend himself, suggesting that he is intent

on remaining calm. To shock her, he suggests he will throw her out of the window. Such a claim only fuels Jadine's belief that Son is intent on raping her. Her false bravado is seen as she claims: "You rape me and they'll feed you to the alligators. Count on it, nigger. You good as dead right now" (121). Jadine's assumption is that, as a man, Son is in her room to violate her. She relies on a stereotype to rationalise his behaviour. In referring to Son as a "nigger" she separates herself from him through the belief that she is more civilised. He responds by laughing at her and asking:

"Rape? Why you little white girls always think somebody's trying to rape you?"

"White?" She was startled out of her fury. "I'm not... you know I'm not white!"

"No? Then why don't you settle down and stop acting like it."

"Oh, God," she moaned. "Oh, good God, I think you better throw me out the window because as soon as you let loose I am going to kill you. For that alone. Just for that. For pulling that black-woman-white-woman shit on me. Never mind the rest. What you said before, that was nasty and mean, but if you think you can get away with telling me what a black woman is or ought to be..." (121)

Much of the dynamic between Son and Jadine is revealed in this exchange. Firstly, Son acknowledges her inference of a stereotype by acknowledging it with another stereotype. She assumes that he will be violent, and he responds by calling her out on her fear, thereby embarrassing and insulting her, leaving her greatly unsettled. Secondly, one sees Jadine's fury at being put into what she deems an incorrect category. She refuses to let herself be dictated to as to what constitutes an African American woman. Perhaps it can be argued that her frustration is reflected inwards as she responds to Son's probing in anger. Thus their frustration lies in being misread by one another, and this misreading becomes a feature in their relationship. Moreover, her reflection on what has happened suggests the effect that Son has had on Jadine:

Other men had done worse to her and tried worse but she was always able to talk about it and think about it with appropriate disgust and amusement. But not this. He had jangled something in her that was so repulsive, so awful, and he had managed to make her feel that the thing that repelled her was not in him, but in her. (123)

Son's questioning shows Jadine how fractured her identity is and what she lacks. He is able to stir recognition in her that who she sees in the mirror and how she behaves are not necessarily who she is. As Otten comments, he forces her to confront her very blackness in the mirror (1989: 67). Furthermore, she confirms the stereotype that Son is aware of. This is seen in his reflection: "He glanced around and was surprised at how uncomfortable-looking her room was. Not at all the way it appeared at dawn when he crouched there watching her sleep and trying to change her dreams" (Morrison, 2004: 130-1). He further comments that "they are frightened," except the "old man," who knows "whatever [he] jumped ship for it wasn't because [he] wanted to rape women" (133). In this, one is made aware that Son's lure to the island does not rest on following women. Indeed, his desire is not to follow them, as "each of them had been afraid for something different: his balls, eyes, spine. He had been afraid for his hands" (136). The emphasis here rests on the fear he has for his hands, as hands have the power to control and be controlled. The powerful paradox that Son faces here is evident. He refuses to succumb to the mere stereotype of violence that people in the house have associated with him, yet he remains fearful of his hands as they are capable of anything. Both Son and Jadine demonstrate the "other" that resides within their respective unconscious. For Son, Jadine only affirms his desire to rebuke the stereotype of violence she associates with him by his resistance of any kind of aggression, as he simply questions her. For Jadine, Son represents that which is foreign to her. Yet she attempts to reject this through her desire to maintain control within their interaction.

Son's unconscious connection with the island is further manifested through his interaction with Gideon and Thérèse. Son becomes instinctively attuned to their way of life as he "drifts" off with them (149), suggesting that his unconscious connection is manifesting itself through his behaviour. Following Thérèse's belief that Son is a fellow descendant of the blind riders on the island, she is "in ecstasy and kept moving her head about the better to see him out of her broken eyes" (149). Gideon's story⁸

⁸ Gideon explains to Son that the 'blind race' is descended from a group of slaves who were blinded the moment they saw Dominique. Isle des Chevaliers is named after them as their ship was wrecked with slaves and horses aboard. The blinded slaves were at the mercy of the current and landed upon the island. Some slaves were rescued by their French owners and returned to indentured labour, while some

lights a fire within Son as he “felt dizzy. The cheap rum and the story together made his head light” (152). Here, one notes the parallel that can be drawn with Milkman Dead’s visit to Danville, in which he learns of his great grandfather Solomon. Such a narrative and an understanding of his past provided Milkman with a sense of hope. In the same way, the story of the blind riders provides the drifter Son with a sense of hope as he learns that the riders still inhabit the island, though they avoid those that are sighted. Thus a significant connection is to be drawn between Son’s arrival on the island and the arrival of blind riders. In a sense, the story is potentially prophetic as it offers Son a different purpose for coming to the island. It is plausible that Thérèse, in particular, represents the positive aspect of the archetypal other because she is a connection between Son and the riders. Her lack of sight connects her to the mythical world of the riders. In so far as Son wishes to “breathe tar” (120) into Jadine, it is he too who needs his eyes opened. His response to Gideon’s terming Jadine a “yalla⁹” is fascinating. Gideon warns Son against his affection for Jadine, ““Look out. It’s hard for them not to be white people. Hard, I’m telling you”” (155). Son’s thought in response to this is that “he didn’t want any discussion about shades of black folk” (155). Once more, Jadine presents a paradox to Son. He desires to protect her from being “chewed over” (155) by others like Gideon, and yet he is frustrated by her apparent ‘whiteness’ as well as her need to change him. In addition, Son is aware that Jadine is aware of who he is. He comments:

He had managed a face for everybody but her. The others were seduced by the Hickey Freeman suit and the haircut, but she was not and neither was he. Not seduced at all. He did not always know who he was, but he always knew what he was like. (165)

This thought is reminiscent of Jadine’s reflection that Son had “jangled something in her” (123). Moreover, it speaks of Son’s awareness that black men are thought of as

hid, totally blind. They gave birth to children who would end up blind. Gideon believes that Thérèse is a descendant of this blind race, although he is convinced she suffers from a malady that afflicts her sight (paraphrased from Morrison, 2004: 152).)

⁹ I use this term aware of its severely derogatory connotations, much like the word “Negro”. In the case of the novel, the word “yalla” is an offensive term used to refer to someone who is of African American descent with a light skin and a supposed desire to be seen as white. Gideon reveals his prejudices here as he degrades Jadine and her appearance, suggesting the complex nature of class and race within the novel.

violent. His frustration at this is evident, as he seeks to be free from such associations, yet he cannot be. Thus, they both influence one another's consciousness in terms of who they are within their individual sense of self. It is ironic that he feels Jadine is able to see past his appearance just as he is able to see past her appearance. Yet his rootlessness allows him to be adrift as he reflects that he is a man "without human rites: unbaptized, uncircumcised, minus puberty rites or the formal rites of manhood" (166). This suggests that Son's conscious ego has not been mediated by any tangible masculine rituals. In a sense, while Milkman initially bases his own sense of masculine self on the name and way of life of his father, Son chooses a rootless existence. He struggles with creating a sense of tangible self, and this is further complicated by Jadine, as he had always:

Chosen solitude and the company of other solitary people – opted for it when everybody else had long surrendered, because he never wanted to live in the world their way. There was something wrong with the rites. He had wanted another way. Some other way of being in the world that he felt leaving him when he stood in the white towel watching Yardman's – Gideon's – back. But something had come loose in him, like the ball that looped around the roulette wheel, carried as much by its own weight as by the force of the wheel. (166)

One learns here that Son's rootlessness is created by choice. Much like Milkman who desires a life without the burden of his father's control, Son's deepest fear is that he will be controlled by others and told how to live, as he desires that choice to be his own. He is in search of a different way to live that is based on his own actions. This struggle is illustrated by the metaphor of the roulette wheel and ball. The roulette wheel suggests one circular path to follow, yet the ball is able to travel in any direction. This suggests that Son is struggling between his own will as the ball, and the will of others as the wheel, to live his life in a certain way. His conscious ego is mediated by Jadine to live a life that embraces materialism as it allows one to be socially mobile, yet his unconscious desires an existence that is dictated by his own terms. Once again Morrison highlights the importance of one's connection to others in creating a sense of self. Much as Milkman requires the support of those in Danville to teach him of his past, Son too requires a sense of connection. Yet, it cannot be his relationship with Jadine, as she struggles with her own fractured identity.

The paradox that Jadine presents in Son's struggle for selfhood is further highlighted when they go out to lunch together. Jadine poses the question to him: "What do you want out of life?" (169). His reply is "my original dime," as "that was the best money in the world and the only real money I ever had" (169). He admits that it was his "first personal, store bought purchase" and that he wishes Jadine "could have seen how it looked in the palm of [his] hand. Shining there" (170). In this incident one sees his sense of achievement. The original represents his mark in the world in that he did an honest day's work for that dime, with no ulterior motives to it. He goes on to suggest to Jadine that all he wants is "something nice and simple and personal, you know? My original, original dime" (170). Son's reluctance to base his selfhood on materialism is suggested. This is further illustrated in his conversation with Jadine:

Son laughed in spite of himself. "That's not lazy."
"What is it then?"
"It's not being able to get excited about money."
"*Get* able. *Get* excited."
"What for?"
"For you, for yourself, your future. Money isn't what the scramble's all about. It's what money does, can do." (171)

For Jadine, the means to get ahead and survive is through money. However, Son refuses to believe that this is how to live his life and Jadine feels that stupidity has led Son to have a life of nothing. However, he refuses to agree with this, as he wanted his "own punishment" (172). Thus Son's concept of selfhood is based on his own terms and way of doing things. In this exchange Son's restraint and concern for Jadine are evident as he desires to touch her feet:

He looked at them, and whispered "Look at that." He leaned down for a better look. "I said I wouldn't touch and I won't. If you object, that is. But I have to tell you how much I want to. Right there." He pointed to the arch. "If you don't want me to, I won't though, like I said." (179)

Son's honesty in this situation is significant. He admits to wanting to touch her feet, yet he will not do anything without her permission. In this sense, he demonstrates his morality, as he will not touch her without her permission, but he is honest as he

acknowledges the desire he feels. This demonstrates Morrison's subversion of stereotype as he does not force himself on her, despite his desire to touch her feet. Thus, Son is consciously aware of his needs as well as her feelings, suggesting his Self acting as mediator between his conscious ego and unconscious as he is able to acknowledge his desire, yet does not act on it. Jadine, however, does not respond well to his admission as she realises: "he wants to kiss my feet, she thought. He wants to put his mouth on my foot. If he does I'll kick his teeth out. But she didn't move" (179). Consciously, Jadine does not want him to touch her feet, yet perhaps unconsciously she does not want to be marked and reminded of the heritage that she has forgotten. He does touch her foot as he "put his forefinger on her sole and held it and held it and held it there" (179). In this moment, he marks Jadine as he touches her feet, echoing the trust he placed earlier on his own feet to assist him jumping off the ship. It suggests his desire that Jadine should trust her own feet and in trusting her feet, place her faith back into the roots that she has lost. This is demonstrated even as his forefinger stays "where his finger had been in the valley of her naked foot. Even after she laced up the canvas shoes" (180). He leaves a mark upon her that she is unable to remove, and in doing so he is able to tangibly "breathe tar" (120) into her to remind her of her heritage. Therefore, Son's attempt to influence her unconscious is successful, as he leaves his mark on her.

However, Jadine struggles with this influence as she attempts to mould him into who she believes he ought to be rather than who he actually is. This is clearly illustrated in a conversation they have after the disastrous Christmas dinner as he comes to check if she is all right:

"I just don't want to fuck, that's all."

"I didn't ask you to, did I? If I wanted to make love, I'd ask you."

"I didn't say make love, I said —"

"I know what you said."

"You don't like me to use that word, do you? Men."

"Go to sleep. Nobody's talking about fucking or making love but you." (213)

Son becomes frustrated as he "thought he must have had this conversation two million times. It never varied, this dance. Except when you paid your money and there was no

seduction involved” (213). Once more, Jadine relies on her assumptions that she has regarding men and their behaviour in order to interpret his concern, suggesting her insecurity as well the prejudice she has. Son is restrained as he is concerned for her. Yet she attempts to provoke him. His frustration is evident as he tires of her attempt to provoke him. Thus he struggles with her desire to change him. His consciousness is torn between his unconscious desire to create his own life free from the burden of having others decide for him, and the way in which Jadine attempts to influence and provoke him to respond how she expects him to respond as a man.

Their first trip to New York, when they escape the island after Margaret’s revelation of abusing her son, Michael, during the abortive Christmas dinner, provides insight into the effect that a difference of environment has on Son, and how this affects his relationship with Jadine. Otten argues that this trip only demonstrates that the “contraries cannot coexist” and that “neither character proves capable of integrating the opposite” (1989: 75), although more is at stake, I feel Son’s impressions of New York are not favourable. He longs for Gideon and Thérèse, asking: “Where [are] the Thérèses and Gideons of New York?” (Morrison, 2004: 216). Son’s isolation and life as a drifter are problematic in that they have left him separated from any sense of identity with fellow African Americans. He muses: “How long had he been gone, anyway? If those were the black folks he was carrying around in his heart all those years, who on earth was he?” (216-7). Unlike Jadine, Son’s conscious ego has had little mediation in this kind of environment. Rather, his constant detachment has left him with little sense of familiarity. It is Jadine whom he desires to help mediate his experience:

He was heart-weary when he opened the door to his room, and the purple carpet fairly took his breath away. He wanted her in that room with him giving him the balance he was losing, the ballast and counterweight to the stone of sorrow New York City had given him. (217)

Son’s discomfort only mirrors the earlier discomfort of Jadine, who experienced a similar lack of connection with the woman in the market. He enters the room feeling uncomfortable and is unable to breathe normally, much like Jadine when her breath

was stolen by the woman in the supermarket. Being in New York strips him of any tangible identification. He is unable to negotiate the city without mediation in the form of Jadine. He longs for the comfort that he feels she would be able to bring him. Jadine is stripped by the woman in the market as she attempts to forge a connection. His conscious ego is mediated by little that is familiar. For Son, the visit to the city manifests this tension as aggression towards her as he recalls her behaviour on the island: “Gatekeeper, advance bitch, house-bitch, welfare office torpedo, corporate cunt, tar baby side-of-the road whore trap, who called a black man old enough to be her father ‘Yardman’ and who couldn’t give a shit who he himself was” (220). Her possession and treatment of sparks the negative aspect of the archetypal other within his unconscious as his thoughts gravitate towards violence, as she represents that which brings him such discomfort. This also speaks to his earlier musing of having the same kind of “conversation two million times” that “never varied” (213) in that his frustration with Jadine escalates here as he attempts to mediate his intense discomfort in these new surroundings. Yet, by contrast, Jadine is fulfilled in these surroundings. Her conscious ego does not have to mediate anything unfamiliar, unlike Son. Being with him fills her with a sense of security as “gradually she came to feel unorphaned. He cherished and safeguarded her. When she woke in the night from an uneasy dream she had only to turn and there was the stability of his shoulder and his limitless, eternal chest” (229).

Son’s conscious desire is to return to that which he knows, suggesting his desire to root himself firmly within his heritage, and he achieves this during a visit to his hometown of Eloë. It is a means to release his tension as he no longer has to navigate that which is unfamiliar. Thus the visit is intended as a means for Jadine to discover an authentic African American community (Duvall, 1997: 339). When they arrive, Jadine’s intense discomfort is obvious. Son is welcomed as a somewhat heroic figure. When they arrive at the house of his friend, Soldier, Soldier jumps up and down as he recognises his friend and Jadine stands behind Son. They greet one another:

Son and Soldier hit each other on the head, the hands, the shoulders.

“Who bought you them skinny shoes?”

“Where’s your hair, nigger?” (Morrison, 2004: 246)

The familiarity is noticeable in this interaction as they embrace one another. One senses Son's relief at being with someone he knows well as he jokes with his friend and as they mock one another's appearance. He is more within his element here as he comes to that which he knows. His lack of wholeness is fulfilled by this return. Jadine, by contrast, is left feeling much as Son felt in New York. He requests that she stays at Soldier's house when he goes to see his father, but "she didn't understand at all, no more than she understood the language he was using when he talked to Soldier and Drake and Ellen and the others who stopped by" (246). Son does not mediate her experience, and she remains detached from the situation and unable to form any kind of connection with those closest to Son. She attempts to fit in and tries "to talk 'down home' like Ondine" (250), but she is annoyed by their "worshipful stares" and "nonconversation" (251). In an attempt to fit in, she gets her camera out and begins to take pictures of the children in the neighbourhood. Jadine comes alive as she photographs everyone: "'Beautiful,' she said. 'Fantastic. Now over here,' click click" (251). She connects with her former self in this episode as her photography is a reminder of her own exploits in front of the camera. She treats the children that she photographs as though they were models and in doing so, she is able to connect with her world while mediating this community that she does not understand. She reduces the children to mere objects as she is able to mould them to appear the way she wants them to. Therefore she projects her experience onto them. Son is infuriated by this, and he snatches her camera from her hands. But he "didn't mean to snatch it. Just end it somehow. Stop the crease, the sunlight, the click click click" (251). In this moment he destroys her connection to her own frame of reference. He refuses to allow her to influence his way of being and those who are closest to him. In doing so, he further alienates her from his life and his heritage.

Their return to New York marks the culmination of their relationship, with both altered by their respective visits to one another's worlds. Their return to New York marks the stage of an impasse in their relationship. John Duvall notes that the "crucial violation" brings about the demise of their relationship (1997: 334). Their relationship has reached a point of no return as the narrator comments:

Each was pulling the other away from the maw of hell – its very ridge top. Each knew the world as it was meant or ought to be. One had a past, the other a future and each one bore the culture to save the race in his hands. Mama-spoiled black man, will you mature with me? Culture-bearing black woman, whose culture are you bearing? (Morrison, 2004: 269)

This clearly articulates the deadlock that the relationship between Son and Jadine has reached. As was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Toni Morrison believes that the problem between Son and Jadine centres on how they feel about themselves, and this impacts on how they feel about their respective responsibilities towards being black (paraphrased from McKay, 1983: 147). Son and Jadine believe that their respective ways of life are of value and each way is the best way to progress forward, hence their attempts to pull one another from “the maw of” what each deems to be the other’s “hell” (Morrison, 2004: 269). In knowing the world as it ought to be, each has a clear vision of how life should be lived, and, bearing “the culture to save the race in [their] hands,” each has the burden of responsibility to make a contribution to the future, although each has a very different view on how to do this. From Jadine’s point of view, Son needs to mature and sacrifice his heritage if he wishes to achieve anything. Son’s concern is that Jadine’s emphasis on materialism leaves her rooted in a culture that is not her own. Perhaps, in a larger sense, this speaks to the problematic nature of identity formation for African Americans in that it is paradoxical in nature. As Paquet mentions, to be upwardly socially mobile, African Americans lose their roots (1990: 499). Yet these are essential, as Fanon highlights that identifying with the mixed message presented by identifying with an “all-white truth” (1952: 63) renders an individual with a fragmented sense of self. For Son and Jadine, they struggle in maintaining their African American heritage as it is constantly eroded through systematic racism. This struggle creates tension between the two.

This is clearly seen in what occurs next. Once more, Jadine attempts to integrate Son into her world through an offer of classes from Valerian. Son refuses and Jadine suggests that it is not Valerian who is the problem. In their attempts to rescue one another, they have smothered one another instead. In trying to change Son, Jadine has

denied him the freedom to live his own way. Son reacts violently to Jadine's suggestion as he turns on her. His restraint breaks:

“Correct,” he said. “The problem is not Valerian. The problem is me. Solve it. With or without me, but solve it because you ain't going anywhere. You sweep me under the rug and your children will cut your throat. That fucker in Europe, the one you were thinking of marrying? Go have his children. That should suit you. Then you can do exactly what you bitches have always done: take care of white folks' children. Feed, love and care for white people's children. That's what you were born for; that's what you have waited for all your life.” (Morrison, 2004: 269)

One senses that this is not only a jealous lover speaking, but rather Son expresses African American men's anxieties and stereotypes of women. What he points out is that men and women together are necessary for the preservation of culture. What follows is his amendment of the myth of the tar baby:

He tore open his shirt, saying, “I got a story for you.”
“Get out of my face.”
“You'll like it. It's short and to the point.”
“Don't touch me. Don't you touch me.”
“Once upon a time there was a farmer – a white farmer...”
“Quit! Leave me *alone!*”
“And he had this bullshit bullshit farm. And a rabbit. A rabbit came along and ate a couple of his... ow... cabbages.”
“You better kill me. Because if you don't, when you're through, I'm going to kill you.”
“Just a few cabbages, you know what I mean?”
“I am going to kill you. *Kill* you.”
“So he got this great idea about how to get him. How to, to trap... this rabbit. And you know what he did? He made him a tar baby. He made it, you hear me? He made it!”
“As sure as I live,” she said. “I'm going to kill you.”
But she didn't. After he banged the bedroom door, she lay in wrinkled sheets, slippery, gutted, not thinking of killing him. (270-1)

What one sees clearly here is the subversion of the tar baby myth by Morrison, in that Son's perception of Jadine is that she is the tar baby meant to ensnare and trap him into a way of life that he wants little part of. In a sense, the farmer represents society more generally as it is dominated by white men. Son's attempt to enter this environment can be compared to the cabbages in the Tar baby myth, yet he is ultimately trapped through

the use of the tar baby (represented by Jadine). He is trapped in this world, yet his ultimate desire is to live another way, as “he never wanted to live in the world their way. There was something wrong with the rites. He had wanted another way” (166). Thus his violation of her, he believes, is a means with which to free her from the materialistic and alien life that she has, as well as re-asserting his freedom from her. He refuses to be ‘changed’, and this scene serves to demonstrate his assertion over the woman he believes is trying to change him. Referring to bell hooks’s earlier argument that violence is considered an acceptable means to achieve manhood, his violation of her is a physical manifestation of his ultimate desire to forcibly ‘tar’ or change her. He attempts to regain a measure of control over her by forcing her to his will. But in doing so, he traps himself and becomes nothing more than the “terrorising” male she originally believed him to be. One is reminded of his earlier reflection that “he did not always know who he was, but he always knew what he was like” (165), suggesting the self-fulfilling nature of the belief of a violent stereotype. As Terry Otten comments, Morrison often inverts traditional moral categories throughout her fiction and is able to explore the dimensions of the concept of love that can reveal themselves in brutish and violent ways (1993: 664). One cannot help being reminded of the men of Shalimar testing Milkman through a violent exchange, as his city ways presented a threat to their way of existence. Morrison offers a strong critique of violence as an acceptable part of manhood or a means to achieve it through this violation and the fight that Milkman is involved in. Son’s sense of rootlessness has rendered him without a means to achieve a sense of self. His Shadow reveals a yearning to dominate and control Jadine. But he is not absolved by Morrison for the choice that he makes, as is seen in Jadine’s response. He returns feeling “repentant, terrified he had gone too far” (Morrison, 2004: 271). He is aware that his actions are reprehensible and realises the dreadful mistake he has made. But Jadine is merely “solemn” as she says:

“I can’t let you hurt me again. You stay in that medieval slave basket if you want. You will stay there all by yourself. Don’t ask me to do it with you. I won’t. There is nothing any of us can do about the past but make our lives better, that’s all I’ve been trying to help you do. That is the only revenge, for us to get over. *Way over.*” (271)

Jadine's desire is to make her life better. In a sense, her attempt to avoid the trap presented by the tar baby is to forget the past and to create a better future. Her revenge on the "farmer" is to make her life better through a surrendering of her "ancient properties" (306). For Son, it is precisely the opposite. His desire is to live his life without constraint. Thus his existence in Jadine's world, as well as the trip to Eloë, has mediated his consciousness to escape the world presented to him by Jadine. Each represents what the other cannot assimilate into. Here, Morrison does not assign judgment of either character. For Morrison, the novel itself is "deeply unsettling" as "everybody was sort of wrong" (quoted in Otten, 1989: 78). Perhaps the significance here is the struggle that both African American men and women face in trying to create a sense of identity.

After New York, Son and Jadine separate, yet he believes he is unable to live without her, and returns to Isle des Chevaliers, where he meets Thérèse and Gideon once more as he searches for Jadine. Gideon's reaction is not favourable as he reminds Son: "I knew it. The yalla. What did I tell you? Huh?" (Morrison, 2004: 297). Having experienced the Shadow in the form of violence, Son returns to the island as he is aware of his connection to it. Yet ultimately, Jadine has left the island and fled to Europe. Son's love for her is seen in his response to Gideon's question of why he is unable to let her go: "Let go the woman you had been looking for everywhere just because she was difficult? Because she had a temper, energy, ideas of her own and fought back?" (298). What one sees here is that Son has developed an understanding of who Jadine is, yet he still lacks a full understanding of her as he deems her difficult. Thérèse agrees to take him back to the island in search of information about Jadine. Instead she rows him to the far side of the island and urges him to join the race of the mythical blind horsemen on the island. She advises that Son should forget Jadine: "Forget her. There is nothing in her parts for you. She has forgotten her ancient properties" (305). A clear distinction is made by Thérèse that Son and Jadine would never be able to live cohesively. In Jadine's removal from her roots, she has created a life that Son would not be able to be a part of and in his desire to maintain his roots, she is not able to be a part of the life he desires. In this moment, Thérèse's urging is the catalyst that urges Son towards his destiny. She represents the positive aspect of

the archetypal other as she assists in helping him discover a new existence. Although hesitant, Son is supported by her words as she says, “The men. The men are waiting for you” (306).

Although it appears that Thérèse makes the choice for Son, Toni Morrison emphasises that she wanted to suggest “this journey is Son’s choice” (quoted in McKay, 1983: 150). One sees this as Son crawls, then begins to walk and finally runs into the mist of the forest where the riders are said to be. Much like Milkman who has his faith restored and is able to leap towards Guitar, Son once more places his faith in his feet as he runs like the rabbit in the tar baby myth, “Lickety-split. Lickety-split” (Morrison, 2004: 306). In doing so, he fuses himself to the world of myth as well as the desire of his unconscious to chart his own course. His sense of selfhood is tied to that of the riders who remain unspoiled by the influence of anything. In a sense, this forms a ritual of manhood¹⁰ for Son as he reconnects directly with his past. He becomes the embodiment of history as these riders represent his forefathers. Therefore, joining the riders allows him an initiation into his heritage. The world as it is and living in the briar patch are not enough for him as he has “chosen solitude and the company of other solitary people – opted for it when everybody else had long surrendered, because he never wanted to live in the world their way” (166). This choice offers him the chance to experience a different kind of world. In light of the historical context that *Tar Baby* was published in i.e. given the lack of acknowledgement of the importance of civil rights and, by extension, African American people by the Reagan administration, it is unsurprising that Toni Morrison explores the boundaries outside of the United States, as this exploration allows the chance for the creation of an identity in a new kind of world. In the case of Son, his unconscious becomes known to him through the leap he makes as he seeks this new way of existence. Thus, masculinity for Son becomes a means to explore a sense of freedom unburdened by tar and to explore (as Morrison suggests) the “magic” in his life (quoted in Dowling, 1979: 53).

¹⁰ Levant argues that a crisis in masculinity championed the production of texts such as Robert Bly’s *Iron John* (1992: 382) in which Bly suggests that Iron John’s story is one of an “essential path of male initiation” (382). Men retreat from the impact of women in order to “throw off” feminisation in order to become “initiated” (383). They do this in an attempt to deal with the burden of modernity (383). Levant critiques this as he believes it to be problematic to suggest such a burden can be dealt with by returning to a more primitive way of life (383). However, with regard to the novel, I believe Son’s joining the riders deserves a more sympathetic reading.

Chapter Three

“As if word magic had anything to do with the courage it took to be a man”: Examining Representations of Patriarchy in *Paradise*

[Steward Morgan] was disgusted. “Cut me some slack.” That was the slogan those young simpletons really wanted to paint on the Oven. Like his nephew, K. D., they had no notion of what it took to build this town. What they were protected from. What humiliations they did not have to face. (Morrison, 1999: 93)

Despite the progress made in attempting to advance civil rights, racial tension remained a part of American life in the 1990s. Thomas Reeves notes that “millions of whites feared blacks, convinced that they were given somehow naturally to crime, drugs, and illegitimate births” (2000: 264). Many African American people felt resentment towards a social system that saw them unfairly discriminated against (264). The acquittal of four white police officers of the savage beating of Rodney King in 1992 and subsequent riots in which fifty five people died only highlighted this deep-seated anger and frustration (265). In terms of African American masculinity, the central event defining this particular era was the Million Man March. Held on October 16, 1995 on the Washington Mall, the march was set up in response to the assault made on progress that had been achieved with the civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s (West, 1999: 82). Controversial march organiser, Louis Farrakhan, called the march an opportunity for African American men to “publicly and collectively, [...] repent of their transgressions against black women, black children and black communities” (92). Women were encouraged to stay at home with their children rather than being invited to attend the march (92). This only served to highlight the complexity of the roles assumed by African American men and women and the expectations in fulfilling those roles (93). While the motives for men to march were wide and varied, one marcher posed the question of “why did we march?” and gave the following answer:

We marched against stereotypes. We marched against media that continue to portray Black men as criminals. We marched against conservative ideology that is anti-Black. We marched against angry White males who have concocted a myth that Black men are taking jobs away from them through affirmative

action. We marched against the Contract with America. We marched against Rush Limbaugh, Newt Gingrich, and Jesse Helms. We marched against *The Bell Curve*. We marched to silence the sceptics. But we also marched for ourselves. (Quoted in West: 93)

This insight sharply demonstrates the varied number of reasons that impelled men to participate, as well as highlighting once more the concern with stereotypes associated with African American men. Although the march was criticised given its lack of vision, it did galvanise and place civil rights within public consciousness once again (93).

Against this historical backdrop with an emphasis on the collective, Toni Morrison's seventh novel, *Paradise* (first published in 1997), forms the final part of the trilogy that she began with *Beloved* and *Jazz*, with each part focusing on a specific moment within American history. More particularly, it focuses on the founding and subsequent existence of the fictional all-African American town of Ruby, Oklahoma, and its residents under the leadership of its founding families, as well as the neighbouring Convent. Ruby is secluded and located ninety miles from the nearest town. Its seclusion suits the townspeople, who believe themselves to be protected from the prejudice and racism they have experienced within mainstream American society. As a result of these experiences, the townsfolk have a deep mistrust of outsiders and strangers, and the town is in a "deal with God: no one dies in Ruby" (Nerad, 2003: 260). The Convent, a former embezzler's mansion and then a mission for indoctrinating Catholicism in young Indian girls, is a refuge for women. Yet the slaughter of this group of women at the Convent, located just outside Ruby, brings about the end of this covenant. The epigraph to this chapter comes from the musing of Steward Morgan, who along with his twin brother Deacon and other men from the founding families, take it upon their shoulders to defend and protect Ruby, not only from outsiders but from the effect of those whom they deem unsuitable.

With regard to the novel, it examines the role of African American men and, in particular, their relationship with women, as well the differences between the generations in Ruby and the preservation and acknowledgement of the past within an environment of male-dominated rule and influence of the founding families. While an

acknowledgement of the importance of the past has always been a cornerstone of Morrison's work (as demonstrated in both *Song of Solomon* and *Tar Baby*), in the case of this novel, an awareness of the danger of an over-commemoration of the past is highlighted as the community is influenced by it. As Jill Matus points out, "even as *Paradise* recognises the importance of memory and history, however, it explores their limitations" (1998: 155). Residents of Ruby need to be "[woken] up from history" (161). Moreover, Morrison seeks to critique the role of patriarchy as a means to maintain this connection to the past and its limitations. I examine this role and how it impinges on the community of Ruby as well as the lives of the women who seek solace in the Convent. Davidson comments that *Paradise* differs from Morrison's previous work in that it does not function solely as an exploration of the individual's journey to attaining a sense of self, but rather focuses on the community itself (2001: 355). However, I also examine how the individual functions within the framework of the collective. The novel also deals with the burden of "double discrimination" in that mainstream society (that includes Ruby despite its isolation) is dominated by white people, and the women who live in Ruby are dominated by their male counterparts (Syri, 2005: 143).

The above epigraph from the novel speaks to the presentation of Ruby as an idyllic paradise that is unburdened of and sheltered from the scourge of racism. Yet, within its confines, Ruby remains at the mercy of its fixation with the past and the domination of its male leaders who attempt to protect and maintain the community's status quo. The maintenance of the status quo and the concern to maintain the past render Ruby paralysed, unable to engage with the present or future (Matus, 1998: 161). No progression or progress can occur in this paralysis, and the creation of Ruby as a utopian paradise by its founders ultimately leaves it fractured. In an exploration of the term utopia, Lyman Sargent defines utopianism as "the dreams and nightmares that concern the ways in which groups of people arrange their lives and which usually envision a radically different society than the one in which the dreamers live" (1994: 3). A utopian society involves human interaction in a number of forms and the residents of such a society express themselves in a number of ways (7). Ruby is founded by a number of families in the hope of escaping the pervasive racism within

mainstream American society. Yet the men of Ruby remain deeply suspicious of those within the town's confines who do not adhere to its way of life.

This domination and maintenance of the town's existence is achieved through a rigid system of patriarchy that ultimately culminates in a gratuitous act of violence committed by the men of Ruby against the women of the Convent. Lawrence-Webb, Littlefield and Okundaye make the point that patriarchy is a part of American society (2004: 626). This influences the relationships between men and women as patriarchy establishes a form of control and domination over that which is "weaker". In this case, men assert their masculinity through maintaining control over women. For African American men, continuous oppression in an unfair system impacts on their lives as they seek to find a means of freedom and control that society does not allow them. This adversely affects the relationships they share with African American women. Carme Manuel proposes that "African American masculinity is [upheld] at the cost of black women" (quoted in Gallego, 2009-10: 55). By definition, violence is then seen as a legitimate method with which to control women (55). Lawrence-Webb et al. argue that the roles within African American relationships have become problematised through consistent conflict experienced between the public and private spheres of life (2004: 625). Although this is not simply confined to African American people alone, there are consequences for this conflict in that an individual may struggle to fulfil the role assigned to him or her (625). For African American men, being the 'leader of the pack' or 'breadwinner' is often distorted and unattainable through the consistent application of discrimination within the public sphere, thus their opportunities to achieve a sense of independence and control over their own lives are hamstrung before they have even begun (625). For African American women, they are (more often than not) viewed as:

Being too overbearing, controlling, and unfeminine in their roles within their relationships. Their prominent role of helping to sustain the family and the relationship by actively participating in economic provisions of the home is seen as counterproductive to their relationship with the African American male, while undermining his masculinity. (626)

Here Lawrence-Webb et al. highlight the ambiguity that African American men and women experience in understanding their respective roles, as the home exists as a place in which men may seek to exercise a sense of autonomy and control over their partners through domination. Thus patriarchy contributes to a number of factors (such as discrimination and economic or social disenfranchisement) that creates “an environment of tension, frustration, and oppressive conditions that couples have to cope with while trying to establish or maintain a relationship” (627). This kind of conflict arises in the novel as the men of Ruby seek to maintain the status quo through a system of rigid patriarchal domination that is rooted in a fierce protection and commemoration of the past. This dogged hanging on to the past prevents Ruby from moving forward. As Holly Flint points out in regard to the novel:

Almost all of Ruby’s black residents, some more so than others, descend from the novel’s original ex-slave families who, in 1890, set out from Louisiana in search of a land where they might begin their own reconstruction. As a community, these families moved west in search of new cultural, legal, and economic identities. (2006: 586)

The creation of a new identity and way of existence is suggested here. In this desire to create a new existence, the potential for conflict exists. As bell hooks points out, “after slavery ended, enormous tension and conflict emerged between Black women and men as folks struggled to be self-determining” (2004: 92). This was, in large part, due to the desire to create and maintain a sense of control on the part of men over women. This control was often achieved through the use of violence, as African American women were to “be kept in check” (57). However, hooks points out that the means of maintaining control were a “repetition of the strategies [...] white slave-masters used” (4). The paradoxical experience of both African American men and women here is evident. How is one to achieve a sense of autonomy if the social structure one finds oneself in does not permit it? Furthermore, what kind of impact does this have on the relationships between men and women when men force their domination, as they have few means with which to assert their identity? In the case of the novel, the need to be awakened from history to embrace the present creates a paradox with the elder generation of the men of Ruby. Additionally, in their attempt to work to shield the community from the “humiliations” of prejudice and discrimination, they employ the

very technique, dominant patriarchy, used in mainstream American society to enforce prejudice and discrimination. They resort to alienation to overcome their trauma (Gallego, 2009-10: 54). Thus patriarchy functions as a method to overcome their anxiety of potentially losing the power they hold over the community. Their curse is that they do not acknowledge the younger generations or their ideas, as they are unable to engage with the future. The community is vulnerable to disintegration as the influence of the past lingers. While Toni Morrison remains critical of the prevalent system of patriarchy, she also offers alternatives of African American masculinity within the novel.

Unlike Morrison's previous works discussed in this dissertation, *Paradise* poses some complex analytical challenges for a number of reasons. Firstly, while Morrison has always focused on the lives of ordinary people, the range and scope of characters in this novel is far greater than in any of her previous works. Thus, her focus on any one protagonist is diffused (Matus, 1998: 156). Noting the contradictions of the Million Man March as well as its emphasis on the collective, I feel it is conceivable that Morrison writes with a focus on the collective in mind rather than focusing on individuals. The novel's focus is situated on the two communities of Ruby and the Convent and their respective members. This lends itself to the complex structure of the novel in that each chapter focuses on the story of the woman it is named after and there is little in the way of a cohesive linear chronology. Therefore, my analysis of the text will take into account the complex structure of the novel. Secondly, Andrew Read argues the novel demonstrates Morrison's own struggle to represent African American masculinity that reveals the critique of patriarchal masculinity without resorting to stereotypes (2005: 527). *Paradise* has received criticism for its representations of African American men, with particular reference to the violence committed by the men of Ruby against the defenceless women of the Convent. In her article, "Worthy Women, Unredeemable Men," Michiko Kakutani complains that "nearly every one of [the novel's] characters is [...] two-dimensional cliché, thin and papery and disposable" (1998). With regard to the men of the novel, she further states that they are "almost uniformly control freaks or hotheads, eager to dismiss independent women as sluts or witches, and determined to make everyone submit to their will" (1998).

Although I agree that the community of Ruby is dominated by men, I do not agree that the male characters can be written off as uniform, as I feel that a more nuanced reading is necessary. Rather, Morrison highlights the problematic nature of patriarchal masculinity and the potentially devastating consequences that can accompany it.

In a brief overview of this chapter, I examine brothers Steward and Deacon “Deek” Morgan’s sense of masculine self and how this is affected by their rigid protection of the legacy and history of Ruby through a system of patriarchy and intense rejection of outsiders and strangers. Firstly, it is necessary to examine the significance of their relationship through one of its defining features, as the brothers are identical twins. Karl Miller notes that the concept of twins implies the notion of duality (1985: 21). The meaning of duality has a number of meanings in that it literally denotes two of something or the perception that one thing represents two things (21). Each component may “complete, resemble or repel one another” (21). One part may repel the other, yet there is a sense of mutuality and a shared relationship (21). With regard to the novel, Vida De Voss argues that doubleness is a guiding feature (2010: 4). Morrison makes use of the concept in order to offer some kind of resolution to a troublesome matter rather than simply focus on an either/or approach (4). De Voss suggests that:

The double is a mirror figure, which is ultimately not limited to the numerical two, but instead conveys the idea of a self and an other, thus a self and all others. The double figure thus functions to disrupt the idea of singularity in identity by making otherness part of the self. (5)

While the Morgan brothers are individual entities they are inextricably linked to one another. Even though the novel is littered with many instances of doubleness, I will limit my focus to the brothers, given space constraints.

More specifically, I wish to examine what role the cultural unconscious plays as a part of the Self for each brother. Jung foreshadowed the concept. He notes that, in terms of personality formation, there are a number of transformative processes an individual may undergo (1950: 119). One of these processes Jung refers to is identification with a group (125). Identification with a group occurs when an individual identifies with a “number of people who, as a group, have a collective experience of transformation”

(125). However, Jung does not expand on the kinds of collective experiences a group may share. Joseph Henderson expands on Jung's idea of a cultural unconscious existing as a part of an individual's unconscious. The cultural unconscious functions as "an area of historical memory" (1990: 104). It serves as a means by which individuals collect and store their own experiences as well as those shared with others (105). Catherine Kaplinsky expands on this idea by arguing that the cultural unconscious is "a living history" situated between the conscious and collective unconscious (2005: 193). Cultural experiences then influence the way one lives one's life and hence how identity is formed (193). The cultural unconscious is formed by images and ideas and when these are activated, they affect one's behaviour and can develop in a positive or negative way (194). An activation of the cultural unconscious "assists in the formation of myth and ritual and also promotes the process of development in individuals" (Henderson, 1990: 103). I wish to use these ideas related to the cultural unconscious and demonstrate how they are applicable to each brother, who each represents a different form of masculinity, while appearing to be inherently similar. Firstly, the intense bond that the brothers share is highlighted in that one rarely speaks or does anything without the other leaving little room to create an individual sense of self. This double influence is particularly highlighted in their struggle to deal with the aftermath of the sacking of the Convent, as each brother seeks to find a sense of wholeness in terms of his identity. In the case of the Morgan brothers, I demonstrate the complexity of their interaction with those around them, and the burden of history that they feel is their responsibility to bear. This is foregrounded in the epigraph from the musing of Steward Deacon. He highlights the burden the men of the founding families have borne in creating Ruby, and his disdain for change and the younger generation of men in Ruby is evident. In their quest to maintain the status quo, the Morgan brothers actively reject ideas of progress and difference. This is primarily based on the experience of the Disallowing¹¹ and has manifested the founding families' distrust of both white Americans and lighter-skinned African Americans. In a sense, they deal

¹¹ The Disallowing refers to an incident that takes place in the novel before the founding of Ruby as the nine founding families that include the Morgan brothers, on an exodus from Louisiana from Haven, an all-Black town created by their forefathers, are rejected by the all-Black town ironically named Fairly, Oklahoma, for being too black and too poor. The significance here is that the founding families remain distrustful of any outsider whether they are black or white. Furthermore, the trauma of this event (that has personal consequences for the Morgan brothers) leaves them significantly altered psychologically, which I will discuss in greater detail later.

with the double burden of discrimination through a rigid system of control. Moreover, they adopt the very methods of control they seek to escape.

The Morgan brothers, along with the other men of the founding families, struggle to maintain a sense of control over Ruby, and this anxiety at a loss of control (much like Son's in *Tar Baby*) spills over into a graphic assault on that which they see as different and as a threat to their survival and the survival of Ruby. The way in which each brother deals with the consequences of what occurs, displays varying forms of masculinity. Deacon represents a form of redemption after the Convent assault as he seeks refuge with Reverend Misner. His unconscious desire is to search for a sense of self that is not rooted just in his brother but rather in himself as he attempts to come to terms with what has happened. Steward, on the other hand, refuses to acknowledge any wrongdoing in what happens. Instead, he attempts to justify his part in the assault of the Convent through a refusal to examine his role. In Steward, a clear separation from his brother is demonstrated as well as his need to certify that his nephew K. D. will pick up the legacy of the Morgan family history and maintain it. In a sense, he projects his fear of losing control onto his nephew.

From the outset, the presence of men and their encroachment on the lives of others is most striking, as the novel begins with a foreshadowing of the end with the sacking of the Convent, and opens with their shooting "the white girl first" (Morrison, 1999: 3). The intent of the men is clear. Their aim is to annihilate this group of women with no questions asked. Their shooting of the white girl only seeks to demonstrate the hierarchy of colour that exists in their minds. They are not burdened by their consciences as there is "No need to hurry here. They are seventeen miles from a town which has ninety miles between it and any other" (3). The mention of distance is significant because it suggests that physical space represents the division they wish to put between themselves and what they are engaging in. Little evidence supports their claims that the women of the Convent are dangerous, as the men misinterpret the significance of the rooms within its confines. Their intent is to search for the "female malice" that they are certain "hides there" (4). One of the men focuses on the kitchen as he recalls the demise of Haven, and he notes that "that is why [the men] are here in

this Convent. To make sure it never happens again. That nothing inside or out rots the one all-black town worth the pain” (5). Here it is made very clear as to why the men decide to sack the Convent. These men (who have yet to be named) do what they feel is necessary to protect the sanctity and purity of their town. History must not repeat itself through the demise of their town. The burden of a traumatic past is evident as it influences and invades the consciousness of these men as their refusal to allow history to repeat itself motivates their actions. Nancy Kang argues that African American men lack the space in which to express their pain and suffering (2003: 844). Thus, maintaining some semblance of control allows men the chance to express this discontent (844). However, it is ironic as they attempt to maintain this purity through violence, as their ancestors were controlled by the same means. For the men of Ruby, this discontent is expressed through violence.

Although they are not referred to by name at this stage of the novel, one encounters the Morgan twins through a description:

The brothers were once identical. Although they are twins, their wives look more alike than they do. One is smooth, agile and smokes Te Amo cigars. The other is tougher, meaner, but hides his face when he prays. But both have wide, innocent eyes and both are as single-minded now standing before a closed door as they were in 1942 when they enlisted. (Morrison, 1999: 12)

The significance here lies in the twins once appearing identical in looks. However, their appearances, while masculine as they are “agile” and “tough” (12), suggest the possibility that their differences may extend simply past the surface. However, this is contrasted with their “innocent” eyes, suggesting a paradox within their character, as they are anything but innocent in the assault that they carry out. Rather, the belief that they are right in their convictions to rid their town of that which might “rot” (5) it carries them forward to achieving their goal. They are both firm in their resolve as they are “single-minded” (12), and the reference to enlisting suggests the value that the twins place on fighting for a cause and what they believe is right. The passage goes on:

Then they were looking for an out – a break away from a life where all was owed, nothing owned. Now they want in. Then, in the forties, they had nothing

to lose. Now everything requires their protection. From the beginning when the town was founded they knew isolation did not guarantee safety. Men strong and willing were needed when lost or aimless strangers did not just drive through. (12)

The twins once craved a sense of freedom and a desire for a new kind of life, one based on autonomy, without feeling dependent on others. But the founding of the town has changed their outlook. They choose to place the burden of taking care of the town on their shoulders. In doing so, they are able to create an environment that they are able to control. In other words, they are able to “break from a life where all was owed”. In a sense they become the masters of their own creation and their own town. But this is not merely an exercise in self-gratification. The brothers, as well as the other men of the founding families, feel a sense of responsibility in keeping the sacrifice of their forefathers alive by maintaining their memory through the upkeep of the town:

As new fathers, who had fought the world, they could not (would not) be less than the Old Fathers who had outfoxed it; who had not let danger or natural evil keep them from cutting Haven out of mud and who knew enough to seal their triumph with that priority. (6)

The new fathers demonstrate their need to match the efforts of their forefathers, suggesting that pride plays an essential role in this community. In a sense, the new fathers function as a preservation of their past much like Pilate in *Song of Solomon*, who becomes a repository for the preservation of their culture. However, unlike Pilate, in preserving the past, the new fathers use it to maintain control over their present and the future. The capacity of memory is also important, as “between them they remember the details of everything that ever happened – things they witnessed and things they did not” (13). Their conscious egos then are mediated by the thought of maintaining a sense of control and their own sense of power, as well as balancing the burden of their traumatic past. Thus the twins are considered an authority on all matters, regardless of whether they have been directly involved in a situation or not. As Rob Davidson points out, Steward and Deacon Morgan function as the town’s recognised leaders as they maintain and enforce the community’s narrative and history (2001: 356). They embody “unified authority; they share one memory [and] one

purpose” (Krumholz, 2002: 21), and this is to protect the community that they have been responsible in building. They have been shaped by the language and values of their forefathers (De Voss, 2010: 28). Although their influence is evident in the sacking of the Convent, it soon becomes obvious that it is heavily felt throughout the town and its members.

The influence and involvement of Steward and Deacon Morgan is clearly seen as they deal with their nephew’s impregnation of Arnette Fleetwood. Thomas Singer argues that a key feature of the cultural unconscious is the complexes that make it up (2006: 202). These complexes function in bringing the cultural unconscious to life (202). One of the characteristics of these complexes is that they “express themselves in powerful moods and repetitive behaviours” (203). For the Morgan brothers, remaining involved is imperative. Much like the controlling influence of Macon Dead who is insistent that his son Milkman learns his way of life, their involvement is pervasive. Their nephew, K. D., reflects on the fact that there has been a meeting called to discuss the problem: “Just those concerned would be at the meeting tonight. Everybody, that is, except the one who started it all. His uncles Deek and Steward, Reverend Misner, Arnette’s father and brother. They would discuss the slapping but not the pregnancy” (Morrison, 1999: 54). K. D. fails to recognise that he is partly responsible for this situation, as he blames it on Arnette for having “started it all”. Arnette has no representation here, and this suggests that K. D. relies on others to deal with his situation in traditional patriarchal fashion. Her voice is not given a space to be heard, as her father and brother will negotiate on her behalf, so there are no women involved in negotiations. Moreover, these negotiations take place between the families rather than the two people involved in the situation. K. D. muses that she enticed him and as such it is her problem to deal with: ““You cornered me at more socials that I can remember and when I finally agreed I didn’t have to take your drawers down you beat me to it so this ain’t my problem”” (54). Their argument culminates when he slaps her. Having asked him how he was planning to assist her, Arnette is left stunned. His anger only seeks to highlight the way in which problems appear to be dealt with in Ruby. The men appear to shoulder little responsibility in such situations, and women are expected to shoulder the implications of such problems by themselves. K. D. reflects that his uncles

“frowned at the same time” (55) when he told them about what had happened, but “however disgusted both were, [he] knew they would not negotiate a solution that would endanger him or the future of Morgan money” (55). In other words, the Morgans’ aim is to assist and absolve K. D. of any wrongdoing. By doing this, the uncles deny K. D. the chance to mature and deal with his problems. Additionally, the brothers are concerned for their status and wealth, which suggests that they maintain control through the privilege they are afforded. The reason for this is made clear as K. D. makes the point that he, “their hope and their despair,” was “the last male in a line that included a lieutenant governor, a state auditor and two mayors” (55). The Morgan brothers (despite being married) have no children, and thus their hopes are pinned on him to continue the family name and all that is associated with it. It is ironic that as much as the brothers focus on the past (noted in the way that K. D. is able to recall the family line), they desire to move forward. But in their desire to maintain control, they take an interest in K. D. The burden that the younger generation carries is highlighted as they try to appease their elders. This is seen in K. D.’s admission that thinking like his uncles was “hard” (55).

Reverend Richard Misner’s involvement is contrasted with that of the Morgan brothers at the meeting. His view of the situation is somewhat different to those of the Morgan men, as he insists that the meeting take place at the Fleetwoods’ home as he “thought it best to serve protocol and go to Fleetwood rather than season the raw insult done to the family by making the aggrieved come to the house of the aggressor” (56). Misner believes that it is the responsibility of the man to deal with the situation, suggesting that part of attaining manhood is to shoulder some responsibility for hitting Arnette. Yet he does not even acknowledge the other issue, which is that Arnette is pregnant. The Morgans are left uncomfortable that they are not on more solid ground territorially, and they have doubts of Richard as a mediator: “To their dismay, Reverend Misner often treated fodder like table food. A man like that could encourage strange behavior; side with a teenage girl; shift ground to Fleetwood” (56). The Morgans’ suspicions of the Reverend are evident. He is an inherent outsider, as is seen in their sorting of Richard’s opinions “to judge which were recommendations easily ignored and which were orders they ought to obey” (57). A clear distinction is to be

drawn between recommendations and orders, suggesting that the Morgans answer to no-one unless they believe it is in their best interests. In his attempt to be diplomatic, Misner attempts to appease the situation as he sees it:

“Let me lay out the situation as I know it. Correct me, you all, if I get it wrong or leave out something. My understanding is that K. D. here has done an injury, a serious injury, to Arnette. So right off we can say K. D. has a problem with his temper and an obligation–.” (58)

Reverend Misner does nothing to refer to the more pressing issue of Arnette’s pregnancy. Instead, the slap gets the attention of the gathered men. It is ironic that the surface issue (the slap) is dealt with rather than the more pressing issue of the pregnancy. This demonstrates the way in which issues are dealt with in Ruby in that the more serious issues are swept aside rather than confronted. The purpose of this meeting is for the Morgans to re-establish a sense of order in this chaotic situation. Thus once more the twins’ concern for maintaining control is demonstrated as they insist on getting involved on their nephew’s behalf. In a sense, Reverend Misner feeds the very system that he is trying to fight against in that the issue is swept aside. Steward Morgan inflames the situation by suggesting that Arnette might not have reacted so badly if she had been hit more often. What Fleet (her father) seeks is a restoration of Arnette’s reputation, and an apology from K. D. is not satisfactory enough. Steward suggests to Fleet that Arnette might stay on in Ruby rather than go to college:

“Well,” Steward answered. “August’s a long way off. This here is May. She might change her mind. Decide to stay on.”

“I’m her father. I’ll arrange her mind.”

“Right,” said Steward.

“Settled then?” Deek asked.

“Like I say. Have a talk to her mother.”

“Of course.”

“She’s the key. My wife’s the key.”

Deek smiled outright for the first time that evening. “Women always the key. God bless ’em.” (61)

The difference between the twins is noticeable. Deacon seeks a more conciliatory line as he acknowledges that Arnette’s going to college would make her “a credit to the

town” (61). In this sense, Deacon is aware as he consciously soothes the feelings of the Fleetwoods that Steward has managed to stir up. However, Steward only influences the situation negatively as he believes that the situation can be solved if Arnette stays in Ruby. In suggesting this, Steward demonstrates his conscious belief that isolation will solve the problem in that outside influence may make the problem worse. While each individual’s approach to the situation repels the other, collectively the two brothers complement one another. Arnette’s mother must be convinced that her daughter’s reputation has been restored. Yet her mother is not a part of the conversation, nor is she consulted in any way. Her husband mentions that ““she’s hit by this too, you know. Maybe worse’n I am, maybe”” (60). He has no awareness of her actual feelings. Once more, the voices of women have been drowned out at the expense of men as their futures are decided for them without their input. This demonstrates the rigidity of patriarchy within the community, as the men are able to maintain control over the women, who are not involved and who are kept away from dealing or giving input to situations that are important. Yet their treatment and belief about the role of women is somewhat paradoxical, as Deacon acknowledges they are “always the key” (61), suggesting an unconscious awareness that women do have a role to play in this community. Yet the lack of women’s voices in this exchange suggests that Deacon is not fully conscious that women need to play a role. Reverend Misner is left “uneasy” by the outcome of the meeting (61). He comments on the Morgan brothers: “They performed as one man, but something in Deek’s manner made Misner wonder if he wasn’t covering for his brother – propping him up the way you would a slow-learning child” (62). Once more, it appears that the Morgans are exactly similar, yet there are differences too in that Deacon makes up for his brother’s shortcomings in the form of his temper and lack of sensitivity. Despite Steward’s brashness, Deacon’s ability to smooth over a situation keeps them in tandem with one another. The two brothers then act as a paradox to one another in that what one lacks, the other makes up for.

The Morgan brothers’ struggle against the younger generation is also highlighted as a feature in which they, along with the other “New Fathers,” attempt to maintain the status quo and a sense of control. The cultural unconscious of the younger generation has only been influenced by that which the New Fathers deem appropriate. Their way

of life and maintaining the past are paramount, albeit at the expense of the present and future. This is seen particularly in the argument surrounding the Oven,¹² which causes a great amount of tension. The Oven functions as an image of not only the brothers' cultural unconscious but also that of the town, as it is central to the town's identity. Dovey Morgan reflects on her husband Steward: "He was already in a losing battle with Reverend Misner over words attached to the lip of the Oven. An argument fuelled in part, Dovey thought, by what nobody talked about: young people in trouble or acting up behind every door" (83). In the past, it functioned symbolically to nourish the community of Haven, and in the present, it serves as a reminder of the past as well as a symbol of domination adopted by the New Fathers, as it serves as a central point to all communal life. It was engraved by the Morgans' forefather with words the origins of which no one in the community was sure of, as the words seemed, at first, "to bless them; later to confound them; finally to announce that they had lost" (7), hence the battle waged by Steward Morgan to maintain what is engraved on its hood. This argument of words fuels a passionate dispute between the community, with the older and younger generations seemingly pitted against one another:

Opinions were varied, confusing, even coherent, because feelings ran so high over the matter. Also because some young people, by snickering at Miss Esther's finger memory, had insulted entire generations preceding them. They had not suggested, politely, that Miss Esther's finger may have been mistaken; they howled at the notion of remembering invisible words you couldn't even read by tracing letters you couldn't pronounce.

"Did she see them?" asked the sons.

"Better than that!" shouted the fathers. "She felt them, touched them, put her finger on them!"

"If she was blind, sir, we could believe her. That'd be like braille. But some five-year-old kid who couldn't read her own tombstone if she climbed out of her grave and stood in front of it?"

The twins frowned. Fleet, thinking of his mother-in-law's famed generosity, leapt out of the pew and had to be held back. (83)

¹² The Oven refers to an oven built by the Old Fathers in Haven, a symbol of communal life meant to nourish everyone in Haven and serve as a tribute to what they had built. When the New Fathers relocated to Ruby, they painstakingly took it apart and re-built it in Ruby to serve as a reminder of the past. It is partly what occurs at the Oven that spurs the men of Ruby into action against the women of the Convent as "what went on at the Oven these days was not to be believed" (Morrison, 1999: 11).

The disjunction between the generations is evident. The younger generation is not impressed by the memories and mythical status attached to the Oven lid. They rely on logic to argue with the elder generation. In rejecting Miss Esther's finger, they reject the notion of the accepted story of the lid, and in doing so the potential for more theories to be explored opens up. Morrison's intention is perhaps to suggest that, while the past is commemorated, that is not to say that there is no opportunity for other thoughts, stories or theories regarding the words on the Oven and by extension, the future of Ruby. A hierarchy clearly operates within Ruby, in that the word of the New Fathers is listened to rather than anyone else, despite the meeting being open for all to attend, as the Oven "belonged to all" (83). However, a very clear distinction is drawn between what one is allowed to say and how one goes about saying it:

It would have been better for everyone if the young people had spoken softly, acknowledged their upbringing as they presented their views. But they didn't want to discuss. They wanted to instruct.

"No ex-slave would tell us to be scared all the time. To 'beware' God. To always be ducking and diving, trying to look out every minute in case He's getting ready to throw something at us, keep us down." (84)

What the younger generation imagines here is a new kind of existence, one that does not fear God or the threat of straying from not consistently acknowledging the past. Deacon Morgan, however, is moved (given his family antecedents came from slavery) to defend his grandfather:

"That's my grandfather you're talking about. Quit calling him an ex-slave like that's all he was. He was also an ex-lieutenant governor, an ex-banker, an ex-deacon and a whole lot of other exes, and he wasn't making his own way; he was part of a whole group making their own way." (84)

Once again Deacon focuses on the past, without an acknowledgement of how this connects to the present. He refuses to identify his grandfather as merely a slave. In a way, he attempts to distance himself from the pain and sacrifice of slavery, and focuses on how his grandfather made more of himself. In not acknowledging part of his grandfather's past, he is selective in how he constructs the memory, and in doing so, he removes the story from a sense of wholeness, as his conscious desire is to shoulder the

burden of the responsibility of the trauma of the past. A part of the cultural unconscious is that it accumulates “experiences that validate” the individual’s point of view (Singer, 2006: 203). In doing so, this creates “a storehouse of self-affirming, ancestral memories” (203). In bringing up the past, Deacon is able to affirm the commitment that he, his brother and the New Fathers have to maintaining Ruby. This mention of the past affirms their belief in how they exist. The younger generation responds through Royal Beauchamp, who dares to interrupt Reverend Pulliam: ““What is talk if it’s not ‘back’? You all just don’t want us to talk at all. Any talk is ‘backtalk’ if you don’t agree with what’s being said... Sir”” (Morrison, 1999: 85). What he alludes to is that a discussion is meant to be based on a mutual exchange of ideas, and yet the elders are not interested in listening to any other ideas. For Steward and Deacon, the past and their descendants have motivated their conscious egos to the point where they do not acknowledge the present, and in doing that, they alienate the younger members of the community. Reverend Misner defends Royal Beauchamp’s right to speak as he answers a plea to keep the boy “still” by suggesting ““Why would I want to?”” as the point of proceedings is ““to listen too”” (85). In this scene Misner represents the need for an acknowledgement of the present in that all parties must participate in the creation of a future. Moreover, he advocates a kind of manhood that questions and engages rather than simply accepts things as they are. This is in contrast to Steward, who reflects on the meeting:

Again the bitterness rose. Had he any sons, they would have been sterling examples of rectitude, laughing at Misner’s notions of manhood: backtalk, name changes – as if word magic had anything to do with the courage it took to be a man. (95)

Steward demonstrates here his lack of belief in change. Rather, he feels that manhood and how to behave properly are learned from one’s elders and then passed down to future generations. His view is much like that of Macon Dead, who feels compelled to teach Milkman the right way to live his life after Milkman has met Pilate. Steward then reflects on his forefathers’ journey, revealing that “it was the shame of seeing one’s pregnant wife or sister or daughter refused shelter that had rocked them, and changed them for all time. The humiliation did more than rankle; it threatened to crack open

their bones” (95)¹³. The experience of their forefathers and Steward’s memory of it has left the brothers with an acute awareness of trauma, and the burden of responsibility that men take on in order to protect their fellow women from such humiliation. Yet witnessing the treatment of their sister ultimately seals the brothers’ belief in the need to maintain the status quo in Ruby. Their conscious egos focus solely on the lives of other people through their mediated experiences of the outside world to protect those that live within Ruby’s confines. Thus their motivation rests in not only maintaining their own positions and those of their fellow men, but also in their desire to protect other women from the same fate, suggesting the paradoxical nature of the way women are viewed more generally by the men in this community. Furthermore, the responsibility that the Morgans feel is evident as Deacon muses that: “he was burdened with the loss of all sons” (113). As Morrison herself suggests, a “man is not free to choose his responsibilities. He is only responsible for what someone has handed him” (quoted in Ruas, 1981: 114). The Morgans not only have the burden of responsibility in commemorating their forefathers, but in preventing a humiliating history from repeating itself once more. The brothers are able to achieve this protection through maintenance of a system of rigid patriarchy, yet this has serious consequences, as seen in their dealing with the pregnancy of Arnette. Arnette and her mother are denied the opportunity to express themselves or voice their opinions with regard to how to deal with the situation, yet they ostensibly hold the key to its solution. The consequences of this are that the relationships between men and women within this community are negatively influenced, hence the fear that the women of the Convent pose a threat to this sense of stability created by the Morgan brothers.

The complexities of Ruby are brought to the fore at the wedding of Arnette Fleetwood and K. D. Morgan. Reverend Pulliam delivers some opening remarks to the congregation about how God is not interested in His people: “Do you understand me? God is not interested in you. He is interested in love and the bliss it brings to those

¹³ The brothers do not only have recollections of past trauma. They, too, have experienced such trauma first hand. Ruby is named after the dead sister of Steward and Deacon Morgan. Deacon recalls how he and his brother had protected her “all their lives,” and when she became ill, there was “no way to provide it” (Morrison, 1999: 113). As there were no “colored people allowed in the wards” she passed away (113). The brothers learn that the nurses were trying to contact a veterinarian to save their sister (equating her with an animal), and when they “gathered their dead sister in their arms, their shoulders shook all the way home” (113).

who understand and share that interest” (Morrison, 1999: 142). What Reverend Pulliam suggests here is that God’s love is selective in nature. He excludes those who do not share the same interests as Him. The community reflects a similar exclusionary perspective, as they only embrace those who unquestioningly accept their values and beliefs. Richard Misner, who is to conduct the service, touches on the fact that this wedding is not only about the couple, but rather “the renewed responsibility of all Morgans and Fleetwoods” (144). Once more, it suggests the unborn and future generations of Ruby must bear the responsibility of the past as well as carrying this past into the future. It is their responsibility to preserve and maintain the past. Unlike Milkman and to a lesser extent, Son, who both embrace the comfort that their history has to offer, the younger generation of Ruby are forced to carry this history without being allowed to question it. K. D. reflects on his marriage and wonders why “everybody [was] using his wedding” to “extend a quarrel he could care less about? He wanted it over. Over and done with so his uncles would shut up; so Jeff and Fleet would stop spreading lies about him, so he could take his place among the married and propertied men of Ruby” (147). K. D. here feels the burden of responsibility from his uncles, but his own desire to take what he believes is his rightful place is highlighted through this rite of passage. His concern is with achieving what is expected of the men of the community. He has little concern for the turmoil that has been caused because of his involvement with Arnette. The wedding binds the two warring families together, suggesting their desire for survival in this union, hence the responsibility of “all Morgans and Fleetwoods” (144). The reception after the wedding highlights the complex bond between the Morgan brothers, as the narrator notes:

It had long been noticed that the Morgan brothers seldom spoke to or looked at each other. Some believed it was because they were jealous of one another; that their views only seemed to be uniform; that down deep there was a mutual resentment which surfaced in small ways. In their automobile arguments, for example: one’s fierce preference for Chevrolets, the other’s stubborn defence of Oldsmobiles. In fact the brothers not only agreed in almost everything; they were in eternal if silent conversation. Each knew the other’s thoughts as well as he knew his face and only once in a while needed the confirmation of a glance. (155)

The twins appear to share an unbreakable, almost mystical bond. Each knows the other without a need for confirmation, suggesting that their identities are intrinsically linked to one another. Little beneath the surface demonstrates difference between the brothers, hence they derive comfort from each other. Each is guaranteed an alter ego who will be just as passionate and protective as he is. Thus, the power that the Morgans are able to maintain is absolute. As “men in suits” they are able to banish the women of the Convent who are invited to the reception by Soane, Deacon’s wife, who remains loyal to Consolata (who lives in the Convent) as she saved their child’s life. The mere presence of these women is enough to ignite the concern of the brothers into action. These women threaten their perfect construction of Ruby and in doing so, the negative experience of exclusion from their past influences their present as they seek to exclude the women. In getting rid of the women from the Convent: “‘Give these little girls their bicycles back,’ said one. ‘Get on out of here,’ said another, through a mouthful of tobacco” (162). The men demonstrate a lack of respect as they term the women “little girls,” and do little to acknowledge or understand them, suggesting the fear of the “rot” the women represent. Moreover, the younger men cheer the women on, and as a consequence of this cheering they are “ordered away without words. Just a look and a head movement from a man seven feet tall” (162). The difference between the generations is highlighted here as the younger generation appear to embrace the ‘outsiders,’ whereas the older generation remain steadfast in their desire to maintain a sense of distance between themselves and the women of the Convent.

Deacon Morgan’s with Consolata from the Convent serves to highlight the danger that the Morgans believe that these women pose. However, despite its tragic conclusion, this affair also offers a sense of hope. Consolata, of African Brazilian descent, signifies difference, as she is lighter-skinned than Deacon and certainly not of the “8-rock” that is so important to the founding families, as well as being a member of the Convent. Comparable to Pilate who offers Milkman a different view to that of his father or Thérèse who offers Son a different path, Consolata represents a breaking away from Ruby. A narrative, told from her perspective, conveys the deep yet ultimately doomed bond they share:

On the way back again they were speechless again. What had been uttered during their lovemaking leaned toward language, gestured its affiliation, but in fact was un-memorable, -controllable, or -translatable. Before dawn they pulled away from each other as though, having been arrested, they were facing prison sentences without parole. (229)

Their bond is based on more than simply physical attraction. She represents a connection outside of Deacon's perception of the world he lives in. In a sense, she operates as the archetypal other within his unconscious in that she offers a different view of the world. Yet it is broken, as Deacon remains loyal to his wife and community:

Hand in hand they fight shrub and bramble until they reach a shallow gully. Consolata spots at once what he wants her to see: two fig trees¹⁴ growing into each other. When they are able to speak full sentences, he gazes at her, saying:

“Don't ask me to explain. I can't.”

“Nothing to explain.”

“I'm trying to get on in my life. A lot of people depend on me.”

“I know you're married.”

“I aim to stay so.”

“I know.” (230)

Yet again, Deacon, despite his obvious connection to Consolata, remains steadfast in his adherence to his responsibility to others. The fig trees are symbolic perhaps of the bond between Deacon and Consolata. It suggests that their union could bear fruit in

¹⁴ Stave points out that Toni Morrison knows the Bible very well and uses it for particular effect (2007: 69). This knowledge of the Bible is essential for readers of the text as well as the various characters within the text (Gauthier, 2005: 404). Thus the significance of the entwined fig trees lies in the Gospel of Matthew as Jesus curses a fig tree and decrees that fruit will not grow from it. Phil Stone suggests that the reasons for His actions can be interpreted as:

Figs are those people who had a choice to leave their roots in Jerusalem. In Nebuchadnezzar's time more than 19 years of warnings preceded the burning down of the city. Bad figs were those people who stayed behind in Jerusalem. Those were the ones who did not bear fruit for the kingdom of God. In his actions, Jesus picks up the same theme and shows that the tree, the city and Jewish religious system based in Jerusalem, would never bear fruit again. (2010)

Thus the lesson meant to be inferred is that those who do not evolve for the glory of God will wither and not bear fruit. In the novel, it can be suggested that there is a danger that the community, without progress or engagement in its present and future, will wither much like the fig trees and not produce fruit.

their coming together as a member of each community (Ruby and the Convent) engages outside their boundaries. Ultimately it is a chance, a representation of hope for the community of Ruby not to wither and die like the trees or the former community of Haven. Much like the relationship he has with his brother, Deacon does not need words to express himself. A connection is forged between the two in their sharing of the branches and fruit, in an Eden-like moment, as they sample that which is forbidden. He cheats on his wife and the purity of the community, and Consolata disregards the teachings of the nuns. In addition, Consolata represents the passion that Deacon lacks in his life as he is not responsible for her, thus introducing the unknown into his consciousness. Yet his intense loyalty to others, as well as his firm belief in rigid patriarchy, keeps him from fully exploring that connection to his unconscious. This loyalty keeps him from fully being able to immerse himself in Consolata's existence. Much like the doomed relationship between Son and Jadine, although Deacon and Consolata may love one another, they cannot exist together peacefully. In a sense, his burden of responsibility is represented by the two trees in that he is unable to extract himself from it. The suggestion is that while he is to be admired for his steadfast loyalty to others, the burden smothers the chance for the creation of a new way of life. Much like the relationship between Son and Jadine that is ultimately doomed to failure, given their intent to try and enmesh the other within their particular world, so the relationship between Deacon and Consolata is influenced by their own particular positions within their respective worlds. When Consolata questions him, his response is significant:

“Does anybody know?” Consolata runs her thumbnail around the living man's nipple.

“Wouldn't be surprised,” he answers.

“Your wife?”

“No.”

“Somebody saw us?”

“Don't think so.”

“Then how could anybody know?”

“I have a twin.”

Consolata sits up. “There are two of you?”

“No.” He closes his eyes. When he opens them he is looking away.

“There's just one of me.” (232)

The significance here lies in the bond shared between the brothers as they are in “eternal conversation” (155). Deacon is aware that Steward possibly knows the secret of his affair without having said anything to him. The doubled fig tree takes on a new significance as it possibly represents Deacon and Steward. They are enmeshed in one another’s growth. One requires the other for support as it develops. Yet Deacon desires to be seen as an individual by Consolata as he proclaims ““there’s just one of me”” (232). Even though Deacon has a great appreciation of and obvious bond with his brother, he yearns to be seen separately, suggesting the need on his part to forge his own identity. The fact that Steward is possibly aware of the affair is confirmed by his picking Consolata up, and her realisation that he is not Deacon: “But it was not the silence of the Friday noon pickups. Then the unspeaking was lush with promise. Easy. Vocal. This silence was barren, a muteness lined with acid. And then she noticed the smell. Not unpleasant, not at all, but not his” (235). The lack of connection to Steward is evident as the silence holds no promises other than hatred. He drops her back at the Convent and she moves away from him, “repelled by but locked into his eyes, chaste and wide with hatred” (235). This look echoes his “innocent eyes” as he searches the Convent. Steward’s intent here is clear: to scare Consolata from his brother. He drops her back at the Convent, symbolising his separation of the two from one another. In a sense, he separates the two fig trees from one another. Yet ultimately Deacon severs ties with Consolata and in doing this, he breaks Ruby’s contact with the outside world, suggesting that the trees are unlikely to bear fruit again and, symbolically, neither will Ruby. Thus his adherence to a stagnant and rigid system of patriarchy prevents any form of progress.

The gathering of the men prior to the onslaught on the Covent is depicted from the point of view of Lone, the town’s midwife, and apparently one who can read minds. Like Circe in *Song of Solomon*, Lone is able to recall events without memory or books with perfect clarity. She denies this, but “she did know something more profound than Morgan memory or Pat Best’s history book. She knew what neither memory nor history can say or record: the trick of ‘life’ and its ‘reasons’” (272). The significance of this speaks to the community as a whole. History can only do and record so much, yet life is mysterious in its workings, as she sees God as “liberating” and a “teacher who

taught [one] how to learn, to see for [oneself]" (273). In this moment Lone signifies what needs to occur in Ruby. In contrast to Reverend Pulliam's comments that God is not interested in them, from Lone's perspective, people need to learn and stop being blind to their condition of life. Morrison's choice of Lone to narrate this viewpoint is significant as she assists in bringing new life into the community, although, as Lone suggests, "she had [only] been called on twice in the last eight years" (272). This is symbolic of the omen of the fig trees that do not bear fruit. This highlights the lack of new life in Ruby. It remains stuck in its own ways, suggesting its condition is not conducive to creating new life. The men, in turn, are planning to take life. They meet at the Oven, which is symbolic, given the Oven's centrality to the community and its representation of the preservation of their way of life. Additionally, it is the symbol through which the community was once fed. Yet it now is chosen as a means with which to plan an assault to destroy life. Lone notes:

Here, when the men spoke of the ruination that was upon them – how Ruby was changing in intolerable ways – they did not think to fix it by extending a hand in fellowship or love. They mapped defence instead and honed evidence for its need, till each piece fit an already polished groove. A few did most of the talking, some said little and two said nothing at all, but silent though they were, Lone knew the leadership was twinned. (275)

Morrison offers a critique of the men, as they do not consider fellowship as a means to deal with and accept change that is taking place. Rather, their anxiety over losing control and not being able to control these changes leaves the men piecing together the evidence that they believe will justify their plan. The Morgans contribute little, already set on their plan of action. The men's conclusion is that the women of the Convent "meddle" as they "[draw] folks out there like flies to shit and everybody who goes near them is maimed somehow and the mess is seeping back into *our* homes, *our* families. We can't have it, you all. Can't have it all" (276). Thus the basis for their anger is the influence these women appear to have over other members of the community. Moreover, it appears that their anger acts as a cover for their anxiety. The influence of these women is a threat to their control and their masculinity. As they are the leaders, it is their responsibility to maintain control, and if they are not able to do this, there are

few resources to create a sense of masculine self. This is where Morrison offers her strongest critique of patriarchal masculinity.

So the novel comes full circle as the men enter the Convent and move their way through the house to prove their theories that the women are perverted and deviant. In their confrontation with Consolata, Deacon is struck by seeing what “has been drained from [her eyes] and from himself as well. There is blood near her lips. It takes his breath away” (289); echoing her biting of his lip. In this moment, the connection between the two is strong as their eyes mirror one another’s. Deacon attempts to stop his brother as he “lifts his hand to halt his brother’s and discovers who, between them, is the stronger man. The bullet enters her forehead” (289). Steward kills Consolata and in that moment, the brothers are separated from one another. The irony is that Steward is anything but strong, as he does not acknowledge his role in what has taken place:

“The evil is in this house,” said Steward. “Go down in that cellar and see for yourself.”

“My brother is lying. This is our doing. Ours alone. And we bear the full responsibility.”

For the first time in twenty-one years the twins looked each other dead in the eyes. (291)

In this moment, the brothers finally see one another for who they are, but Deacon is able to see just who he is and what he has done in his brother’s eyes. For once, the brothers are no longer in unison, with the same thoughts and opinion. Yet again Deacon shoulders the responsibility for what has happened as he stands up against his brother. This is symbolic, as he did not stand up to Steward with regard to his relationship with Consolata. In a sense, he attempts to take responsibility for his own failings as he did not with Consolata, and ultimately becomes conscious of the Shadow within himself. Deacon is aware of his role in what has happened at the Convent and he wishes to take responsibility for it. In a sense, he takes responsibility for his failings that have led to the events at the Convent. As De Voss notes, Deacon’s experience at the Convent not only highlights the separation of Steward and himself, but forces him to examine himself (2010: 50).

The aftermath of the events at the Convent only serves to further this division between the brothers, as the townspeople note that:

The most interesting development was with the Morgan brothers. Their distinguishing features were eroding: tobacco choices (they gave up cigar and chew at the same time), shoes, clothes, facial hair. [...] But the inside difference was too deep for anyone to miss. (Morrison, 1999: 199)

This suggests that, while their appearances may be similar, their interior selves have deviated from one another. Steward becomes “insolent and unapologetic” (299), suggesting his denial of what has happened, as he believes himself to be justified in his actions. Projections function as a defence against anxiety in which the individual transfers his or her emotions or thoughts that are too difficult to deal with onto another person or third party (Singer Harris, 1996: 115). Thus, Steward takes his nephew K. D. under his wing in order to ensure that he becomes wealthy. In a sense, Steward projects his anxiety of potential loss of control onto his nephew, thereby ensuring that his legacy is carried on through K. D. and his grandnephew. This supports Richard Misner’s previous view that the Morgans, “rather than children, [...] wanted duplicates” (Morrison, 1999: 161).

On the other hand, Deacon strikes up a friendship with “somebody other than Steward” (300), suggesting his intent to broaden his sense of self. His realisation of the implications of what has happened allows him to explore the issues that have been holding him back, as well as having faith in someone other than his brother. He “had never consulted with or taken into his confidence any man. All his intimate conversations had been wordless ones with his brother or brandishing ones with male companions” (301). Deacon realises that his interaction with his brother has not been based on anything sustainable. Rather, it is based on the same frame of reference. His interactions with other men have been based on asserting his sense of domination and power. He admits to Richard Misner that he is not certain about the relationship

between Coffee (Deacon and Steward's father) and his twin brother Tea,¹⁵ given that Coffee:

“Saw something that shamed him. The way his brother thought about things; the choices he made when up against it. Coffee couldn't take it. Not because he was ashamed of his twin, but because the shame was in himself. It scared him. So he went off and never spoke to his brother again. Not one word. Know what I mean?” (303)

In a sense, Tea acts as a mirror for Coffee, both literally and figuratively. To see his brother dancing and giving in to the whims of the white men whose sole intention is to embarrass the brothers is a reflection of the shame he feels on being removed from his job. For Deacon, Steward's refusal to acknowledge his wrongdoing is a mirror of the shame he feels in his treatment of other people, but particularly his rejection of Consolata. This acknowledgment allows him to explore the dark aspects of himself, as he admits to Richard Misner that he “got a long way to go” (303). Yet ultimately Deacon does not give up on his brother, suggesting that there is hope for the future.

Misner captures the very issue that plagues Ruby as he reflects on its ‘leaders’ or, rather, the men who led the assault on the Convent:

Richard's thoughts about these men were not generous. Whether they be the first or the last, representing the oldest black families or the newest, the best of the tradition or the most pathetic, they had ended up betraying it all. They think they have out-foxed the whiteman when in fact they imitate him. They think they are protecting their wives and children, when in fact they are maiming them. And when the maimed children ask for help, they look elsewhere for the cause. (305-6)

What he highlights here is the very problematic nature of patriarchy. In their fierce belief that they are protecting their own, the men merely reinforce the belief held by mainstream society that patriarchy is a legitimate form of control. The very discrimination that the men of Ruby fight so hard against is engaged as a method to

¹⁵ The twins share a close bond much like the one Deacon and Steward have. However, this is shattered when Tea decides to oblige some white men (intrigued by the twin faces) who ask them to dance. While Tea dances, Coffee refuses to do so and ends up with a bullet in his foot. Coffee decides that, from that day, they are no longer brothers.

control others, namely the women within the community. Their actions were “born out of an old hatred” and “their selfishness had trashed two hundred years of suffering and triumph in a moment of such pomposity and error and callousness it froze the mind” (306). It suggests that the assault on the Convent echoes that which Steward recalled of the journey of his forefathers, as the humiliation had “threatened to crack open their bones” (95). The different response of each Morgan brother with regard to what occurs at the Convent is perhaps suggestive of the contradictory views within the collective, much like the collective of men that gathered for the Million Man March. But it is also necessary to acknowledge the burden of trauma passed from generation to generation. Furthermore, the desire to ensure that the women of Ruby never suffer the same kind of humiliation as previous generations did allows one to acknowledge the intentions of the Morgans and men of the founding families. Yet the means by which the Morgan brothers go about achieving this have devastating consequences, in that the mark of this assault becomes a permanent part of the town, and the townspeople’s redemption lies in acknowledging this painful mark, as well as engaging with the present. Thus redemption for the men of Ruby is to be found in Deacon Morgan, who acknowledges his role in this assault and who attempts to begin to change for the better.

Conclusion

I began this dissertation with the phrase “what it is to be a man” (Morrison, 1993: 206) as a springboard for the exploration of understanding others’ experiences of the world and in particular, what it is to be an African American man through the examination of a selection of texts by Toni Morrison. My critical questions centred on examining some the dominant stereotypes associated with African American masculinity, how Morrison is able to transcend these stereotypes in order to create a plurality of masculinities and how she is able to achieve alternative images of African American masculinity. As an author, chief among Toni Morrison’s concerns is how African American people are represented and part of this project has been to explore the historical context in which she writes, albeit briefly, given my space constraints.

The 1960s and 1970s in the United States of America was marked by a mixed response for the mobility and fortune of African American people. At the close of the 1970s, the progress of the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s and the Black Panther movement of the 1970s was in danger of becoming obsolete. Writers like Toni Morrison shifted their focus to the role of the writer and how to go about creating positive and affirming representations of African American people, as well as preserving African American history. For Morrison, the political and the aesthetic of writing go together. She notes that her work, as an African American woman, remains true to her own sensibilities, as well as a: “further exploration of [her] own interests, questions, challenges. And since [her] sensibility [is] highly political *and* passionately aesthetic, it would unapologetically inform the work [she] did” (2005a: xi). Thus, for Toni Morrison, her “sense of the novel is that it has always functioned for the class or group that wrote it” (1984: 57). She views her writing as a means to connect and “get in touch with all sorts of people” (quoted in LeClair, 1981: 121). In a sense, she writes as she believes the novel essential to the preservation of African American history and exploring the possibilities of a new existence (Morrison, 1984: 58). What Morrison emphasises here is her intention to root her work specifically within African American culture. She addresses what she believes her function as a writer to be and what her writing should achieve. Even though her belief is that her novels “should clarify the roles that have been obscured; they ought to identify those things in the past that are useful and those

things that are not; and they ought to give nourishment” (quoted in LeClair: 121), they should not dictate to the reader. Her novels, then, suggest “what the conflicts are, what the problems are,” but they need not “solve those problems because it is not a case study, it is not a recipe” (Morrison, 1988: 59).

Like the focus of this dissertation, Morrison’s literary project examines and engages with specific elements and aspects of African American culture. More specifically, Matus comments that her work is an examination of a set of questions that focus on history, memory and trauma (1998: 1). Morrison’s concern lies in reclaiming the past. Moreover, this examination is a means to lay the past to rest, yet there is also the possibility that trauma may be relived (2-3). Her novels are not merely a cure, then. Thus, she examines the interior lives of her characters and how they shape their sense of self, as well as examining the roles that gender, race and class play within this creation. In doing this, Morrison writes against a monolithic perspective on identity creation. While Morrison examines the role of African American women, part of her writing is dedicated to understanding African American men; as David Magill contends, Morrison is able to represent a plurality of masculinity within her works, as she views masculinity as a “key concern” for African American culture (2003: 202). She is able to examine the different possibilities open to African American men for different conceptualisations of masculine self (202). In addition, part of her questioning centres on how African American men are to form a sense of self within a Western-dominated model of manhood (Gallego, 2009-10: 51).

It has been my intention in this project to examine how Toni Morrison goes about achieving these various representations within a selection of her works through the lens of Carl Jung’s psychological concept of the Self and elements related to the Self. As I have mentioned, the Self functions as an “image of man’s fullest potential and the unity of the personality as a whole” (quoted in Singer Harris, 1996: 23). However, in the case of African American men, the creation of a masculine self is affected by racism and the discriminatory practices that accompany it. As Fanon suggests, the Self is a means by which a black man can understand his paradoxical experience of the world as constant exposure to an “all-white truth” (1952: 63), causing a man to

identify with that truth rather than his own way of existence that is then deemed subordinate. Thus the conscious ego of an individual is conflicted by the paradoxical messages it receives. In relation to African American men, it is possible to extrapolate that their exposure to the prevalent Western ideal of masculinity, as outlined by Mutua (2006: 13), renders their sense of self fractured, as they are not afforded the privileges of ideal masculinity due to individual and societal racism.

This paradoxical experience of the conscious ego is clearly seen in *Song of Solomon's* (1977) Macon "Milkman" Dead. He is influenced by his father's belief that selfhood is attained through wealth and maintaining control over those around him. As Macon Senior states: "Let me tell you right now the one important thing you'll ever need to know: Own things. And let the things you own own other things. Then you'll own yourself and other people too" (Morrison, 2005b: 55). Yet Macon Dead exists within a system of white capitalism, suggesting the paradoxical position he occupies. Therefore Milkman's sense of self is based upon self-centredness and materialism and in this he is disconnected from his community. Meeting his aunt Pilate serves as a means of introduction to his African American heritage, as she influences his search for a sense of self. She represents a completely different worldview to that of his father and Milkman's equating her to the same stature as his father serves as a demonstration of his awareness of the need for this connection. She represents the archetypal anima within his unconscious as he guided by her through a journey of self-discovery, as well as a reclaiming of his family's past serves as a means of self-discovery. Morrison demonstrates the need for an understanding and appreciation for the past that one requires in order to be able to "surrender" to the air and to life (Morrison, 2005b: 337).

In *Tar Baby*, William "Son" Green's desire to maintain his connection to his heritage is complicated by his relationship with Jadine Childs, who is disconnected from her African American heritage. As in *Song of Solomon*, Morrison highlights the danger of such a disconnection from one's heritage, yet this is problematised by Son's unwillingness to attempt to move forward. Their need to re-indoctrinate one another into one another's respective worlds has a detrimental effect on their relationship. Morrison highlights the problematic nature of creating a sense of self within different

cultures, as a price has to be paid in making an attempt to be upwardly socially mobile. Furthermore, this is complicated by the recognition on Son and Jadine's part of aspects of themselves within one another. Each forces the other to examine what it means to try and form a sense of self. For Son, the price of not wanting to evolve is that he remains at the mercy of the unjust society in which he finds himself, and for Jadine, the price is a disconnection from her heritage. In a sense, her exposure to an "all-white truth" (Fanon, 1952: 63) only further serves to maintain this disconnection. The archetypal other that they recognise in one another has a negative effect on both Son and Jadine as they attempt to dominate the other.

In *Paradise*, the cultural unconscious is explored through the Morgan brothers, who respond to this by maintaining a rigid hold over the community of Ruby. The twins both have powerful memories of their forefathers and the dehumanising treatment they endured as African Americans in being rejected from the all-black town of Fairly for being too black. Their own personal experience of trauma (watching their sister Ruby die and being unable to save her) fuels the twins' fierce belief that it is their responsibility to protect all who dwell in Ruby from the evil humiliation of the outside world, as well as maintain the pain of this past through re-telling and remembering it. Thus, the Morgan brothers struggle with this responsibility as well the implications this has on the community. What Morrison highlights here, with regard to the creation of a masculine self, is the double burden that African American men bear in that their conscious egos are consistently mediated by paradoxical messages of what it means to be a man within a white- and Western-dominated conception of manhood.

However, it would be disingenuous to suggest that Morrison is not critical of African American men and the choices that they make. Indeed, despite the problematic nature of the paradoxical messages African American men receive on what it is to be a man, she is critical of the means that appear to be employed in dealing with the burden of such messages. In this project, I have looked at what Jung terms the "dark aspects" of the personality known as the Shadow, which individuals are required to be aware of if they are to attain "self knowledge" in order to achieve full consciousness (1951b: 9). For Milkman, his disconnection from his community, enforced by the ideologies of his

father, renders him selfish and weighed down by the burden of materialism. Morrison is firm in her rejection of such a concept of manhood, as she does not advocate the idea of individual competition (Magill, 2003: 203). Rather, she focuses on the importance of connection to one's community. Milkman's denial of this connection renders him with a severely fractured sense of self. In *Tar Baby*, Morrison is at pains to paint Son as not being prone to sexual violence, and a character who does not merely give in to his desires. Yet he rapes Jadine, and this act brings about the demise of their relationship. His paradoxical attitude towards her, in that he wishes to protect her and yet remains frustrated by her lack of connection, boils over as he succumbs to violence to force his point. Thus the act can be construed as his desire to force her heritage on her through reprehensible means. He is repentant after what happens, suggesting his awareness that his actions are inexcusable, yet the damage is done. In *Paradise*, while Morrison makes the reader aware of the burden of responsibility rooted in a history of trauma carried by the Morgan brothers, she nonetheless critiques the method through which they maintain this burden. In their desire to protect the community of Ruby from the abject humiliation that their forefathers and they themselves have suffered, the Morgans impose a strict system of rigid patriarchy. The very system that the brothers are trying to protect the community from, they make use of in order to achieve this 'protection'. This is clearly demonstrated in the dealing with Arnette Fleetwood's pregnancy and K. D.'s slapping of her. Neither Arnette nor her mother is involved in proceedings, and the lack of their voices is most striking. In this incident, Morrison offers a critique of patriarchy as it denies women and younger generations in Ruby the chance to be heard. Moreover, it perpetuates an imbalance in equality as women are not given equal status to men. Therefore Morrison is able to demonstrate the complex nature of attempting to achieve a sense of self within the tenuous position that African American men occupy. Yet she also highlights the responsibility that a man has in how he chooses to respond to his environment and the paradoxes presented to him within that environment.

Although Morrison is critical of the apparent "dark aspects" of the Self, she also offers African American men various ways in which to create a different concept of masculine identity. She also appears to examine various circumstances in which

African American men exist and I argue that this shifts with each text I have focussed on. Firstly, masculinity appears to be, for Morrison, a communal effort not solely reliant upon the efforts of the individual. In *Song of Solomon*, Morrison focuses on the individual's journey to attaining selfhood through the assistance of others. Milkman's unconscious is first influenced by his aunt Pilate. Morrison offers Milkman a line to achieving a sense of self through the trope of flight as it offers a "change, an alternative way" (1988: 156). Throughout the novel, there is awareness on Milkman's part of his desire to fly. From being referred to as the "little bird" (Morrison, 2005b: 9) at birth to the young man who feels "unrestrained joy at anything that could fly" (178), the trope of flight dominates Milkman's unconscious. In visiting Shalimar, the bobcat hunt with the other men allows Milkman to discover the power of flight in a metaphorical sense as he is stripped of his materialism and vanity and must rely purely on himself to survive the experience. The discovery that he is a descendant of the legendary Flying African, Solomon, only reinforces the possibilities of selfhood that the idea of flight offers him. In this case, Milkman forges a re-connection to others through his reclamation of the past and a rejection of a life based on materialism.

Unlike *Song of Solomon*, *Tar Baby* offers a shift in dynamic as the focus shifts to the relationships between African American men and women, perhaps suggesting Morrison's continued efforts to create meaningful representations of African American people, one of the concerns for writers in the 1980s at which time this novel was published. Son creates an existence fused with that of the mythical riders on Isle des Chevaliers, suggesting that the complex nature of American society does not offer a space in which he can create a tangible sense of identity. In travelling to New York with Jadine and the confusion he has in negotiating the worldview that she presents to him, Son's disconnection from others is clearly demonstrated. Here, Morrison notes that a sense of masculine self cannot be rooted in violence. This is seen in his musing that he had always: "chosen solitude and the company of other solitary people – opted for it when everybody else had long surrendered, because he never wanted to live in the world their way. There was something wrong with the rites. He had wanted another way" (Morrison, 2004: 166). Son's unconscious is dominated by his desire to live his life differently in the company of those who are like him. But this is only influenced

by Gideon's stories and Thérèse, who suggests the path that the riders provide. Thus his need is for a sense of self that is not rooted in the real world. Thérèse functions as positive aspect of the anima archetype within his unconscious as she urges him to a destiny where he can become whole. As Morrison suggests, his choice to identify with his heritage and its past is wisdom that "he can't bring [...] back to the real world" (quoted in Ruas, 1981: 112). Hence his fusing with myth provides a means for him to live his life another way.

In *Paradise*, Morrison's project shifts towards examining the collective, as well as the individual within the collective. The Million Man March in the 1990s in the United States saw a number of different responses to its aims as, both organisers and participants differed in their views with regard to those aims. African American women were not invited to attend the march despite the march's emphasis on empowerment which led many prominent female critics to question the role of African American women as well as the pervasive nature of patriarchy (West, 1999: 92). In *Paradise*, Morrison highlights the contradictory nature of the collective and this is seen in the response of each Morgan brother to the sacking of the Convent. In Deacon, his unconscious is first mediated by his affair with Consolata. He moves outside the confines of Ruby and his burden of responsibility in order to discover an existence without people dependent upon him and without having to maintain his sense of status and power. Yet this possibility is extinguished by the interference of his brother, Steward, who puts an end to the affair. Deacon's subsequent insistence on taking full responsibility for what happens at the Convent suggests his unconscious need to atone for the way he ended his affair with Consolata. I argue Deacon's need for atonement propels him to search for company other than his brother. In seeking counsel from Richard Misner, Deacon embraces the younger generation that is necessary for the survival of Ruby, and in doing so, he roots his sense of self in the future rather than clinging to the past. However, his brother Steward is an example of the maintenance of the status quo in Ruby. His response to the assault on the Convent lies in his unconscious need to leave things as they are and to maintain his sense of domination. Hence, he puts his efforts into his nephew K. D., as it is K. D. who carries the hopes of carrying on the Morgan line. In a sense, Steward, unlike Deacon, refuses to examine

the problematic nature of his beliefs and projects those beliefs onto his nephew. Here, Morrison offers a powerful critique of not taking responsibility, as she advocates responsibility to be an essential tenet of manhood.

Finally, the question of “what it is to be a man,” for Toni Morrison, is complex. Morrison acknowledges the tensions created from a traumatic past burdened with the dehumanising effects of slavery and these continued effects through individual and structural racism (Magill, 2003: 202). Thus the messages her African American male characters’ conscious egos receive are paradoxical in nature, as I have demonstrated. Yet Morrison remains concerned by the choices that African American men make in response to this complex mediation of the conscious ego. She strongly critiques the notions of violence, patriarchy and a lack of connection to others as a means through which to achieve a sense of masculine self. Rather Morrison appears to advocate the importance of maintaining one’s ties to one’s community. Also, attaining a sense of masculine self cannot be achieved at the expense of women. Instead, equality must be fostered. What Morrison also highlights is the importance of the reclamation of the past. However, such reclamation cannot be made at the expense of not attempting to engage with the present and future. Therefore, “what it is to be a man” is a deeply complex question, yet Toni Morrison presents a range of representations of African American masculinity to attempt to answer this question by creating novels that seek to connect and “get in touch with all sorts of people” as well as “give nourishment” (quoted in LeClair, 1981: 121).

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