

Chapter One

I. An Overview on Walker's Works

The 1982 Pulitzer Prize winning writer Alice Walker, born on February 9, 1944 in Eatonton, United States is an eminent African American writer. She has occupied a significant position in the history of African American literature. Her works are best noted for their insightful and vivid treatment of African American culture. She is equally considered as one of the most versatile and controversial writer of African American literature. She has indebted us with different fictions: *The Color Purple* (1982), *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* (1970), *Meriden* (1976), *The Temple of My Familiar* (1989), *By the Light of Father Smile* (1998) etc.

Walker was awarded not only the Pulitzer Prize but also the American Book Award for her most famous book *The Color Purple* (1982). Her novel deals with the struggle of African American, particularly women who have gone through the society that is racist, sexist and violent. Her fame can be acclaimed not only as being a novelist but also being the representative spokesperson of African American People. She often demonstrates the struggle and constant down fall of Black women in society during the 1950-1990's, through her novels and poems.

Reading her novels is like visiting with special friends who gradually reveal the intimate details of their lives. In *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, Walker introduces her readers to a twentieth century black heroine whose longing for personal peace echoes the wounded heart- beat of her African roots. This novel delves deeply into the psyche of Tashi, who was introduced briefly in *The Color Purple* and again in *The Temple of My Familiar* (1989). Tashi as an African female character seems to have haunted Walker through those two books, until she became more real and meaningful than a mere footnote in others' lives. In *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, Tashi effectively

tells her own bittersweet tale through Walker's simple but precise prose. What is revealed is no less than shocking. It triggers the primal emotions that bind women of all races and ages together, as Tashi discovers the secret of joy, albeit it inevitably precipitates her premature death.

Although Alice Walker insists that *Possessing the Secret of Joy* is not a sequel to *The Color Purple*, she has chosen to recast various characters in the later novel. The novels are also alike in that their protagonists, Celie in *The Color Purple* and Tashi in *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, are women who experience epiphany-like moments that lead to a fuller, more coherent sense of self. In these moments, the presence of a literal or metaphoric mirror enables the protagonists to move from an experience of fragmentation to a vision of a more unified state of self-possession.

Reminiscent of the classic Japanese film *Rashomon* (1951), this novel utilizes brief first-person narratives from Tashi and the significant figures in her life, interwoven to allow her story to unfold as if through personal interviews for a documentary film or newspaper feature. It begins when she is already dead: Tashi speaks from the grave, first offering an allegory about listening to the truth of one's inner voice even if it results in one's demise. Then other characters begin to insert their versions of her tale, revealing as much about themselves as about Tashi as they recall events in which her impact on their lives was significant.

Mostly, her works are culturally based and play a significant role in her works. The characters in *Possessing the Secret of Joy* are also manipulated by culture. She has emphasized on the black woman's struggle for selfhood against the different evils of African-American society such as sexism, classism and racism etc. She narrates a painful

and a heart rendering story of a colored female who has been made a victim of the society where two cultures exist but one is overlapped to another. The explanation of female body spiritually, physically and morally is the centre of her work. Alice Walker was not only one of the most superior African American writers over the century, but also an activist in the civil rights movement, growing up in the time period where African Americans were just beginning to experience equality. In addition to her work about race, she wrote about the poor treatment that black women faced, and was often criticized for her portrayal of the black man being the bad guy. *Possessing the Secret of Joy* is one of her most profound books, involving racial discrimination and black and white relationships. A lot of her novels and stories are based on her childhood experiences. Alice Walker continues to write today and her legacy will live on for generations to come, as possibly the most inspirational black writer of our time. Her novels provide insight that most people would never learn in a lifetime. She even appreciates the constructive criticism from her readers, because it makes her a better writer.

II. Synopsis

Possessing the Secret of Joy tells the story of Tashi, a minor character in Walker's earlier novel *The Color Purple*. She comes from Olinka, Alice Walker's fictional African nation where female genital mutilation is practiced. Variously called "the baths" or female circumscion, the operation involves the cutting of female organs. Here, Tashi emerges as an African "Woman Warrior." Tashi chooses to undergo circumcision because she is a woman torn between two cultures, Olinkan and Western. She wants to honor her Olinkan roots and has the operation in her teen years, although it is usually performed on female children. This very operation killed her sister at a young age. Yet, in her twenties beyond the usual age, she decides to

undergo the procedure that had been spared by her mother who converted to Christianity following Tashi's older sister's death. This sparing, however, left Tashi suspect in her village, left her desperate "To be accepted as a real woman by the Olinka people; to stop the jeering. Otherwise, I was a thing" (*Possessing the Secret of Joy* 120). Tashi later sees several psychiatrists because of the trauma she has suffered before finding the strength to act. The novel explores what it means to have one's gender culturally defined and emphasizes that, according to Walker, "Torture is not culture." She urges readers to educate themselves to this horror which, she warns, may also show up in America with immigrants from places in the world in addition to Africa, where this is practiced.

III. Review of Literature

Possessing the Secret of Joy is a highly acclaimed novel. The ultimate aim of this study is to reveal African American women's struggle for self identity by applying different aspects of psychoanalysis, especially, archetypal criticism of Carl Jung. Critics have judged the text from different perspectives. For instance, Barbara Christian in the essay entitled "Black Feminist Criticism: Perspectives" Opines:

Her willingness to challenge the fashionable belief of those days to re-examine it in the light of her own experiences of dearly won principles that she has previously challenged and absorbed. There is a sense in which the "forbidden" in the society is consistently approached by Walker as a possible route to truth (82-3).

The purpose of this novel is not only to indict the practice of female circumcision but also to make the physical removal of the clitoris a metaphor for many other forms of oppression and diminishment. Walker's novel is a powerful feminist expression as well as a forceful consideration of tyranny, no matter what shape it takes, and is

equally applicable to both genders. As such, it deserves to be read from both perspectives.

Similarly, the most credible critic of Colonialism, Franz Fanon, in his essay “On National Culture” suggested that: Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding people on its grip and empty in the native's brain of all form a content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures & destroys (154). Fanon asserts here through his strong criticism that it is the colonial politics of Colonizers that they would make their own justified logic which they use to exploit and destroy the colonized with their diplomatic way. The metaphoric relationship between African and European cultures creates a similar master/slave dependency, which can be interpreted as a metaphoric castration, clitoridectomy, or rape. Even though the Olinka people have gained their freedom, they have, like the mutilated women, lost their integrity—that of their culture. The forced imposition of European Christian values has irreversibly altered their culture; this shift can be seen, for example, in the tribe’s adoption of European dress.

Regarding the novel, Angeletta Goudine points out the conflict between people who tries to suppress people in the name of ritual which is synonymous to culture and the people who fight for natural totality. She states:

This novel is the story of the two kinds of women: those who are forbidden the possession, the right to own their bodies in natural totality, and those who forbid others this right, Walker constructs both archetypes-“the mother who betrays” and “the daughters so betrayed.” The conflict is embodied in the relationship between Tashi and M’Lissa, who destroy themselves and each other because of their beliefs

in and questioning of ritual female circumcision. Vicariously, on the pages of *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, they also destroy Africa. (238)

The lines signify the essence of resistance. Tashi, the black American female by mutilating her genital organ brings a grave issue of culture and body into politics. *Possessing the Secret of Joy* is foremost an exploration of female sexuality and the way that the aspect of a woman's self-identity is managed on a grand scale—not simply in Third World cultures but also in supposedly progressive societies in Europe and America. Walker equates the position of women in every culture with that of a castrated male; female circumcision is the equivalent to castrating a male, since both surgeries destroy a person's ability to attain sexual release. In the case of the female, one of the chief locuses of sexual pleasure, the clitoris, is excised. The circumcision of Tashi stands for her personal enslavement to a patriarchal world. In such cultures, women's needs and women's desires are not only passed off as unimportant but also considered to be unhealthy aberrations. This is certainly true in the case of Amy Maxwell, whose mother had her young daughter circumcised for masturbating.

Likewise, Jonathan Cape analyzes the text linking it with the most dehumanizing and the worst aspect of ritual circumcision of Africa in this way:

Female circumcision in Africa varies from a tiny symbolic nick of the clitoris to wide excision of the vulva causing severe mutilation and scarring of the external genitalia with resultant pain and tearing during sexual intercourse and childbirth. Alice Walker has chosen the most mutilation of these operations for her heroine in her latest book *Possessing the Secret of Joy*; perhaps this is because the reader is like to respond to it with outrage. It is only through the efforts of such outraged people that this painful, de-womanizing, degrading, and

disfiguring practice, which millions of women continue to undergo, can be eradicated. (270)

This excerpt talks about the painful and the worst aspect of rituals that has compelled the woman to get involved in the act as fascinated by the males and the colonizers. For color American women, both their male counterparts and the white society are means of domination. When Walker chooses to talk about such a serious issue, she chooses mutilation for she wanted this dehumanizing and hollow act to be erased from society. She is creating a discourse and this discourse she believes would subsequently help in the politics of erasing this act. She does raise serious questions about intersection of cultural identity and gender.

In the same way, Nontsasa Nako commenting on *possessing the secret of Joy* addresses:

Finally the third strategy that Walker deploys in her novel is essentialism.

She relies on an essential differentiation between Africans and Americans. Tashi is an African woman who suffers emotional and psychological trauma as a result of what Walker terms as genital mutilation [...]. The same is true for Tashi who grows up around the American missionaries and retains to her detriment Walker would have us believe, her "essence" (1-17).

So, in the view of Nako, African American women and African women are represented as different and all the negative stereotypes of black womanhood are projected to African women. Although Walker makes an effective case against these barbaric and discriminatory rituals by personalizing Tashi's story and telling it one drop at a time. A manifested form of castration is the excision of the Olinkas' African

names: M'Lissa renames herself during the fight for independence, taking as her new name a contracted form of the European name Melissa. She has cut out her female as well as her Olinkan identity—first literally, because she has been circumcised, but also metaphorically, because she has cut off her given tribal name. The same set of circumstances surround Tashi, and, because she physically relocates herself by marrying an American and living in his home country, her loss is more extensive. Unlike M'Lissa, Tashi loses all of her Africanness, her roots as well as her femaleness.

Again, Lale Demirturk quotes in his essay entitled "In search of a Redeemed Vision: The American women's Novel":

Tashi, in *Possessing the secret of Joy*, literally lifts the African women to the level of history, which has long 'Circumcised' their identity from its memory. She attempts to redefine the community of African women who have endured the "mutilation" of their gender identity in order to protect what lies at the root of their spiritual & racial heritage - the Afrocentric self. (87)

The alternation of narrators becomes somewhat muted by the similarity among the characters' voices; even the phrasing and tone lack adequate variations. Tashi and Adam are particularly close in this way, while Mzee (the Austrian analyst who helps open the door to Tashi's forgotten memories of her sister's death) and Benny are the most distinctive.

Similarly, Kanneth Kadiatu explores about this novel in his essay entitled *Feminism and the Colonial Body*: "Walker an African American author writing about female circumcision from the united states, has taken a difficult task in creating this novel, which could be read as an example of neo-colonialism from the imperialist

West, as it takes an issue that affects mainly black women in Africa” (346).

Possessing the Secret of Joy is an angry novel. Walker focuses her attack on European colonialism, in its metaphoric castration of Africa and the silencing of Africanness in slaves excised from their mother countries. She also condemns the excision of femaleness from every woman that is performed by patriarchal cultures. Walker clearly parallels these two lines of argument by drawing all of her female characters as needing strong or oppressive males for their validation. For all the women, these relationships diminish their capacity to become complete, independent, strong women.

Chris Barker scrutinizes the evolution of the concept of race in human society:

The concept of the traces of its origins in the biological discourses of social Darwinism that stress lines of descent and types of people. [...]

The concept of race refers to alleged biological and physical characteristics, the most obvious of which is skin pigmentation. These attributes, frequently lined to intelligence and capabilities are used to rank racialized groups in a hierarchy of social and material superiority and sub-ordination. These racial classifications constituted by and constitutive of power, are at the root of racism. (247)

As a discursive construct, the meaning of race changes in the span of times as it is intermingled with other disciplines, and is struggled over. Thus, different groups are differently racialized and subject to different forms of racism. Race is a term historically used to describe a human population distinguishable from others based on shared biological traits. The concept of race stems from the idea that human species can be naturally subdivided into biologically distinct groups. In practice, however, scientists have found it impossible to separate humans into clearly defined races.

Adam Kuper contends “most scientists today reject the concept of biological race and instead see human biological variation as falling along a continuum” (67). Nevertheless, race persists as a powerful social and cultural concept used to categorize people on the basis of differences in physical appearance and behavior.

In her late works, Walker magnifies the significance of the eye image by injecting into her metaphor of sight and damage the psychological and sexual blinding of women and girls in Africa and throughout the world. She avows that her own "visual mutilation" led her to write about these horrific forms of physical and sexual abuse. She was stunned by the "callous way that little girls are taken to be mutilated"(Marks 266) and she likened it to her family's treatment of her as a child, especially in their sending her away from her immediate family to live with her grandparents when she failed to adjust to her injury. By exposing the violent, cultural rituals of clitorrectomy and infibulation in Africa, Walker continues to voice her activism against violence toward women in general. She exposes genital mutilation as "a culturally specific form of violence against women" (Marks 275).

While writing *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, according to Warrior Marks, Walker faced a dilemma, that Westerners might see "genital mutilation as a way of describing Africa as being backward and savage and barbaric, and feeding into all those sorts of racist perceptions of Africa" (275). Her solution to this difficulty is to illustrate forcefully that while we may view traditions in the Middle East, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Africa as isolated assaults on women, in fact "the assault on women is worldwide [varying] only by degree" (276). Marks notes that even in American culture women strive to be "very thin, very white, very blond, with very big breasts"(276), an image of beauty that encourages many women and girls to starve themselves, have breast implants and liposuction, and bleach their skin and hair.

While some of these activities may not necessarily be related to violence, per se, others are clearly life-threatening (eating disorders can lead to death, and women have died from liposuction), and they are clearly related to sexism. Walker convincingly argues that clitorrectomy, silicon breast implants, and the like are all "really about shaping a woman in the image that men think they want.

It is quite important to study how religious representations in works by African-American women authors are related to political issues in terms of race and of gender. Jeanette King, in her *Women and the Word: Contemporary Women Novelists and the Bible*, summarizes the problem as follows:

Just as the Bible has been used to construct woman as essentially inferior to man, it has also been used to construct the black races as essentially inferior to the white, so that the black female is doubly oppressed by this discourse, perceived both in gender and in color as being made not in God's image (152).

Christianity has empowered the philosophies and movements that oppose slavery and racism. As the documents from the Civil Rights movement, including Martin Luther King's speeches and writings, clearly demonstrate, Christianity has been the basis on which people from different backgrounds could join together to support each other in their effort to bring about justice.

At the same time, it also goes without saying that Christian organizations have acquiesced, if not actively supported, slavery and racism. African-American criticism of racist practices among established churches has taken two courses. One is to criticize them and demand that Christianity be rightfully understood, or revised, and put to use to support and promote racial equality and justice. The second course is to

reject Christianity as helplessly or innately racist, and look to other religions to provide the self-respect and moral support necessary to fight against racism.

Alice Walker explicitly deals with theological issues both in fiction and in essays. In fact, Walker's *The Color Purple* has been influential in forming a school of African-American feminist theology, sometimes called "womanist theology" after the term that Walker created to mean "black feminist." In her later works, Walker develops this religious view into the Gospel "a version of African-American feminist spirituality a syncretism of ancestor worship, goddess worship, African-American centrism, and Christianity in *The Temple of My Familiar* and *Possessing the Secret of Joy*" (167) according to Rosemary Radford Reuther. Her womanist revelation in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* raises the issue of the color and gender of God the Father and in so doing, leads to a radicalized alternative deity.

The aforementioned critics have analyzed the text from different perspectives. They have not given emphasis on the original female identical issues from psychoanalytic aspects and the struggle of characters in such situation and atmosphere. Without the study of black women's struggle for their self by theorizing different aspects under psychoanalysis, the study of *Possessing the Secret of Joy* will be incomplete.

Chapter Two

I. Psychoanalysis: A Study

After the first hundred years of its history, psychoanalysis has matured into a serious, independent intellectual tradition, which has notably retained its capacity to challenge established truths in the most areas of our culture. The biological psychiatrist of today is called to task by psychoanalysis, as much as was the specialist in nervous diseases of Freud's time, in turn of the century Vienna. Karl Figlo writes in *Psychoanalysis: Science and Masculinity*:

Today's cultural commentators, whether for or against psychoanalytic ideas, are forced to pay attention to considerations unconscious motivation, defenses, early childhood experience and the myriad other discoveries which psychoanalysts brought to 20th century culture. Above all, psychoanalytic ideas have spawned an approach to the treatment of mental disorders, psychodynamic psychotherapy, which has become the dominant tradition in most countries, at least in the western world (vii)

Little wonder that psychoanalytic thinking continues to face detractors, individuals who dispute its epistemology and its conceptual and clinical claims. While disappointing in one way, this is a sign that psychoanalysis may be unique in its capacity to challenge and provoke. Paradoxically, our new understanding concerning the physical basis of our existence – our genes, nervous systems and endocrine functioning- rather than finally displacing which considers the memories, desires and

meanings which are beginning to be recognized as influencing human adaptation even at the biological level. How else, other than through the study of subjective experience, will we understand the expression of the individual's biological destiny, within the social environment?

It is not surprising, then, that psychoanalysis continues to attract some of the liveliest intellects in our culture. These individuals are by no means all psychoanalytic clinicians, or psychotherapists. They are distinguished scholars in an almost bewildering range of disciplines, from the study of mental disorders with their biological determinants to the disciplines of literature, art, philosophy and history. Figlio opines: "There will always be a need to explicate the meaning of experience. Psychoanalysis, with its commitment to understanding subjectivity, is in a premier position to fulfil this intellectual and human task" (vii).

If we analyze the history of study on "Self", Enlightenment is the period when human subject was considered as a unified individual with a center, an inner core that was there at birth and developed as the individual grew, while remaining essentially the same. This core of the "self" was the source of the subject's identity. However, contemporary philosophy has followed the natural sciences in shattering this notion which was linked with a cosmology that put "man" at the center of the universe and has decentered the subject itself. In Enlightenment period, the subject was constructed in the interaction between self and society. The postmodern subject, by contrast, has no fixed, essential, or permanent identity. Subjectivity is formed and transformed in a continuous process that takes place in reaction to the ways.

Psychoanalysis studies the oftentimes skewed ways in which the mind expresses feelings. Ryan Michael views that it is also "concerned with the dynamics of interpersonal relations and with the way self is formed through interactions with its

familial and sociocultural environment” (Michael 103). Depending on the school of psychoanalysis one needs the study of the mind’s operations in literature should be concerned either with the unconscious and the instincts or with the family, personal history, and social world that shapes the self. It is the talking cure that takes place in the presence of patient (analysand) and doctor (analyst) through patient’s behavioral activities. The focus of the psychoanalysis is, therefore, unconscious part of mind. It can help us better to explain literary relationships, actions, motives, and the very existence itself of the text. Moreover, it engages in the interpretation and source of information therapeutically. Themes and motives central to psychoanalysis are desire and loss, delay and repletion of doubling, lack and so on. In his book *crits* Lacan opines:

Psychoanalysis is the science of the mirages that appear within this field. A unique experience, a rather abject one after all, but one that cannot be recommended too highly to those who wish to be introduced to the principle of man’s follies, for, by revealing itself as akin to a whole gamut of disorders, it throws light upon them. (119)

Nineteenth century is the period of transition when many changes took place. Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913) broke with the idea of language as a tool to express thought about reality and pointed to how the speaking subject was thoroughly embedded in an always already preexisting language system. According to him, “the bond between signifier and the signified is arbitrary, hence the whole is arbitrary, too” (Salovoj 23). The second characteristic is the linear nature of signifier; the signifier being auditory is unfolded in time. Signifiers form a chain. Saussure’s disruption of the picture of language as a neutral tool is accompanied by Sigmund Freud’s questioning of the rational, transparent character of human thought itself.

Psychoanalysis is different from psychology for psychology studies mind's conscious part and the behaviour of individual, however, psychoanalysis focuses unconscious part of the mind. Freud's major concern was to describe how human mind affects the growth of an individual and the civilization. For him every human being is mentally ill and this illness determines what an individual does and how a culture is formed.

For Freud, consciousness is not primary but only the aspect of the unconscious. This is how the birth of psychoanalysis took place. Freud believed that unconscious motives and the feelings people experience as children have an enormous impact on adult personality and behavior. Freud says that unconscious should be a part of Psychology and other fields as Philosophy and Science as well. In *The Essentials of Psychoanalysis* he further clarifies: "The concept of the unconscious has been knocking the gates of Psychology and asking to be let in. Philosophy and Literature have often toyed with it, but science could find no use for it. Psychoanalysis has sized upon the concept, has taken it seriously and given it a fresh content" (189). According to him, Psychoanalysis has truly captured and described the importance of unconscious' role in human life. Here, Freud concerned the development of a child. The child starts sucking his mother's breast from his birth. Unconscious mind begins to work from the very first act of breast feeding. Along with this action different instinctual desires emerge in him as Freud views.

He was the first modern psychologist to suggest that every personality has a large unconscious component. Life includes both pleasurable and painful experiences. For Freud, experiences include feelings and thoughts as well as actual events. He believed that many of our experiences, particularly the painful episodes of childhood, are forgotten or buried in the unconscious. But, although, we may not consciously recall these experiences, they continue influence our behavior. The "unconscious" is

the mental realm into which those aspects of mental life that are related to forbidden desires and instincts are cosigned through the process of “repression”. Freud theorized that all of life moves toward death and that the desire for final end shows up in human personality as destructiveness and aggressive. But the life instincts were more important in his theory, and he saw them primarily as erotic or pleasure-seeking urges.

II. Psychoanalytic Views on Self/Mind

Freud had described what became known as the structural components of mind: “id”, “ego” and “superego”. Though, he often spoke of them as if they were actual parts of personality, he introduced and regarded them simply the model of how the mind works. In other words, id, ego and superego do not refer to actual portions of the brain. Instead, they explain how the mind functions and how the instinctual energies are regulated. In *The Essentials of Psychoanalysis* Freud views: “The id is the reservoir of the instinctual urges. It is the lustful or drive-ridden part of the unconscious. The id seeks immediate gratification of desire, regardless of the consequences” (185). The id is, therefore, treasure house of such desires and buried thoughts which are guided by “pleasure principle.” It represents all our instinctual/inner desires. The personality process that is mostly conscious is called the ego. The ego is the rational thoughtful, realistic personality process. The part of the personality that would stop us is called the superego. This is guided by “morality principle”. Rules, regulations, standards, values, and codes of society are the concerns of superego.

The ego’s job is so difficult that unconsciously all people resort to psychological defenses. Rather than face intense frustration, conflict or feelings of unwillingness, people deceive themselves into believing nothing is wrong. If the

demands of the id and the ego cannot be resolved, it may be necessary to distort reality. Freud called these techniques defense mechanisms because they defend the ego from experiencing anxiety about failing in its tasks. Freud felt that these defense mechanisms stem mainly from the unconscious part of the ego and only ordinarily become conscious to the individual during a form of psychoanalysis. A few of the defense mechanisms he identified are shortly discussed below.

According to Freud, “Dream is the royal road to unconscious” (*Interpretation of Dreams* 45). Dream uses two main mechanisms to disguise forbidden wishes: “Condensation” and “Displacement”. Condensation is a whole set of images packed into a single image or statement when a complex meaning is condensed into another. Displacement occurs when the object of an unconscious wish provokes anxiety. This anxiety is reduced when the ego unconsciously shifts the wish to another object. The energy of the id is displaced from one object to another.

Other defense mechanisms discussed by Freud are: “repression”, “reaction formation”, “projection” and “regression”. When a person has some thought or urge that causes the ego too much anxiety, he may push that thought or urge out of consciousness down into the unconscious. This process is called repression. The person simply forgets the thing that disturbs him, or pushes it out of awareness without ever realizing it. Reaction formation involves an unacceptable feeling or urge with its opposite. Another way the ego avoids anxiety is to believe that impulses coming from within are really coming from other people. This mechanism is called projection because inner feelings are thrown, or projected outside. It is a common mechanism which we have probably observed in ourselves from time to time. Many people, for instance, feel that others dislike them, when in reality they dislike themselves. Lastly, regression means going back to an earlier and less mature pattern.

According to Hilgard and Atkinson, “When a person is under severe pressure and his other defenses are not working, he may start acting in ways that helped him in the past. For example, he may throw a temper tantrum, make faces, cry loudly, or revert to eating and sleeping all the time the way he did as a small child” (374). A person’s inner feelings transfer as regressions.

Freud was the first major social scientist to propose a unified theory to understand and explain human behavior. No theory that has followed had been more complete or more complex. But his ideas were controversial when they were proposed at the turn of the century, and they are controversial today. Some psychologists treat Freud’s writings as a sacred text-if Freud said it, it must be so. At the other extreme, many have accused Freud of being unscientific-of proposing a theory that is too complex ever to be proved true or false.

In 1977, Seymour Fisher and Roger Greenberg published a book (*The Scientific Credibility of Freud’s Theories and Therapy*) that summarized more than fifty years of research on Freud’s ideas. Some parts of his history held up well. For example, Freud believed that the male homosexual had an unusually close and intense involvement with his mother, while his relationship with his father was more likely to be characterized by distance, coldness, and conflict. To test this idea one psychologist (Ullman, 1996) asked groups heterosexuals and homosexual prisoners to describe their parents. He found that homosexuals were more likely to say that their fathers gave “too little.” Many other studies on homosexuals pointed in the same direction. Other Freudian beliefs were not supported by evidence. For example, psychoanalysis seems to be no more effective than other forms of psychotherapy that are simpler, cheaper, and less time consuming.

Fisher and Greenberg concluded:

When we add up the totals from our research, balancing the positive against the negative, we find that Freud had fared rather well. But like all theorists, he has proved in the long run to have far from a perfect score. He seems to have been right about a respectable number of issues, but he was also wrong about some important things. (396)

Freud's revolutionary ideas attracted many followers, and a number of these psychoanalysis came to develop important theories of their own. At one time, Carl Jung was Freud's closest associate. But when Freud and Jung started to argue about psychoanalytic theory, their personal relationship became strained. After breaking with Freud, Jung underwent a prolonged period of inner turmoil and uncertainty about his theories. Like Freud, he used self-analysis (dream interpretations, specifically) to resolve his emotional crisis. Yet this was also a time of creativity and growth, leading to Jung's unique approach to personality theory. Both a milestone in Jung's career and the signal of his break with Freudian psychology, *The Psychology of the Unconscious* was the book in which his own point of view began to take definite shape. In this work, Jung interprets the thought processes of the schizophrenic in terms of mythological and religious symbolism. Jung's theory of personality borders on the mystical. He went beyond Freud's idea of a personal unconscious and proposed a collective unconscious, which

[C]onsists of all the memories and patterns of behavior inherited from man's ancestral past. All human beings have the same collective unconscious, which predisposes them to act in certain ways. The collective unconscious is the residue that accumulates as the result of repeated experiences over many generations; it is separate from the personal experiences of the individual. For example, since all human

beings have a mother in certain predetermined ways. Because of our collective unconscious, we are born with predispositions for thinking and feeling according to certain patterns. (*Psychology* 378)

Thus, we are predisposed to be afraid of the dark and of snakes because these were some of the dangers encountered by primitive people. Jung felt that many symbols had universal meaning because of their origin in the collective unconscious. For example, the mandala, or magic circle, is a symbolic representative of the self – of man's striving for unity and self-cohesiveness. Mandalas are found in the art and design of many cultures.

Jung's analytical psychology is enjoying renewed popularity today among laymen, probably because of its optimistic and mystical flavor. Jung had a more positive view of man than Freud and was to some extent a predecessor of the humanistic psychologists. Freud's psychoanalytic idea is especially oriented towards human sexuality, however, Jung's method is all humanistic. To convey his idea, he envisages the idea of archetype. The primordial image, or archetype, is a figure –

[B]e it a demon, a human being, or a process – that constantly recurs in the course of history and appears wherever creative fantasy is freely expressed. Essentially, therefore, it is a mythological figure. When we examine these images more closely, we find that they give form to countless typical experiences of our ancestors. They present a picture of psychic life in the average, divided up and protected into the manifold figures of the mythological pantheon. (Adams 791)

The moment when this mythological situation reappears is always characterized by a peculiar emotional intensity. It is as though chords in us were struck that had never

resounded before, or as though forces whose existence we never suspected were unloosed.

The theme that unifies most of Jung's subsequent writings is individuation, a process that he viewed as taking place in certain gifted individuals in mid-life. While he believed that Freud and Alfred Adler had many valuable insights into the problems encountered during the maturation process, he considered their investigations limited. Jung's particular concern was with those people who had achieved separation from their parents, an adult sexual identity, and independence through work, but who nevertheless underwent a crisis in mid-life.

Jung viewed individuation as a process directed toward the achievement of psychic wholeness or integration. In characterizing this developmental journey, he used illustrations from alchemy, mythology, literature, and Western and Eastern religions, as well as from his own clinical investigations. Particular signposts on the journey are provided by the archetypal (universal) images and symbols that are experienced, often with great emotion, in dreams and "visions," and that, in addition to connecting the individual with the rest of humankind, signify his or her unique destiny. In his writings on the "collective unconscious" and the archetypal images that are its manifestation, Jung maintained that "cultural differences cannot wholly account for the distribution of mythological themes in dreams and visions" (qtd. in Walker 279) according to Steven F. Walker. Jung writes of many patients who, while completely unsophisticated in such matters, describe dreams that exhibit striking parallels with myths from many different cultures.

It has been pointed out, however, that there appears to be a basic ambiguity in Jung's various descriptions of the collective unconscious. At times, he seems to regard the predisposition to experience certain images as comprehensible in terms of

some genetic model. At other times, he emphasizes the numinous quality of these experiences, maintaining that archetypes demonstrate communion with some divine or world consciousness.

Jung disagreed with Freud on two major points. First, he took a more positive view of human nature, believing that people try to develop their potential as well as to handle their instinctual urges. Second, he distinguished between the personal unconscious (which was similar to Freud's idea of unconscious) and the collective unconscious, which is a storehouse of instincts, urges, and memories of the entire human species down through history. He called these inherited, universal ideas archetypes. The same archetypes are present in every person. They reflect the common experience of humanity with mothers, nature, war and so on.

Jung went on to identify the archetypes by studying dreams and visions, paintings, poetry, folk stories, myths, and religions. He found that these same themes – the “archetypes” – appear again and again. For example, the story of Jack and Beanstalk is essentially the same as the story of David and Goliath. Both tell how a small, weak, good person triumphs over a big, strong, bad person. In *Letters* Jung states such “stories are common and easy to understand because the situations they describe have occurred over and over again in human history and have been stored as archetypes in the unconscious of every human being” (28).

In his book *Man and His Symbols* Jung writes about his theory of individuation:

The persona is the character's mask that he shows to the world; it is any social personality—a personality that is sometimes quite different from his true self. In the female psyche, the archetype is called the animus, the male psyche, anima. The anima/animus is a kind of mediator

between the ego (the conscious will or thinking self) and the unconscious or inner world of the individual. (181)

According to Jung, "to achieve psychological maturity," the individual must have a "flexible, viable persona that can be brought into harmonious relation with the other components of his or her psychic make up (the anima/animus)" (181). It describes those rites, manners, customs, and so forth, which insure the good life, or destroy it; and it describes those

[B]oundaries of feeling, thought, and action that particular group has found to be the limitations of the human condition. It projects this wisdom in symbols [that] express the groups' will to survive; it embodies those values by which the group lives and dies. These drawings may be crude but they are nonetheless profound in that they represent the group's attempt to humanize the world. (172)

Jung refers to the collective unconscious as "racial memory." He defines archetypes as "a priori, inborn form[s] of intuition." According to Jung in *Collected Works of C.G. Jung: Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, "the impact of archetype on a group—be it in the form of immediate experience or an expressed thought or spoken word—stirs us, or summons up voices, and it transmutes our personal destiny into the destiny of mankind" (100). For the critic in the twenty-first century who wishes to extend classification and interpretation of African American literary art, one challenge is myth criticism, particularly the collective unconscious as a term of critical study in African American letters.

III. A Brief Introduction to Myth and Archetypal Criticism

Two of the most influential thinkers, Claude Lévi-Strauss and Roland Barthes, have helped to revivify the concept of myth in recent times. Lévi Strauss's discussion

of myth in *The Savage Mind* helped to establish the idea of myth as “a kind of thought,” one, as he puts it, based on elements that are “half-way between percepts and concepts” (18). This is very different from the traditional view of myth, conveniently defined by Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg as “a traditional plot which can be transmitted” (12).

This shift of emphasis from myth as a sort of plot to myth as a way of thinking with close resemblances to (along with some differences from) ideology, can also be found in Roland Barthes’s highly original *Mythologies*. Barthes’s great achievement was to bring myths home to contemporary life, to make present-day European readers aware that myths were not just something that other people (remote African tribes, Russian peasants, the ancient Greeks) believed and created – but were part of the stuff and fabric of everyday modern life in the West. *Mythologies* includes brief studies of such diverse topics as wrestling, soap powders, the face of Greta Garbo, steak and chips, and striptease. Barthes explained that for him the notion of myth explained a particular process whereby historically determined circumstances were presented as somehow natural, and that it allowed for the uncovering of “the ideological abuse [hidden] in the display of *what goes without saying*” (11). Myth, for Barthes, thus performs a naturalizing function, one which can be likened to an inversion of defamiliarization.

If Levi-Strauss sees myth as a kind of thought, for Barthes, it is a type of speech, and his emphasis is very similar to that of Levi-Strauss: “Myth is not defined by the object of its message, but by the way in which it utters this message” (109); it is “depoliticized speech” (142). In recent usage, then, the concepts of myth and of ideology are interlinked: myths perform an ideological function while ideologies function by means of myths.

Archetypal criticism gets its impetus from psychologist Carl Jung, who postulated that humankind has a "collective unconscious," a kind of universal psyche, which is manifested in dreams and myths and which harbors themes and images that we all inherit. Literature, therefore, imitates not the world but rather the "total dream of humankind." Jung called mythology "the textbook of the archetypes" (qtd. in Walker 17).

Archetypal critics find New Criticism too atomistic in ignoring intertextual elements and in approaching the text as if it existed in a vacuum. After all, we recognize story patterns and symbolic associations at least from other texts we have read, if not innately; we know how to form assumptions and expectations from encounters with black hats, springtime settings, evil stepmothers, and so forth. So surely meaning cannot exist solely on the page of a work, nor can that work be treated as an independent entity.

Archetypal images and story patterns encourage readers (and viewers of films and advertisements) to participate ritualistically in basic beliefs, fears, and anxieties of their age. These archetypal features not only constitute the intelligibility of the text but also tap into a level of desires and anxieties of humankind. Whereas Freudian, Lacanian, and other schools of psychological criticism operate within a linguistic paradigm regarding the unconscious, the Jungian "approach to myth emphasizes the notion of *image*" (Walker 3).

Sigmund Freud says in "Creative Writers and Day-Dreaming" that myths are "distorted vestiges of the wishful fantasies of whole nations, the *secular dreams* of youthful humanities" (Adams 715). But we get an elaborate theory of myth and archetype from his student, the Swiss psychologist Carl G. Jung.

The Man and His Symbols by Jung reads: “Myth in its most ordinary meaning refers to stories of gods or other supernatural beings handed down from ancient times. A collection of traditional myths in a culture or nation reflects, allegorically, its cultural or national history” (150). The stories of the Genesis, Exodus and Apostles in Jewish mythology, for instance, are part of the constitution of Jewish nation or culture. Being read and re-read by generations of people in a nation/ culture, these myths are often regarded as its spiritual identity. Writers also turn to myths as sources of inspiration, *mythos* in Greek meaning narration and plot. As the verbal expression of ancient dreams and rituals, the myth is also the structural principle of imaginative literature when it gives meaning to rituals and form to dreams.

In the long tradition of mimesis, the myth occupied a low position for its obvious irrationality and distortion. Giambattista Vico, however, helped to restore the importance of the myth in his *New Sciences* : “The first science to be learned should be mythology or the interpretation of fables; for [...]all the histories of the gentiles have their beginnings in the fables, which were the first histories of the gentile nation. By such a method the beginnings of the sciences as well as of the nations are to be discovered” (325). The eighteenth century Romanticists also placed the myth, the wisdom of poetry, on the same footing with science and reason.

The word “archetype,” according to Jung, was much used in ancient Greek, *arché* meaning “root” and “origin” while *typos* “pattern” or “model.” The modern concept of the archetype appeared in the late nineteenth century, referring to the recurring literary phenomena such as motifs, themes, and narrative designs. The first one to use the concept in the sense it now appears in contemporary archetypal criticism is cultural anthropologist James G. Frazer at the turn of the century, to explain the structural principles behind the archetypal myths and rituals in the tales

and ceremonies of diverse cultures. Myths and archetypes thus offered the literary critic one more alternative, in addition to the generic or the historical, to questions concerning literary convention or genre. Because of its more or less universal nature, the archetype is important for constructing macro structures of literature connecting different times and geographical locations.

As archetypes usually include myths (tales, rituals, totems, taboos, etc.), so “archetypal criticism” is often used for myth and archetypal criticism. However, archetypal criticism owes especially to the following three people for their separate contributions: Frazer in the late nineteenth century revealed “the recurring mythical patterns in tales and rituals” (175); Jung in 1930s and 1940s developed a theory of archetypes out of it; and Frye proposed, based on the previous two, a whole system of literary archetypal criticism in the 1950s.

James Frazer is the most prolific and influential anthropologist in his fifty years of research on myth. For twenty-five years he worked on *The Golden Bough*, his masterpiece in twelve volumes (an abridged one volume was issued in 1922). Frazer studied classical literature when he was an undergraduate, and his interest in literature contributed a great deal to his anthropological study. In *The Golden Bough* he tried to show a general development of modes of thought from the magical to the religious and, finally, to the scientific, or the traces of human consciousness from the primitive to the civilized. This evolutionary sequence now seems unsatisfactory, but the synthesis and comparison of a wide range of information about religious and magical practices alone have made Frazer immortal. A major magic he observed was performed in an ancient Italian land Nemi where a runaway slave might break off a branch from the tree in the sanctuary and then slay the old priest for the title of “the King of the Wood”. Such a practice, according to Frazer, “derived from the belief that

the well-being of the social and natural orders depended upon the vitality of the king, who must therefore be slain when his powers began to fail him and be replaced by a vigorous successor” (273).

Jung agreed with Frazer that myth was the means by which the primitive people experienced the world, but to him myth concerns humanity in general, including modern men, via a concept called collective unconsciousness. Jung is best remembered for the set of terms and definitions he has made in this area, and for the combination, better than others, of the Frazerian analysis of rituals and tales with the literary and cultural archetypes to be developed by the Canadian scholar Northrop Frye in the 1950s. Although the concept of the collective unconscious may have come from a dream in which Jung found himself in a two-store house where the cave below the basement reminded him of the “inner drama which the primitive man rediscovered” (*Collected Works* 79), the elaborate theory Jung later developed is by no means vague and accidental. The unconscious, in this sense, is divided into two parts, namely, the personal or the superficial layer of the unconscious, and the supra personal or the deep layer, which is the collective unconscious. The later is much more universal in nature as it represents the primordial types of man’s primitive instincts. Here Jung redefines the Freudian concept of instinct in terms of “archetypes,” to give credit to Freud and to make it more tangible for “scientific” analysis.

In *Collected Works of C.G. Jung: Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* Jung opines that “it is not enough to make a science of archetypes by proving that it belongs to the domain of medical psychology” (146). To back up the statement that his concepts of the instinct and the archetype are “neither a speculative nor a philosophical but an empirical matter,” he tries to show that these instincts take

“definite forms” (149) and are empirically veritable. As the most spontaneous expression of the collective unconscious, dreams seem to be the ideal source of archetypes. To be more explicit, dream is a personalized myth and myth is a depersonalized dream. Archetypes may also be identified in “fantasies produced by deliberate concentration” (164). However, Jung admits that “the diagnosis of the collective unconscious is not always an easy task” (174) because the unconscious content is no longer there when being perceived. Take for instance the archetype of the dual mother.

Like Freud, Jung believes that the collective unconscious as the instinctual expression may be accountable for neurosis if a patient suffers, say, from the delusion of the mother complex. But this delusion, Jung argues, is not caused by the Oedipus complex, but by the inability of the patient to cope with the dual mother when this instinct is activated. What is more, the neurosis may go beyond the personal level to make a whole society sick since “in the last analysis what is the fate of great nations [is] but a summation of the psychic changes in individuals.” If, for instance, a nation was reviving an archaic swastika (referring to the emblem of Nazism) or an archaic fasces (the symbol of the fascist Italy), if it was reviving the “medieval persecution of the Jews” and making Europe “tremble again before the Roman fasces and the tramp of legions,” then it only indicates that nation is affected by a collective neurosis. Archetypal criticism argues that archetypes determine the form and function of literary works that a text's meaning is shaped by cultural and psychological myths. Archetypes are the unknowable basic forms personified or concretized in recurring images, symbols, or patterns which may include motifs such as the quest or the heavenly ascent, recognizable character types such as the trickster or the hero,

symbols such as the apple or snake, or images such as crucifixion all laden with meaning already when employed in a particular work.

Jung says that “there are as many archetypes as there are typical situations in life,” but it is impossible to pinpoint “the contents” an archetype refers to. Here Jung is talking about both the form and the contents of the archetype: the form exists only in the unconscious and is therefore beyond conceptualization without certain contents. Jung once compares the form of the archetype to the axial system of a crystal which “performs the crystalline structure in the mother liquid without having any material existence of its own.” This reminds us of the famous analogy made by T. S. Eliot where the author, like the platinum in the chemical reaction of oxygen and sulfur dioxide, is the invisible origin of the meaning of the work. The form of the archetype takes shapes only when crystallized by the contents which are, however, so varied that it takes efforts to establish the connection between the two. Jung does provide some basic forms of the archetype, the shadow, for instance, and anima or animus. Jung sees some inner-connection between the collective unconscious, archetypes and literature, just as Freud does between his id/ unconscious, Oedipus complex and literature. But Jung is even less certain how collective unconscious may be used in the analysis of literary texts, as he was well aware of the difference between psychology and literature, neurosis and works of art, and admitted that he was not qualified to talk about the deep layers of literature, such as aesthetic experience and literary form.

IV. Feminist Appropriation of Archetypal Criticism

A type of criticism that attracted renewed attention in the 1970s and 1980s, largely as a result of a feminist interest in the implications a new form of archetypal criticism might hold for an understanding of women’s experience of patriarchy. Archetypal criticism has, however, something of a patriarchal history: its two

founding fathers are generally taken to be Carl Gustav Jung and Sir James Frazer. Frazer's *The Golden Bough* represents an exhaustive study of the interconnections of art, religion and myth through long processes of historical transmission and transformation. In addition to having a significant influence upon the study of ancient art and culture, the work left its mark on contemporary literature. In his prefatory comments to the notes to *The Waste Land*, T. S. Eliot acknowledges his deep indebtedness to Jessie Western's *From Ritual to Romance* and adds the following comment:

To another work of anthropology I am indebted in general, one which has influenced our generation profoundly; I mean *The Golden Bough*; I have used especially the two volumes *Adonis, Attis, Orisis*. Anyone who is acquainted with these works will immediately recognize in the poem certain references to vegetation ceremonies. (ii)

The widespread influence of Eliot's poem in the twentieth century is certainly one important factor in the spread of interest in archetypes, that is, in particular symbolic patterns and motif-complexes which span cultural and historical boundaries.

Outside of the work of creative artists we come near to archetypes in the work of Sigmund Freud, and certain Freudian uses of, for example, the Oedipus complex come close enough to universalized cross-cultural patterns of meaning to invite the term "archetypal." But the theory of archetypes gives more direct theoretical justification in Jung's theory of the collective unconscious, the survival of primitive forms of thought in the psyches of the members of developed cultures.

It is with Maud Bodkin's *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry* (1934) that archetypal literary criticism comes of age, and this study initiated a flood of myth-seeking analyses of literature, especially in the United States.

By the 1950s, however, archetypal criticism was under pressure. It was treated as a variant of extrinsic criticism by the New Critics, while simultaneously incurring the disfavour of Marxist and sociological critics for its alleged failure to confront the socially or culturally specific nature of myth – although the critical theories of Northrop Frye helped to keep an archetypal light burning during the decades after the Second World War, and Leslie Fiedler's *Love and Death in the American Novel* (1960), demonstrated that it was possible for a literary criticism to trace archetypal patterns in modern literature in a manner that was both creative and culture-specific.

With the resurgence of feminist criticism, however, a new approach to the study of archetypes emerged. If the oppression of women was universal, then this would explain why myths reflecting this repression appeared at all times and all places – without the need for any mystical or even biological explanation. Annis Pratt's *Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction* (1982) is representative of the feminist appropriation of archetypal criticism. Pratt argues that Jung defined archetypes as primordial forms springing from the preverbal realm of the unconscious, and that he did not intend his archetypal categories to be taken as fixed absolutes but more as “images, symbols, and narrative patterns that differ from stereotypes in being complex variables, subject to variations in perception” (4). She concludes that it is possible to trace a relationship between the rise of women's fiction and three interrelated repositories of archetypal materials: “*The Demeter/Kore* and *Ishtar/Tammuz* rebirth narratives, the *grail legends* of the later Middle Ages, and the cluster of archetypal and ritual materials constituting the *Craft of the Wise*, or *witchcraft*” (167). She summed up that the archetypal patterns to be found in women's fiction constitute signals from a buried feminine tradition that conflict with cultural norms, and this view of archetypes holds for feminist literary critics today.

Chapter Three

I. Archetypal Symbolism: A Means to Scrutinize the Self of Black Woman

Possessing the Secret of Joy marks a new beginning for an author/activist who explicitly appropriates Carl Jung's archetypal patterns of the ego, the shadow, the anima/animus, and the Self in a psychological process that promises individual harmony and wholeness for those earnestly seeking self-knowledge and well-being. It is worth noting that at the beginning of her writing career, Walker embraced the national ethos of protest, resistance, and liberation that defined the revolutionary 1960s, and her involvement in the Civil Rights Movement, especially in the segregated South, was a sign of her profound commitment to changing society and to being a viable part of the struggle for African American liberation and women's freedom from the exterior forces of oppression.

The novel is most implicitly Jungian, for even in the afterword of the book, Walker acknowledges reading Jung in her own "self-therapy" (269). Her reliance on Jungian archetypes is obvious throughout the novel, which critically examines and interrogates the African tradition of female "genital mutilation." If "individuation" (267) means the becoming of a homogeneous being, then the process of becoming begins with a psychic trauma or wounding of the spirit which is what Tashi, Walker's African heroine, experiences. This traumatic event alerts Tashi to the limitations of the ego-centered consciousness, which is incapable of resolving emotional conflicts on its own, and to the profound but unconscious supra-personal forces interfering in a creative and positive way with the ego, for the ego is "by definition, subordinate to the Self and is related to it like a part to the whole" (Jung 5). According to Jung, mental crisis has "a long unconscious history," and one's inability to resolve the conflict

between the ego-centered world of the self and the personal and collective unconscious (manifested by archetypal symbols) evokes the crisis. While Tashi experiences the individuation journey to wholeness, Walker gives specific voice to the inner power of the individual to change and to mature spiritually, a Jungian psychoanalytical discourse that enables Walker to acknowledge yet downplay the power of society over the individual.

In her artistic proclivity to strip and reduce an object or character to what in fact is an awakening truth or epiphany, Walker strips Africa of the romantic image bestowed upon it by black writers in the 1960s and the Harlem Renaissance artists of the 1920s. *Possessing the Secret of Joy* is a contemporary and radical feminist rebuke of a tribal god who liked “woman’s vagina be tight” (169) and ancient and modern African leaders who kept their “penis” (189) while African females lost their vulva. Adam further clarifies that “When her outer sex is cut off, and she’s left only the smallest, inelastic opening through which to receive pleasure, he can believe it is only his penis that can reach her inner parts and give her what she craves” (172). This novel is, too, a political diatribe against the social diseases of tribalism and sexism. The novel dramatizes “the original battle of the sexes” (172). Tashi, the wounded African heroine, learns by degrees that “White is not the culprit this time” (85), eventually discovering that African tribalism and sexism are responsible for her psychological maiming and subsequent crises. With her dilemma consisting of her renouncing the egoism, the false pride of African tribalism, and her discovering a unique inner voice, Tashi creates an alter-ego in the imaginary Lara, the rejected co-wife in one of her stories. Tashi’s complex about the sight of blood and her repression of archetypal images and their truths are the contributing causes of her mental instability.

Tashi's wounding begins with the death of her older sister Dura, who bleeds to death from a botched "bath," a euphemism for female genital circumcision. There are three types of female circumcision: sunna circumcision, referring to the removal of the prepuce or vaginal foreskin; clitoridectomy, referring to the detachment of the clitoris; and infibulation, referring to an excision of both sides of the vulva, which is then scraped raw and sewn together, often in less-than-sanitary conditions.

Infibulation leaves only a small opening for the vagina, which can give heightened sexual pleasure to a man during intercourse, but makes urination, menstruation, intercourse, and especially the birth process not only painful but also life-threatening.

True to her willful sexual revolt and revolutionary politics, Walker dedicates *Possessing the Secret of Joy* with "TENDERNESS AND RESPECT TO THE BLAMELESS VULVA," (before the story of the novel begins) choosing for her female characters the most radical form of female circumcision, infibulation.

Surreptitiously, Tashi has gone to the place of the baths in her village, has heard her sister Dura's screams, and has seen the bloody aftermath of the "operation," but she represses the memory of the experience and retains only a phobia of blood.

Tashi says:

I studied the village was hot and dry, with few trees. I studied the white rinds of my mother's heels, and felt in my won heart the weight of Dura's death settling upon her spirit, like the groundnuts that bent her back. As she staggered under her load, I half expected her footprints, into which I was careful to step, to stain my own feet with tears and blood. (16)

As a result of this repression and her silence, she later submits herself to the African traditions of scarification (a different kind of maiming) and, even later, as a young

woman, of infibulation's. With an inflated ego, she informs an objecting Olivia (Celie's daughter from *The Color Purple* who is a missionary in Africa and sister to Adam whom Tashi marries), "All I care about now is the struggle for our people. [. . .] You are black, but you are not like us. We look at you and your people with pity [for] you barely [possess] your own black skin. [...] You don't even know what you've lost! And the nerve of you, to bring us a God someone else chose for you" (21-22)! This is the result of the echo of collective unconscious set in her mind. This echo is, as Jung says, "racial memory." In general, culture itself is the manifestation of archetypes which a person has to accept sooner or later.

When she begins to awaken to the truth about her society, her culture, and the pain inflicted on women, Tashi confesses, "I was crazy," for as she goes to have her face scarred with identifying tribal marks, she sees "potbellied" children "with dying eyes" and "old people" lying on "piles of rags" while the village women make "stew out of bones" (22). Unable to reconcile the impoverishment of her culture with the cultural arrogance she exudes, Tashi develops a "passion for storytelling" and slips into madness. To chronicle Tashi's descent into madness and her resulting fragmentation, Walker creates six personas: Tashi, the troubled African child who submits to the tribal rites of scarification and circumcision and upon whom silence is imposed; Evelyn, the scarred adult Tashi who becomes an American citizen; Tashi-Evelyn, the African American whose cultural duality is dominated by the nightmarish remembrance of her African past; Evelyn-Tashi, the Americanized African whose cultural selves coalesce into a picture of herself as a "Wounded" (157) American; and Tashi-Evelyn-Mrs. Johnson, the aging matriarchal composite of selves who confesses to killing M'Lissa, the mutilator or tsunga (a Walker neologism), who reconciles herself with Lisette, Adam's mistress, and Pierre, Lisette's son by Adam. And, finally,

there is Tashi Evelyn Johnson Soul, who achieves the Self upon her reconciliation of opposites, resistance to lies, and acceptance of death for her "crime" of alerting other women to her conviction that resistance to lies (imposed through silence upon suffering women in a patriarchal social order) is the real secret of joy.

In her typical labyrinthine configuration of text and context, Walker constructs seventy-two narratives of horror: forty-two narratives by the multiple Tashi(s), and a combined thirty discourses by Olivia, Adam, and Benny, Tashi and Adam's retarded son whose skull is crushed in the birth process; Lisette and Pierre; M'Lissa, the African tsunga; and Mzee or "Uncle Carl," the Jungian analyst. By focusing on Tashi's narratives, we can see the archetypal symbolism and the Jungian patterns of the individuation process. To avoid confusion, all six personas are here called Tashi.

"And what about your dreams?" asks Mzee (24), the Swiss psychoanalyst to whose tower in Switzerland Tashi has been taken for analysis by Olivia and Adam, whose French mistress, Lisette, is a niece to Mzee. By implication, Walker thus espouses Jungian dream symbology. Jung has written of the importance of dreams, averring that there is nothing accidental about dreams which have a "compensatory function" in alerting the conscious mind to disaster or expressing the anticipatory as well as the good and the beautiful. Citing the autonomy of the unconscious realm of dreams, Jung writes that "even when asleep we dream." One therefore "cannot afford to be naive in dealing with dreams" because they "originate in a spirit that is not quite human, but is rather a breath of nature--a spirit of the beautiful and generous as well as the cruel goddess" (Jung 36). By appropriating the dream motif here and placing Tashi in Mzee's "tower" (Carl Jung built his own private tower in Zurich, which he called his place of maturation), Walker brings together the dynamics of Tashi's

conscious, personal unconscious, and collected unconscious thoughts, which Jung believed to be essential in the individual's quest for psychological well-being.

Tashi's dream of imprisonment in an African tower that resembles a "termite hill" (222) is symbolic of the personal unconscious as the collective unconscious. Tashi is the "Queen termite with the broken wings" (216), reproducing her own kind as scurrying termite workers (who are Africans) care for her needs because she is the sacrificial breeder. Tashi is Everywoman, Walker's cultural trope for African females who experience the bath. However, Tashi does not reveal this particular dream to Mzee, but to Pierre, whom she, as an ego-centered personality, initially rejects. (Her dream will be discussed later.) However, Mzee's showing of a film of his visit to an African village with its ritual ceremony of initiation jars Tashi's repressed memory of Dura's death and eventually causes her to reveal her dream. The showing of the film is deliberate, as deliberate as Mzee's desire to give Tashi "a very large bag of clay" (81), an early reference to clay fertility dolls, symbolic of a magical, strong autoerotic matriarchal society, which is now denounced by the males for political purposes. Jung often used art in his analysis of patients, believing that art and its creative expressions could unlock the hidden world of dreams in the unconscious. Walker utilizes art in this way in *Possessing the Secret of Joy* and also in *The Temple of My Familiar*, a novel that is not explicitly Jungian but, as a precursor to the former reveals her Jungian tendency to connect art, psychology, and mental health.

After viewing the film, Tashi draws and paints a foot and fighting cocks, but there is a giant "strutting" cock that waits for the "insignificant and unclean" vulva that the "foot" tosses to it (71). Realizing that the giant cock is really a hen and that the foot belongs to M'Lissa, the tsunga who has operated on Dura and killed her, Tashi recalls her visit to the village bath and acknowledges "Dura's *murder*" (79) and

the women's participation in the murder. All is part of Walker's authorial pronouncement on the hierarchy of oppression with women colluding with men against other women and therefore participating in their own oppression in a patriarchal society. Indeed, later M'Lissa confesses to Tashi that Catherine (their mother) had helped to hold Dura down for the operation that killed her. Through M'Lissa's voice, Walker perhaps responds to Mzee's criticism that black women are difficult to analyze because they cannot bring themselves to criticize their "mothers," a reference to black women's collusion with the social forces holding them down either through their imposed silence ("don't tell") or through more direct methods of collusion with their oppressors. Both cases are presented here. On awakening Tashi confesses, "I felt as if I were seeing the cause of my anxiety for the first time [. . .]. There was a boulder lodged in my throat [. . .]. I remembered my sister Dura's murder [. . .] exploding the boulder" (76, 79). She further says,

I felt a painful stitch throughout my body that I knew stitched my tears to my soul. No longer would my weeping be separate from what I *knew*. I began to wail, there in Mzee's old arms. After a long time, he dried my face, stroked my hair, and comforted me with a motherly squeeze that coincided with each of my hiccups, as my weeping subsided.

They did not know I was hiding in the grass, I said. They had taken her to the place of initiation; a secluded, lonely place that was taboo for the uninitiated. [...] He stroked my forehead thoughtfully, got up quietly and left me to the continuation of a very long sleep. (79)

The "boulder" explodes further when a retiring Mzee introduces Tashi to Raye, a powerful African American analyst who coaxes Tashi to discuss her own "bath"

experiences. Raye is able to bond with Tashi and upset again the silence imposed upon her. She does this by visiting a dentist who performs periodontal surgery on her gums, and the surgery, soreness, and healing of her gums represent, she comments to Tashi, her "puny" effort to comprehend the subject's emotions, Walker's apparent reference to Jung's participation mystique whereby an analyst attempts to feel a client's pain. With her revelations, Tashi is forced to see the falseness of her masked self as "Completely woman. Completely African. Completely Olinka" (61) the self-centered and limited, petty world of the ego. Tashi then confesses to having had an "outlandish outsized image of [him] self" (20). He becomes aware of his (and his people's) crisis in his selfhood and appeals them for awakening thereafter in this way:

I sat astride the donkey in the pose of a chief, a warrior. We who had once owned our village and hectares and hectares of land now owned nothing. We were reduced to the position of beggars – except that there was no one near enough to beg from, in the desert we were in. [...] All I care about now is the struggle for our people [...]. You are a foreigner. Any day you like, you and your family can ship yourselves back home. (64, 22)

Having presented and given voice to the first of Jung's archetypal patterns, the persona or mask, Walker deftly describes the second, the shadow, which is superimposed upon Tashi and manifested in her aberrant behavior. The shadow personality is childish and awkward, though not malevolent unless it becomes integrated into the anima or animus archetype, which is more forceful than the shadow because it is convinced of its rightness.

Walker writes of Tashi's shadows, illustrating the archetypal images on several occasions. For example, years after she marries Adam and relocates to America as a

"wounded American," an adult Tashi returns to Africa to seek vengeance on M'Lissa, whom she confronts:

A proper woman must be cut and sewn to fit only her husband, whose pleasure depends on an opening it might take months, even years to enlarge. Men love and enjoy the struggle, you said. For the woman [. . .]. But you never said anything about the woman, did you M'Lissa? [. . .] I am weeping now, myself. For myself. For Adam. For our son. For the daughter I was forced to abort. There is caesarean section, you know, the aborting doctor had said. But I knew I could not bear being held down and cut open. The thought of it had sent me reeling off into the shadows of my mind; where I'd hidden out for months. (208)

The victims of her shadowy self are Benny, her son, and Pierre, Adam's son by Lisette. She "frequently and with little cause, no cause, boxed Benny's ears," making him "squeal and cringe"; and she hurls stones at Pierre when he comes to visit Adam, while "the cabby ran up to Pierre, grabbed him under the arms and dragged him out of sight " (136-37). Jung states that awareness of the dark and primitive side of the personality is essential for self-knowledge, but this recognition requires much painstaking work extending over a long period. Thus, Walker's treatment of her heroine's passion and rage, psychoanalysis and therapy over an extended period of time after which Tashi recognizes and loses her shadow is, it appears, realistic. As Tashi Evelyn Mrs. Johnson, facing execution in Africa, the mature and shadowless Tashi writes to her husband's dead mistress seeking reconciliation and acknowledging that "Pierre has been such a gift to me" (260).

Walker makes considerable use of the black French character, Pierre, who is homosexual. Through his character, the author treats homosexuality as non-aberrant

and explores the religious symbolism of stones, Jung's symbol of wholeness. When she finally allows Pierre, a student at Berkeley, to visit her in California, Tashi muses,

He has told me he likes men as well as he likes women, which seems only natural, he says, since he is the offspring of two sexes as well as of two races. No one is surprised he is biracial; why should they be surprised he is bisexual? This is an explanation I have never heard and cannot entirely grasp; it seems too logical from my brain. His brother sits across from him as he reads, sunk in admiration. They have stolen many hours to be together, roaming the Berkeley campus and city's streets (174).

Pierre interprets Tashi's dream of imprisonment in a tower that is cool, tall, and dark with "millions of things moving about me in the dark" that are "forcing something in one end of me, and from the other they are busy pulling something out" (25-26). Near the end of her life, Pierre informs her of Africa's "strong identification with the termite" that "has kept a place for males in its society" (26). As the de-sexed (broken wings) queen termite of her dream, Tashi, the prisoner, is "stuffed with food at one end [. . .] having your eggs, millions of them, constantly removed at the other"; afterwards, she is expected to die (219). In the book, African women are sacrificial breeders in a patriarchal and polygamous tribal society which has made female circumcision a "sacred" or religious rite of passage intended to make a woman fit for marriage: "no man would marry" a "loose" or uncircumcised female whose "clitoris, like a penis, can rise" (218). The village elders believe that God "created the tsunga" and thus it is a religious taboo to break the silence surrounding what Walker presents as a psychic trauma that women have endured for centuries in Africa and the Middle

East. In the afterword, Walker cites statistics that indicate that “ninety to one hundred million women living today have experienced this torturous rite of passage “(270).

A student of anthropology, Pierre has immersed himself in Tashi's dementia, consulting a number of books in order to interpret her dream. Initially rejected, like the biblical Christ, Pierre has become for Tashi the sacred "corner" stone that she once hurled at him. Walker's use of stones is not accidental here or in *The Temple of My Familiar*. The South American character Jesus in the latter believes that by guarding the village's "three small stones" he is preventing the villagers' foreign enslavement. And M'Sukta, in *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, is the sole survivor of an African matriarchal tribe. M'Sukta is put on racist display in Condon's "Museum of Natural History," and she is called "the African Rosetta stone" (72,233). The cover of the novel shows a photograph of "the hand of the author touching Jung's alchemical or philosopher's stone, carved by Jung in 1950" (frontispiece). This stone is cube-shaped and covered with inscriptions; in its center is a tiny replica of a man whose physical encirclement or encapsulation resembles the eye's pupil. Jung had such a stone in his garden in Zurich. In the Middle Ages, the "philosopher's stone" symbolized humankind's ultimate achievement of wholeness: medieval alchemists had aspired to find "the secret of matter in a pre-scientific way, hoping to find God in it, or at least the working of divine activity," believing that the philosopher's stone embodied the secret of this energy (Jung 225). In the individuation process, stones symbolically represent the Self, but Tashi, in Walker's hierarchical appropriation of Jungian symbolism, must experience the third stage of the individuation process, the anima/animus archetypes.

Presenting what she appears to believe is a natural male/female duality, Walker subverts and exposes traditional Africa's rejection of this duality and the

autonomous rights of pleasure and gratification for women as well as for men. Rhetorically, Walker attacks "primitive" African society and its cultural female rites. Again, it is Pierre, Tashi's "gift," who assists Tashi in her development by explaining the concept of the female soul of the male and the male soul of the female. This theory is nullified by Tashi's society because "Man's life was not capable of supporting both beings: each person would have to merge himself in the sex for which he appeared to be best fitted" (167) Walker's obvious sexual pun and her scathing commentary on the socially constructed and ascribed sexual roles for males and females.

Walker's gender-specific language is intended to attack and mock the patriarchal ethos of Tashi's Olinka society and its political-moral biases which "justify" the suppression of females. Indeed, Walker, typically iconoclastic, is most profane where God, as presented in sacred African tribal lore, has excised an "erect clitoris" that resembled an erect phallus and then "fucked the hole that was left" (217). Like her modern literary predecessors, Ann Petry and Paule Marshall immediately come to mind, Walker eschews religious orthodoxy. Here, Raye avers, "Religion is an elaborate excuse for what man has done to women" (215). Walker does not shun, however, the Jungian idea of the individuation process as containing a sacred, religious function. Thus, her raw and Menckonian unorthodox treatment of organized religion does not obscure her apparent espousal of the theological divine in the individual. Nevertheless, Tashi, on the journey to the Self, reveals the animus stage of her development when she murders M'Lissa, the tsunga.

Of the male or Logos and rational soul co-existing in the female gender, Jung writes that the "animus corresponds to the paternal Logos just as the anima corresponds to the maternal Eros," even though the female "consciousness is

characterized more by the connective quality of Eros than by the discrimination and cognition associated with Logos." This sexist discourse aside, Jung remarks that the anima/animus archetype "is uncommonly strong" (unlike the shadow self which can be discerned and discarded) and is not easily dismissed because it has "an unshakable feeling of rightness and righteousness" (Campbell 155). Under the influence of this archetypal image, one can plunge into the murderous depths of the shadow's "childish" behavior. Tashi has, in fact, the killer instinct of the mythological murderer of women, Bluebeard: she willfully kills the tsunga who has called herself and others like her "torturers of children" (21). But Tashi, unlike Bluebeard, kills to avenge female suffering and to affirm female sexuality, an act which illustrates the dual quality of the anima/animus as possessing "good" or "bad" qualities. Walker vitalizes and validates the Jungian notion of the anima/animus righteousness by having Tashi's multiple selves assume the responsibility for M'Lissa's murder.

For Walker's readers, these multiple confessions can be confusing, but Tashi's act of murder is so "right" in its final appearance that Tashi's multiple selves all claim credit for the feat, which explains the initial confusion of multiple confessions.

Dressed like an American, but speaking like an Olinka, Evelyn leaves America to return to Africa to kill M'Lissa and is accused of murdering a "monument" (158). Tashi-Evelyn visits M'Lissa and "fingers" the razors that she has purchased to kill her, "fantasizing" M'Lissa's "bloody demise" (229). But it is Tashi who thinks of leaping up and strangling M'Lissa after listening to the stories of her painful life as a "tsunga" (224). Tashi confesses to Olivia her innocence of M'Lissa's murder; but Tashi-Evelyn-Mrs. Johnson states, "I did it"(238) while on trial, and writes to the deceased Lisette, "Tomorrow morning I will face the firing squad for killing someone who many years ago, killed me"(247). This is, of course, a dizzying discourse; however, it is also an

illustration of Jung's conceptualization of the "unshakable feeling of rightness" of the anima/animus archetypes, and, not coincidentally, Walker's subversion of Jung's sexist ideas that "Eros is an expression of their [women's] true nature, while their Logos is often only a regrettable accident" (Campbell 152). Walker's idea of poetic justice is presented in Tashi's premeditated killing of M'Lissa, who anticipates and even foresees "the murder of the tsunga, the circumciser, by one of those whom she has circumcised" (196).

It is not for M'Lissa's murder, however, that Tashi Evelyn Johnson Soul is executed. Although a tsunga and a "national monument," as a woman M'Lissa is expendable. Tashi dies for breaking the silence surrounding the misery of women's lives in general and their circumcision in particular. Exposing the cruelty of tribal society, Tashi makes signs of protest (an American custom), using the colors of the African flag as Walker merges global traditions and creates a nexus of African American unity. Tashi achieves the Self, Jung's union of opposites par excellence, at the end of the book after she has reconciled the personal and collective unconscious contents of the Self and her relationships with others, particularly Pierre and Lisette. Most notably, Tashi has accepted the truth of her experiences as opposed to the lies of the social order. Resistance to the lies of female suffering brings her the secret of joy, and she, in turn, shares this joy of resistance and truth with other women who attend her execution, bringing ancient fertility dolls, "wild flowers, herbs, seeds, beads," and "ears of corn" in a feminist celebration of women's harvest (193), the coming of age, the coming of consciousness. Even in the final lines of the novel, Walker's illustration of the Jungian archetypal Self is clear when Tashi Evelyn Johnson Soul faces a firing squad, hears a "roar as if the world cracked open" and is "satisfied" (264).

2. Walker's Voice for Black Female Identity

By exposing the violent, cultural rituals of clitorrectomy and infibulation in Africa, Walker continues to voice her activism against violence toward women in general. She exposes genital mutilation as "a culturally specific form of violence against women" (275). While writing *Possessing the Secret of Joy* and Walker faced a dilemma, that Westerners might see genital mutilation as a way of describing Africa as being backward and savage and barbaric, and feeding into all those sorts of racist perceptions of Africa. Her solution to this difficulty is to illustrate forcefully that while we may view traditions in the Middle East, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Africa as isolated assaults on women, in fact "the assault on women is worldwide [varying] only by degree" (276). Violence generalizes across cultures: It seems there is a continuum of violence against women that takes specific forms in different cultures. Walker notes that even in American culture women strive to be "very thin, very white, very blond, with very big breasts"(276), an image of beauty that encourages many women and girls to starve themselves, have breast implants and liposuction, and bleach their skin and hair. While some of these activities may not necessarily be related to violence, per se, others are clearly life-threatening (eating disorders can lead to death, and women have died from liposuction), and they are clearly related to sexism. Walker convincingly argues that clitorrectomy, silicon breast implants, and the like are all "really about shaping a woman in the image that men think they want. And every country in the world is busily doing that" (276).

Blindness as a sexual metaphor takes full, symbolic form in *Possessing the Secret of Joy*. The novel begins with a parable narrated by Tashi, an African woman driven mad as a bitter consequence of clitorrectomy and infibulation, a tribal ritual that sanctions the removal of the clitoris and the entire vulva. Following the cutting or

excising of the genitalia, the circumciser sews the vulva together tightly, leaving only a small opening for urine and menstrual blood to pass.

Tashi's animal tale, a parable of the panthers, that condemns the consequences of blind tradition foreshadows the events of the novel. Baba, the male panther in the story, bound by tradition, accepts a second wife whom he does not love. This new arrangement introduces conflict into a previously harmonious relationship. They began "snarling and biting and whipping at each other's eyes" (3); the panthers' story foretells the blindness to come. Baba's failure to follow his own heart and to reject tradition causes heartache and confusion, not to mention the death of Lara, the second wife.

The multivocal structure of the novel weaves together the memories of six characters who are all related to the central character, Tashi, who voluntarily submits to the ancient ritual of genital mutilation. When Olivia, her brother, Adam, and other family members come to Africa as missionaries, Tashi is among the crowd of villagers that turns out to greet them. Olivia, Tashi's sister-in-law, remembered the first time she met Tashi: Tashi was crying. Blindness quickly becomes metaphorical; the eyes of the weeping child are invisible to the village elders, who deny Tashi's existence saying, "There is no little crying girl here" (8). Seeing is a way of knowing: the villagers refuse to see what they cannot acknowledge. This denial silences any concern or sympathy for Tashi, who is grieving the loss of her favorite sister, Dura, who has hemorrhaged to death from genital mutilation.

Adam's memory of Tashi reveals his own blinkered understanding of people, events, and consequences. He recalls Tashi's liveliness and the sparkle in her eyes. Later, as they grow to maturity, he remembers introducing her to sexual pleasures by performing cunnilingus, a taboo, with her amidst the Olinkan fields. Olivia's memory,

however, is more accurate. Tashi had indeed been crying over the loss of her sister, and Adam's failure to see this truth reveals his inability to comprehend her completely. He knows her sexually before the circumcision and wants to marry her, but he does not internalize the memories she has repressed, nor the pain she will endure. Such events and horrors are, for him, "other."

The colonial invasion and the building of a road that obliterates the Olinkan village push Tashi to resist Christianity because it represents colonial power and prohibits many indigenous customs. Tashi's resistance leads her to the startling decision to be circumcised: "RESISTENCE IS THE SECRET OF JOY" (264)! Walker addresses Tashi's choice to submit, as an adult, by creating a complex psychological atmosphere that fosters a convincing basis for Tashi's decision. In an interview Walker concludes that oppressed people tend to hold on to practices that they can enforce. The British were right about stopping this sort of evil thing. But because they themselves were so evil, and the harm that they had done was so great, it was very difficult for African men and women to really choose what they would like to retain of their culture, since the British were so busy destroying everything else.

Tashi blindly searches the forest for the circumciser. She does not notice the absence of other women there. Such absence should have signaled danger to her. M'Lissa, the old woman circumciser, thinks Tashi a fool, but nevertheless performs the excision. Later when Tashi, driven by madness, comes to kill her, M'Lissa wants to know, "Didn't you have eyes in your head? Didn't anyone ever teach you that the absence of women means something?" (227). The women revolutionaries deserted camp because the men wanted them only for cooking, cleaning, and sex, refusing ever to accept them as freedom-fighters. Had Tashi been more observant, had she questioned the absence of women in the camp, for example, she would have

discovered that the procedure she was about to undergo was superfluous; moreover, it would preclude revolutionary activity (she could hardly walk following the procedure). Indeed, other women ran away from the guerilla camp, refusing to become sexual slaves.

The eye as window to the soul can reveal the deepest hurts; Tashi's eyes reflect her wounds. In fact, some researchers claim that if a woman has been genitally mutilated, it is evident by the look in her eyes. Adam searches for Tashi only to find "the flatness of her gaze. [...] They were as flat as eyes that have been painted in, and with dull paint" (43). Seeing Tashi after the circumcision, Olivia observes "that her soul had been dealt a mortal blow was plain to anyone who dared look into her eyes" (59). Tashi participated--blindly--in her own demise. When Adam finds her she says, "My eyes see him but they do not register his being. Nothing runs out of my eyes to greet him" (35). By the time she has healed sufficiently to leave camp she recognizes her error, although she nonetheless marries Adam and moves to the United States with him.

Again, by means of multiple narrators, a clear consensus emerges concerning Tashi's worsening physical and psychological condition, both attributed to her submission to the mutilation. Olivia details the embarrassment Tashi suffers because she cannot rid herself of the odor of sour menstrual blood that cannot flow from her body and cannot be reabsorbed. Tashi takes an extremely long time to urinate, and she walks with slow and studied movement uncharacteristic of her once quick liveliness. Olivia had begged her not to mutilate herself, but Tashi rebutted her, calling her and her family "the white people's wedge" (22), an African expression dismissive of African Americans as "sell-outs" or Uncle Toms. Tashi's fate is thereby sealed.

Walker focuses on eyes as the mirror of the soul. Tashi cannot look her friend in the eye: "I stole glances down alongside her face and let my eyes slide over the top of her head" (21). Tashi puts her friend in the position of "other." She tells her, "All I care about now is the struggle of our people. ... You are a foreigner. Any day you like, you and your family can ship yourselves back home. You are black, but you are not like us" (21). Olivia cannot adequately respond to such an obvious assertion, but she unselfishly tries to empathize with Tashi's pain and madness. Walker, however, answers directly the accusations flung at her for daring to judge an African cultural tradition. When asked what right she has as a Westerner to "intervene" in African traditions, Walker remarks, "Slavery intervened. As far as I am concerned, I am speaking for my great-great-great-great-grandmother who came here [to America] with all this pain in her body."[\[8\]](#)

Tashi's inability to foresee the outcome of her course of action initiates the sexual blindness that permanently dissolves the bond with Adam, her former lover, now husband. The excision almost completely precludes sexual relations with Adam. She remembers that "each time he touched me I bled. There was nothing he could do to me that did not hurt" (57). Almost unaccountably, she becomes pregnant; the pregnancy and the childbirth are harrowing. The trauma of the birth results in their son's retardation. Following the delivery the horrified doctors sew her up almost as she had been, "because otherwise there would have been a yawning unhealable wound. But it was done in such a way that there was now room for pee and menstrual blood more easily to pass" (58). Although Tashi's body recovers, her mind slips. She suffers recurring nightmares and resorts to psychotherapy: on several occasions she is committed to a psychiatric institution.

Adam's motivations pertaining to Tashi are questionable, and at a deep level he seems sexist. Although Adam claims to love his wife, he maintains a long-lasting relationship with a French woman named Lisette, who bears him a healthy son. Adam visited Lisette in France twice a year, and she comes to visit him in California once a year. These events augment Tashi's pain, but Adam appears oblivious. When Tashi's psychiatrist compares infidelity to circumcision, telling Adam that "woman after woman comes to me to complain that her husband, man, lover, is or was unfaithful to her. [...] [T]he result [...] is frigidity in the woman. Psychological circumcision [...]" (165), Adam is stunned and claims that he had not thought of Tashi's "suffering as being on a continuum of pain" (159).

While Adam claims to detest the practice of excision and infibulation, his protestations are hollow, for he refuses Tashi's request to use his ministry to preach against the practice, with the excuse that his congregation would be too embarrassed. Tashi construes his refusal as further evidence that he is just another cog in the patriarchal system that perpetuates her suffering. Later, while in prison, she composes a letter detailing her withdrawal from Adam:

My soul removed itself from Adam's reach. [...] It is because I helped him start his progressive ministry. [...] I sat there in our church every Sunday for five years listening to Adam spread the word of Brotherly Love, which had its foundation in God's love of his son, Jesus Christ. I grew agitated each time he touched on the suffering of Jesus. [...] I began to see how the constant focus on the suffering of Jesus alone excludes the suffering of others from one's view. [...] I wanted my own suffering, the suffering of women and little girls [...] to be the subject of a sermon (260).

Enduring years of psychotherapy, Tashi finally confronts the memory of her sister's death, so long repressed. She also remembers a conversation that she overheard as a little girl while serving food to the village elders. This memory holds the key to an interpretation of the recurring dream in which she imagines herself enclosed in a dark tower:

A man is blind. [...] He has an eye. [...] But he cannot see [...] Man is God's cock. [...] It drops the seed. [...] But its offspring. [...] It cannot identify. [...] The Tsunga's stitch helps the cock to know his crop. [...] The Tsunga though herself a woman. [...] helps God. [...] Woman is Queen. [...] If left to herself the Queen would fly. [...] But God is merciful. [...] He clips her wings. [...] God is wise. That is why he created the Tsunga. [...] With her sharpened stone and bag of thorns. [...] With her needle and thread. [...] Because He liked it tight! [...] God likes to feel big. [...] What man does not?" (219-222)

Pierre, Adam's son by his lover Lisette, a Harvard- and Berkeley-trained cultural anthropologist, strives to untangle the meaning of Tashi's dream. He makes the connection between the religious symbology, alluded to by the elders, and the organizational behavior of termites. The dark tower of the dream is a termite hill, and Tashi is the queen who loses her wings:

It is you lying in the dark with millions of other worker termites-who are busy [...] maintaining mushroom farms from which they feed you--buzzing about. You being stuffed with food at one end [...] and having your eggs, millions of them, constantly removed at the other. You are fat, greasy [...] inert; only a tube through which generations of

visionless offsprings pass, their blindness perhaps made up for by their incessant if mindless activity. [...] (216)

The symbols are clear: the queen is inert. Her wings are clipped; she cannot fly. She produces blind children who perpetuate the oppressive system. Tashi's dream, replete with powerful religious and social symbolism, elucidates the deep-rooted significance of the practice of genital mutilation but critiques the position of women in capitalist and materialist cultures. Through the character of Raye, Tashi's psychiatrist, Walker puts forward this summation: "In a culture in which it is mandatory that every single female be systematically desexed, there would have to be some coded, mythological reason given for it, used secretly among the village elders" (217). Tashi realizes that Pierre has with his "knowing eyes" interpreted her nightmare: "From as far away as an undergraduate dormitory at Harvard, [he] saw into me. Even into my dreams" (153). The missing connections that have so confounded Tashi's understanding of her own life finally coalesce. She cannot resolve her anger and madness, however, and these forces drive her to seek revenge. She returns to her homeland, finds M'Lissa, the Tsunga (circumciser) who mutilated her, and kills her.

In this book the patterns of violence and the symbolic nature of the eye and vision assume new complexity regarding the sexual blinding of women and girls. Walker compares "the blameless vulva" to which she dedicates the book, to the eye, specifically the pupil, that opens to allow light to pass. As such, they are organs that identify the self:

Without its pupil, the eye can never see itself, or the person possessing it, reflected in the eye of another. [...] Without the clitoris and other sexual organs, a woman can never see herself reflected in the healthy, intact body of another. Her sexual vision is impaired, and only the

most devoted lover will be sexually "seen." And even then, never completely. (12)

Tashi's name is almost an anagram for "She Is Alice Telling" her tale, repeatedly, of the injured little girl in Walker who finds the means, as an adult, to communicate her anguish, rather than succumb to the suicide she at one time contemplated. Instead, she develops a social conscience and the means, through writing, to save herself and others. Her injury has reallocated the resources of sight to the exploring of blind injustice. Alice Walker develops in her works the dichotomous view that, on the one hand, women must contend with rape and violence imposed upon them from outside forces; but, on the other hand, they also victimize themselves and self-inflict wounds. Walker places the ultimate responsibility on women to resist societal expectations and the demands of tradition. The dark enclosure of the movie theater where Walker's mother consumed the propaganda for maintaining sexism, racism, and violence is the counterpart to the dark tower in Tashi's dream that supports the suppression of female sexuality.

Chapter Four

I. Renewal of Self in *Possessing the Secret of Joy*

By resisting the violent, blood-filled darkness, brought on by her childhood incident, and drawing the conclusion that it was no casual accident, but rather, a part of culturally reinforced patterns of behavior, Walker finds the strength to address shocking, taboo subjects that others might shun. Walker believes that her pen will prove mightier than the circumciser's knife as social commentary. Her own inner pain has fortified her to illumine these dark corners of human activity and positively to express the wholeness of selfhood, the power of inner vision, whole sight, and the ultimate secret of joy. The survivor with the wounded eye becomes the accomplished writer who topples the false gods of evil traditions and supplies, by example, she means to see clearly the effective and affirming choices that exist. She thereby makes pupils of us all.

With the political assassinations of the 1960s, however, Walker, as made clear in *Meridian* (1976), experienced the pathos of a somewhat successful but now aborted movement. Significantly, then, Walker shifted her authorial emphasis from the external conditions of society to the internal psychological development of the individual, and in *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, she turned specifically to Carl Jung, who has written extensively about the individuation process with its aims of bringing the questing individual to a state of spiritual maturity and peace.

Carl Jung's well-documented break with Sigmund Freud occurred because of Jung's inability and unwillingness to accept Freud's restricted view of the libido as the sexual drive of fulfillment. Believing that the libido, or the urge towards life, extended beyond mere sexuality to a hypothetical élan vital, or life energy itself, Jung stressed a widened consciousness whereby the individual seeks to reconcile the opposites of his

or her nature that dwell in the conscious as well as the personal and collective unconscious. Jung defines the conscious as the center of the ego; the personal unconscious as a repository of repressed personal experiences or complexes that must be made conscious; and the collective unconscious as an archive of symbolic archetypes of a hereditary nature. These archetypes, which can express themselves in one's dreams, fantasies, and actions, must be made conscious also; that is, these archetypal patterns must be integrated into the world of the ego, which is then forced to acknowledge that the ego-centered consciousness is not really self-sufficient and does not exist independently and alone but is guided by an integrating factor not of its own making.

Jung identifies these archetypes as the persona or mask, or the false wrappings of the society acquired by the individual; the shadow, or the dark side of the duality, like the anima/animus, or maternal eros, or feminine spirit, in the man and the paternal logos, or masculine soul, in the woman; and, finally, the self, or the essence of human wholeness, the individual par excellence. These archetypal symbols can be experienced through the individuation process, or the path to wholeness. The individual who endures considerable struggle in this process is awarded the self, the inner sacredness and uniqueness of the individual who finds the god within his or her self. For Jung, the individuation process has a religious function, whether or not one is a believer, for there is no creed to be espoused, but rather a belief in each individual's uniqueness. Crystallizing the preciousness of the Self, the religiosity of the process is symbolized by the self's feelings of harmony and peace and by such objects as the mandala, or magical circle of being, and the philosopher's stone.

With the lasting image of her heroine's death and rebirth, Walker links self-renewal to the dynamics of change within the individual, a motif which marks the

distance that the author has traveled from an activist committed to changing society to an activist who is devoted to the psychological process of self-healing and the importance of the journey inwards.

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