

REPUBLIC OF TURKEY  
THE UNIVERSITY OF YÜZÜNCÜ YIL  
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES  
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

**THE SUFFERS OF BLACK WOMEN  
IN ALICE WALKER’S *THE COLOR PURPLE* AND *MERIDIAN* AND  
TONI MORRISON’S *BELOVED* AND *THE BLUEST EYE***

POST-GRADUATE THESIS

Yasemin AYDEMİR

VAN-2011

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SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ MÜDÜRLÜĞÜ'NE,

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This paper is prepared as a thesis for post-graduate study. It is aimed to analyze “the suffers of black women” in Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple* and *Meridian* and Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* and *The Bluest Eye*.

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## INTRODUCTION

It is an undeniable fact that it is not easy to be a female in all societies. Moreover, if the females are also colored, it becomes much more difficult to live in any community in the world. They are separated from the society. They have to endure all the violence and racist behaviors of both white men and women. In addition to these, a colored woman not only struggle against racist society, but also she has to suffer at the hands of black men. With the help of social movements, women have begun to strive for their rights:

Women's liberation recently has been placed on the social agenda in America with a forcefulness and extensiveness that has few historical precedents. The new content and contours of the women's movement are doubtlessly attributable in part to its emergence within, and often in unavoidable opposition to, other social struggles. The expulsion of the proponents of a resolution on women from an SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) convention of the late sixties foreshadowed what would later become a self-imposed isolation. This isolation was at once organizational, theoretical, and developmental. Part of the movement's force and effectiveness has certainly been a function of its intensive focus on sexual oppression. Moreover, the organization of autonomy was an indispensable prerequisite for a clear formulation of the myriad problems surrounding male supremacy in general. At the same time, however, this isolation fostered a tendency to proclaim the socio-historical primacy of women's oppression over class, national, and racial oppression... (James 146)

By the help of emergence of feminist point of views that came out after slavery years, women of color struggled against the violence, discrimination and oppression. Civil War also gave black people the opportunity to defense their positioning in racial society. However "according to pre and post-Civil War arguments, the black was by nature a savage brute" (Petesch 18). Moreover, the acts of blacks have been seen "...as bloodthirsty in the pre-Civil War arguments, where revolt is the specter in the white psyche" (18). In the post Civil War, these arguments began to disappear and the black ones' needs for liberation started to decrease. "Afro-American historical victimization at the hands of white hegemony represents the conditions that have created and serve to

perpetuate a black worldview or ideology” (Awkward 26). After struggling for gaining humanistic rights, the colored writers started to deal with “...Black women’s experience in sexual as well as racial terms...” (48)

Being aware of these facts, both famous contemporary writers, Alice Walker and Toni Morrison aim to portray the experiences of black women in their novels. In most of their novels the “...characters...must search for identity by returning to the neighborhood and to the communal experience” (Bjork 163). They do this to survive in a society where they cannot escape from being victims.

Both Walker and Morrison “...deepen our understanding of the limitations and possibilities of lives of black Americans...” (Bell 269) They are African-American writers and their advantage is to be colored people in white society. “This is evident in the way that Walker has passed on some of Southern heritage in her fiction” (Lauret). Likewise, Morrison expresses her knowledge about black life creating fictional characters. “Morrison’s strengthening of definitions and focusing of perception is reflected in the novels’ narrative structures” (Birch 151).

Nearly all novels of these writers study “...destructive effects of ...racism on individual African Americans and on the African American community” (Kubitschek 40). As stated by Davis “Awareness of being black is the most powerful and the most fertile single inspiration for black writers in America” (Davis 3). Both works of Walker and Morrison have been praised for their compassionate portrayals of women who have survived different forms of emotional and physical sufferings. Being African-American women writers, their “...writings tend to unmask the double standards implicit in racist and sexist exclusionary practices, and to give them a glimpse of a world without color lines” (Roses-Randolph 73).

After 1970s, African American literature emerged as one of the important part of American Literature most of the African-American writers of 20<sup>th</sup> century; especially dealt with experiences of Blacks. Black writers of contemporary American fiction, Toni Morrison and Alice Walker have focused on suffer and struggle of Blacks in the United States. As there were black writers, both of them emphasized that to be a black woman is more different than to be a woman. Not only Walker’s novels *Meridian* and *The Color Purple* but also Morrison’s novels *The Bluest Eye* and *Beloved* have presented how Black women could survive in hard conditions. Both of the writers demonstrated the African-American women’s life vividly and the characters in their novels have suffered beyond

what one can think human being can endure. Reading these important works; one can see the reasons of why black women suffer and the problems that black women face.

## **PART I**

### 1.1. AFRICAN-AMERICANS IN 1700s - 1800s

African-Americans were those people who "... brought to the English colonies as slaves in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries" (Levine 3). Their "... full participation in the American society was denied for many years" (Hogue 49). The white American excluded, the black Americans. "... In America the Afro-American represents a difference, another... a level of human experience that the dominant society denies" (23). These positions led them to sustain inhuman behaviors:

The Afro American is a descendant of the slaves, while the white American is a descendant of the master. The Afro-American comes from Africa; the white American comes from Europe. Slavery and later racial segregation produced for the Afro-American a condition that includes suffering and pain; the white American belongs to a culture that views pain and suffering as aberrant. (23–24)

As Hogue emphasizes, African-Americans were not regarded as equal to white Americans. The places from where they came were different, and their position in American society was obviously somewhat different. These truths were the evidences of their future life:

Their life style, their occupational possibilities, their prospects of change and mobility, were predetermined. These limitations in turn threw slaves back upon their own cultural world whose dictates and values were accepted with a minimum of ambivalence questioning or inhibiting self-consciousness while some house servants, artisans, and urban slaves may have aspired to emulate the manners, style, and culture of the master class, for the mass of slaves the peer group and role models...the significant others...remained black. Of course there was desire for things the whites possessed...the freedom, power, mobility, luxuries...but the road to these ends seemed to lie not in attempting to emulate the whites but rather by entering fully into sacred world of one's own peers with its comforting precedents and promises, its strategies alternative sources of power. (Levine 139)

The lives of slaves were restricted totally by the white Americans. Even they did not have the chance to decide their lives. They wanted to have the opportunities that their masters had. To achieve these facilities, they knew that they had to struggle.

Black Americans were aware of attitudes of white ones towards them. To the white American, the African-American is the other "... that which introduces the gaps, incompleteness, and contradictions in the definition or constitution of the subject or object. The nature of the interaction between the two reflects this difference" (Hogue 24). African-Americans noticed that there was "white supremacy..." (49) against them and getting rid of this superiority was not very easy. Black Americans were "...disadvantages vis-à-vis whites in the United States" (Staples 63).

The African-Americans "... did not carry with them a network of beliefs, customs, institutions..." (Levine 3) and were deprived of their real culture. Black Americans were brought from Africa to the United States as slaves and stripped of their names, languages and cultures" (Staples 66). They began to live in a different world that ignored their humanity. Both "Racial oppression..." (14) and "...racial inequality..." was visible:

Slavery created a bipolar social structure where class contradictions were expressed in their simplest form: an enormous dispossessed mass, forced to work for its survival, subjected by a small dominant group with all-encompassing powers. Opposite skin colors further differentiated masters and slaves. A typical example of this structure was the plantation system, although the exploitation of Black slaves in the mines was not all that different. Within these socioeconomic organizations, the lifestyle of the slaves was ruled by the pragmatic concept of the economic worth of slave labor. (Staples 66)

The slaves did not have any property. To the white masters, the color of their skin was different together with their race. Due to these differences they had to struggle for survival, even under the worst conditions of life. They were isolated because of their color. They had no right to live like white Americans. "...African-Americans living in the south were struggling for survival in the face of physical and mental repression and the loss of most of the rights" (Blackshire- Belay 39). They had to endure cruel people who administered them:

When black people got to this country, they were Africans; a foreign people. Their customs, attitudes, desires were shaped to a different place, a radically different life. What a weird and unbelievably cruel destiny for those people who were first brought here. (Jones 1)

The very harsh conditions were waiting for Blacks in America, especially in South America. Their future was predetermined by the white American. They were changed in unknown social surroundings. "Black Americans had no choice in their racial membership. Any degree of black ancestry classified them as black" (Staples 66). The attitudes towards Blacks caused to destroy their previous cultural life:

The reliability and productivity of the enterprise to which the African slave was attached was based on its simple organization and jail-like character and on the limiting of communication between its members. In the same manner that a jail is not a society, so plantations and mines do not constitute social organizations, although they may, in the long run, cause a new society had a vested interest in not permitting slaves to interact freely, for with social cohesion might come a sense of solidarity. That is why we can say that deculturation was a technological device applied to the exploitation of slave labor, since a common culture gives a group dignity, cohesion, and a sense of identity. (Fraginals 7)

The masters of the slaves aimed to dehumanize the blacks. To them, if they had come together and had shared their thoughts, they would have united and then there would have been a new social environment. Because of these reasons, the slaves were not independent and they could not communicate each other. "The creation of African-American culture was not a simple process of radical acculturation followed by forced acculturation. It was, rather, the product of a complex of syncretism..." (Harris 104) The African-American culture was not the result of the blacks' adaptation to their "... environment in order to survive and thrive, both individually and collectively" (Coyle, Garside, Kelsall, Peck 1138). All the manners of whites were the result of their opinions about Blacks since to white ones, colored ones were others:

The exclusion of the Afro-American has more to do with the discursive formation that defines whites' definition of reality than it has to do with intentional, motivated racism. But the images and myths invested in the Afro-American become integral practices within the dominant ideological apparatus. They become a part of the myth of an American concusses... its process of normalization, its principle of unity and cohesion. They provide the ruling social order with an explanation to overcome the contradiction the Afro-American represents within its discursive formation. The ideological apparatus reproduces itself in its various practices by reproducing these Afro-American myths and images as Other. (Hogue 24)

As indicated by Hogue the exact reason of discrimination of African-Americans is racism. Although, the black are not responsible for their color, they are denied because of their black body. To Black Americans, race is "...no usefully distinguishing factor in human relationship" (Hutner 539). They have been used by white men and women for some financial aims in inhuman conditions:

Setting aside, then the idyllic interpretations and a few exceptions, we are left with the concrete fact that a mass of Africans were forcibly moved to America and made to work within an organization of prisonlike characteristics for productive purpose. This elementary principle cannot be ignored if one wishes to analyze seriously the cultural contributions of Africans in America. One must keep in mind, moreover that the majority of these Africans upon arriving in America, did not become integrated into organically created and developed towns. On the contrary, they were taken to uninhabited areas, where homogeneous work groups were formed under the absolute command of certain individuals who forced them to work in the fields and mines. On other occasions they were forcibly incorporated into productive units of this type that were already in operation. (Fraginals 7)

It is an undeniable fact that the black African brought America for personal benefits and they were obligated to live as if they were no human beings. There were lots of limitations in front of them and the black Americans could not go beyond these restrictions. Even though the blacks had to survive within these dehumanizing conditions, no one could deny that they were much help in America.

In this new environment the black people perceived that they had to struggle and be alive. They did not bring anything with them. Moreover they did not have anything in common but "... they shared a fundamental outlook toward the past, present, and future and common means of cultural expression which could well have constituted the basis of a sense of common identity and world view capable of withstanding the impact of slavery" (Levine 4). Even during these slavery periods, they wanted to remember their past by the way of their verbal expressions:

In their song, as in their tales, aphorism, proverbs, anecdotes, and jokes, Afro- America slaves, following the practices of African cultures they had been forced to leave behind them, assigned a central role to the spoken arts, encouraged and rewarded verbal improvisation, maintained the participatory nature of their expressive culture, and utilized the spoken arts to voice criticism as well as to uphold traditional values and group cohesion.  
(6)

In spite of the loss of their relation with their own culture, blacks continued some of their verbal abilities. To Blacks, these verbal arts caused much useful "...occasions for the individual to transcend at least symbolically, the inevitable restrictions of his environment and his society by permitting him to express deep held feelings which ordinarily could not be verbalized" (8). They encouraged the black Americans to openly state their feelings about each other and their master. They weren't allowed to continue their African culture, so Blacks created a new culture in slavery surroundings:

The culture brought by the Africans was more or less destroyed and reworked through slavery. With regard to the social and technological organization of production relations, slavery brought its own culture that had little or nothing to do with European, African, Indian or Asian cultural elements. The centuries of slave work broke all the pre existing cultural contributions and produced a peculiar, vigorous culture that took root and expanded within the society, among individuals, families, groups and social classes. Therefore, what appeared later, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as Blacks culture was only a culture produced by slave societies. Within the former slave societies, typical slave cultural elements persisted well into the twentieth century. These were the

elements that appeared in religious practices, magic, music, family organization, cuisine, and other aspects... (Fraginals 41)

Because of the fact that the blacks were deprived of their African culture, creating a new culture in an absolutely different life was unavoidable. It was certain that this culture was the result of slavery life. "They were collected belatedly, most frequently by men and women who had little understanding of the culture from which sprang, and little scruple about altering or suppressing them" (Levine 36). The slavery formed their life:

People of African descent have resisted oppression throughout history, whether resistance originated within or outside the Africa continent. From the fifteenth through much of the nineteenth centuries, Africans were enslaved by people both indigenous and foreign to Africa-men and women resisted internal African slavery and enslavement in the institutions developed by Europeans in the Western Hemisphere, or New World societies. Despite resistance, the centuries-long African slave trade resulted in the enslavement... (Okihiro 188)

Even though black people have opposed to slavery, they have always been "...accepted an inferior status..." (Harris 209) Due to specially the color of their skin, they have been discriminated and isolated. They have had some rights to live freely after emancipation and "...there has been some progress and improvement in matters related to race, there still exists an entrenched racial divide and hierarchy in the United States" (Cashmore 9).

## **1.2. AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN**

It is evident that African-Americans are the descendent of the slave Africans who were brought to America and had to survive within evil conditions. "Everyone agrees that slavery imposed special burdens upon women" (Fox Genovese 50).

Everything was in favor of white women and slave holding women especially in South America where the harsh hands of slavery was seen obviously:

Southern women belonged to a slave society that differed decisively from northern bourgeois society to which it was politically bound. Slavery as a social system shaped the experience of all its women, for slavery influenced the nature of the whole society, not least its persisting rural character. Southern slave society consisted largely of a network of households that contained within themselves the decisive relations of production and reproduction. In the South, in contrast to the North, the household retained a vigor that permitted Southerners to ascribe many matters ... notably labor relations, but also important aspects of gender relations... to the private, sphere, whereas northerners would increasingly ascribe them to the public spheres of market and state. The household structure and social relations of Southern society had multiple and far-reaching consequences for all spheres of Southern life, including law, political economy, politics, and slaveholders relations with yeomen and other non-slaveholding whites. And it had special consequences for gender relations in general and women's experience in particular. (Fox-Genovese 38)

Slavery deeply affected African women in the South. When the conditions of North were compared with the condition of the South, which could be understood that in the South the slaves obliged to work and help increasing the wealth of slaveholders. Moreover colored women didn't have equal positions compared with colored men:

It is a cruel irony that the black women's role as a worker has been used to represent dominance over and emasculation of black men. This predisposition ignores both historical and socio-economic realities. Black women were brought to this country for two economic reasons: to work and to produce workers. Although they were valued for their reproductive function, as were white women settlers, it was only of equal importance with their labor. (Scaff 41)

The black men brought to America only for their physical power that would provide the production in the fields. On the contrary to slaveholders, black women had

different roles. They had to help their white women master in the kitchen. They had to give birth to increase the number of the slaves who worked in the house, in the fields. This was certain that slave "...women were raped" (Staples 63) by white masters. The situation of black slave women was much more different from the other women and "the condition of women in a slave society can only be compared to that of slaves" (Fox-Genovese 47). Slavery made Black women's situation much more different:

The history of slave women, like that of the women of other oppressed groups, races, nations, and classes, demonstrates 'how' dangerous it can be to study women in isolation from the interlocking systems of class, gender, and race relations that constitute any society. By modern feminist standards, slave women did escape, some of the fetters of privilege that imprisoned white northern women. But surely they did not escape the larger constraints imposed by life in a slave society. (48)

The slave women not only had to "...resist the forces of oppression that they must eventually encounter in a society which is based on race and class exploitation..." (Staples 168) but also they had to struggle for surviving within that discriminating conditions. "The black women shared the deformed equality of equal oppression with the black man" (Schoff 41). Though their oppression wasn't the same, both the black men and women were under supremacy of white people. "The racism, classism, and sexism associated with each woman's experience of being Black and female in the United States are the critical measurements of their oppression (Joseph-Lewis 20). The black women slave was not a man and she was not a white person. Actually, her god given color was the first reason of her lower status and the second one was her gender.

The "...experiences of black women..." (Okihiro 189) could not resemble the experiences of white women. "...Black women always had to work to survive" (Richardson 79). She was the significant person who gave birth and looked after children and her husband. Nevertheless, "... from a white supremacist perspective, Black women were seen as unladylike, unfit and immoral" (79). Moreover Southern women's burden could not be seen as the same as other women in America:

As members of a slave society, Southern women differed in essential respects from other American women, although their experience has not figured prominently in the development of American history... Southern women's history should force us to think seriously about the relation between the experiences that unite women as members of a gender and those that divide them as members of specific communities, classes, and races. It should, in other words, challenge us to recognize class and race as central, rather than incidental, to women's identities and behavior... to their sense of themselves as women. (Fox-Genovese 39)

The position of the slave women and the experience of these women couldn't be generalized with the experience of the other women in America. There existed differences of class and race. Class and race usually were seen to be the determinants for the experiences of women. "Facile generalizations about the parallels between the struggle of blacks and women for status ignore the complexity and distinctiveness of the history of black women..." (Bell 240) The social relationships of colored women also shaped by the conditions of slavery:

Gender race and class relations constituted the grid that defined Southern women's objective positions in their society constituted the elements from which they fashioned their view of themselves and their world, constituted the relations of different groups of southern women to one another. The class relations that divided and interlocked southern women played a central role in their respective identities. Slaveholding, slave, yeoman, poor white, and middle-class town women, as members of a gender, shared the imposition of male dominance, but their experience of that dominance differed significantly according to class and race. (43)

Male dominance differed among societies in the South America. The attitudes towards women were also varied. The blacks women were slaves, this difference meant that their class was very lower and they were isolated from the society especially because of the slavery. On the contrary other women, who were from different classes, were much luckiest when they were compared to the slave women. "The household world of Southern women evolved as part of the development of Southern slave society" (65).

Slave women had to resist against both her master's behaviors and male members of her family:

Black women must recognize that in the same manner that they have developed a perspective on the liberation movement based on their past and present experiences, so too have white women developed their perspective. It is incumbent upon both Black and White women to become familiar with each other's history and the ways in which their sexual oppression has been felt and has influenced their present concerns and priorities. It is incumbent upon White women to understand that this is both a sexist and racist society and that, as social beings, they too participate in inhumane social conditions. White women's position in United States society as the benefactors of racism has allowed them to ignore their Whiteness. (Joseph-Lewis 40)

Although the experiences of black and white women in America differ, since their gender is the same, they should act together. Black or white women are exposed to oppression in different aspects. White women are aware of the fact that the black women have to resist against both sexist and racist society. In black women life "...there is such a thing as racial-sexual oppression which is neither solely sexual ...the history of rape of Black women by white men as a weapon of political repression (Bell 24).

### **1.3. THE SOCIO-CULTURAL BACKGROUND OF AFRICAN-AMERICANS IN 1960s-1970s**

After 1950s, the life on Americans especially African-Americans began to change obviously. Rapid social changes affected all human beings in America. After the two World Wars, industrial and socio-culture developments caused new social groups in all countries:

... Afro-America, as a result of an enormous social transformation, developed ostensibly as a more visible and sharply defined urban, racial, and cultural group. This transformation, which resulted from economic

modernization in the South and industrial expansion in the North, caused a shift in the labor force and mass migration out of rural South where the majority of blacks lived until the 1950s. After 1950 a new phenomenon of Afro-America social reality appeared: large urban black populations. (Hogue 48–49)

Even though the African-Americans who were viewed as the others were seen as invisible group of people and were denied by the white Americans, after the 1950s, by the help of some social movements their existence came into being. Without these changes that would be hard to have humanist rights. Moreover, these variations help Blacks expressing their self:

Between World War II and the early 1970s many changes transpired in America. There were large scale industrialization and urbanization. Advances in technology continued to revolutionize industry and workplace, and the hegemony of the United States as a world superpower materialized. It is impossible to determine the effects of this technologically transformed society and these new complex societal forces on the Afro-American. But one result is obvious: most blacks acquired a different basis for addressing their existence. New modes of self expression and new systems of representation began to emerge. (49)

The two Wars inevitably affected the socio-cultural life and economic situation of all countries that joined. Being in the most powerful country, America the African-Americans saw themselves as an important and necessary part of the society and the members of this group wanted to share their ideas clearly. The advances that appeared after World War II and went on in 1970s helped these groups defend their existence in American society. “As a result of their political struggles in the 1960s, black Americans are represented, although not equally, in almost every sphere of American life” (Staples 62). Although the discrimination against black Americans continued, the opportunity to their voices started to be felt.

#### 1.4. THE IMPACTS OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AFTER 1960s

By the help of social movements that emerged in 1960s, the African-Americans began to have different kinds of right that changed their position in America. “In the late fifties and early sixties the institutionalized racial repression that ... denied them full participation in the American society no longer seemed natural” (Hogue 49). The struggles and revolts of Blacks helped them to express their beliefs:

There was Watts in 1965, Newark in 1966, and Detroit in 1967. These riots and rebellions along with economic discrepancies and more available information heightened the civil rights, and black power struggles and continued to undermined and bring into question the authority and legitimacy of the dominant American ideological apparatus. (50)

During these first years of 1960s, the blacks who started to perceive that as they were people, they had to rights that would protect them socially and politically. Therefore, they began to rebel against the white supremacy. These revolts demonstrate that there would be different types of resistant:

In the post-slavery years various theoretical perspectives have competed as an explanation of the status of Afro-Americans in the United States. Until the last 20 years those theories were all in the range of biological determinism to racial equality through assimilation. While Pan-Africanism took hold as a social movement during certain early periods, it never fitted into the mainstream of scholarly thought about the condition or fate of Afro-Americans until recent years. After assimilation concepts were put to a reality test by the civil rights movement during the 1960s and found wanting, a more nationalist orientation emerged among black intellectuals in the late '60's. Along with a renaissance of Marxist theory, the theoretical perspective that began to dominate the scholarly interpretation of black life was internal colonialism. (Staples 9)

After emancipation lots of intellectual Blacks struggled for expressing the African American position in the United States. Only with the help of the civil rights movement, the isolation of the Blacks took attention. They began to defend their rights as human beings:

Concurrent with the early stages of the civil rights movement, which had challenge successfully in the courts the legality of certain laws barring blacks from full participation in the dominant American society's institutions and practices, were other fermenting social developments that would question and undermine some of the moral and political practices within the ideological apparatus. (Hogue 50)

The civil rights movement provided to defense the blacks human rights in front of the laws that had limited their resistance against white society for centuries. And these rights caused some changes in American society. After the Civil War, the troubles of colored men started to have a significant place:

White Americans, to be sore, have always been preoccupied with Negroes, but rarely since the years immediately preceding and following the Civil War have black people occupied so important a place in the national consciousness as they in the past several decades. The standard mechanisms by which white were able to repress their recognition of the Negro's plight were rendered increasingly ineffective by the middle of the twentieth century. The belief that Negroes, being inferior, status, that they were in fact quite content with the cast-ridden life they were thrust into after the Civil War, and that if there was any problem, it centered on a handful of white and black radicals, agitators, and neurotic malcontents was undermined as black America became more and more able to articulate and act upon their dissatisfactions and their aspirations. The fantasy, indulged in by so many whites at the turn of the century that what they liked to call the "Negro problem" was at best temporary, since Negroes, unable to stand the rigors of either the Northern climate or of free competition were in the process of extinction as a people, was belied by the increasing presence of blacks in all parts of county. Not even the comfortable conviction that, since the United States was an open society, those Negroes on

the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder had no one to blame but themselves (though it is a conviction that retains potency to this day) could be totally persuasive to this people who had just experienced the irrationality and injustice of the Great Depression. (Levine 87)

The blacks were seen as the lower group of people for centuries. However, after Civil War in the middle of twentieth century, the movements were the way to express their desires. “That Negroes come to occupy an increasingly prominent place in the aspects of the postwar era (87). By the help of Civil War, the blacks began to take into account and “... most of the rights obtained after the Civil War...” (Blackshire-Belay 39) These periods assisted Blacks and provided the expectation of recovery:

REBELLION or revolution ... that was the burning question of 1960s. Whether the cry was “We Shall Overcome” or “Burn, Baby, burn!” black and white voices were raised in protest against racism, poverty, war, corruption, and sexism. Americans were deeply disillusioned by the moral bankruptcy of their political and economic system and took radical action to correct or to escape the social injustice of the decade in myriad forms of movements and cults. These radical movements and cults ranged from the bombing of buildings identified as part of the military industrial complex by the Weathermen, a white revolutionary splinter group of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), and the burying of cars as menaces to the ecology by college students, to the emergence of the drop-out and turn-on followers of Timothy Leary, the guru of the drug culture and former Harvard professor, and the ritual murders by the Charles Manson cult. Eclipsing the first manned United States landing on the moon in 1969, a revolution in moral conscience and social consciousness was underway. Spearheading these radical changes and most significant for their impact on the Afro-American novel from 1963 to 1983 were the black power movement and, toward the end of the 1960s, the women’s rights movement. (Bell 235)

During 1960s, not only the black people but also the white ones attempted to revolt against the war, racism and other discriminating and spoiling acts. Both of these social groups wanted to live in a democratic country. There had to be social and moral

changes in their country. These radical changes influenced the African-American writing by the way of Black Power Movement and the women's Rights Movement:

Nearly a quarter of a century ago the social and cultural fabric of the United States of America was shaken to the core of its European foundations by what has been termed a Black Revolution or Black Power Movement. The year 1966 witnessed the official beginning of this movement, when Stokely Carmichael, the new chairman of the student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), announced his organization's redirection from its traditional methods of demonstrating and protesting for the civil rights denied to African Americans citizens, by laws and custom, for more than a century. (Blackshire-Belay 37)

The Black Movement was the result of an organization that externalized the discrimination and suffers of Blacks. The Power had "a meaning as large as the history of the struggle of black people against racism in the United States" (Bell 236). It helped to state "...the determination of black people to define and liberate themselves" (236). This organization necessitated the "...black people to unite, to recognize their heritage, to build a sense of community" (236). That reminded their aims and encouraged them "to lead their own organization..." (236) The discrimination seen in nearly all social spaces began to disappear:

Political, social, educational, and cultural institutions and practices within the ideological apparatus became more flexible and expansive. The political arena opened up to include black elected officials. Blacks began to form a presence in state legislatures. Colleges and universities enrolled larger numbers of black students. The corporate and business world and the media institutions became more sensitive to the historical exclusion of black and other minorities. (Hogue 52-53)

In 1960s, the civil rights movements "... produced the options for disenchanted and repressed groups-blacks" (51). These movements caused the changes in the society's "...socio cultural system" (51). The limitations against the blacks began to vanish. Every

part of society concerned with the blacks and other groups of people who lived in America. No longer there were restrictions in all institutions against African Americans:

This transformation in theory and ideology arose because blacks began to define the nature of their situation, to write their own books and publish through black-controlled media. Members of the liberal sociological establishment retained their faith in assimilation as a solution to the race problem, retreated from the study of race relations or in a few cases became part of an intellectual neo-conservative white black lash. (Staples 9)

By the help of novelty in the socio cultural system, blacks had the opportunity to express their feelings and position that isolated them from the American society for many years. “Within the cultural apparatus, the literary institutions... became more sensitive to the exclusion of Afro-American literature, other minority literatures, and women’s literature” (Hogue 53). Blacks began to form a presence in lots of institutions that were managed by them:

...participation in the civil rights movement, ambivalence about the black power movement, especially its male chauvinism, and boredom with their actual or expected lives as suburban housewives spurred many American women more than a century later to renewed activism for women’s rights. Most of the leading feminists, of course, were and are middleclass white women. (Bell 239)

Not only the black and white men but also the white and black women attempted to struggle for achieving their rights in American society. “Just as the nineteenth-century struggle to free slaves, the women’s rights movements of the 1960s were fired by the civil rights and black power movements” (239). In other words, the civil rights movements provided to start new kind of organizations. The black women insisted that “their own emancipation cannot be separated from the emancipation of their men” (240). Therefore, the rights of colored women were taken into account:

Thus, as the public interest began to shift in the late 1960s from the rights of blacks to the rights of women, publishers became more receptive to the voices of black women writers, and novels by Margaret Walker, Rosa Guy, Mary Vroman, Louise Meriwether, Paule Marshall, Kristin Hunter, Caroline Polite, Sarah Wright, Alice Walker, Alice Childress, Ellease Southerland, Gloria Naylor, Toni Morrison, Gayl Jones, and Toni Cade Bambara, among the better known, were all published the end of 1983. (Bell 240)

The years that witnessed the civil rights movements, were also the years when the black women had some rights in American life. As a result, women writers began to have the chance to write on black women and their experiences in a white society. Both colored men and women had the opportunity to take part in American society:

The 1960s saw America undergo social and cultural changes that still affect the nation and promise to do so well into the next century. For African American in general and the black middle class in particular, the sixties were a time not only of change but also of expansion of new opportunities. This was also a period of personal and cultural self-affirmation, in which black Americans as a whole began to reinvasion America. Than the massive movement of black people toward the attainment of civil rights and equal opportunities met with resistance goes without saying. (Banner-Haley 27)

As it is indicated before, after the civil rights movements there occurred socio cultural variation in America. All minorities especially the blacks moved forward to obtain legal rights both for their women and for themselves. "The civil rights movement may have been their finest hour, but it was only the beginning of a new and in many ways more painful journey to real freedom" (28). The rapid changes of course meant that they had to face with difficulties to live independently. "Between World War II and the early 1970s... most blacks acquired a different basis for addressing the existence" (Hogue 49). They realized that there was novelty for "...self-expression and new systems of representation began to emerge" (49).

**PART II**

## 2.1. THE HIGHLIGHTS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN LITERATURE

Emancipation provided the African-Americans an environment to express themselves literary and orally in American society. "Black writers made important literary contributions to the antislavery movement almost as soon as it began to gather strength, in 1830s" (Bruce 1). At first, "...black writers sought to use their pens to fight against racist practices and ideas." (1) The initial problem in their lives was "... ruthless and violent racist mob" (Chapman 559). They began to write narratives on their experiences. "A rich and varied body of literature has been created by black Americans which have become an organic part of the literature of the United States" (21). Their literary products were the portrayals of their previous lives:

In their works, black writers directly confronted the conditions of an increasingly racist society in everything from their choice of subjects to the way they drew their characters and the kinds of moods they tried to portray. (Bruce 4)

It was unavoidable fact that their resistance against hard conditions of life was in presence in their black literature. "The Africans torn away from their native languages and cultures and ... began to use English as a written language of literary expression" (Chapman 21). It was a means to demonstrate their experiences:

The rich variety of Afro American folk imagination and expression made its impact on the consciousness and sensibility of both blacks and white American writers and has entered the written literature of the United States in many different shapes and ways. This incomparable cultural harvest of the black man's experience, anguish, humor and creativity in the United States remains a viable and potent source writers in the twentieth century draw upon in accordance with their individual needs, talents and literary vision. (22)

African-American literary products began to emerge in all literary aspects. These works also influenced the white writers. This is an undeniable fact that black literary

works contributed to American literature. The previous racist behaviors were the main subjects of their writing:

All Afro-American writers have had to contend with the dominant American ideological cultural apparatus and its literary practices and institutions, which, by the mere nature of their system of formation, exclude certain Afro-American texts and images. Although there is no evidence that the motives and strategies of these practices are consciously racist, their effects can be interpreted as racist. Afro-American writers have both accepted and reproduced established American images of the Afro American, or they have moved to counter these images. The publication, review, distribution, and reception of their text are tied inextricably to the kinds of images, values, defined literary experiences, and stereotypes they produce. (Hogue 31)

To be accepted by the white American writer was not so easy. To white writers, the blacks' writings had the same and known characteristics and they were related to racial issues. These aspects of African writing prevented them to be included in American literature. "Those Afro-American texts that dealt with nonconformist themes and subjects...aggressive, dignified intelligent or assertive blacks...were ignored" (36). The cause of this ignorance was that they intended to visualize life-like characters and incidents:

We can detect a pattern in the development of Afro-American expression very similar to the general line of American writing. The real achievements in imaginative writing follow an initial period of expository autobiographical, religious and political writing. (Chapman 24)

As stated by Chapman, the progression in African-American literature had parallel when it is compared to American literature. The social movements that emerged in sixties witnessed "... the production of new Afro-American images and new Afro-American texts" (Hogue 48). These recent works were the representatives of their capabilities:

The modern period of literature by Negro authors, marked by the mastery of literary craftsmanship, achievements in form, and the critical definition of specific literary and cultural problem of Negro Americans within American culture... (Chapman 24)

The contemporary African writers demonstrated their literary success by the help of their efforts. "Self-definition and pride receive great emphasis in the bulk of criticism published since the mid-1960s" (Smith 142). The black writer "uses language that reflects the culture... the writer understands the universality of African peoples' experience..." (Blackshire-Belay 6) The Black writing has begun to show the difficulties only in America where Negro people are minatory, but also it points to the minatory groups who have had difficulties in all over the world. The African "writer transcends the local or fixed boundary of imagination in style, imagery, and form...the writer shows a quest for justice, harmony, and peace" (86). These writers commenced to create an original literary style:

Although many Afro- American writers such as Morrison, Gaines, Murray, McPherson, and others consciously or unconsciously reproduce dominant literary conventions, genres and stereotypes-therby allowing their works to be appropriated... the Afro American in the eighties has not returned to a pre sixties status for the restoration of Afro - American *Other* is clearly established. (Hogue 17)

Although contemporary African writers were so successful in their field, "... new Afro-American texts and images informs us that the cultural apparatus expanded as a result of the sixties' movements, but it did not change its goals, values, assumptions, and basic suppositions" (158). Thus, the racial issues continued to occupy their writing:

The term characterizing the 1960s and the critical outlooks stressed from that time include "the Black aesthetic" and "the Black Arts Movement. These phrases accompanied the political slogan "Black power" and the related assertion "Black is beautiful, the beauty of blackness had been noted before, but it had not been stated so openly so often, so loudly, and by so many. The new mood more often celebrated blackness and

expressed identity, as opposed to a defensive posture. Nevertheless, polemics and protest did not automatically disappear. (Smith 156)

In 1960s, as being the result of Black Power, the Black Aesthetic and the Black Arts Movement emerged and influenced the Black writing of that time. These movements helped the writers to express their thoughts and feelings obviously. “Attached to the historical project of liberation, the Black Arts Movement heightened the interest in black literature” (Blackshire-Belay 5). “Black people, we know have not been “liberated” from racism by their writings...” (Hunter 427) “Blacks...tried to write themselves out of...” (474) racism and slavery, but these phrases did not leave them totally:

The African American person, whether critic, theorist, or writer, operates within a rhetorical context placed in opposition to oppressive situations. This is the unique character of the literature produced by African American women and men in this country, indeed, throughout the entire Americans. We are transformed by openness to change, by proactive creation by the new, the novel, and the useful. By our admission of freedom, we oppose enslavement, physical or psychological. But of course it is true that we have not always been successful in the positions we have taken. However, on the whole, from the earliest in the history of our literature until the present we have been on a journey for truth and righteousness. In effect, this literary process has been a prominent part of our quest for liberation in the sense that clarifying our roles in the larger “flow of humanity introduce us to the world in essential and necessary use of language.” (6-7)

Africans in America were under pressure of some hard conditions even if they were writers. “Black women are transformed by their appeal to humanity. Black men are transformed by their openness, to change. Both are opposed to enslavement, either physical or psychological” (5). The radical changes in society started to affect the works of colored writers:

...It is not surprising that from 1962 to 1983 the Afro-American novel has been characterized by continuity and change. During this period, black novelists sought structures and styles appropriate for the imaginative reconstruction of their sense of the double-consciousness of black people as refracted through their particular vision of a rapidly changing experience of social reality and art. (Bell 244)

The constant variations after 1960s, affected the literary works of African writers. They got rid of slavery and they faced to industrial world. Then the impacts of two World Wars and possession of some civil rights influenced their experiences. As a result of these changes, the images of black novels began to vary:

In contrast, as contemporary Afro-American novelists attempt to displace personal ambivalence and social absurdity with a new order of thinking, feeling, and sharing based on self-determination a sense of community, and a respect for human rights, most, like John O. Killens, John A. Williams, and Alice Walker continue the tradition of realism; while some, like Toni Morrison, explore poetic realism. Others, like Margaret Walker, Ernest Gaines, William Melvin Kelley, Ronal Fair, Hal Bennett, Charles Wright, Clarence Major, John Wideman, and Ishmael Reed, experiment with modern forms of slave narrative, romance, fable, and satire. (245)

The changes in American society affected the black novelists' writing attitudes. They used the methods of realism in different ways. "Because most contemporary black American novelists are college educated, it is not surprising that the literary and nonliterary influences on their use of narrative conventions have been wide-ranging and varied" (279). They found different ways of telling their subject matter:

...the Afro-American novel has its roots in the combined oral and literally traditions of Afro-American culture. It is one of the symbolic literary forms of discourse that black Americans have borrowed from Western culture and adapted in their quest for status, power, and identity in a racist, white, patriarchal North American social arena. The Afro-American novel in other words, is not a solipsistic, self-referential linguistic

system, but a symbolic socio-cultural act. (Coyle, Garside, Kelsall, Peck 1140-1141)

The literary conventions and images of black literature had impacts on Western literatures, even though it was a different type of writing dealing with racial issues. It was an undeniable fact that "... the presence of Afro-American literature and the awareness of its culture both resuscitate the study of literature in the United States and raise that study's standards" (Hunter 539). The roots of Black literature were African-American lives:

The receptivity of the black South African writers to Afro-American influence is at least partly due to their perception of significant similarities between their own experience-historical as well as contemporary-and that of American blacks. Both groups share a racial heritage; both bear the burdens of their colonial inheritance; both are familiar with the dehumanizing realist of a racist society; both have long histories of violent contact with whites; and both face a compelling need to affirm their blackness in the face of raw white assault. (Shaw 156)

Both South African writers and American blacks have had the same view towards literature. It is because of the fact that both of these groups struggle against the white supremacy and they suffered due to the similar reasons. The racial and isolating environment was surrounding them totally:

Every American writer of African descent works within and against the dual tradition-oral and literary, African and European, male and female-that each inherits as part of his or her North American cultural legacy and in which however marginally, each participates in the elusive quest for status, power and identity. Each writer's contribution and significance are therefore influenced by his or her relationship to past and present writers, as well as by the relationship of his or her texts to others in the tradition, both in the narrow Eurocentric sense of literary formalism and in the broader Afro centric cultural sense. (Coyle, Garside, Kelsall, Peck 1136)

The black writers, who came from Africa, dealt with individual effort against racial society. Their aim was to obtain personality in their society that saw them lower than the white ones. The effects of other writers coming from the same race couldn't be ignored.

By the help of the social movements, African-American novel began to be famous piece of African-American Literature. "Afro American modernist and postmodernist novelist are similar in emphasizing the freedom of the individual more than the group, technique more than message, and psychological and cultural revolution more than social" (Bell 337). It shows that African-American novel is much richer and various in concepts:

Although twentieth-century novelist like Hurston, Wright, Ellison, Baldwin, Williams, Kelley, Gaines, Morrison, A. Walker, Wideman, and Reed also employ the novel and romance as symbolic acts to explore the disparity between American myths and American reality, they do not approach the narrative tradition from the same ideological perspective as their predecessors or each other. Among other things, social and cultural change has encouraged the movement toward more individualism in the novelists and their aesthetics. They nevertheless share in a common tradition. This is largely because as members of the largest ethnic minority group in the United States, Afro-American novelists develop their personal and national identities within and against the distinctive pattern of values, orientations to life, and shared historical memories they acquired from contribute to Afro- American culture. (339)

The contemporary African American novelists were different in their attitude to write novels. The variations in the black society caused these writers to deal with personal affairs of their character. Individual became much more important to state having identity and individual effort was more significant than the group effort. African-American novel was "... the product of social and cultural forces that shape the author's attitude toward life..." (339)

## 2.2. PROMINENT BLACK WOMEN WRITERS

The independence of black literacy was given via the “...expansion of the dominant society’s institutions and practices...” (Hogue 55) The black publishing houses began to be independent, as well. “This freedom along with the materials and perspectives produced by the sixties social movements, allowed Afro-American writers to write new kind of texts” (55). The writing of black women “... had began to assert itself, after the advent of rights movement and, later, by the early 1970s of the second wave of feminism” (Huther 427). The socio-cultural variation provided blacks to express their ideas freely. “By the early 1970s, Black studies and then women’s studies had organized themselves as disciplines and academic departments or programs” (427). Though the obstacles that prohibit Black writing didn’t disappear totally, social changes made it flexible:

For almost a century, Afro-American critics and writers have been aware of the ways in which ideological pressures have dictated the canon of American literature. They also have been aware of the exclusion of certain Afro-American literary texts, images, and conventions from that canon. If we read the letters and fiction of the nineteenth-century writer Charles Chesnutt..., we can discern clearly be awareness that certain literary images, stereotypes, and conventions are sanctioned and promoted by editors, publishers, and critics, and that other Afro-American images and stereotypes are repressed or subordinated. If we read the essays of Zora Neale Hurston almost fifty years later, we again can discern that she too was quite aware of the pressures by ruling literary institutions to prohibit certain Afro-American images and texts. (Hogue 6-7)

As indicated by Hogue, the emergence of literature was not so easy. There were lots of obstacles against it. The black writers of course noticed these difficulties. Even in twentieth century, black writers, especially black women writers had to resist against hard conditions of writing in a white society. Most black women writers, like Zora Neale Hurston contributed the production of black literature. “Hurston wrote a feminist work (*Their Eyes Were Watching God*) long before the women’s movement reached its peak in the 1960s. She was an innovator and pathfinder” (Blackshire-Belay 47). Hurston was the

author of the most famous work *Their Eyes were Watching God* that is about a colored woman character:

Hurston *Their Eyes were Watching God* concerns the romantic quest of Janie Starks, a black woman who has the fortitude and intuitive wisdom to transcend the dehumanizing definitions... manifested her grandmother and in the men she marries-of a rational bourgeois society and to find her inner voice, her identity. Here Hurston turns upside down many of the myths and stereotypes about the Afro-American. Rejecting the usual pathological portrayal of Blacks, she exhumes spiritual, emotional, and other aspects of Afro-American consciousness...captured in folklore and folk wisdom...that had been excluded. Hurston is trying to approach a definition of existence where the resolution to the texts problem are reached differently by straining the ability of generic techniques to effect a closure within the text's discursive formation. To effect its closure, the novel formulates a counter or invented worldview... manifested in Janie's first two husbands and her grandmother...that is trapped in mainstream bourgeois contexts, values, and codes. But the novel also and ultimately presents a character Janie, who enables us to see the constraints of established ideological stereotypes and abstract constructs. Through Janie the text produces an experience whose lived and theoretical concept of history is *different* from the one the dominant American society imposes. (Hogue 25)

Zora Neale Hurston's novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) portrays the experiences of black women vividly. Demonstrating this, Hurston uses different ways of expressions and conventions. After the publication of the novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* "...the reviewers and critics of this novel saw no "universal" or lasting qualities. The novel was not the kind of writing defined as "great" literature" (26). Due to these criticisms "...it went out of print...except for small printings in Fawcett paperback in 1965 and by Greenwood Press in 1969 and limited editions on Negro Universities Press...." (26) Hurston has been viewed as a significant black woman writer who has produced an environment that lead to produce black writing independently. "The authentication of Hurston statue cannot be divorced from the authentication of the Afro American female literary tradition as a whole" (Benstock 63). Thus, Hurston can be viewed as the first important black woman writer:

...we shift our investigation from race and sex exclusively to an examination of definitions, assumptions, and criteria used determined the worth of literary text during the 1930s and 1940s. The neglect of Hurston's novel can be best explain of the naturalist movement in American literature during the first half of the twentieth century; second by identifying naturalism's criteria, standards, and assumptions about literature... its model for determining the worth of literary text; and third, by examining how closely Hurston, as compared to Wright and Petry, meets those naturalist standards and criteria. (Hogue 28-29)

During these years when Hurston's popular novel was published, the value of literary works was determined according to some qualities. Of course, the gender and color were obstacles, as well. Actually, "In the twentieth century, Hurston's rewriting of the sentimental romance, *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) celebrates the liberating possibilities of love, storytelling, and autonomy for black women" (Coyle, Garside, Kelsall, Peck 1142). Hurston's craftsmanship came into being via her original style of writing:

Zora Neale Hurston represented an even more striking perspective on Afro America than that either of Hughes or of Du Bois. Hurston was born in the all-black town of Eatonville, Florida. Unlike Hughes and Du Bois, then Hurston grew up surrounded by rural black folk culture, so much so that the excruciating pain with which that world had been made and forced to survive would not be known to her until later in her life. In many respects, it was the Harlem Renaissance that not only opened Hurston's eyes to the cruel reality of racism's effect on Afro America but also led her to return to that world in order both to recreate herself and to preserve and present its treasured cultural forms to America. (Banner-Haley 86-87)

In her childhood years Hurston had the opportunity to notice the culture of black society. Even though during that year she was not aware of the difficulties of black life in a white society, she began to realize the pressure of the white supremacy during following years. She couldn't close her eyes not to see the limitation of black life. So, she aimed to deal with black culture and black conventions:

As a result of the work of Hurston and others, Afro-American women writers would eventually attain recognition and equal status within the canons of that literature. Another, perhaps more important result would be the presentation of multifaceted nature of Afro America and the implicit prescription for an integrative diversity that would continue to emanate from within Afro America and to provide the means by which, to borrow Hughes's apt title, a way might be found to *Let America Be America Again*. (Banner-Haley 88)

The crafts of black women writers began to take attention and they were viewed as masterpieces of African American literature. "Afro- American novelists... develop their personal and national identities within and again the distinctive pattern of values, orientations to life, and shared ancestral memoirs they acquired from and contribute to African-American culture" (Coyle, Garside, Kelsall, Peck 1141). They continued to write on black issues:

Women writers such as Alice Walker, Toni Morrison, Gloria Naylor, Toni Cade Bambara, and Paula Marshall wrote novels and short stories depicting area of African American life that had gone untouched by many male African American writers. While the tradition of novelist John A. Williams, Richard Wright, James Baldwin, and Ralph Ellison became the standard by which critics evaluated African American letters prior to the 1970s, strong women writers emerged to demonstrate the broad scope of black literature. The rediscovery of Zora Neale Hurston by literary critics underscored the maturity of the new awakening in African American literature. The formation of a critical literary canon continued with the publication of Susan Willis's specifying: *Black Women Writing the American Experience*. (Blacksire-Belay 5)

The black women, writers' works differed from black men writers' in their attitude to deal with the issues that were not took into account by male writer. Therefore, the lives of black people were viewed in different ways. These works "...demonstrated the immensity..." (Blacksire-Belay 6) of African experiences in white society. Moreover, these writers "...explored every aspect of Africans' lives in the United States" (6). Even, these women writers dealt with the subjects unknown or ignored by most of the people:

...black women novelist provide a much neglected perspective and chores of voices on the human experience, but, contrary to the assumptions of some critics, this does not necessarily mean that their works constitute a distinctive literary tradition. The absence, silence or misrepresentation of black women in literary and nonliterary texts or contexts by black men as well as white men and women is now commonplace knowledge. (Bell 242)

Black Women writers were concerned about the ignored aspects of black experiences, especially black women's struggles against difficult conditions of their life. The writings of these black women writers aimed to "...give meaning and history, and to validate and make coherent the striving and yearning of those American who embrace feminism because it explains certain lived experiences" (Hogue 62). Thus, the literary products of those writers were unavoidably seen feminist:

Later, in the early seventies, feminist or black women produced representations of the historical past that show the historical oppression of black women and show that black women, underneath one-dimensional stereotypes, are complex human beings. The feminist discourse was triggered by the dominant American society's the black cultural nationalists, and white women's representations of the historical past that excluded the black women. (61-62)

In 1970s, the literary craft of black women writers came to its turning point in literature. The actual issues that were written by these women were past suffers of black women. Even though both the black men and white men in American were aware of the difficulties of being a black woman, these issues hadn't been taken into consideration for many years:

...many black women novelists employ to a greater or lesser degree the following signs and structures: (1) motifs of interlocking racist, sexist, and classist oppression; (2) black female protagonists; (3) spiritual journeys from victimization to the realization of person autonomy or creativity; (4) a centrality of female bonding or networking (5), a sharp focus on personal relationships in the family and community; (6) deeper, more detailed exploration and validation of the

epistemological power of the emotion; (7) iconography of women's clothing; and (8) black female language. (Bell 243)

The concepts that were taken into account by women writers were similar. They depicted the ideas, feelings and behaviors of African women toward white society. They had to resist against racism, sexism and classism. So, these women writers provided writings to demonstrate the real suffers and pains of black women. "Thus the richness, diversity, and vitality of contemporary African-American novel compel readers and critics alike to be as intellectually independent and imaginatively daring in their approach to black fictive world as the artists were in creating them" (338). Black women writers portrayed the black life in detail:

With varying degrees of subtlety and historical nuance, African American women novelists (especially Toni Morrison and Alice Walker) reconstructed the black world through the particular lens of race, gender, and class. The furor raised by their writings was not so much over the depiction of the brutal consequences of racism for the black community; this had been a constant theme in black literature. The anger was over the way in which these novelists deconstructed the middle class verities that earlier black writer had cherished. They presented a portrait of the psychological damage suffered by black women at the hands of black men. Who were themselves under the sway of white male society? (Banner-Haley 110 - 111)

Being well-known black writers, Alice Walker and Toni Morrison provided too much in production of black literature. They were black and women, so they were aware of the fact that their sex and color was the primary reason for oppression in the United States. With the help of their portrayals about black experiences, one could envision the struggle of black women clearly:

Thus, Celie, the central character in Alice Walker's widely acclaimed novel *The Color Purple*, suffered one humiliation after another through the story at the hands of black men, particularly sexual exploitation by "Mister". Celie managed to survive these trials by

bonding with black women. Her sister and Shug Avery led Celie into a world of self-esteem and assertiveness, intimacy and eventually love for all of humanity. Even if the novel was not entirely convincing (especially in its historical specifics), Walker did succeed in exposing much of the damage done to African American gender relations as a result of that community's absorption of the bourgeois dictates of gender. (Banner-Haley 111)

Alice Walker's famous novel *The Color Purple* described the experiences of black woman, Celie, in a male dominated environment. The protagonist of this novel struggles to be alive and free in these conditions. Even though the character strives against male characters, with the aid of female characters she is able to overcome her negative feelings and attitudes towards life. Then she begins to be concerned about human's life. Walker's novel conveys the survival and suffers of an African woman. "We are also intrigued by Alice Walker's adaptation of the epistolary method in the Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Color Purple* (1982), whose theme is a rewriting of Janie Crawford's dream in Hurston's romance of what a black woman ought to be" (Coyle-Coarside-Kelsall-Peck 1142). When one examines the works of Walker he/she can notice that most of her writings are the products of realist imagination. "Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist Alice Walker employs magical realism in *The Temple of my Familiar* (1989) to recreate the primordial sub-Saharan African mother of us all, whether, like paleontologists or fundamentalists; we call her Lucy or Eve (1136). Like Walker, there are lots of black writers who aim to convey their past in their works:

... there was more than enough former in the literary marketplace and writers' workshops for writers like John O. Killens, John A. Williams, Alice Walker, Gayl Jones, Toni Cade Bambara and Toni Morrison to fulfill their roles as black artist in defining the complexity of Afro-American life and, to paraphrase Ralph Ellison, to realize that in spite of all it: Technical experimentation, the autonomy of the novel as a system of artificial signs is qualified by its interrelation with other cultural systems, especially linguistic and ethical. (Bell 278)

Many black writers were aware of the fact that portraying the life of black people was not easy. These contemporary writers noticed that the convention of writing were not the only elements influencing the writing. The culture and language of the society also

affected the literary works. “In their definition of Afro-American life, these writers therefore continue to tap the roots of Afro-American culture and institutions... Black music, speech, religion, and the family...” (Bell 278) Even though they were brought to a new place, they didn’t want to destroy their traditions:

The other trend that came out of the sixties and early seventies seriously tried to engage the duality of Afro America. It could be said that many of the writers working along this path were engaged in a meditation on history. Their works sought to make sense of Afro America, not just for white audiences but also for themselves and their enlarged black middle class readership. These writers produced works, often complex in structure that pointed to a new vision of how Africans saw themselves in America of Reagan popularity, resurgent racism and calls for a revival of the civil rights movement. In some respects, this trend was a fruitful blend of the experimental, the feminist, and the academic. (Banner-Haley 113)

Having some social rights in America, the black writers began to deal with their past. They not only addressed to black people but also to white society. The writings of these African American writers were complicated. The feminist thought affected the works of black women writers:

One novel in which all of above could be seen at work was Toni Morrison song of *Solomon* (1977) ... Morrison’s brilliant epic novel about a Midwestern black middle class family clearly rivaled Ralph Ellison *Invisible Man*. Allegorical, historically grounded, and steeped in black folklore and magical tradition, Morrison’s novel took what was actually a simple story (a young man’s search for his roots) and with it wove an intriguing web of myth, history, and psychological portraiture about Afro America. Like any novel, it was not without its flaws, but it showed white literary critics that, especially in the hands of gifted talent, Afro America was by no means finished yielding powerful insights into the nation’s dialogue over race (and gender). (Banner-Haley 113)

Toni Morrison's novel *Song of Solomon* was concerned with the history of black men. Morrison was engaged in meditation on history and the history of Afro America. Her novel aims to emphasize that the freedom given has to be spiritual. In Morrison's works one can see that "...generally short poetic narratives whose celebration of the beauty, truth and possibilities of life is derived from the exploitation of its magic, mystery, and terror" (Bell 270). Likewise, Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (1970) is a sensitive exploration of Black girls' lives. Morrison's later novels, "Song of Solomon (1977) and *Tar Baby* (1981), include many examples of characters who define themselves rather than let the larger society do so" (Smith 158). Like other black writers, both Morrison and Walker have helped one to comprehend black family life:

Bambara's *Salt Eaters* is exceptional in its quest for a balance of the spiritual and political, of the traditional and modern. In Williams's *Sissie*, Alice Walker's *Third Life of Grange Copeland* and *The Color Purple*, and Morrison's *Bluest Eye* and *Sula*, we see a critical exploration of the strengths and weaknesses of the institutions of the black family and church as well as of the continuing racial and sexual explanation of black people, especially women influenced by the sexual revolution as well as by the continuing color and class struggle in the American social arena, contemporary Afro-American neorealist are still basically inclined toward a redemptive, paradoxically progressive and apocalyptic view of history even when the surface patterns are dialectical, cyclical, and spiral. Ambivalent in their narrative allegiances to a black aesthetic, they have increased the range of their thematic concerns from the religious and political to the economic, psychological, and philosophical aspects of contemporary life. (Bell 278-279)

In most of the black women writers' novels, the oppression of Africans can be noticed in lots of aspect. Especially women protagonists of these writers are subjected to humiliation at the hands of male characters. Even, they are exploited by strict religious rules that are controlled by black and white men in their society. In the course of time, the black writers attempt to deal with different aspects of modern life:

Afro-American women have written of themselves as persons and as women under social conditions of

colonization. In this respect, their writings cry out for comparison with those of white women. Prevailing opinion insists upon the special tradition of white American women's writing during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Despite frequently sharp differences among feminist critics, there remains a general consensus that White women wrote themselves out of their domestic tradition in both senses of the phrase they wrote from the experience, and they wrote to subvert the constraints it imposed upon them. It is not fashionable to insist upon the colonization of the imagination of white women writers, but it, too, has existed. For white women did suffer exclusion from the dominant cultural traditions and frequently from the educations and careers, that provided the institutional foundations for equal perceptions in those traditions. That is a different problem but it deserves mention as a way of locating the experience of black women in relation to system. It has been possible for feminist critics to pass briefly over white women's relation to the "high culture" of their period in part, because of the general agreement about women's identification with literary domesticity. White women largely accepted the limitations of their sphere, sometimes turning the limitations representatives of its values, or for its other members, or both. (Benstock 72)

The writing of black women seems to be somewhat different since they come from different socio-cultural surroundings. They suffer from exploitation and many other types of discrimination. Therefore, their literary talent is not similar to the white women crafts. To white women, they also resist against some obstacles in front of them even though they aren't colored people. However, "the experience of Afro-American women has left them simultaneously alienated from and bound to the dominant models in ways that sharply differentiate their experience from, that of white women" (73-74). Thus, colored women reflect these experiences in their works:

These are, of course, several novels written since 1965 that are letter or equally well written, including Ernest Gaines's *Miss Jane Pittman* Morrison's *Sula*, and Bambara's *Salt Eaters*. In the 1970s Zora Neale Hurston was rediscovered and reassessed a major voice in the tradition of the Afro-American novel, inspiring the search of many black women writers beyond their mothers' gardens for other literary mothers. Because of the diverse influence, interests, and talents of

contemporary black American novelists, we find a corresponding diversity in their attitudes toward and use of realism and modernism. Even among the neo realists ...we find that some...especially Williams, Morrison and Bambara...are inclined on occasion to move beyond realism. This is not to imply that modernism and postmodernism are more viable modes for constricting the vision of contemporary Afro-American novelists. Nor does it imply that the neo slave narratives of Margaret Walker and Earnest Gaines...are necessarily superior on all levels to novels by other neorealist. (Bell 279-280)

As indicated above, Zora Neale Hurston was seen as significant writer helping the black women to write about their own women. The writers coming after Hurston attempted to write in the path that was established by her. Therefore, Hurston works were taken into account and influenced the novels of black novelists who could later compared to the early years of black literary sphere, the contemporary novelists emerged to be concerned with different attitudes of writing. Realism had a different shape at the hands of modern black writers:

Since the 1960s black protagonists such as Janie, Vry, Miss Jane Pittman, Sula, Velma, and Celie have been resurrected, created, and recreated to illuminate the joys sorrows of those who are poor, black, and female. Stereotypes and archetypes, idealized and relists characters contend with each other as the novelist seek to create fiction that explore the wide range of black American character and that celebrate the humanistic value of black American life, male, and female, while criticizing self-destructive values. The most distinctive character types include the preacher, the hustler, the matriarch, the messianic leader, the Bad Nigger, the liberated women, and the blues-jazz figure both male and female. (342)

When the main characters of the novels of black writers, especially black women writers are studied carefully, one can realize that these people are the representatives of black female in the United States. The target of these black novelists is to depict the difficult conditions of African life in environment. They also want to demonstrate the dehumanized conditions in that life. Of course, the writers criticize these negative ways

of living, by the help of the protagonists. Moreover, "...the representations of self, constitutes an inescapable aspect of the Afro-American female literary tradition, especially of Afro- American women's autobiography" (Benstock 64). Black women's lives appear with variant aspects in their writings:

Ntozake Shange's *For Colored Girls* and Gayl Jones's *Corregidora* strain the dominant wench stereotypes of the black women to present black women characters who expose aspects of their sexuality along with a kind of historical oppression that had never appeared in Afro-American fiction. Toni Morrison's characters Sula and Nel in *Sula* and Toni Cade Bambara's *Sweet Pea*, Pot Limit, and Slyvia in "Medley" stretch the bitch stereotypes and present women characters who exhibit a healthy female support system that has been omitted in Afro American texts Paule Marshall Reena in "Reena" and Alice Walker's *Meridian* Hill in *Meridian* violate the dumb black woman stereotype and show female protagonists who display a certain political sophistication and personal conviction that are new to the pages of American and Afro-American fiction. The Sixties social movements produced the discursive formations for these exclude images and stereotypes of the black women to emerge. (Hogue 56)

After 1960s, by the help of social movements the black female writers had the opportunity to express their thought in their novels obviously. Different types of female characters were created to show the oppression and restrictions in black women life. There emerged novelty in expressing the views of writers.

### **2.3. FEMINISM AND BLACK FEMINISM**

Feminism is a literary thought emerging in the nineteenth century and maintains its impacts today. It necessitates that all of the women in the world have equal rights to the men. To feminists, the actual reason of inequalities is being a man or a woman. The sexes determine how a person should behave in the society. Feminism causes variations in male dominated societies. It influences not only the culture but also the laws. Feminists aim to protect the women from violence and abuse. Moreover, they want equal jobs and equal

pay to destroy the discrimination. The main target of these women is to be liberated, like men. “In the 1960s feminists began to write in the first person and speak women as ‘we’, on the grounds that we all shared common interests as women oppressed by men” (Ramazanoğlu 1). As stated, feminist writers generalize all the women, since they think that every woman is under oppression and suffers:

It started from assertions of women’s common sisterhood in oppression. Sisterhood expressed the idea that in general women have interests opposed to those of men that men generally dominate women, and generally benefit from this domination. During the 1970s, however, feminists produced new knowledge of women’s lives. Instead of establishing women’s shared oppression as women, they began to emphasize the differences between women. Once attention was given to the diversity of women’s experience, to the power of some women over other, and to the political and economic interests shared by some men and some women, problems were created for feminism. Differences of interest between women challenged feminist theory of women’s shared oppression. (3)

As seen, feminism begins with the belief that women are sister of each other and men dominate women. The meaning of feminism changes through time and it demonstrates the differences between the women. Some women seem to be more powerful than another. Emerging because of the common oppression feminism begins to have different meanings. Important topics for feminist theory include: the body, class and work, disability the family, globalization, human rights, popular culture, race and racism, reproduction, science, the self, sex work, and sexuality.

Feminism involves different movements and theories concerning with subjects like gender difference, that defend equality for women and camping for women’s rights. The history of feminism can be analyzed into three waves. These feminist movements cause the feminist Theory emerge. Feminism has changed the common perspectives in some areas within Western Society, ranging from culture to law. The Feminist Activists have wanted to gather for women’s legal rights. Most of the leaders of feminist movements are middle class white women from Western Europe and North America. Women of other races have suggested new alternative feminisms. This trend accelerates with the Civil Rights movement in the United States. Then women in former European

colonies and the Third World have proposed Post-Colonial and Third World feminisms. Postmodern feminists argue that gender roles are socially constructed and it is impossible to generalize women's experiences across cultures and histories:

During the 1950s, women faced a social, political and economic establishment that limited their opportunities and enmeshed them in a powerful set of expectations and moral regulations... The ideal woman was seen as a domestic goddess who prepared her family's meals, dispensed wisdom and common sense, and always kept her well-dressed and appropriately coiffed... Between 1945 and 1958, the percentage of women college students dropped from more than 54 percent to only 35 percent, and the more number of women in the work force experienced similar declines. Although 35 percent of adult women worked outside the home in 1956, they had few "career" opportunities and, except for those who worked as teachers and nurses, little chance of promotion and advancement. (Olson 314)

In old days women accepted her place in the society, as a housewife or a mother but after 1950s they wanted to make a career, too. That idea of women caused them to reject their social situation. A feminist movement started since the women wanted to have important status and main responsibilities:

In the 1960s and 1970s the momentum of struggles related to women's oppression and exploitation flowed from many sectors of women with perspectives far different from those of the more traditional feminist organizations. As the women's Liberation Movement emerged and expanded into a diverse range of struggles and activities it impacted on the lives of women of different classes and generated questions that were spotlighted in all kinds of overt struggles no specifically associated with the women's Liberation Movement. Emphasizing briefly these dimensions of struggles generated by the Women's Liberation Movement. (Joseph-Lewis 59)

By the help of Women's Liberation Movement, women of all classes attempt to gather for striving against the limitations in front of women. "The Women's Liberation

Movement organized rape crisis centers and battered women's centers to help victims recover from the attack and fight for their rights" (Joseph-Lewis 64). This movement was of course the significant way of expressing feminist theory that aimed "...to establish the existence of an American sisterhood between black and white women" (Carby 6). They wanted to unite with all women and defend the same rights:

What emerged in the Sixties was a surge of radical movements which applied new emphasis and approaches to issues with long histories in the United States. It is within the wider context of this phenomenon that the Women's Liberation Movement erupted and crystallized. With conditions and varying contradictions faced by women in all walks of U.S. society, the radicalizing energy of the Sixties and the New Left provided the political ground on which a wave of mostly younger women became politically conscious and active feminists. While the more traditional feminist organizations continued their momentum in the older feminist traditions, the impetus of the Women's Liberation Movement came from the catalyst of the other movements that exploded during the Sixties. (Joseph-Lewis 52)

The social movements coming into being in the sixties led to variations in different institutions and social groups in the United States. Even though most of women were faced with restrictions due to this radical movements, by the means of these organizations they emerged to gender for their feminist ideas. "From different points and levels of struggle, the movements indicated various consequences of U.S. capitalism" (52). These indications along with feminism helped black women to explain their position:

One of the critiques of dominant social thought consistently put forward by feminists is that it defines women as other. This is exactly what discussions of identity produce, unless the complexities of social divisions and their ordering are addressed directly, without employing the common dichotomous approach of self/other, mind/body, subject, object and nature/culture. Recognizing and theorizing the interconnections across practical task of considerable difficulty especially as in European societies as well as

in social thought, dichotomous categorizing abounds impeding the development of fruitful dialogue and a plurality of non-treating identities. (Afshar-Maynard 97)

To the feminists, being a woman has been another issue. Women have always been in the second place compared with men. Therefore their personality also ignored. “In feminist thought the subordination, oppression and exploitation of women are not respecters of national boundaries. On the contrary women are used these defining boundaries” (98). Because of these attitudes that have occurred toward women, they “... have always participated in collective struggles against oppressive racial and nationalist regimes. They have also taken part in protest movements designed to protect the status quo and the threatened loss of rights and privileges” (West-Blumberg 99).

In the sixties, women of color also began to resist against the restrictions that prevented them from defending their social rights in their country. “Radical/ethnic struggles in the United States provided another arena in which women voiced their views and engaged in political actions” (102). Thus, after many years of endurance, they find an environment to tell their thoughts in public:

Feminism as a discourse in black women writings and speeches dates back to Sojourner Truth and Francis Harper who were very active in the women’s suffrage movement of the nineteenth century. As a literary discourse, feminism informs Hurston *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937). It reemerged in the early 1970s with more vigor, commitment, sophistication and political acumen. (Hogue 59)

The primary people who led to black feminism in writing tradition were Sojourner Truth and Francis Harper. The most significant representative of black feminism was Hurston although her novel was not allowed to be published in most of publication houses in early twentieth century. “On the most basic level, central of their lives than the dominant culture supposes women should” (Mostern 191).

Black women in many situations are treated as non-females. “The ghost of Sojourner Truth’s haunting question is still with us today. Consider the crime of rape, which is punishable by death in many states” (Joseph-Lewis 27). Many black women viewed as they haven’t got the same state as white women. Therefore, “Feminist scholars

have moved...in addressing theories of subjectivity, questions of difference, and the construction of social relations...” (Scoff 183) The significant issues of Black feminists are of course “...equality and difference...” (Scoff 183). “The Black female is either unnoticed or over noticed and misinterpreted” (Joseph-Lewis 28). They have been seen as helpless female since they have lived according to conditions of male-dominated society. They haven’t had any superiority. Moreover, “...‘race’ plays an important part in their social and economic positioning” (Afshar-Magnard 14). The main issue that differs black females from white ones is racial difference that is given by God and is seen as the source of humiliation.

### **PART III**

### **3.1. A BRIEF OUTLINE OF LIVES AND LITERARY WORKS OF ALICE WALKER AND TONI MORRISON**

Both Toni Morrison and Alice Walker help one “...understanding the historical position of African American women, doubly silenced by race and by sex” (Sollors and Diedrich 357). In their works, they aim to reconstruct “... both history and context of their people” (358). Being black women writers, these women portray what the color of skin means in a white society. Even though their people are viewed as invisible, Morrison and Walker try to show that actually these black people especially women exist in real world.

Unlike Morrison, “...Walker calls herself a womanist rather than feminist” (260 Bell). Alice Walker’s main target is to explain the lives of black people especially black women. Because of the fact that the experiences of some women characters in her works resemble white women as well, she introduces herself as a womanist. In fact, she explores women’s conditions in general. Walker wants to demonstrate for what women struggle and why their life experiences are not alike to men’s experiences:

And the higher consciousness she seeks for society is based on her insider’s view of the working-class history of blacks in general and the socialized ambivalence of black women in particular as well as her outsider’s view of the conflict of white women with capitalism. (260)

Though Walker is a black writer and she deals with black women in some of her works, the issues in these writings are universal. Being Black female voices Walker and Morrison achieve so much success and they take the attention that they deserve. To these creative writers, “The task of literary creation is combined with the propelled by the task of social and cultural creation...” (Sollors and Diedrich 358) They “...reflect the social and cultural reality” (358) of Black people.

### 3.1.1. THE LIFE OF ALICE WALKER

Born in Eatonton Georgia in 1944 “... Alice Walker was awarded the Pulitzer Prize and the American Book Award for her second novel, *The Color Purple* (1982), her reputation as one of America’s for important contemporary writers were assured” (Reed 285). She was the daughter of Willie Lee and Minnie Tallulah Walker. “She rose from relative obscurity to celebrity status within a short time period” (Nelson 458). Her birth place and the conditions of her childhood year affected her later years. “The daughter of sharecroppers...” (“Alice Walker” 51126) Walker had the opportunity to witness the lives of blacks. “Many of Walker’s works have been heavily influenced by her own experience as a southerner, as an African American, and as a woman” (Nelson 458).

In 1952, Alice Walker “involved in an accident which left her permanently blind in one eye” (Pratt ix). This partial blindness obliged her to have education with “...handicapped students...” (ix) She received full scholarship and can continue her education:

In 1961 Walker graduated from high school as valedictorian. The tragic loss of her eye again yielded positive results when she was awarded a rehabilitation scholarship that enabled her to go to college. When Walker left Eatonton, to attend Spelman College Atlanta, she was given a seventy-five dollar contribution on from her neighbors as well as three significant presents from her mother a suitcase with which to depart from her poor, rural surroundings; a typewriter with which to write; and a sewing machine, which afforded her the economic freedom to create her own clothing as Celie does with her paints-making enterprise in the *Color Purple*. (Nelson 459)

Her family tried to support her and she stepped new surroundings that led her to start writing. Not only her childhood memories but also her education years influenced her writing career. “Walker’s childhood was lived in poverty in the rural South, a poverty which she never fails to mention...” (Lauret 4) To her, two words “South” and “poverty” had significant meanings. Being a member of Southern culture enabled her to portray it in her works:

...in 1961 Walker goes to Spelman College, Atlanta. She finds the institutional environment stifling (in terms reminiscent of Saxon college in meridian) and two years later she flees to freedom; Sarah Lawrence College in Westchester, New York. The world now begins to open up, literally when she travels to Africa in 1964, and intellectually too. At Sarah Lawrence she is taught by the poet Muriel Bukeyser, who encourages her writing and passes her poems on to Langston Hughes; Hughes will be instrumental in the publication of the first collection of poems *Once*, in 1968. (Nelson 6)

As indicated above, it was possible for her to begin demonstrating her creativity on pages. In Sarah Lawrence College, she was interested in literature very much. In 1965 she was “awarded B.A. degree from Sarah Lawrence College” (Pratt ix). During these education years another bad circumstance occurred. “...another traumatic experience occurs when Walker finds her involuntarily pregnant... She feels suicidal and undergoes an illegal abortion, but this second scarring produces the same creative impulse as the first...” (Lauret 6)

Her first trauma was being blinded by her brother. “Because of the shooting then her childhood is effectively over at the age of eight, but the death of the child gives birth to the writes...” (5) The second trauma was being pregnant during her education years. Even though, it influenced her deeply, she wanted to get rid of this unexpected pregnancy. Nevertheless; this second experiment helped her developing her creativity:

Her college years served to shape Walker in a number of ways. As on all-black southern school. Spelman was affected by the Civil Rights movement and Walker’s understanding of civil rights issues grew during her time in Atlanta. At Sarah Lawrence, Walker’s was one of few African American students, making her own search for identity even more pronounced. Walker also began to question the Christian religious, tradition that had pervaded her childhood... (Nelson 459)

Being a student in Spelman College meant to be interested in Civil Rights movement. “By then the mid 1960s, Walker’s is already involved in the Civil Rights movement, another experience which she consistently cites as crucial to her development as a writer” (Lauret 6). She aimed to find the answers to the questions in her mind. She

had the chance to be herself and defend herself as a black women writer by the help of the movement:

Walker is involved in Civil Rights campaigns from 1965 until 1968. She canvasses voter-registration in her native Georgia, and is employed by Head start in Mississippi to teach black history to adults for SNCC, the student Non-violent Coordinating Committee. (Lauret 7)

Walker starts in teaching activism. Being one of the Southern black people, she tried to express what her people experienced. “Walker’s last year of college was one of intense emotion and volatile experiences. Walker had gone on a trip to Africa and Europe the previous summer, a journey that yielded many of the poems for *Once*” (Nelson 459). This journey allowed her for getting to know the lives and conditions of her ancestors. “The world now begins to open up, literally...and intellectually...” (Lauret 6) The images of Africa can be observed in most of her novels:

Walker graduated from Sarah Lawrence in 1965 and began working for the welfare department in New York City. She left that job in order to increase her involvement with the Civil Rights movement, first in Georgia and then in Mississippi, Mostly working on voter registration projects. Her experiences at Spelman coupled with her time as a civil rights worker in the Deep South laid the foundation for her second novel, *Meridian*. Also during this period, Walker married Melvyn Roseman Leventhal, a Jewish civil rights lawyer. Walker continued to write, and her first novel, *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, was completed three days before the birth of their daughter, Rebecca Grant, in 1969. During the next several years, Walker taught at several colleges, including Jackson State in Mississippi, Tougalou College, Wellesley College, and the University of Massachusetts. Her writing continued to gain recognition as well. In 1973, Walker’s third book of poetry, *Revolutionary Petunias*, was nominated for the National Book Award. In *Love and Trouble*, her first collection of short stories was published in 1973 and took the Rosenthal Award of the National Institute of Arts and Letters. (Nelson 459-460)

Walker kept in working for the benefit of Civil Rights Movement. She married a Jewish lawyer "...at a time when interracial marriage is still illegal..." (Lauret 7) Her life style always took attention of the critics although some of them continued illegal marriages. In 1967 she "Won first prize in *American Scholar* Essay contest for "*The Civil Rights Movement: What Good was it?*" Awarded MacDowell Colony Fellowship to begin writing *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*. Published first short story, *To Hell with Dying* (Pratt IX). Though it was hard for her to be a worker of movement, she didn't give up displaying her literary creativity:

...Alice Walker is a fighter as well as a meditative poet and a lyrical novelist. She has taken part in the struggles her people have waged, and she knows the struggles they must yet face in this greatest of the world's democracies. She also knows that of even ample bread and wine or power and the applause of one's countrymen can give anyone the calm, the freedom that comes with a mind's acceptance of its own worth. (Gates, Jr. and Appiah 8)

Interested in black people's rights, she was aware of the fact that people suffered due to lots of reasons. To her, independence was the first step in finding one's identity. Although there were some changes in her personal life, she didn't do without writing. "In 1975, Walker became a contributing editor to the feminist magazine *Ms*. In 1976, Walker and Leventhal discovered, and in the same year, Walker's second novel, *Meridian*, was published" (Nelson 460). The ill times in her life, didn't prevent her from productivity:

While Walker received a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1977 and a teaching appointment at Yale, her highest honors have been in connection with her third novel, *The Color Purple*, for which she won the American Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize in 1983 and which as transformed into a major motion picture under Steven Spielberg's direction in 1985. *The Color Purple* speaks to many experiences in Walker's personal life and family history, including its setting in the Deep South, its relationship to the rape of Walker's great Grandmother at the age of twelve, its inclusion of images of Africa, and its focus on African American women. (460)

Like her other works, her well-known novel *The Color Purple* was related to her own life and experiences. This novel supported her womanist aspect and her womanist

means “A black feminist or feminist of color” (Nelson 460). Displaying her feminist point of view, *The Color Purple* assisted her to become “...the first Black woman to receive the Pulitzer Prize” (Pratt IX). Her womanist aspect progressed and influenced later works. “Walker continued to develop her womanist ideology through her subsequent two novels, *The Temple of My Familiar* and *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, both of which “Include several of the characters first introduced in *The Color Purple*” (Nelson 460). She focused on especially “...feminist issues with in African-American culture” (“Alice Walker” 51126). These issues could be seen in her other works:

Additional publications include an edited anthology of Zora Neale, a writer of the Harlem Renaissance who greatly impacted Walker—two books of poetry, *Good Night, Willie Lee, I’ll See You in the Morning* (1979) and *Horses Make the Landscape More Beautiful* (1984); *You Can’t Keep a Good Woman Down* (1981) a collection of short stories—two children’s books, *To hell with Dying* (1987) and *Finding the Green Stone* (1991) a volume of essays, *Living by the Word* (1988); and a compilation of poetry entitled, *Her Blue Body Everything We Know: Earthling Poem’s 1965-1990* (1991). Walker lives in northern California. (Nelson 460-461)

Walker’s main concern was to write according to her “...travel experience in Africa and memories of the American civil-rights movement to an examination of the experience of African-Americans, mainly in the South, and of Africans” (“Alice Walker” 51126). Like most writer of that time “...the pressure and fascination of actual events during the 1960’s intrigued...” (“American Literature” 1746) Walker’s works were created after Civil Rights Movement:

The personal and literary career of Alice Walker exemplifies the hopes and dreams which characterized the 1960s. The distinguishing voice of that decade, whether it emanated from emergent African nation states, the Civil Rights Movement in America, or the Women’s movement internationally, had called for liberation. Aspiring young writers like Walker set about reclaiming their cultural heritage and identifying the literary tradition to which they belonged. Courses on black American writing tentatively appeared, and women teachers rediscovered the neglected works of their female antecedents. (Birch 195)

Like feminist authors, “Walker’s writing springs from her introduction to the realities of racial and sexual politics...” (Birch 195-196) and she portrays these life-like issues. She deals with “not only black people but anyone who has suffered and survived with this spiritual dimension intact” (Lauret 1). She explores the oppressions, suffers and especially the triumphs of black women. “Recovering an “invisible” history has been a task set out by many of...” (Sollors and Diedrich 359) writers like Walker. “She searches “...African history itself in *Color Purple* and in *The Temple of My Familiar*...” (359) To Walker, she is a womanist since she is concerned with the troubles of all women:

Once a Civil Rights activist and an editor at Ms. Walker is a self-styled “womanist” who has taught at numerous universities, including Wellesley, Yale, and the University of California at Berkeley. Currently she runs a publishing company, Wild Tree Press, and lives on a ranch in northern California. (Reed 285)

Walker is a productive writer. She often writes about women who survive cruelty and considers her a “womanist.” “Understanding of Walker’s writing demands a preparedness to accept evolution, and a reader’s willingness to follow the author’s speculative revision of the world” (Birch 196).

### 3.1.1.1. LITERARY WORKS OF ALICE WALKER

Actually, Walker’s “first published work, *Once*, is a slim volume composed in feverish haste into which poems she packs a young life time” (Birch 196). It was published in 1968. Alice Malsenior Walker completed her first novel *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* in 1969 and it was published in 1970. Similar to her other works, this novel is about suffers of black people. It aims to search the lives of colored people:

*The Third Life of Grange Copeland* (1970), Walker’s first novel, is set in an impoverished area of Georgia similar to Walker’s own birth place and deals with the economic oppression and resultant desperation of three generations of a black share-cropping family. In that novel, the character of Mem is partly based upon Minnie Tallulah Grant Walker, Alice’s mother... (Nelson 458)

As seen, Walker creates life like characters and events in most of her works “The title of this novel reflects her attempt to historicize the present, in a narrative covering three generations of a family over almost a century, spanning a period of economic and political oppression” (Birch 196). The characters in the novel dream their future and “...wealthy Northern relatives also make their appearance in *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, where they lead Brown field to dream about a better life in the North” (Lauret 4). Even in this novel, she manages to show Blacks’ desires, troubles and struggles:

The narrative of Copelands, with its potential for repeated tragedy, falls into three significant movements, producing a crisis at the end of the second and resolution in the last. The first concerns the consequences of Grange Copeland’s defection from family responsibility when he can no longer stand the humiliation and misery of a share-cropper’s life. His son Brownfield is left to struggle through a disintegrating childhood into young manhood and marriage to Mem, in which Brownfield begins to repeat the pattern of violence established by his parents’ marriage. This first “act” in the tragedy ends with the return of Grange to his homeland, to begin his second “life heralded by the birth of Ruth and a reawakening of Grange’s capacity for love. In a narrative pattern which Walker will go on to use in later fictions she portrays a “transformation” in Grange as stunning in its completeness as Celie’s is in *The Color Purple*. In both of these novels the transforming agent is love. (Birch 197)

In *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, Walker wants to demonstrate the effort of the Copelands. “Her examination of the legacy for black women in terms of the sexual politics...and her hope for future amelioration are embodied in the girl-child Ruth Copeland...” (196) Walker claims that social change can be achieved by aid of change. She proves her belief creating personality of “...the character of Ruth’s grandfather, Grange, who eventually ensures Ruth’s future by accommodating the past” (197). Showing the relationship between a child and her grandfather, Walker reveals her craftsmanship. “What goes on between that daughter, that growing child, and her grandfathers told with particular grace; It is as if one were reading a long and touching poem” (Gates, Jr.- Appiah 8).

“*The Third Life of Grange Copeland* tapes “the south in transition both before and after the civil rights movement” (Sollors and Diedrich 359). The character “Ruth embraces the hope of a new future for all blacks, as open-mouthed in wonder she watches black and white students march together...” (Birch 202) Ruth is the only individual who manages to survive:

The tragic consequences of a complex intermingling of parental love and racial hatred seen in *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* are rehearsed again in the sexual jealousy of a father for a daughter, around whom clusters the associated hatred of his white employers and the love of a dead Sister...The story is presented in a mixture of poetry and prose... The father, like Brownfield Copeland, has the unforgiving nature of a man who feels betrayed, and is bent upon a repetitious course of violence in which he had beaten his wife to death and which ends in the violent cutting off of his daughter's budding breasts. As the daughter submits to the inevitable beating and violation, her innocence is suggested by the Madonna-like image of her... Once again Walker demonstrates how the black women have to go on paying for the iniquities of sexual exploitation suffered in slavery. (203)

Walker's first novel is related to race black characters and their experiences. The disgust against white masters and “...tyranny of gender construction...” (202) is stated clearly in *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*. “Toward the end of his third life, Grange Copeland can at last stop begin hard on him and look with kindness upon him - and one wonders whether any achievement can be more revolutionary” (Gates, Jr. and Appiah 8).

Walker's first short story *To Hell with Dying* was published in 1967. “...the rural environment of Eatonton and her friendship with the old man Mr. Sweet who inspired the short story *The Hell With Dying* which was later issued as a book for children” (Lauret 4). In 1973 she published *In love and Trouble: Stories of Black Women and Revolutionary Petunias and Other Poems*. “*Revolutionary Petunias* was nominated for the National Book Award and won the Lillian Smith Award from the Southern Regional Council” (Partt X). Like her novels, her short stories were successful in portraying black lives:

...a number of her short stories were published in one volume, *In Love and Trouble*, which celebrates the strengths as well as the neuroses of black women. Her fictional women range from the adolescent Myop to the dying old woman in *The Welcome Table*, and within that embracing scope she creates women loving, revengeful, submissive and violent. In *The Child who Favored Daughter* her subject is the sexual politics produced by black enslavement. (Birch 203)

Collecting different short stories in a book Walker aims to display varied aspects of black women. “*In Love and Trouble* foregrounds the problems experienced by black women from all walks of life...” (208) In 1974 Walker published *Langston Hughes, American Poet*.

In 1976 Walker published *Meridian*. *Meridian* is “Alice Walker’s second novel...” (Gates, Jr. and Appiah 11) It is “...a story about the civil-rights movement, and a spiritual and political biography of the character for whom it is name—Meridian Hill, a black woman who determines to live out the movement...” (12) Like, Meridian Hill, Walker was a civil-rights worker. The title of this novel has varied meanings:

...Meridian...it refers to the sun at noon, in the middle of the day, when the light is brightest and there are no shadows. The word “meridian” also refers, in a “definition” Miss Walker does not give but in a connection that cannot be coincidental, to a specific place: meridian, Mississippi, the home of James Chaney, one of three civil-rights workers murdered by the White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan in nearby Neshoba County, Mississippi, in June of 1964. (12)

As *Meridian* is related to Civil Rights movement, its title has significance and hidden meanings. “*Meridian* is Walker’s memorial to the courage, strength and personal sacrifice made by her freedom-marching comrades whom the fictional Ruth Copeland joined” (Birch 208). It deals with women who get together for their people and especially black women’s rights. “*Meridian* records a young female student’s experience of combating Jim Crow laws, and the mentality that had framed them” (209). *Meridian* is a colored woman who ignores everything for her purpose to gain women rights:

This is a woman-centered novel in that Meridian Hill is the linking device between all other characters. By focusing on Meridian's various familial, emotional and political relationships, Walker presents a fictional woman whose acquisition of self-knowledge is perhaps a projection of Walker's own. The main characters form an eternal triangle between a black man, Truman Held, a black woman, Meridian, and a white woman, Lynne. Structured in three parts, the third part, "Endings", suggests resolution of conflicts established in the first two, eventually celebrating a sisterhood across the color divide, between Meridian and Lynne. In a non-chronological sequence which underlines Walker's own sense of history as a non-linear, seamless process, Meridian is glimpsed in various stages of development, from child, to student, mother and political activist. Time past and present are interwoven in the consciousness and presentation of Meridian, whose sense of self is defined through her memory of significant experiences. (Birch 210)

Alike, Walker's adolescence years, Meridian Hill intends to search her own identity involving Civil Rights movement. Her personality and her thoughts change in time. As in most works of Walker, realization of self has a substantial space in *Meridian*. Meridian Hill is "...aware of sexual as well as racial oppression and this enables her to become more sympathetic to Lynne" (Lauret 61).

In 1979 Walker "published Good Night, Willie Lee, I'll see you in the morning: poems" (Pratt X.) As it is known, "...Miss Walker's father, Willie Lee Walker, was 11 years old" (Barnes 1). When his grate - grandmother died. "Unlike the closeness Walker experienced with her mother however, the relationship she had with her father and brothers appear much more distant and negative..." (Lauret 5) To Walker, her father's behaviors towards her and her brothers were different due to the fact that she was a girl.

In 1981, Walker "published *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down: Stories*" (Pratt X). "*You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down* offers a retrospective view of the issues which preoccupied all black, and some white, women in the 1960s" (Birch 219). In this story collection, the stories are about especially black women in the time of Civil Rights Movement. However, in a "...social organization, they speak for white women too" (242). Like in her novels, in Walker's short stories one can see portrayals of black lives:

The ensuing divisions amongst blacks who advocated differing paths towards political liberation, as well as those amongst black women who found the women's movement incompatible to their needs, are addressed in *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down*. This collection of stories has a more conscious theoretical thrust than the earlier *In Love and Trouble*, as by using the short story, letter or diary as narrative frame works; Walker begins to clarify her political stance. Black feminists had in 1973 formed a separate feminist organization, the National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO), in response to a need not satisfied by the women's and Civil Rights movements. Their need for a non-sexist philosophy was not shared by many black male activists and white women did not share their need for non-racism. (Birch 217)

In *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down* Alice Walker asks for a non-sexist environment for fellow women, black or white. These stories demonstrate the expression of world as it is perceived by the female Walker's another famous novel *The Color Purple* was published in 1982 an "...was nominated for the National Book Critics Circle Award" (Pratt X). "Walker won wide recognition with her novel *The Color Purple* (1982; Pulitzer Prize; film, 1985), a dark but sometimes joyous saga of a poor black southern, woman's painful Journey toward self-realization" ("Alice Walker" 51126). In this popular work, Walker portrays the main character, Celie's life in male dominated environment. Celie is a black female and it is not easy for her to find her place in the society. "In *The Color Purple*, Celie suffers severe emotional and physical abuse at the hands of her husband, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_" (Nelson 461). Walker portrays a poor black woman in *The Color Purple*:

The plot of *The Color Purple* gives us some clue to its popularity. It tells the story of a poor, uneducated and "ugly" African American woman in the American south, who is transformed from a fourteen-year-old rape victim and incest survivor into a successful businesswoman in her forties, property owner and "mother" of an extended family clan who gather around her to live in peace and harmony, celebrating each other for ever after. The familiar script of rags to riches combined with sexual and emotional fulfillment is instantly recognizable to us from popular fiction, and therefore may account for *The Color Purple*'s success. But the intricacies of Celie's progress-and, more importantly, the way they are told-betray the ostensible formulaic simplicity of this narrative. As

befits any romantic or, for that matter, feminist heroine, Celie has to go through many trials and tribulations to gain her, final victory, but her trials are not of the sort which we usually find in fiction, and neither is her victory of her own individualist making-as the tradition of Harlequin or Mills and Boon romance would demand. (Lauret 92)

Being a black woman complicates the triumph in a male ruling surrounding. She has not any rights to say anything when she is raped by her father who is in fact not her real father. However, suffers do not keep her from searching her identity. Her triumph can be seen at the end of the novel. "In *The Color Purple* Walker celebrates the unsung creativity of black women..." (Birch 223) The main character, Celie struggles for her personal life and overcomes her troubles:

In all of Walker's challenges to patriarchal attitudes and the gender construction which underpins these in *The Color Purple*, conflict is resolved as it is in fairy-tales. A facile solution to gender differentiation is offered in Celie's pants-making, which are comfortable because they are designed to fit everybody, but the truly fabulous element in *The Color Purple*, with incredibly happy ending, is embodied in the transformations undergone by the characters with the exception of Sofia, each one enters the story as a stereotype and leaves completely transformed. The agent for these miraculous changes is Shug Avery, who acts as bringer of light and health, yet she too undergoes a change, not in herself so much as in how she is perceived by others. (226-227)

In *The Color Purple*, the writer indicates that if the personality of the characters change, the results of events change in time. The happy ending of this novel, is the result of these variations of people, even white or black. In fact, it is a story "...about the development of individual selfhood..." (Lauret 96)

In 1983, Walker "Published *In Search of Our Mothers Gardens: Womanist Prose*" (Pratt X). As it can be viewed "...the author is not dead: she makes herself heard, as a commentator on her own word in *In Search of Our Mothers Gardens*..." (Lauret 3) In this work she deals with her parents, her feminist and activist aspects:

...in *In Search of Our Mothers Gardens*, where she writes of her parents, brothers and sisters and of her glamorous, aunts, who came to visit from the North and whom she saw as role models: independent, sexy, sassy women of whom she refused to believe that they earned their living by cleaning other people's (white women's) houses. (Lauret 4)

*In Search of Our Mothers Gardens* can be considered as the speaker of the thoughts and beliefs of Walker. It consists of "...numerous critical essays, which have been collected in a volume..." (Reed 285) In this prose, the author even expresses the meaning of what a womanist:

Womanist in *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens* is defined in four different ways, from the black idiomatic "womanish" to the metaphorical "womanist" is to feminist as purple is to lavender. She describes a "womanist" perspective as a life-loving, on-sexually divisive one, "committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. (Birch 217-218)

As stated, in *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens* gives the information about the thoughts of the author. She expresses her womanist attitude towards varied situations. She aims to define womanism and the position of black women. In 1984 she published *Horses Make a Landscape Look More Beautiful*. This book consists of poems. "The poem *Horses Make a Landscape Look More Beautiful* talks of her 'part'- Cherokee maternal foremother, and a paternal great-great-grandmother who was raped by a white man..." (221)

In 1989, Walker published *The Temple of my Familiar*. "It is a novel that spans time from prehistoric days to the present" (Nelson 462). It is the fourth novel of Walker. This novel is also the expression of a womanist world view:

...in *The Temple*,...she gives a brief recapitulation of Celie and Shug's and the story of Tashi in *Possessing the Secret* is firmly rooted in female experience in the Africa and America and Europe of today. Walker's transportation of characters between fictions give reader satisfaction in that she supplies further answers to questions rose. In *The Temple* we learn that Shug and Celie, like Morrison's ancestor figure Baby Suggs in

*Beloved*, have continued their spiritual journey by forming a church in a tradition of long standing among Black women. Shug and Celie have become the ancestor figures in Walker's fictional world, in their continued presence in the writer's consciousness, and Tashi is the symbol of how far from being won is the battle against female subordination. (Birch 235-236)

As stated, *The Temple of my Familiar* displays expressions of womanism. There are the characters related to Walker's previous novels. "The characters in this novel learn to merge their past, present, and future in order to create meaning in their lives" (Nelson 462). *The Temple of My Familiar* clarifies that "...involvement in struggle is the source of creativity and that if an artist refuses commitment then she will never discover "some kind of larger freedom" (Birch 237). In this novel to Walker, only by the help of change and awareness one can overcome the suffering.

In 1992, Walker's one of the recent novels *Possessing the Secret of Joy* was published. In this novel, Alice Walker "...identifies the source of racial and gender oppression as being the same" (238). This work, also includes "...several of the characters first introduced in *The Color Purple*" (Nelson 461). In 1994, her novel *By the Light of my Father's Smile* published and in 2004 *Now Is the Time to Open Your Heart* published. Many of her essays are collected in *Living by the Word* (1988) and *Anything We Love Can Be Saved* (1997)" ("Alice Walker" 51126).

### 3.1.2. THE LIFE OF TONI MORRISON

Born in Ohio on 18 February 1931, Toni Morrison "... was the second oldest of four children. Her parents, George and Ramah Wofford, were the descendants of sharecroppers from Alabama and Georgia" (Nelson 331). Her real name was Chloe Anthony Wofford:

...her parents named her Chloe Anthony Wofford. She acquired her nick name, Toni, while attending Howard University "Morrison" came later, when she married a Jamaican architect, Harold Morrison, in 1958. She...grew up in Lorain, Ohio. The family was relatively new to the area. Early in the century, both her mother's

and her father's families had come to Ohio from the south looking for physical safety and increased economic opportunities. They were part of the Great migration, a large scale movement of blacks from the rural, agricultural South to the industrial cities of the North from about 1880 to 1920. (Kubitschek 2)

As stated Toni Morrison grows "...up in atmosphere steeped in black folklore, music, ritual, myth and storytelling" (Reed 209). In her home town "...schools were not segregated. In fact, when Morrison started grade school, she was the only black child in her class and the only one, who could already read" (Nelson 331). During those years the black in the south could not attend the school of whites:

African Americans had almost no legal protections when Morrison's grandparents moved north. In the South, a system of segregation called "Jim Crow" ordered separate public facilities for blacks and whites. Blacks could not attend a white school or eat in a white restaurant or even use a water fountain designated "for whites". Whites always had better facilities; often no facilities were available for black people. (Kubitschek 2)

To quit themselves from these inhuman conditions, Woffords decided to go north. Although Morrison was student in an integrated school she "... experienced the effects of racism early, for even the children of newly arrived immigrants...were immediately taught that they...were not at the bottom of American society but that blacks were below them" (Nelson 331). Morrison also experienced racist behaviors at her home. Her father caused her to feel a "...moral superiority over whites, Morrison's father also bequeathed her his perfectionism as a craftsman, for he was a master shipyard welder who "loved excellence" (331). Moreover, Morrison's father George Wofford "...hated and distrusted whites all his life" (Kubitschek 3).

The stories told in her early age influenced her. "Toni Morrison inherited a love of storytelling, especially ghost stories" (Nelson 332). Morrison began to be interested in literary works during her education years. She "...was influenced by her exposure to the classics of American and European literature" (Reed 209). She was interested in different aspects of literature:

During high school, Morrison developed a love for literature, studied Latin for four years, and formed the decision to become a teacher. After graduating from high school with honors, Morrison enrolled as an English major at Howard University in Washington D.C. She minored in the classics, performed on the stage with the Howard University Players, and changed her first name from Chloe to Toni. Having received her B.A. degree from Howard in 1953, she entered the graduate program in English at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. There she studied under David Daiches and wrote a master's thesis... (Nelson 332)

She graduated from high school in 1949. "...her parents many sacrifices allowed her to become the first woman in her family to attend college" (Kubitschek 3). Morrison was the luckiest person in her family. She "...enjoyed a formal education not available to her grandparents or parents" (3). Her education continued in different universities:

After receiving her M.A. degree from Cornell in 1955, Morrison taught for two years at Texas Southern University, in Houston, before she joined the faculty at her alma mater, Howard University. While teaching at Howard, she married the Jamaican architect Harold Morrison and gave birth to two sons, Harold Ford and Slade Kevin. Her marriage ended around 1964 the year that she was denied tenure at Howard University because she did not have a Ph.D. degree. (Nelson 332)

Morrison constituted her own family in 1958. "Morrison guards her privacy in many areas, including the reasons for her divorce. She has said only that she and her Jamaican husband had different ideas of the roles for men and women and that she would not be subservient to him" (Kubitschek 4).

After divorce, Morrison found a job, in New York "...where she worked as a textbook editor for L.W. Singer, a subsidiary of Random House" (Nelson 332). During that time she didn't stop "...her teaching responsibilities..." (Reed 209). The year following her divorce "...were the most depressing years of Morrison's life" (Nelson 332). She worked in that position for twenty years and "...she championed such writers as Toni Cade Bambara, Angela Davis, and Henry Dumas, while publishing her own four novels" (Reed 209). Her literary surroundings contributed her to be much more successful in her field:

Morrison's work as an editor contributed to African American literature in two ways. First, she was influential in publishing many other black writers. In addition to editing text books, she edited novels by Gayl Jones, Toni Cade Bambara, and John McCluskey; and autobiographies by the boxer Muhammed Ali and the politician Andrew Young. Her editing work has thus, helped to shape the tradition of African American literature. Second her editing work brought her into contact with materials that she later used as imaginative starting points for her novels. Morrison contributed to a project eventually published in the early 1970s as *The Black Book*. At that time, history textbooks concentrated almost exclusively on great white men and military battles. (Kubitschek 4)

Morrison's work as an editor helped her preparing the first step for her writing career. That is, she began to collect necessary materials for her works. He also published a book on African American history, *The Black Book*. "Random House had promoted her to senior editor in charge of black literature" (Nelson 332). He wrote his prominent novel *The Bluest Eye*:

To overcome her depression, Morrison decided to rework a short story she had written at Haward University and to turn it into a novel. That novel becomes *The Bluest Eye*. Morrison had a hard time getting it published. Several publishers turned it down before Holt, Rinehart, and Winston finally printed it in 1970. (332)

Morrison started her writing adventure when she was working at Random House. Her first novel was *The Bluest Eye* that she began to write while she was "...still a student at Haward University" (Kubitschek 5). Her new career assisted her to write start writing freely:

For her entire career, Toni Morrison has been a single parent. Often she earned a living with editing and teaching jobs during the day and wrote at night. Morrison began writing fiction, she says, because her circumstances gave her the time. When she moved to Syracuse, NY, after her divorce, she knew that she wouldn't stay long. She didn't therefore, try to make friends. Random House allowed Morrison to work at

home. Creative writing gave her a focus during her solitary evenings. After editing all day and putting her children down for the night, she began to write a story... This story became her first novel, *The Bluest Eye*. (Kubitschek 5)

Her job in New York, allowed her to write literary works. “In the 1970s, Morrison’s career suddenly took flight. When she published *Sula* (1973) and *Song of Solomon* (1977), she became recognized as one of the most important new voices in American fiction” (Nelson 332). She began to be famous by the help of her first novel:

...clearly Toni Morrison perceived a void in the canon where a black female voice should be. A chronological reading of Morrison’s work will show that her own voice—heard in *The Bluest Eye* (published in 1970) and *Sula* (1974), where she focuses on the black female—gathers strength in later work as she considers the issues of female friendship, different aspects of love, and the succor afforded by community. The voice is avowedly black and female. (Birch 149)

Alike other black female writers, Morrison’s creativity was not recognized immediately. However, “The success of *Sula* earned Morrison an appointment as lecturer at Yale University and *Song of Solomon* won her the National Book Critics Circle Award” (Nelson 332-333). The fame of her novels provided her to again “...international acclaim” (Kubitschek 5). Her later works took the attention of most of the people:

Also in 1981, Morrison published her fourth novel, *Tar Baby*. Although the novel drew mixed reviews, and *Newsweek* put Morrison’s picture on its cover and published a long interview article on her life and work. Three years later, in 1984, Morrison left Random House to devote herself exclusively to her writing and to teaching, her first career choice. All along, she had been teaching in various places on the side, including Bard College and the State University of New York at Purchase. (Nelson 333)

Morrison’s fourth novel *Tar Baby* was about “...conflicting cultural values, personified in the tug of love between Jadine and Son...” (Birch 151) Leaving her job at

Random House, Morrison “...was appointed to the Albert Schweitzer Chair of the Humanities at the State University of New York at Albany” (Reed 209). Meantime, “...she wrote and directed the performance of a play, *Dreaming Emmett* (1986)” (Nelson 333). Her fifth novel *Beloved* published in 1987. This novel was a significant work “...for which she received the Pulitzer Prize” (333). This popular work “...seeks to fill a gap in our knowledge; how did slaves, with terrible experiences, become free, healthy people” (Kubitschek 6). Morrison’s fifth novel *Beloved* was “...a powerful account of mother love, murder, and legacy of slavery...” (“Toni Morrison” 33246) Her success continued with her later novels:

Since 1989, Morrison has been Robert F. Goheen Professor in the Humanities at Princeton University. She has also lectured at many universities, among them Harvard; and in 1992, she published three of her Harvard lectures under the title, *Playing In the Dark: Whiteness and Literary Imagination*. That same year, she also published her sixth novel, *Jazz*, which was greeted with moderate praise. (Nelson 333)

Morrison’s sixth novel *Jazz* was published in 1992. It was “...a tale of love and murder set in Harlem in the 1920s” (“Toni Morrison” 33246). This novel deals with “...romantic issues” (Kubitschek 6). Its characters “...Joe and Violet, are not the usual young couple, however. They have experienced first-hand the Great migration and the Jazz age, and when the book opens, they are in their fifties” (6).

Being a black female writer, “Morrison’s lasting fame secured in 1993, when she was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature. She was the first black person and only the eight women to receive that recognition” (Nelson 333). She was “One of most accomplished prose stylists of the twentieth century...” (Reed 209) At present, Toni Morrison works “...at Princeton University, where she teaches Afro-American studies and creative writing” (209).

### 3.1.2.1. LITERARY WORKS OF TONI MORRISON

Morrison's genius has been recognized all over the world. "In addition to honorary degrees from Ivy League colleges (Harvard, Yale, Columbia), Toni Morrison has won many honors, including a National Book Critics Circle Award and Pulitzer Prize" (Kubitschek 1). She is the writer of six richly allusive and precisely crafted novels" (Reed 209). The success of his fiction is the product of "...its poetic language, lush detail, emotional intensity, and sensitive observation of American life as viewed from a variety of African American perspectives" ("Toni Morrison" 33246). Morrison begins writing fiction in her maturity and she expresses "...the themes that she would explore and develop in her subsequent work" (Taylor-Guthrie 93).

Her first novel is *The Bluest Eye* published in 1970. It is "...the story of a girl ruined by a racist society and its violence" (33246). In this novel, "...the two most important themes are the failure of love and the reasons some African Americans repudiate their racial identity by adopting the values of white society" (Nelson 333). The novel starts with a parody. "This text is shown to be ironic...Morrison uses parts of it as chapter headings" (334). *The Bluest Eye* focuses on "motherhood" (Kubitschek 6). This work "...deals with the many cooperating forces that make a little black girl come to want blue eyes" (6). The protagonist wants to have the same properties as the white ones:

The structure of *The Bluest Eye* cleverly juxtaposes two worlds, two cultures in tension within a double framework; one female is the cyclical, seasonal one, the other the idealized world in a child's reading primer, The first frame, in which the narrative moves from Autumn, Winter, Spring to Summer, echoes the spiraling movement of Pecola's tragedy, and underlines the inevitability of natural processes which in Pecola's case become perverted and stunted. For such as Pecola, the world could never be a place of self-fulfillment. The larger society into which she is born, and by whose standards she will be judged, is like the earth receiving the narrator's seeds, unyielding. The seasonal rhythm of planting and harvest is a cruel parody of Pecola's experience as summer brings both death of the baby she bears to her father and her retreat into madness. The novel questions not how this happened, but why: the answer suggested is found in the second frame, which

contrasts white expectations with the reality of a black childhood. (Birch 151-152)

In *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison depicts that if one compare a black child's life with the life of white one, the previous is much more different. Portraying the character Pecola "...Morrison illustrates how an unloved member of an underclass can be tragically destroyed and, in Claudia, the healthy survival of one cocooned by familial love" (152). The writer wants reader to "... share through Pecola the trauma of racism's effects was away of signaling the far-reaching range and insidious nature of those effects and their causes" (Matus 38).

Morrison's second novel published in 1973 is *Sula* that "...tells of the passionate and lawless Sula, the last of a matriarchal family..." (Taylor-Guthrie 93) This novel "...has a less contrived structure, and its style comes closer to that of folk narrative" (Nelson 335). This novel demonstrates the troubles of a black female:

The central concern in *Sula* is the quest for personal identity, but this quest is taken to an egocentric extreme. Thus, a related theme is the evil that inevitably grows when we are so absorbed with ourselves that we become unable to love others. Morrison has explained that the protagonist, Sula Peace, and her best friend, Nellie Wright, are symbolic of good and evil people. (335)

As seen, Morrison's second novel *Sula* "...is centered on women's friendship, a rare topic in literature before 1973" (Kubitschek 6). The writers "... first two novels, *The Bluest Eye* and *Sula*, helped to make more realistic black women visible to the American reading public" (17). In *Sula* the narrator is Sula's friend Nel:

Nel... is her complementary opposite, brought up in a strict Baptist household where every stirring of her imagination is disciplined. Sula's energy propels her out into the world, but the world drives her back into the community. Sula destroys her family and Nel's marriage, and she becomes an outcast. (Taylor-Guthrie 94)

The protagonist of the book, Sula has an extreme affection for her friend Nel. “The only abiding relationship for Sula is her love for Nel, which in girlhood was uncomplicated by Jealous competition between them for boyfriends” (Birch 160). Nel marries a man, “... but it holds no attraction for Sula, who leaves the Bottoms to live life on her own terms” (160). Sula causes Nel to divorce her husband, but cannot understand the reason of this divorce since to Sula they are best friends:

For Sula the only thing that matters is the freedom to do whatever she wants to- a freedom that whites deny black males and that white and black males deny black females. As a result, she becomes a pariah in her own community. When she dies, the only one who mourns her passing is Nel Green and the town’s idiot, Shadrack who had a crush on Sula. Thus, Sula comes across as a character whose life is a cautionary tale, and the novel affirms the values that are the opposite of Sula’s. (Nelson 335-336)

Being black women, both Nel and Sula know that they “... grow into a world fashioned first for whites, then for males and lastly for black women” (Birch 160). All freedom is forbidden to them. “In her ten years of absence, Sula had lived an ‘experimental’ life in which she had free-wheeled amongst lovers for whom she never felt possessiveness” (160-161). However, independence cannot relax her; she wants to return to her best friend:

In *Sula*, Morrison points to what can be lost when community disappears. Technological progress had brought isolation; a distancing of individuals from the emotional nutrition which had characterized the Bottoms, where once the air had got heavy with peeled fruit and boiling vegetables. French corn, tomatoes, string beans, melon rinds. Morrison suggests that in striving to acquire the artifacts of twentieth-century America, black Americans will only survive “whole” if they nourish, and are in turn nourished by their own community. With this they can preserve the sense of identity which Nel and Sula, in their own ways, had set about finding. (164)

Toni Morrison aims to portray the isolation of a woman, Sula. This woman needs to behave as she desires. She doesn't resemble her close friend In *Sula* "...Morrison makes explicit her belief that there is a spiritual world beyond the physical one" (Nelson 336).

Published in 1977, Morrison's third novel *Song of Solomon* brings her National Book Award. It helps her to become "...one of the America's leading novelists. It concerns a middle-class man who achieves self-knowledge through the discovery of his rural black heritage" ("Toni Morrison" 33246). This novel is "...a compelling and complex story, draws upon the Afro-American myth that Africans, like their ancestor Solomon, could fly from enslavement back to Africa..." (Birch 164) In this work, Morrison shows suffers of Blacks, vividly:

*Song of Solomon* is a fable underlining how separation, both physical and spiritual, hinders growth. To emphasize the dangers of a further Diaspora as Southern black communities disintegrate in Northern-migrations, Morrison uproots her fictional characters from the rural south and locates them in the urban, industrialized North. Even they cannot escape the violence of racism which invades them in the account of the boy murdered in Mississippi... Paradoxically, despite the viciousness of endemic southern racism, the uprooted blacks, like those in Alice Walker's fiction, love their southern homeland...In migrating blacks suffered a double dispossession for in leaving the southern homeland they left their living contact with African ancestors. (164)

Morrison's third novel tells the story of the black people who removed from Africa and took South America. Then they migrate north of the country. There are "...more supernatural elements" (Nelson 336) in *Song of Solomon*. It deals with "...an African American man searching for his roots, but this theme is blended with political issues in a wholly new way" (Kubitschek 6). In *Song of Solomon*, Morrison portrays the quest of personality:

The major themes in *Song of Solomon* are the search for identity and the clash between materialist and idealist values. These themes are developed in a plot that describes the spiritual coming of age of Milkman Dead.

The events of the plot combine the actual and the imaginary, the natural and the supernatural. (Nelson 336)

The protagonist of *Song of Solomon*, "...Milkman is exposed to two different influences, that of his materialist father, Macon and that of his spiritual aunt, Pilate" (336). However, at the end of the novel, it is clear that "...the spiritual freedom gained from a discarding of materialism" (Birch 165). The protagonist, Milkman "... is guided to the freedom to be found only in true identity" (169). In her novel, Morrison characters search also for their African roots:

*Song of Solomon* presents Macon Dead the slumlord and his bootlegging sister, Pilate, who are pitted, in a duel that is carried into the third generation by the affair between his son, Milkman, and her granddaughter, Hagar. Within the conflicts of the black community, Toni Morrison introduces a secret society dedicated to retaliating, murder for murder, and every crime against the black community. Yet this society misinterprets Milkman's quest for his African origins as a betrayal of their secret mission. (Taylor-Gathrie 94)

Although the black people suffer too much in *Song of Solomon* "...the Southern community enables Milkman to find his roots and himself" (Kubitschek 23). At the end of this novel, there is "... an assertion of the supremacy of spirit over matter, an expression of an idealist vision of life" (Nelson 337).

Morrison's fourth novel, published in 1981 is *Tar Baby*. There is a "...sense of danger and reprieve at the beginning of *Tar Baby*..." (Birch 170) Compared with the writer's previous novels "...*Tar Baby*'s setting is exotic, lush and captivatingly sensual" (170). In this novel "...the conflict between the races explodes, revealing all the underlying interrelationships between white masters and black servants" (Taylor-Guthrie 94). Morrison demonstrates racism by the way of white and black characters:

In her next novel, *Tar Baby* (1981), Morrison gives a new twist to the familiar themes of the repudiation of racial identity and that of the conflict between material and spiritual values. For one thing, most of the action

takes place not in the United States but on an imaginary French Caribbean island named Isle des Chevaliers. For another, for most of the novel the milieu is not that of an African American community but that of the island mansion of a white millionaire, Valerian Street. However, the novel again asserts the existence of a spiritual world beyond the material one because once again the livings are visited by ghosts of the dead. Also Nature – the island and its fauna and flora-is described as an all-encompassing, sentient being. (Nelson 337-338)

As stated, the story told in *Tar Baby* is much more different compared with other works. It centers on white people's surrounding and setting is not America. "The protagonist of *Tar Baby* is a young black woman, Jadine Child's, who is the niece of the millionaire's black servant Sidney and Ondine" (338). This work observes matters that can occur between white ones and black ones:

At the start of the novel, Valerian Street and his wife, Margaret, have retired from their confection industry in Philadelphia and are preparing for Christmas in their Caribbean retreat, "L'Arbe de la Croix." Their old butler, Sdyney, and the cook, Ondine, uprooted and as yet unsettled in the tropics, await their adopted daughter, Jadine, as well as the son of the house. Suddenly, an intruder in the house creates a panic that dislocates each character and reveals a pattern of dependence, exploitation, and complicity between masters and servants, servants and children, husbands and wives. (Taylor-Guthrie 94)

A sailor "...is discovered hiding in the Mansion" (Nelson 338) of the streets. He is a black man and he "...calls himself Son, but his real name is William Green" (338). They do not call the police and treat "...him as a houseguest" (338). Jadine runs away with this black man, "...only to be confronted by their incompleteness as individuals and as a couple" (Taylor-Guthrie 94). These couple is used to show how difficult it is to have different colors of skin:

She will not comprise with his backward black world, and he cannot live in her white world. He becomes the rabbit caught by and sinking with the Tar Baby-Here

Toni Morrison dramatizes his choice of death by Eros, or death by Psyche. The novel has a circular construction based on the cycle of nature and the spiritual relationships of the characters to the laws of nature. (Taylor-Guthrie 94)

There is an "...unacknowledged racism that shapes" (Nelson 338) the streets behaviors towards Son. Although at first Judine and Son argue due to Son's race, later they become lovers. This novel "...takes an age-old concern...a woman and a man in love ...and makes it new with a landscape where trees talk and political concerns are inescapable" (Kubitschek 6).

Morrison's fifth novel *Beloved* published in 1987 is the writer's "...best-known work ...a powerful, often barrowing ghost story about a Black fugitive slave who kills her baby to spare it from a life of slavery" (Reed 209). It is also acknowledged as "...a powerful account of mother love, murder, and the legacy of slavery..." ("Toni Morrison" 33246). *Beloved* tells a past event that ends in crime:

Six years after *Tar Baby*, Morrison published *Beloved*, which is based on a historical incident. In 1856, in Cincinnati, a fugitive slave by the name of Margaret Warner tried to kill her four children when slave catchers came to take them back to the Kentucky plantation from which she and her children had escaped. *Beloved* explores this incident from two angles, a historical and a moral one. Thus, a major theme in the novel is the history of the treatment that black female slaves have received from whites ever since they were packed onto the slave ships that brought them to America. But the central theme is a moral one, because the most clearly developed pattern in the novel's structure is the protagonist Sethe's trying to answer the question whether it was morally right for her to kill her child in order to preserve the child from a life that she, Sethe, considered not worth living. The structural red thread that runs through the novel is Sethe's gradual change, her psychological deterioration as she feels more and more guilty... (Nelson 338-339)

Morrison reveals the past events. She does not directly demonstrate the truths by the help of slave narratives. She states what a slave female can experience in her life.

*Beloved* "...challenges its readers to recognize the unbearable poignancy of the claims of the past the loss suffered not just by those who survived, but by those who did not" (Matus 104). *Beloved* consists of three parts created to exhibit suffers and struggles of black women:

The three-part structure of the novel emphatically underlines the interrelation between the specificity of location and the demands of the ghost for audience and attention. Part I opens with 124 was spiteful Part II with 124 was laud, and Part III with 124 was quiet .These simple statements chart the progress of the haunting, from the fretful mischief of a poltergeist, through the clamorous demands of a materialized spirit, to the final freeing of the hunter, and the haunted. At the same time, they reflect the gradual pacification of an aggrieved child, whose demand of attention, when fulfilled, allows a final slipping into easy sleep. Greedy for the mother-love of which she was deprived by violent death, Beloved's ghost returns to demand attention from a mother overcome with grief and guilt, yet overflowing with maternal love. Beloved's materialization occurs when Sethe's plantation past re-emerges with a visit from a fellow ex-slave, Paul D. This encounter with her own history, when Sethe is offered the possibility of new life and love by Paul D, triggers the materialization of Beloved who is clamorously jealous for recognition as the living proof of her mother's deed. Sethe's guilt and the manifestation are mutually sustaining one feeding on the other. For eighteen years, the memory of her child-murder had disturbed and prevented peaceful co-existence for those living at No. 124. The initial shock horror of the event had destroyed Sethe's mother-in-law's will to live and the continuing disquiet had driven Sethe's two sons to steal away from home as soon as they reached adolescence. (Birch 177-178)

The name of the novel comes from Beloved who "...refers to a child whom Sethe killed and who, twenty years later, returns to her mother not only as her dead baby grown up but also as a person able to remember several previous" (Nelson 339) events. Sethe's little baby Beloved shows "...what it was like to be jammed in between the dead and the dying in the hold of a ship" (339). Writing the slave experience "...Morrison as a black writer tells the truths of slavery to the mixed-race audience of the present" (Kubitschek 15).

Morrison's sixth novel, *Jazz* published in 1992. The writer "...got her idea for her sixth novel...from a book of photographs of dead Harlem residents entitled *The Harlem Book of the Dead*, for which she wrote the Introduction" (Nelson 341). *Jazz* is viewed as "...a tale of love and murder set in Harlem in the 1920s" ("Toni Morrison" 33246). In this work, Morrison wants to give information about her people:

Music comes to the fore in her most recent novel *Jazz*, in which Morrison undertakes an imaginative interpretation of a specific and transitional period in the history of her people. The time is the 1920s, the place Harlem. Morrison's focus is not upon the 'niggerati' described by Hurston, but on the hopeful Southern blacks who were forced by Reconstruction from rural homelands into the 'City'...The vehicle for her reconstruction of this second Diaspora is the story of the middle-aged couple, Violet and Joe Trace, whose relation to this new environment is realized in Morrison's examination of Joe's affair with the 17-year-old Dorcas. Morrison's choice of title aptly embodies both the structure of the novel and the significance of jazz music as an expression of black experience. Blues and jazz music, now incorporated into the cultural heritage of all Americans, owes nothing at all to white cultural models. It is an artistic expression of a black experience untainted by white association or cultural models... (Birch 189)

As known, most of the black people "...left the South for the North they took with them an African music from which jazz emerged" (189). In this novel, the old people are troubled by this new way of singing. "In addition, the narrator adds meditations on the influence of jazz— particularly, sexually explicit jazz lyrics — on the attitudes of people during the time between 1919 and 1929" (Nelson 342). This recent singing "...not only urged the young to live, it urged the old to remember, and it is in the act of remembering that the protagonists in *Jazz* find a self they had lost in the city" (Birch 192). This novel also "...shows the community becoming politically and artistically active, protesting injustice and creating jazz" (Kubitschek 23).

Morrison's seventh novel, published in 1998, is *Paradise*. This novel doesn't only center on "...a single protagonist but develops a conflict between two opposed groups of people, because its central theme is that of bigotry among African Americans, and because its vision of life has strong religious undertones" (Nelson 342). It is obvious

that "...almost transcendentalist conception of God is something new in Morrison's fiction, perhaps a harbinger of more religious fiction to come from her pen" (Nelson 342).

Morrison's "other novels are...*Love* (2003) and *A Mercy* (2008)" ("Toni Morrison" 33246). She "...has also written a play, *Dreaming Emmett* (1986)" (Reed 209). Her works also include the essay collections *Race-ing Justice*, *En-Gendering Power* and *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. The publication years of these two books are the same, 1992. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, analyzes "...the critical biases of professional literary criticism" (Kubitschek 17). In addition, Morrison is the writer of "...several children's books, including *The Big Box* (2000), written with her son, ...a song cycle, *Honey and Me* (1992), written with Andre Previn, and an opera, *Margaret Garner*" (2003)" ("Toni Morrison" 33246).

## **PART IV**

#### 4.1. THE SUFFERS OF BLACK WOMEN IN ALICE WALKER'S *THE COLOR PURPLE* AND *MERIDIAN* AND TONI MORRISON'S *BELOVED* AND *THE BLUEST EYE*

Being two prominent writers of African-American literature, both Alice Walker and Toni Morrison depict how a black person lives in a white dominated society. Especially, they deal with black female characters in their fiction. "In the fiction of Morrison, Walker..., as in the novels of Black women writers in general, the construction of race-specific narratives that highlight a gendered subject has required the fusion of two discourses" (Butler-Evans 19). Writing on race is an indispensable attitude to these women writers. "Alice Walker's novels deal with the human experience in general, but especially the human experience from the perspective of the suffering and the downtrodden, the hurt and the oppressed" (Nelson 461). In most of her novels, the woman characters suffer and struggle for identity:

...in *The Color Purple*, Celie suffers severe emotional and physical abuse at the hands of her husband Mr. \_\_\_\_\_. The title character of *Meridian* comes from an impoverished background, is maltreated by whites and men in her life, and ultimately sacrifices herself in the name of fighting injustices, such as those she herself has endured, for all. (461)

Walker expresses that not only black women suffer from discrimination by the white people, but also they are in pain due to the black men. In her novels, one usually realizes that she demonstrates "female as victim" (Walker 55). Most of her fictional characters "...suffered and survived" (Lauret 1) at the end of the novels.

Likewise, Toni Morrison's "...fiction is noted for its poetic language, lush detail, emotional, intensity and sensitive observation of American life as viewed from a variety of African-American perspectives" ("Toni Morrison" 33246). Being a member of black society has helped her portraying the lives of black female characters in her fiction:

Recurring themes in Toni Morrison's fiction are the failure of love; the quest for an authentic identity, or,

conversely the failure to achieve such an identity; and the clash between material and spiritual values, between the belief that the physical world is all there is and the belief that beyond the physical world there exists a spiritual world. Moreover, on some level Morrison always deals with the role of women in African American society. (Nelson 333)

The themes of Morrison's novels, allow her revealing African American females' position both black surroundings and white society. "Her first novel, *The Bluest Eye* (1970), is the story of a girl ruined by a racist society and its violence..." ("Toni Morrison" 33246) The protagonist of this novel struggles against racism. "...*Beloved* (1987; Pulitzer Prize), a powerful account of mother love, murder, and the legacy of slavery..." (33246) Her later fiction displays what it means to be a slave and what the results of this oppression can be at the end.

#### **4.1.1. THE SUFFERS OF BLACK WOMEN IN ALICE WALKER'S *THE COLOR PURPLE***

Awarded the Pulitzer Prize, *The Color Purple* is "...the story of Celie, a poor, barely literate Southern black woman who struggles to escape the brutality and degradation of her treatment by men" (Gates, Jr- Appiah 16). Although it is not easy to get rid of the patriarchal society, the protagonist manages to overcome these conditions.

*The Color Purple* is "...more concerned with the politics of sex and self than with the politics of class and race" (Bell 263). The matter of identity and realization of self is the most significant issues centered on this novel. It demonstrates the "...violent abuse of black women by black men..."(263) The dangers in front of the black female characters don't appears especially due to the racial problems. Black community, itself has lots of obstacles that prevent black women from realizing their identity. Among these handicaps, there are rape, incest, gender roles, color, black men and violence.

#### 4.1.1.1. RAPE AND INCEST

Walker's novel *The Color Purple* begins with the scene of rape. When the protagonist of the novel, "...Celie is 14 ...stepfather, whom she believes (because nobody talks about the lynched) is her father, begins to rape her..." (Walker, *The Same River Twice* 50) She cannot tell this trauma anybody. At first, her stepfather starts to do this when her mother is not at home. The he says "...you better shut up and git used to it" (Walker, *The Color Purple* 3). Celie's expressions show how difficult position she stays. "But I don't never git used to it. And now I feell sick used to it. I be the one to cook. My mama she fuss at me an look at me. She happy, cause he good to her now. But too sick to last long" (3).

As Celie asserts, as a teenager, she cannot tolerate this abuse, but she cannot tolerate this abuse, but she is not able to express this to her mother. She narrates "My mama dead. She die screaming and cussing" (4). After her mother's death "...she is repeatedly raped and beaten by her stepfather..." (Gates, Jr.-Appiah 16) He causes "...the birth of two children whom he gives away to an old friend who has become a missionary..." (Walker, *The Same River Twice* 50)

The rape scene of the novel "...is based on Walker's great-great-grandmother, who was raped and impregnated at age 11 by her master Walker's great-great-grandfather" (Winchell 85). As seen, this abuse is related to a real event and it is written by the writer to demonstrate what a black female live. This event reveals "...the portrayal of black family..." (86)

This incident actually proves that there is incest in most of Black families. The writer suggests that "...child-rape, incest..." (Birch 222) is an undeniable fact of most blacks' lives. Since Celie has been "...warned by her stepfather not to tell anyone (but God) who fathered her children, she dutifully writes letters to God" (Walker, *The Same River Twice* 50). She cannot tell it anybody due to it is a shame to be raped by a family member. "The bulk of Celie's letters are addressed to God, as the only Being in whom she could confide the horror of her rape and the burden of her marriage of convenience to Mr. \_\_\_\_\_" (Birch 225–226).

The shame and fear of rape scene leads her to write her sadness on the papers. Being an abused girl, Celie aims to protect her sister Nettie. She indicates "I see him

looking at my little sister. She scared. But I say I'll take care of you. With God help" (Walker, *The Color Purple* 5). Already, Celie is a female who "...is sexually abused by her presumed father and who manages to save her sister Nettie from the safe fate" (Evans 450). The protagonist helps her sister to free herself from their father's evil opinions about his little daughters. Her sister, Nettie "...who with Celie's help has fled to Africa with a missionary group..." (Gates, Jr.- Appiah 16)

After raped by her so-called father Celie starts even not to look at other men as if they will do the same thing. "I don't even look at men. That's the truth. I look at women, tho, cause I'm not scared of them" (Walker, *The Color Purple* 7). This assertion shows how incest can affect a female's life. She decides not to say anything to anybody. She becomes "...silent for several years after she has been raped by her stepfather: women writers write what abused girls cannot speak" (Lauret 97). As it is asserted by Celie, she can only rely on God and can share the incidents with him:

Celie is so cut off from everyone and her experience is so horrifying, even to herself, that she can only write it in letters to God. The letters take us through her awful pregnancies, her children being taken away from her, and the abuses of a loveless marriage. (Evans 470)

The letters of Celie express everything that she has lived and her each thought can be understood by the way of this writing. Because of the rapist father's behaviors, even after years she states "But I don't know how to fight. All I know how to do is stay alive" (Walker, *The Color Purple* 17). It's hard to object all abuses she has lived. Celie begins to see all of men as a "...female sexual danger and abuse" (Lauret 98). She marries Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, but she behaves as if she is not alive near men:

As Walker explains, to have Celie's speak in the language of her oppressors would be to deny her validity of her existence ; to suppress her voice would be to murder her and to attack all those ancestors who spoke as she does. Her words, particularly the opening ones describing her rape by her stepfather, might shock, but they are the only words that she could have used. They are a part of the self that Celie is eventually able to accept. (Winchell 87)

Suffering during the adolescent years of Celie, prepares her to ignore similar events. She has hope in her heart. Reading the sentence of Nettie “Pa is not our pa!” (Walker, *The Color Purple* 150) Celie’s shame of rapist father starts to disappear. She shows her easiness in her letter to God, “All my little half-brothers and sisters no kin to me. My children not my sister and brother. Pa not pa” (151). She is glad to learn that “...the man who raped Celie is in fact not their father” (Lauret 93).

After several years of depression and shame, Celie gets to know that “Her real father had been lynched. With the stigma of incest removed, Celie finally stands up to Mr. \_\_\_\_\_” (Gates, Jr.-Appiah 19). She intends to get rid of other men in her life. “When she discovers that her abuser was not her natural father, her joy is accompanied by a feeling that God had ignored her suffering” (Birch 226). She purposes to live it up.

The reason of significance of the Celie’s rape scene is that there is not a race issue. Celie is black and her stepfather is black, as well. This incident displays that being a member of a black family is dangerous for a female. The victim of abuses, Celie “...begins he story raped, beaten, orphaned, without emotional support, and with only minimal economic support” (Dieke 143). These facts are the representatives of a black female’s life. Celie is demonstrated “...the black woman as oppressed ...” (Evans 163)

Being a black woman, Celie cannot express what she lived at the hands of her stepfather. So, Walker uses the epistolary form, to state an abused girl cannot tell anything. “Celie’s early “letters” are all written to what she later realizes is a nonexistent God; they are closely related to a process of self-narration and presentation through an extensive interior monologue” (163). There is no response to her letters since her suffering continues for a long time until she learns that her rapist father is not her real father:

Celie has been denied “a self” and is treated merely as an object. She has been repeatedly raped by her step-father and viewed as a necessary replacement for her own mother who was too ill and too weary of sex to act on her own. Later, when given to Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ as his wife slave, she is described by her step-father in terms of her ability to work and to attend to Mr. \_\_\_\_\_’s sexual need, being viewed as mere property for exchange. (Dieke 56)

As indicated, being a black female, Celie viewed only as an object that doesn't have any feelings and rights. This attitude shows itself when she is raped by her father. The protagonist's "...abuse is deepened by the fact that before marriage she had already been repeatedly raped by the man she calls "father" and made to bear his children only to have them taken from her soon after birth" (Bloom 88).

#### 4.1.1.2. GENDER ROLES

In *The Color Purple*, Walker displays the roles of black female in black community. Her work points "what a black woman ought to be and do" (Bell 263). The protagonist of the novel, Celie attempts to "struggle for social change" (267) to create her new self and the new attitudes towards black women:

Well, next time you come you can look at her. She ugly. Don't even look like she kin to Nettie. But she'll make the better wife. She ain't smart either, and I'll just be fair, you have to watch her or she she'll give away everything you own. But she can work like a man. (Walker, *The Color Purple* 10)

So-called father of Celie states that being a black girl, she can be a good slave wife and she can do all of housework and she can be used a sexual object by the master. "...married Celie so that she would look after his children..." (Walker, *The Same River Twice* 50) Because of the fact that Celie is the slave-wife, she has "...beaten down for many years "by her life of drudgery and abuse with Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ and his obnoxious off spring..." (50) As viewed, black women are exposed to the "acts of violence" (Lauret 91).

Most of the Black females, like Celie, are not allowed to be educated. There are always "...cultural boundaries..." (92) in front of black women. In the novel one of the sisters of Reverend Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, states that "When a woman marry she spose to keep a decent house and a clean family" (Walker, *The Color Purple* 19). She implies that the responsibility of a black woman is only to do all of the housework and the duties about children. She also emphasizes Celie's position in their brother house. "Good

housekeeper, good with children, good cook” (Walker, *The Color Purple* 20). Mr. \_\_\_\_\_’s sisters speak as if a black woman does not have any feeling and she is only an object of people.

In *The Color Purple*, gender roles are indicated so clearly. Especially, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_’s son Harpo points what a black wife should do and what it means to be a man. When her aunt tells him to do something, Harpo says “Women work. I’m a man” (20). This utterance portrays the hard conditions of a black woman. Even though Celie does everything that is told, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ beats him consistently. To him, “All women good for...” (22) beating. Black men think that black women deserve beating. This behavior of violence also influences his son Harpo:

He beat me like he beat the children. Cept he don’t never hardly beat them. He say, Celie, git the belt. The children be outside the room peeking through the cracks. It all I can do not to cry. I make myself wood. I say to myself, Celie, you are a tree. That’s how come I know trees fear man. (Walker 22)

Celie is exposed to violent attitude not only in her previous family, but also in her new family. *The Color Purple* centers on the black women’s “...economic and sexual enslavement in a male dominated and racist society” (Bloom 88). They are seen having no rights to act freely. It is obvious in this novel that “the South suggests that sexism for Black women in America does not derive from racism, though it is qualitatively affected by it” (Evans 470). They are abused for sexual reasons:

In a scene reminiscent of a slave auction, Celie’s stepfather then offers her in marriage to the widower Albert \_\_\_\_\_, who looks her over like a head of live stock and marries her in desperation because he needs someone to cook and clean for him and take care of his four children. Thus Celie is passed like a piece of property from one cruel and domineering black male into the hands of another. (Winchell 86)

Being one of the member of this abuser male dominated community, Celie and the wife of Harpo, that is, Sofia suffers too much. However, unlike Celie, Sofia advices

Harpo to beat his wife and says the reason “I say it cause you do what I can’t” (Walker, *The Color Purple* 38). At first, Celie cannot fight; she only cares for being alive:

She say, All my life I had to fight. I had to fight my daddy. I had to fight my brothers. I had to fight my cousins and my uncles. A girl child ain’t safe in a family of men. But I never thought I’d have to fight in my own house. She let out her breath. I loves Harpo, she say. God knows I do. But I’ll kill him dead before I let him beat me. Now if you want a dead son-in-law you just keep on advising him like you hip. I used to hunt game with a bow and arrow, she say. (38)

A black female is seen as the sexual object even in her own family. She has to do what white black males want them to do. In *The Color Purple*, each time Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ despises Celie stating “Look at you. You black, you pore, you ugly, you a woman. Goddam, he say, you nothing at all” (176). This utterance helps one to realize what it means to be a woman in a black society. “Mr. \_\_\_\_\_’s view of Celie sums up the societal disadvantages of black women, as well as revealing how Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ had unquestioningly accepted the white man’s view of power” (Birch 224). Even his attitudes affect the manners of his son towards his wife:

Gender socialization has conditioned Harpo into believing that his manhood is measured by his mastery of his wife, even if this entails beating. He has no way of dealing with the living reality of Sofia who, having learned to defend herself from numerous siblings, fights back...She and her sisters had fought for equal status with their brothers, whose respect and fierce loyalty they had won. In the depiction of Harpo’s marriage to Sofia, Walker repudiates the gender stereotyping which has stifled the development of both sexes. Harpo is not designed, mentally or physically, for wife-beating. He loves to cook and clean the house, whereas Sofia, dressed in Harpo’s work-pants, is a competent maintenance worker in the house, happily nailing roof-boards. In this gender role-reversal Harpo is initially ill at ease, comfort-eating to the extent that his belly expands to the proportion of pregnancy, but his discomfort results from his sense that he is failing to meet the social expectations of what a man should do and be. (225)

Indirect influence of racism leads black male to be dominant in a black family. Sofia's self-confidence encourages her to object to beating her husband. She is aware of black females' position at the hands of black males. However Celie's situation "...derives from the experiences that early shaped their personalities and from culturally deprived sex roles" (Winchell 87).

#### 4.1.1.3. COLOR

Even in black community, the degree of blackness shapes the behaviors of people. In *The Color Purple*, the mistress of the protagonist's husband is a good representative of color of skin. Even though she has a dark black skin, "She is the woman in control of her life" (Walker, *The Same River Twice* 52). She is more different than Celie. "She is gorgeous and knows it, with only positive thoughts about her very black skin—since during this period the black and lighter-skinned black woman had about the same chance with black men" (52).

Knowing the position in the black dominated society, Shug Avery acts independently and warns Celie not to be dependent on black males. Similarly, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_'s sister, Kate also advises Celie about fighting. "You got to fight them, Celie, she say. I can't do it for you. You got to fight them for yourself" (Walker, *The Color Purple* 21). Nevertheless, Celie is afraid of black males' brutality and states "I think about Nettie, dead. She fight, she run away. What good it do? I don't fight, I stay where I'm told. But I'm alive" (21).

This self-described "black, pore, and ugly" woman, with all the suggestions of race, class and gender oppression implied in that description, represents the suppressed voices ...and other anonymous women of Walker's earlier novels, and through strategies of representation and defamiliarization, highlights their status as oppressed. (Evans 11)

Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ always despises Celie using the bad words including "black". This truth is the indicator of her oppressed life. Her husband usually compares Celie and

utters "...what you got? You ugly. You skinny. You shape funny. You too scared to open your mouth to people" (Walker, *The Color Purple* 175). So, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ aims to emphasize the color of her skin and her physical appearance and wants to discourage her to act independently. At last, Celie starts to get to know her identity, "I'm pore, I'm black, I may ugly and can't cook, a voice say to everything listening. But I'm here" (176). This last expression demonstrates that Celie accepts herself and realizes that she has the courage to get rid of these evil surroundings:

Although *The Color Purple* is a firmly rooted in the life of a rural black, community, where lives are shaped by interpersonal relationships, the weight of white institutions is ever present. The town government is white, the law is white, Sofia is imprisoned because she attacks a racist Mayor, and Squeak is raped when she tries to intercede on Sofia's behalf with the white Sheriff, to whom she is distantly related. This particular outrage is cleverly turned to black advantage, when Squeak outwits the Sheriff by using the same survival strategy as the rabbit in the tar baby tale. Sofia is released into the custody of the Mayor's wife because the authorities are convinced she will regard this is a harsher punishment than imprisonment. As the folklore collected by Hurston reveals, black survival had depended, upon such strata gems... (Birch 225)

Living in a racist society affects not only black males' opinions on black females, but also the behaviors of black women towards white community. Even though, it is hard to survive in a patriarchal society, some black women like, Shug and Sofia manage to keep alive and act according to their decisions. At the end of the novel *The Color Purple*, Celie "...liberates herself, that is, she comes to value herself..." (Evans 470) By the help of the black women, Sofia, Shug and Nettie she becomes brave and "...Celie frees herself from her husband's repressive control" (Gates, Jr. - Appiah 16). The focus of the novel is "... black women's struggle for independences" (17). The efforts of the protagonist end in success:

Walker's hope for change in the future rests, then, with the young, old and outrageously bold black woman. By exploring the oppressions and celebrating the triumphs of Southern black wives, mothers, and daughters as they

relate more to each other than to working-class black men, she tailors the tradition of critical realism to fit into folk romance and reinforces the theme of black feminism in the Afro-American novel. (Bell 267)

As indicated above, to Walker, liberty from the cruel hands of both white society and black males can only be achieved through colored people's especially black women's interdependency. It is an undeniable fact that only color of women can know the obstacles of black life.

#### 4.1.1.4. BLACK MEN AND VIOLENCE

Walker's novel *The Color Purple* begins with the scene of abuse by a black man, that is, Celie's father rapes her. This protagonist of the novel is the representative of "... a fourteen year-old rape victim and incest survivor..." (Lauret 92) At first, she sees the sexual abuse of a black man. Her letters to God and to her sister Nettie can be seen "as a breaking of the patriarchal taboo on women speaking out about abuse..." (97) Celie emphasizes her difficult situation with these utterances "I am fourteen years old. I have always been a good girl!" (Walker, *The Color Purple* 3). Even though, she is a teenager, she feels the most unbearable sorrow:

He act like he can't stand me no more. Say I'm evil an always up to no good. He took my other little baby, a boy this time. But I don't think he kilt it. I think he sold it to a man and his wife wer Monticello. I got breasts full of milk running down myself. He say why don't you look decent? Put on something. But what I'm sposed to put on? I don't have nothing (5).

Celie's father acts as if she is not a human being and she hasn't got any feelings. Because of the violent behaviors of black males around Celie's and other black women's *The Color Purple* can be considered as "...a catalogue of suffering..." (99) In the novel, "...Celie emerges from the brutal domination and abuse of men..." (Bell 263) The black women in *The Color Purple* are not only exposed to the racist people's discrimination,

but also "... social oppression" (Bell 263) in black community. The protagonist "...feels little for men expect fear. ...her stepfather beats her..." (Winchell 88) The violence used towards black woman by black man, creates the frightened black females. They cannot even look at other men gradually.

During her adolescence years, "...is repeatedly raped and beaten by her stepfather, then forced by him into a loveless marriage to Albert, a widower with four children" (Gates, Jr.-Appiah 16). Coming from hands of a brutal black man, she becomes the wife of an aggressive black man. The protagonist expresses the brutality of Mr.\_\_\_\_\_, "He beat me like he beat the children. Cept he don't never hardly beat them" (Walker, *The Color Purple* 22). This expression shows that Mr.\_\_\_\_\_ beats her like an animal and shows no human connection. The acts of violence demonstrated by black men, causes "... fear of men" (Winchell 88) in the hearts of black female characters. In *The Color Purple* "...the oppression black women experience in their relationships with Black men (fathers, brothers, husbands, lovers)..." (Evan 469) is aimed to focus on.

Nettie's letters, in their formal English, seem stiffly didactic after the poetic beauty of Celie's nearly illiterate attempts to verbalize her plight, but they provide a parallel between the oppressive, male-dominated Southern society that Celie, has now become strong enough to rebel against and equally oppressive and male-dominated society in Africa. (Winchell 94)

The letters of two sisters, Celie and Nettie, help one to visualize the viciousness of black males towards the females. Doing this, Walker displays the "...challenges to patriarchal attitudes and the gender construction..." (Birch 226) In *The Color Purple* although Celie succeeds to get rid of the cruel hands of black men and starts to live independently, her "...suffering is not diminished by the happy ending..." (228)

#### 4.1.2. THE SUFFERS OF BLACK WOMEN IN ALICE WALKER'S *MERIDIAN*

Published in 1976, *Meridian* focuses especially on the protagonist of the novel, Meridian's "... involvement in the civil rights movement..." (Butler-Evans 140) It also displays "... the violence of the 1960s, marked by political assassinations..." (140) In this novel, Walker deals with "...the larger political sphere, with education, religion, social action, racial commitment, personal love..." (Cooke 157-158) In *Meridian*, Walker expresses "...inner struggle..." (158) of especially a black woman, Meridian Hill. This work is "...Walker's memorial to the courage, Strength and personal sacrifice made by her freedom-marching comrades..." (Birch 208) It is obvious that "*Meridian* records a young female student's experience of combating Jim Crow laws and the mentality that had framed them" (209). The protagonist of the novel *Meridian* decides to become an activist and struggle for revolution:

In fact, *Meridian* is based on this idea, the sacredness and continuity of life- and another, that it might be necessary to take life in order to preserve it and make it possible for future generations. Perhaps the most difficult paradox that Walker has examined to date is the relationship between violence and revolution, a relationship that so many take for granted that such scrutiny seems outlandish. (Evans 466)

Even, *Meridian* has to lose her own child through abortion; she decides to sacrifice herself for the benefit of her community. However, she know that "...the societal evils which subordinate one class to another, one race to another, one sex to another, fragment and ultimately threaten life" (466). The protagonist is aware of all these truths, but "... devotes her life to activism" (Lauret 60). Therefore, she suffers from struggle, violence, rape racism and motherhood in the novel.

#### 4.1.2.1. STRUGGLE

The fight of protagonist of the novel starts when “she leaves her husband and gives up her child, distances herself from her devout Christian mother and devotes her life to activism” (Lauret 60). She has to struggle with different types of obstacles because of her “... insistence on the sacredness of life” (Evans 466). Although her lead meridian to involve in movement, she leaves him “... because her life in total commitment to struggle in the black small towns of the South is meaningless to him...” (Gates, Jr. Appiah 9) For this reason, her endeavor begins to show its evil side her love affair. The necessity of this struggle is given in *Meridian* as “...there are times in a person’s life when to risk everything is the only affirmation of life” (Walker, *Meridian* 133). Thus, *Meridian* ignores lots of things for her people:

There were periods in *Meridian*’s life when it could not be perceived that she was ill. It was true that she’d lost so much of her hair that finally she had shaved her head and begun wearing a striped white and black railroad worker’s cap: the cotton was durable and light and the visor shaded her eyes from the sun. And it was also true that she was frail and sickly-looking. But among the impoverished, badly nourished black villagers-who attempted to thrive on a diet of salt meat and potatoes during the winter and fresh vegetables without meat during the summer – she did not look out of place. In fact, she looked as if she belonged. (144 -145)

As seen, even physical appearance of the protagonist of the novel, begins to change due to her devotion to freedom. During the movement, there occur lots of deaths and *Meridian* also “...loses weight, her hair falls out and she is prone to fainting spells, especially after protest actions in which she finds herself increasingly isolated” (Lauret 60-61). Nevertheless, without hesitations she devotes herself to Revolution:

And *Meridian* had sat among them on the floor, her hands clasping the insides of her sneakers, her head down. To join this group she must make a declaration of her Willingness to die for the Revolution, which she had done. She must also answer the question “Will you kill

for the Revolution?" with a positive-Yes. This however, her tongue could not manage. Through her mind was running a small voice that screamed:" Something's missing in me something's missing."And the voice made her heart pound and her ears roar. "Something the old folks with their hymns and proverbs forgot to put in! What is it? What? What?"(Walker, *Meridian* 27)

Although it is too hard for Meridian to accept the utterance about killing for Revolution, she fights with her inner voice and admits it. She "...holds on to the idea of nonviolent resistance after it has been discarded as a viable means to change, Walker persists in struggling with this age-old dilemma-that of death giving life" (Evans 466). Meridian's exertion is for "...new legislation giving blacks the right" (Birch 208) to do many things, like white people do. In Meridian there is "...a process of struggle and suffering for black and white together and for men and women together" (Lauret 63). Both black and white people, who are students at Meridian's college, do not give up their hopes:

We shall overcome...  
 We shall overcome...  
 We shall overcome, someday...  
 Deep in my heart, I do believe...  
 We shall overcome, someday... (Walker, *Meridian* 48)

After one of the students, Wile Chile learns that she is pregnant, she decides to run away. Wile knows if a girl is a student at Saxon College, she should accept not to become pregnant. She should be a virgin. "The Wild Child escaped. Running heavily across a street, her stomach the largest part of her, she was hit by a speeder killed" (37). Bearing this suffering atmosphere, not only Meridian but also her activist friends, start to protest for having more rights about especially women, both black and white. Meridian's only struggle is not for the women's rights, it is also for destroying "...racial oppression" (Birch 211). She becomes friend of a white woman, Lynne who later becomes the wife of her lover Truman. As she knows the difference between black and white, she begins to show her thoughts on discrimination:

She was just a woman. Only they could not see her that way. To them she was a route to Death, pure and simple. They felt her power over them in their bones; their mothers had feared her even before they were born. Watching their fear of her, though, he saw a strange thing: They did not even see her as a human being, but as some kind of large, mysterious doll. A thing of movies and television, of billboards and car and soap commercials. They liked her hair, not because it was especially pretty, but because it was long. To them, length was beauty. They loved the tails of horses. (Walker, *Meridian* 137)

As the narrator states, Lynne is a white woman whom black men like spending time. She has the features that Meridian lacks. Moreover, Meridian is aware of this difference even in her community. The lover of her, Truman marries Lynne, but “Sometimes they talked intimately, like sisters, and when they did not they allowed the television to fill the silences” (173).

Meridian’s way of life starts to change by the help of her “...refusal to accept most of what she took for granted, that attracted her” (Gates, Jr.-Appiah 13). This variation in her thoughts and attitudes towards life also “...leads her to persevere in her emotional courage to neither reject Truman nor Lynne, to develop her racial solidarity and to open herself up to Lynne’s friendship” (Lauret 86).

#### 4.1.2.2. VIOLENCE

In *Meridian*, Walker writes about “...the possibility of interracial love and communication, the vital and lethal strands in American and black experience, with violence and non-violence and self-hatred” (Gates, Jr.- Appiah 9). Most significant themes of *Meridian* includes “...the estrangement and violence that mark the relationships between Miss Walker’s black men and women” (17). Moreover, “...the most difficult paradox that Walker has examined to date is the relationship between violence and revolution...” (Evans 466) The years of movement have witnessed the sharp strictness and violent sides of both government and society.

Even though being a Civil Right female worker depicts that Meridian will experience the hard conditions of the revolution, Walker implies that “...if Black women

turn away from the women's movement, they turn away from women moving all over the world, not just in America" (Evans 467). In fact, being the writer of *Meridian*, Walker rejects "...the violent revolution..." (Birch 209) Likewise, the protagonist of the novel *Meridian* has "joined the movement against racism" (213) for stopping the violent attitudes towards people. Her devotion takes lots of things but she doesn't give up her decision:

She began to have headaches that were so severe they caused her to stutter when she spoke. She dreamed of such horrible things she would wake up shaking. Still, when she thought of the extraordinary opportunity she had in attending Saxon College, which had an excellent social and academic reputation, she knew herself to be extremely fortunate. She studied hard and made the dean's list, and during her second year she joined the Atlanta Movement. She found it impossible to study while others were being beaten and jailed. It was also, surprisingly an escape for her. After her friendship with Anne-Marion, they marched often together and would go to jail with their toothbrushes and books and cigarettes under their arms. In jail they were allowed to smoke, which helped to calm their shrieking nerves. On Saxon campus itself, ironically, smoking led to expulsion, as did any other form of "decadent" behavior. (Walker, *Meridian* 94-95)

When *Meridian* thinks that she will see the profit of studying at a famous college, her education is disturbed due to the forceful atmosphere of outside world. During Civil War most people are beaten and punished. These incidents affect her deeply. She decides to be a Civil Rights worker. In fact, *Meridian* "...ascends from the revolutionary cell..., to lead erstwhile revolutionaries, and children and adults in the wider social sphere, to new hope and strength" (Cooke 162). Even though, Saxon College prevents her from joining acts of the movement *Meridian* dares to be a part of it:

The emphasis at Saxon was on form, and the preferred "from" was that of the fishing school girl whose goal, wherever she would later find herself in the world, was to be accepted as an equal because she knew and practiced all the proper social rules. The administration of the college neither condoned Saxon students' participation in the Atlanta Movement nor discouraged

it. Once it was understood, as much as possible, was ignored. All of Saxon's rules, against smoking, drinking, speaking loudly, going off campus without an escort, remaining off campus after six, talking to boys before visiting hours, remained in effect. It was understood that a student who allowed her to be arrested did so at her own academic risk. Fortunately, there were teachers who would lie for the students—week in jail became a week on a field trip and was certainly as informative for the student as any field trip could ever be – though everyone knew this was a lie. Or a teacher might himself end up in jail. That too was ignored, though his name and photograph appeared in papers. (Walker, *Meridian* 95)

Meridian knows that joining in acts and being under arrest can hinder her next years. At Saxon College, if a girl is taken in jail the same teachers of this college, help them not to be sent away. Being aware of these facts, Meridian Hill continues to struggle for the movement. It is clear in *Meridian* that "...rigid and foolish force, on the one hand, and sanctimonious greed, on the other, stand as the only operative values in the society" (Cooke 162). In addition to this, the writer of *Meridian* Walker, "...examines the hatred and violence which result from the fear of difference" (Birch 214). The exact reason of the violence during movement is race.

#### 4.1.2.3. RAPE

In *Meridian*, rape is seen another side of violent behavior. "...rape, harassment, reproductive control and enforced childbearing are constituted in the novel as forms of violence ..." (Lauret 66) In this novel, one of these aggressive behaviors is seen through a black man Tommy Odds. This colored man's "...rape of Lynne justified ..., by the black man's need to liberate himself from white oppression by taking revenge upon white women" (66). Tommy Odds's hatred of white people causes this violent behavior:

For of course it was Tommy Odds who raped her. As he said, it wasn't really rape. She had not screamed once, or even struggled very much. To her, it was worse than rape because she felt circumstances had not permitted her to scream. As Tommy Odds said, he was just a lonely one-arm nigger down on his luck that nobody had time for

any more. But she would have time wouldn't she?  
 Because she was not like those rough black women who  
 refused to be sympathetic and sleep with him— was she?  
 She would be kind and not like those women or any  
 other women who turned him down because they were  
 repulsed and prejudiced and maroon stump of his arm  
 made them sick. She would be a true woman and save  
 him— wouldn't she? (Walker, *Meridian* 158)

As Lynne is a white female and the colored women in the black community do not want to have a relationship, Tommy Odds decides to rape her. At first, she resists but then the utterances of him cause Lynne not to prevent this incident. Actually, Tommy's only wish is to put her in a position that she can remember her difference in black society. "I'm going to show you what you are" (159). Saying this expression, Tommy brings other black men to do the same violence.

"A little nine-year-old black girl was raped by a white animal last week in Tchula", said Tommy Odds, "they pulled her out of the river, dead, with a stick shoved up her. Now that was rape. Not like us" (160). Due to the fact that a little black girl has been raped by a white man, the colored man wants to take revenge on Lynne. She is the only white whom they can touch in black society even though she is the wife of their friend, Truman. "...Tommy Odds...rapes Lynne as an act of vengeance on white society" (Lauret 74). It is obvious that "By being white Lynne was guilty of whiteness" (133). There it is a fact that "...more than interracial relationships and cooperation, the question of the uses and abuses of violence was a bone of contention in the Civil Rights Movement" (75).

In *Meridian*, rape incident is seen again. Lynne's daughter Camara who is also black, like is father; Truman is raped by a crown man. "...his six-year old daughter... had been attacked by a grown man and was now lying nearly dead in the hospital" (Walker, *Meridian* 169). To Lynne, it is not easy to accept the rape of her daughter. She finds difficulty in expressing it. "Our daughter has been hurt"... "the kid's been beat up"... "There's been...an accident. Our child. Attacked..." (168) Even Camara is a little black child; she "...is raped and murdered..." (Gates, Jr. and Appiah 10)

In the novel, the concept of rape is expressed by one of the teachers of Meridian Hill. Being a university professor Mr. Raymonds, sometimes helps Meridian and tells some of his students different stories of the past. One day, he emphasizes the violence of white men, stating "...exactly how many black women had reported rape at the hands of

white men in the years between 1896 and 1963” (Walker, *Meridian* 111). This expression displays that during most of the slave black women have suffered from the violent behaviors of white race.

#### 4.2.1.4. MOTHERHOOD

In *Meridian*, at first the protagonist needs to keep secret her motherhood since she decides to continue her education. Initially, “Her pregnancy came as a total shock” (Walker 61). Nevertheless, though she insists on hiding the truth, at last “... she was expelled from school because of the pregnancy” (62). After giving birth to her child, “...she conceived, quite consciously, methods of killing herself” (69). The pregnancy prevents her from making real of her ideals:

When motherhood comes to Meridian with alarming suddenness, the chapter title. Happy mother is an ironic denial of the reality, as the child bride begins to repeat her mother’s experiences. Unlike Mrs. Hill, Meridian does not accept childbearing with furious equanimity, and questions the social expectations of motherhood. The first assumption questioned is that motherhood is fulfilling experience. For Meridian it is the opposite, bringing a sense of enslavement... Another assumption examined is that motherhood is accompanied by instant adoration of the off spring, and Walker expresses the feelings of many women, silenced by a fear that their thoughts of infanticide are unnatural... (Birch 212)

To Meridian, giving birth to a child necessitates taking care her/ his. This means that she has to stay at home and must not act freely. “...many radical feminists blamed motherhood for the waste in women’s lives and saw it as a dead end for a woman...” (Evans 165-166) Meridian’s ideas on Motherhood resemble feminists’ thoughts. In *Meridian*, Walker “scrutinized that tradition which is based on the monumental myth of Black motherhood, a myth based on the true stories of sacrifice Black mothers performed for their children” (465). Meridian aims to be active for preparing a tranquil future:

Meridian knows that enslaved women had been made miserable by the sale of their children that they had laid down their lives, gladly, for their children that the daughters of these enslaved women had thought their greatest blessing from “Freedom” was that it meant they could keep their own children. And what had Meridian Hill done with her pernicious child? She had given him away. She thought of her mother as being worthy of this maternal history, and of herself as belonging to an unworthy minority for which there was no precedent and of which she was, as far as she knew, the only member. (Walker 91)

Although she is glad to hear Mrs. Hill’s expressions about her children, Meridian sees motherhood as a different thing. Meridian’s “...involvement in the Civil Rights Movement is initiated by her feelings of inadequacy in living up to the standards of Black motherhood” (Evans 465). She attends Saxon College and “...it was kept secret from everyone that Meridian had been married and divorced and had had a child” (Walker 94). It is because the females who continue education should be virgins.

After divorce, when Meridian Hill involves in movement, she meet Truman who is also a Civil Right activist. She becomes the lover of Truman. She becomes pregnant again, but this time she acts according to her will and conditions. She decides “...to give her child away and she has an abortion, but the reasons are neither selfless...nor selfish” (Lauret 82). She begins to see that it is her right to control pregnancy, as white females do. “Her aborted motherhood yields to her a perspective on life – that of “expanding her mind with action” (Evans 466).

#### **4.1.2.5. RACISM**

In Walker’s novel *Meridian* the most effectual and significant concept that causes black woman to suffer is racism. During Civil Rights movement, the protagonist of the novel *Meridian* struggles for having equal rights to white race. She desires to become one of the “...black women Civil Rights workers” (Lauret 83). Walker portrays “...the difficulty of a black woman’s position in a racist, capitalist and self-destructive society...” (85)

Meridian joins the movement with the hope that they can “...overcome racial oppression...” (Birch 213) In the novel, “Through her confrontation with racism and sexism in society Meridian had been forced into recognition of her own harbored race prejudice” (214). She is aware of the fact that black men are eager to have relationship with white women. To her, black females’ enemy is “...white racist society” (Walker 95). Being a black activist “...Meridian appropriated all the good qualities of black women to herself, now that she was awake enough to be aware of...”(109) their presence in the racist society. Walker manages to show the racist views of the public in her novel:

Both girls had lived and studied enough to know they despised capitalism; they perceived it had done well in America because it had rested directly on their fathers’ and mothers’ backs. The difference between them was this: Anne-Marion did not know if she would be a success as a capitalist, while Meridian did not think she could enjoy owning things others could not have. Anne - Marion wanted black to have the same opportunity to make as much money as the richest white people. But Meridian wanted the destruction of the rich as a class and the eradication of all personal economic preserves. Her senior thesis was based on the notion that no one should be allowed to own more land than could be worked in a day, by hand. Anne-Marion thought this was quaint. When black people can own the seashore, she said, I want miles and miles of it. And I never want to see a face I didn’t invite walking across my sand. Meridian reminded her of her protested admiration for socialist and communist theories. Yes, Anne-Marion replied. I have the deepest admiration for them, but since I haven’t had a chance to have a capitalist fling yet, the practice of those theories will have to wait awhile. (Walker 118)

Being two Civil Rights workers, Meridian and Anne-Marion share their thoughts about both racism and capitalism that cause the discrimination of black people from the society. Both of these females have “...race consciousness and pride with a feminist awareness” (Lauret 80). Moreover, it is an undeniable fact that racism is “a focus for their energies” (Birch 217).

#### **4.1.2. THE SUFFERS OF BLACK WOMEN IN TONI MORRISON'S *THE BLUEST EYE***

Being the first novel of Toni Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* portrays how a slave woman can suffer. It centers on the protagonist, Pecola's desire to have blue eyes, like her white friend. "...*The Bluest Eye* (1970) is an immigrated history of what it is to grow up black and female in the 1970s and 1940s..." (Matus 2) It helps one to visualize the state of a colored girl:

In Pecola and Claudia, *The Bluest Eye* focuses on ordinary African American girls and claims for them the status of earlier heroines in the bildungsroman. At the same time that it illustrates the girls struggles with the social forces of racism and poverty, the novel embraces individual personality by detailed characterization. The destruction of Pecola's personality is the novel's tragedy; the survival of Claudia's personality, its triumph. (Kubitschek 32)

*The Bluest Eye* helps one to explore the difficulties of being black females in America. Morrison's novels "...the pivotal idea is the domination of blacks by the exiting American standards of beauty: blue eyes, blond hair, and white skin" (Bloom 10). This novel tells the story of Pecola Breedlove, who, hates "her black self, yearns for blue eyes..." (11) Began when Pecola is a child, this longing causes hardships to occur when she grows older. Her hatred shows itself as suffers including blackness, and the beauty, racism, violence and rape.

##### **4.1.2.1. BLACKNESS AND THE BEAUTY**

Walker's novel "*The Bluest Eye* is about a lonely victimized, black girl, Pecola Breedlove, who is driven insane by her desire to have white skin, blonde hair and blue eyes..." (Peach 24) The narrator of the story is Claudia is the best friend of Pecola who "...prays for blue eyes" (Guthrie 93). At first, the features and good sides of being black in "... a small Midwestern community" (93) are displayed with "...a big, blue-eyed Baby doll" (Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* 20). The *Bluest Eye* centers on this doll to display racism:

It was a most uncomfortable, patently aggressive sleeping companion. To hold it was no more rewarding. The starched gaze or lace on the cotton dress irritated any embrace. I had only one desire: to dismember it. To see of what it was made, to discover the dearness, to find the beauty, the desirability that had escaped me, but apparently only me. Adults, older girls, shops, magazines, newspapers, window signs-all the world had agreed that a blue-eyed, yellow haired, pink skinned doll was what every girl child treasured. "Here", they said, "this is beautiful, and if you are on this day worthy you may have it." I fingered the face, wondering at the single-stroke eyebrows; picked at the pearly teeth stuck like two piano keys between reeds how line lips. Truced the turned-up nose, pocked the glossy blue eye balls, and twisted the yellow hair. I could not love it. But I could examine it to see what it was that the entire world said was lovable. (Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* 20-21)

A white baby doll is given Claudia as a Christmas gift; nevertheless, she doesn't love it and doesn't want to see this present. "I destroyed white baby dolls" (22). This utterance makes it clear that as she aware of the fact that, she is from black race, she doesn't seek to have even a white doll. "Claudia herself, as the mature narrator, condemns the American concept of blonde beauty..." (Peach 25) The blackness causes the narrator to hate the white race:

The novel develops the emotional rationale for some of the cultural changes sought by the political movements of the 1960s. Activist called for black dolls, for example, to help African American children build self-esteem. The "Black is beautiful" movement enlarged on this idea, advocating pride in black skin and African or African American features. In *The Bluest Eye*, the absence of black dolls-and the inescapable presence, of white ones-is presented as part of what makes shame in character, Pecola, feel invisible. Further, the novel presents the emotional consequences of identifying ugliness with blackness, and clearly shows that too many beautiful, unique black children are destroyed by racist aesthetics. (Kubitschek 30)

To Claudia, like white people, a white doll isn't as beautiful as all the people around the world thought. She can't understand how people see white females as pretty. This wonder is emphasized by her saying "What made people look at them and say "Awwwww," but not for me?" (Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* 22) She knows the beliefs of

people about both blacks and whites. The discrimination caused by race is too obvious in *The Bluest Eye*. Claudia's friend, Pecola however longs to have the features of white females. "Through Pecola Breedlove, the focal character, Morrison presents alternatives and reactions to the measurement of worth by physical criteria" (Bloom 10). The narrator of the novel, "Claudia's, efforts to comprehend the myth of white physical superiority while attempting, at the same time to hold on to her views of beauty of her own people's beauty and cultural worth" (McKay 59-60) shows that to her black is beautiful, as well. As they know the reality of their community, both Pecola and Claudia begin to struggle "...with the social forces of racism and poverty" (Kubitschek 32). They know what the beautiful is:

The Breedloves did not live in a storefront because they were having temporary difficulty adjusting to the cutbacks at the plant. They lived there because they were poor and black, and they stayed there because they believed they were ugly. Although their poverty was traditional and stultifying, it was not unique. But their ugliness was unique. No one could have convinced them that they were not relentlessly and aggressively ugly. Except for the father, Cholly, whose ugliness (the result of despair, dissipation, and violence directed toward petty things and weak people) was behavior, the rest of the family – Mrs. Breedlove, Sammy Breedlove, and Pecola Breedlove- were their ugliness, put it on, so to speak, although it did not belong to them. (Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* 38)

Even the place where Pecola Breedloves and her family live is the representative of the color of their skin. "The master had said, "You are ugly people. They had looked about themselves and saw nothing to contradict the statement..." (39) They all accept the expression of the people around them. "The community senses the Breedloves self-hatred and encourages it by agreeing that the Breedloves are ugly" (Kubitschek 34). Thus, Pecola herself knows the truth that she was a colored person and ugly:

It had occurred to Pecola some time ago that if her eyes, those eyes that held the pictures, and knew the sights –if those eyes of hers were different, that is to say, beautiful, she herself would be different. Her teeth were good, and at least her nose was not big and flat like some of those

who were thought so cute. If she looked different, beautiful, maybe Cholly would be different, and Mrs. Breedlove too. Maybe they'd say, "Why, look at pretty-eyed Pecola. We mustn't do bad things in front of those pretty eyes. (Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* 46)

Pecola Breedlove is aware of the discrimination that is done by white ones in the community. Even at school, "she was the only member of her class who sat alone at a dabble desk" (45). To her, the reason of these acts is her ugliness "...that made her ignored and despised at school, by teachers and classmates a like" (45). Pecola as a colored female, "...yearns for blue eyes, she believes will make her white, extinguish her position as pariah, and give her the love and security that are desperately missing from her life" (Bloom 11). In time, however state of Pecola begins to deteriorate:

The omniscient narrator relates Pecola's far more serious experience of sexual assault. Raped by her father and emotionally abandoned by her mother Pecola falls prey to Soaphead Church, who promises her what she thinks will make her lovable blue eyes. (Kubitschek 34)

Experiencing too much suffers in her family; Pecola doesn't lose her hope to have blue eyes and to become beautiful. Her mother Pauline is one of the indicators of Pecola's ugliness. "Pauline spends most of her time at the movies. From these films, she absorbs racist ideas of female beauty and learns to dislike her own appearance" (35). Pauline is also aware of the fact that as they are black, they are ugly and beauty belongs to white females:

But Pecola look like she knowed right off what to do. A right smart baby she was. I used to like to watch her. You know they makes them greedy sounds. Eyes all soft and yet. A cross between a puppy and a dying man. But I knowed she was ugly. Head full of pretty hair, but Lord she was ugly. (Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* 126)

Pauline looks at her new-born daughter and she knows her daughter is an ugly female like her. Pauline "... sees herself in her child" (Kubitschek 35). The God-given

physical appearance leads Pecola to pray "...for blue eyes (Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* 46). As a member of black race "Pecola, suffering from a sense of self-loathing and false identity..." (Peach 27) wants God to give her bluest eyes that are seen the mark of beauty in the community:

Pretty eyes. Pretty blue eyes. Big blue pretty eyes. Run, Jip, run. Jip runs, Alice runs. Alice has blue eyes. Jerry has blue eyes, Jerry runs. Alice runs. They run with their blue eyes. Four blue eyes. Four pretty blue eyes. Blue - sky eyes. Blue - like Mrs. Forrest's blue blouse eyes. Morning - glory- blue eyes. Alice - and - Jerry- blue-storybook- eyes. (Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* 46)

Every night, Pecola prays saying all the blue eyed white people's names and the story characters that have blue eyes. She knows that the blue eyed ones, that is, white people have right to do everything that they want. "As we have seen, Morrison noted that the reclamation of racial beauty in the 1960s made her think about why such slogans as black is beautiful were necessary" (Matus 45). Her fictional character, Pecola exemplifies the result of racist society:

Pecola is victimized by the community's hierarchy of color and caste. It is, of course, founded upon the white model for beauty, but it has undergone a necessary modification: those members who appear more white are accorded preference over those who are not. Within the socio-historical context of black oppression, appearances have always been tantamount to gaining approval from the dominant group, however illusory those appearances or approvals may be. Consequently, those who are able to mimic white social codes may hope to move socially and economically in both the black and white worlds and thus, color serves to determine class order. (Bjork 39)

The life experiences of Pecola show that color is the first obstacle in front of her race. In *The Bluest Eye*, the superiority of white people is displayed by standards of beauty. Therefore, it is an undeniable fact that, if one thinks about Pecola's position, "...only a miracle could relieve her, she would never know her beauty, and she would see

only what there was to use: the eyes of other people” (Morrison 46-47). She cannot live the happiness of being different and treated in a different way in white society. As the narrator of the novel, states the problem is not Pecola’s and her family’s “...ugliness, but their “conviction” of their ugliness that makes the difference” (Bloom 13). Not only Pecola, but also the members of her family accept the state of ugliness and this acceptance causes them to experience nearly all evil racial and interracial acts of people.

#### 4.1.2.2. RACISM

The novel *The Bluest Eye*, begins with Morrison’s comments “...on the movement’s assertions of racial beauty” (Matus 2). The political movements assertions of 1960s and 1970s, demonstrate that in fact the colored ones are beautiful. Likewise, Morrison aims to imply this thought by the help of her story. In the novel, “The self-hatred is often focused on the body as the most obvious indicator of race; hair and color, for example, are recurrent concerns” (Peach 28). The real cause of the discrimination is color of people’s skin in *The Bluest Eye*:

The poignancy of Pecola’s victimization arises not only from the racism and resulting interracial conflicts Pecola must encounter on the way to self-hood but also from the intraracial conflicts related to color firmly rooted in white racist myths, subscribed to by black culture. As damaging as the white criterion of beauty that denies Pecola a positive sense of self are the values of light-skinned Maureen Peal, whose sense of superiority associated with her color. (Bloom 12)

The different colors of two races are the reason of lots of events in *The Bluest Eye*. The physical appearances of these two races lead one to become more superior. In the novel the concept of black “...is a construct partly of the characters own making but mostly social, based on white definitions of blackness which associate it with violence, poverty, dirt and lack of education...” (Peach 26-27)

The setting of *The Bluest Eye*, “...mirrors perhaps one of the greatest beliefs in black communities during and after slavery – that the North is freer place for black people

economically and socially” (McKay 68). It helps one to visualize what the difficulties of living in a racial society are:

The Breedloves are victims of a racist class conscious society that has forced them to live unnatural lives; but while their lives have been battered by racism’s more tangible effects of extreme poverty and deprivation, the most insidious effects of racism as well as sexism are represented by the maliciousness of stereotypes. (Bjork 36-37)

As seen *The Bluest Eye* is the determiner of the acts of people. The Breedloves’ daughter realizes this truth, “...she is ugly, and knowing that she is unloved, Pecola desperately wants the blue eyes that she understands will make a child lovable in American society” (Kubitschek 35). It’s an unavoidable fact that “The African American community as a whole shares those racist experiences, but some have supports that the particularly vulnerable Breedloves lack” (34). White people have superiority. They prevent Breedloves from behaving independently:

Then they had grown. Edging into life from the back door...Everybody in the world was in a position to give them orders. White women said, “Do this.” White children said, “Give me that.” White men said, “Come here.” Black men said, “Lay down.” The only people they need not take orders from were black children and each other. But they took all of that and re-created it in their own image. They ran the houses of white people, and knew it. When white men beat their men, they cleaned up the blood and went home to receive abuse from the victim. They beat their children with one hand and stole for them with the other. The hands that felled trees also cut umbilical cords; the hands that wrung the necks of chickens and butchered hogs also nudged African, violets into bloom; the arms that loaded sheaves, bales and sacks rocked babies into sleep. (Morrison 138)

As Morrison states, the black females are only seen as housemaid or slaves at the hands of white race. Even, the white little children order something and they act as if they have no wish. The white people “...use to despise African Americans” (Kubitschek 34).

The colored women are always viewed as a person who should endure violence and hardness even they are at home. In fact, in novel *The Bluest Eye*, the initial love of Cholly and Pauline, Pecola's parents, "...cannot withstand poverty, racism and isolation from the community" (Kubitschek 35). Most of the reasons of white people's behavior in the novel "...lie in the impact of prevailing white ideologies and dominant social structures on the black community" (Peach 28). At the beginning of the novel, Claudia's dismemberment of the blue-eyed white doll is "...an attempt to discover the superiority of white culture" (29). The black women should "...combat the waywardness of their husbands and children and the racism of whites" (McKay 70).

#### 4.1.2.3. VIOLENCE AND RAPE

In Morrison's novel *The Bluest Eye*, the first act of violence seen through bad behavior of Claudia MacTeer. When a white baby doll is given her as a Christmas present, she wants to break it. Her family states their puzzlement "Now-you-got-it-up-what's-the-matter-with-you?" (Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* 21) Claudia accepts his violent behavior indicating "I destroyed white baby dolls" (22). In fact, Claudia wants to learn the secret of beauty of white people. "Claudia's acts are motivated in the main by a need to locate the source of white beauty that is not immediately apparent to her" (McKay 61). Even though she tears the white babies to pieces, she cannot adopt the superiority of white race. "But dismembering of dolls was not the true horror. The truly horrifying thing was the transference of the same impulse to little white girls" (Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* 22). This terrifying instance of Claudia is the result of this fact "...Claudia is envious of Shirley Temple..." (Bjork 35) who is a little white girl. "Later her envy turns to hatred and inspires her to tear apart ..." (35) the white baby dolls. Claudia's disgust for white ones increases day by day:

When unstifled, Claudia's anger and transgressive urges register a resistance to the indoctrination of the dominant culture's fantasies of beauty and worth. Her anger, however is readily converted to shame because she does, not really understand what makes her feel violent and aggressive. Interested anger, the text implies, is appropriate, legitimate; disinterested anger cannot understand its provocation or bind itself to any rationale.

The problem of appropriate anger is articulated as Claudia moves from confessing her destruction and dismembering of white baby dolls to her disturbing desire to perform the same rites of violence on white girls. As for as Claudia is concerned, her motivation is nothing more than curiosity. Like the child who dismantles a fascinating mechanism in order to see how it is put together, she wants to take apart little white girls in order to know the secret of how they work, what makes them beautiful and desirable... (Matus 41)

Claudia's rage towards white female shows itself with the attitude towards white baby dolls. However, in time she realizes that her acts cause realizes shame. Moreover "She has discovered that despite her hostility toward the dolls, there is no fulfillment in "disinterested violence" (Bloom 24). It is an inevitable fact that "...Claudia's realizations are pessimistic, but they are not, and this is her why survives and grows (24).

The violent manners are also seen by means of Pecola's father, Cholly. He not only beats her daughter, but also rapes her, that is the signifier of incest occurring in a black family. Toni Morrison displays "...the emotional violence heaped, upon children by parents as a special concern" (13). Pecola is the representative of both psychologically and physically abused girl:

*The Bluest Eye* delineates how Pecola is repeatedly exposed to psychological violation, and how physical violation completes the psychological destruction. Significantly, this physical violation –rape– is a crime brought to the nation's consciousness by the feminist movement. (Kubitschek 30)

As seen, the abuse in Pecola's family, leads her to find herself at the end of the novel. "...certainly Cholly's disgraceful act has left Pecola bereft of presence and fully silenced into madness" (Bjork 50). Therefore, this demonstrates again, that "... black women write about the violence and abuse which they have suffered at the hands of black men" (Peach 36). Pecola's destruction is accelerated by her own father:

What could he do for her – ever? What give her? What say to her? What could a burned-out black man say to

the hunched back of his eleven-year-old daughter? If he looked into her face, he would see those haunted, loving eyes. The hauntedness would irritate him- the love would move him to fury-How dare she love him? Hadn't she any sense at all? What was he supposed to do about that? Return it? How? What could his calloused hands produce to make her smile? What of his knowledge of the world and of life could be useful to her? What could his heavy arms and be fuddled brain accomplish that would earn him his own respect, that would in turn allow him to accept her love. (Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* 161-162)

Although Cholly remembers her wife and their love to each other, during this incident, he takes the advantage of Pecola's helpless position. "Cholly chooses to physically give of himself because it is all that he has left to give ..." (Bjork 50) Although Cholly is aware of the fact that his attitude towards Pecola is viewed as incest; he doesn't give up his evil idea of raping his own daughter. "...Cholly rapes his daughter; it is a physical manifestation of the social, psychological, and personal violence that, together with his wife, he has upon Pecola" (Bloom 14). However, this is a truth that his act is the sample of "... child abuse, including incest and rape..." (14) After this violent behavior, mother of Pecola, Pauline accuses her daughter not her husband:

After she has been raped by her father, Pecola lies on the kitchen floor, trying to connect the pain between her legs with the face of her mother looming over her. The connection is complex, but it is one that the reader as much as Pecola has to make through the way in which Pauline denied her daughter the mother daughter bonding which in Morrison's novels, as we shall see in the discussion of *Beloved* is crucial to black women's self-definition. (Peach 36-37)

Realizing the rape scene, Pecola's mother cannot continue to accept her as her, daughter as if the incident is her fault. On the other hand, "Cholly's rape of his daughter is as much rooted in the past as in the present" (37). Doing this incest, he recalls the rape scene of a woman that has been wanted by the white hunters. He remembers the love that he feels for his wife Pauline. "Even though Pecola is a child, she has started her menstrual cycle..." (Bloom 15) that causes her to become a "...little-girl-gone-to-woman..." (Morrison, *The Bluest Eye* 31) This event makes her a woman child that brings shame.

“Pecola’s stillborn child is not only a symbol of his personal violation but of the fettered life she has been made to live” (Bloom 14). Pecola’s only concern is not having the bluest eye; she also wants to get rid of the racist behaviors of white people. Therefore, Morrison’s novel *The Bluest Eye*, “...bears witness not only to the trauma of the incest and rape that Pecola experiences, but to the trauma of pervasive racism” (Matus 47).

#### **4.1.3. THE SUFFERS OF BLACK WOMEN IN TONI MORRISON’S *BELOVED***

Being Toni Morrison’s fifth novel, *Beloved* (1987) is a prominent work awarded Pulitzer Prize. It is a story about “...a powerful (account of mother love, murder, and the legacy of slavery...)” (“Toni Morrison” 33246) Like Morrison’s previous novels, *Beloved* focuses on “motherhood” (Kubitschek 6). *Beloved* tells the story of a mother, Sethe who is a black slave female formerly:

At one level *Beloved* is a romance between Sethe and Paul D, two ex-slaves reunited in post Civil War America. The historical context makes their relationship special, for under slavery black people were not allowed to have free physical and emotional relationships and as such their relationship becomes part of the healing process which Morrison hoped that the novel would provide. However, their reunion is problematised by the relationships of each of them, to Sethe’s children, one of whom is a ghost incarnate of the child murdered by Sethe. Both of them are haunted by their pasts and dehumanized by what they have done or what has been done to them. (Peach 93)

As slave woman at the hands of, white owner, Sethe cannot live freely. On the contrary, she has to do what white race wants her to do. The novel “*Beloved*” “...opens with in the historical present of 1873 and into the home of a former slave, Sethe, and her daughter, Denver” (Bjork 141). After many years, Sethe and her daughter are liberated. The white race’s orders are not in their life. However, their past does not leave them in peace.”In their own Bluestone Road there is “... a past of Sethe’s two sons Howard and Bugler and of a now dead grand matriarch Baby Suggs...” (141) The spirit of Sethe’s

baby whom she killed, lives with them and it "...has caused Sethe's son to flue long ago and made victims of those left behind" (Bjork 141). The baby is felt as a grown up girl in *Beloved*:

...the novel centers around the stories of a number of slaves. But by their very existence, these stories produce a peculiar kind of tension. Most accounts of slavery have been written; these are oral. Most accounts of slavery have focused upon slavery itself; this account contextualizes the slave's experience with in his or her subsequent life. Moreover, this account involves a ghost. Importantly, the ghost in *Beloved* is not presented as a shadowy figure, a creature of legend or dreams, but rather as a character that drinks water, has sexual urges, and even has need for mothering. (Rice 101)

Therefore, even though the people in *Beloved* have gotten rid of difficulties of slavery, they cannot escape from the ghost of Sethe's dead baby. It is obvious that, slavery is "...the most painful part of the African American heritage..." (Kubitschek 115). However, the characters of *Beloved* "...cannot put slavery behind them by simple act of will" (115) due to the fateful venom of the killed baby. Even though they overcome the inhuman conditions of slavery, they cannot escape from their past:

In addition to exploring the trauma that slavery wreaked on those who survived into the post-Civil war period, Morrison ambitiously attempts an imaginative testimony, through the figure of Beloved, of those who did not survive those sixty million and more to whom the novel is dedicated. The novel challenges its readers to recognize the unbearable poignancy of the claims of the past-the loss suffered not just by those who survived, but by those who did not. (Matus 104)

Even though, the people after Civil War have started their peaceful life, Sethe and her family need to overcome their past. "...Morrison describes the horrendous consequences of a flight from slavery for Sethe and her children" (Birch 176). The serenity of life in *Beloved*, have been "...disturbed and prevented ... co- existence for those living at No.124" (178) by the memory of Sethe's child-murder. Therefore,

Morrison's novel *Beloved* portrays the life of black woman, Sethe before and after slavery. She suffers from slavery, racism violence, and murder and motherhood.

#### 4.1.3.1. SLAVERY

Morrison's novel *Beloved* "... is lovely based on the story of Mary Garner, a slave who killed her child and attempted to kill herself rather than return to slavery" (Peach 93). Likewise, the protagonist of the novel Sethe kills her child and this murder does not become distant, each time it comes closer. In "*Beloved*" one can comprehend how difficult it is to be a slave woman at the hands of a slave-holder:

Early in the novel we learned that Baby Suggs had withdrawn from her doctrine of the body as the site of love and life. We later learn the reason for her withdrawal in the terrible knowledge of Sethe's violation of one of her own children's flesh. Throughout the novel, there are many remembrances of violation: the stories of its characters collectively encapsulate. (Bjork 156)

This cannot be denied that the reasons behind Sethe's murder of her own baby girl emerge due to the brutal sides of slavery. Although *Beloved* "...is not a slave narrative" (Rice 105). Morrison helps one to examine the situations of slaves, as well. She manages this through the memory of the characters, especially a black mother, Sethe:

...we come to a paradox in the novel. Sethe's act emphasizes the perverse nature of slavery: a mother must kill her children to protect them. Sethe can choose not to love, or she can choose to kill what she love, to protect it. Either choice begets a loss of some part of the self. (106)

There is a contradiction at the center of the novel. Even though Sethe loves her baby too much, she wants to kill her. The violent act of Sethe has "...relation to slavery" (Kubitschek 115). When "a cruel man called school-teacher becomes the master, the

slaves attempt a group escapes” (Kubitschek 116). During this flight some of the slaves die. “Sethe is stopped after she cuts two-year-old Beloved’s throat with a hand saw. The child dies. The community’s betrayal mortally hurts Baby Suggs, who takes to her bed and slowly dies” (117). This incident doesn’t leave Sethe’s house:

The accumulated voices of various agents act together as chorus and witness to Sethe’s experiences. Baby Sugg’s horror at her, grandchild’s murder, Paul D.’s memories of Sweet Home and chain gangs, are given as much narrative weight as Sethe’s account of events, or even Beloved’s impressions from the grave. Each account of personal suffering has the haunting of 124 as its geographical epicenter, whilst the causative events scribe an ever-widening circumference embracing the composite experience of slavery. The enormity of the central experience focuses on the triple burden carried by black women, who had no control over their husbands, children or their own bodies Sethe’s life at Sweet Home, where she was expected to breed, offered a limited choice: she could marry any one of the Sweet Home slaves. The powerlessness of black women as illustrated in Bevoled... (Birch 178)

When Sethe is a slave, she has no right to give decision even about her marriage. She is the silent black female who should only obey the orders. She doesn’t want “...her children to be taken back into slavery...” (Matus 104) Although she needs to kill her baby girl, “...the preacher say at the funeral (and all there was to say, surely) engraved on her baby’s headstone. Dearly Beloved” (Morrison, *Beloved* 5). Everybody is aware of the fact that Sethe’s murder is not her desire; it is obligation of a mother to save her child from the cruel slave-holder:

What’d be the point? Asked Baby Suggs. “Not a house in the country ain’t packed to its rafters with some dead Negro’s grief. We lucky this ghost is a baby. My husband’s spirit was to come back in here? Or yours? Don’t talk to me. You lucky. You got three left. Three pulling at your skirts and just one raising hell from the other side. Be thankful, why don’t you? I had eight. Every one of them gone away from me. Four taken, four chased, and all, I expect, worrying somebody’s house into evil.” Baby Suggs rubbed her eyebrows.” My first born. All I can remember of her is how she loved the

burned bottom of bread. Can you beat that? Eight children and that's all I remember. (Morrison, *Beloved* 6)

Sethe's mother-in-law wants to relieve her bride. She reminds Sethe, the slavery years when she suffers because of her children due to different reasons. In *Beloved*, "Stamp Paid and Baby Suggs, survivors of slavery, do their best to help others to freedom. Both have lost their families, and both become symbolic parents and elders in their community" (Kubitschek 123). Being a tolerant mother-in-law, "Baby Suggs welcomes her fugitive grandchildren and daughter-in-law Sethe" (123). She knows what it is to be a slave female and what a black female should endure during her life. So, she decides to help Sethe.

The memory of past, takes Sethe to the cruel white man during slavery. "Schoolteacher's nephews brutally abuse Sethe sexually, sucking milk from her breasts and whipping her back bloody" (116). This incident affects Sethe deeply and she always remembers the viciousness of white man and the murder of her own child. She cannot endure to see her daughter at the hands of this brutality. Therefore, she decides to kill her:

I got a tree on my back and a haunt in my house, and nothing in between but the daughter I am holding in my arms. No more running – from nothing. I will never run from another thing on this earth. I took one journey and I paid for the ticket, but let me tell you something, Paul Garner: it cost too much! Do you hear me? It cost too much. Now sit down and eat with us or leave us be. (Morrison, *Beloved* 18)

As seen, Sethe's bad days starts with the scene of this brutality. When she is pregnant with Denver, she has milk in her breast to feed her baby girl. Unfortunately, at first white man takes the food of her baby, then they have caused to kill her. "...Sethe's commitment to her children's welfare leads her to kill one of them, *Beloved* to avoid returning them and herself to slavery" (Kubitschek 123). To Sethe, in time, even the meaning of love begins to vanish. It turns another shape. She loves her children. "She takes the risk and chooses to love them, and when they are threatened, she chooses to act upon her love" (Rice 106). In fact, she aims to protect them:

...the paradox at the center of this novel: in protecting Beloved by killing her, Sethe risks losing her own humanity. In exploring such a situation, Morrison is setting forth a kind of history that was never a part of traditional histories of slavery. She is suggesting that slave was not just deprived of rights or even life itself. He or she was deprived of the freedom to be human. (Rice 107)

In fact, Sethe's outrageous act is the indicator of the fact that she is losing her humanistic features day by day. She dares to kill her child that influences her motherhood in a baddish way. "...Morrison indicates Sethe's response to the trauma of motherhood under slavery and in particular, Beloved's death" (Matus 108). In addition to this, Morrison manages to demonstrate how the "...maternal loss..." (Bjork 157) can be the ruin of a black female. "Sethe was powerless to keep her children from enslavement except by killing them" (Birch 179). Portraying Sethe and her experiences of slavery, Morrison "...emphasizes both the enormity of slavery and the powerlessness of the black slave woman" (179). She wants to tell the reasons of the murder:

After I left you, those boys came in there and took my milk. That's what they came in there for. Held me down and took it. I told Mrs. Garner on em. She had that lump and couldn't speak but her eyes rolled out tears. Then boys found out I told on em. Schoolteacher made one open up my back, and when it closed it made a tree. It grows there still. (Morrison, *Beloved* 19-20)

Sethe states Paul D that, the effect of that brutal act of Schoolteacher's nephews continues to give pain. She cannot forget this incident, that is of "...the horrors of slavery itself" (Peach 94). Moreover, even after so many years of this event, "Sethe's ferocious pride and independence isolate her from her neighbors, who expect her to express remorse for her action" (Kubitschek 123). To the black community, her behavior of murder cannot have any excuse.

#### 4.1.3.2. RACISM

In the novel *Beloved*, at first, blacks are at the hands of white people and they are slave. They have not only "...been abused by white men..." (Matus 119), but also they begin to lose their humanity. Even, the black people aren't given permission to learn writing and reading. It is clear that "...if blacks could write they should not be treated as animals" (Rice 103). The female characters in the novel, especially Baby Suggs is brave to mention the inhuman acts of white race in her community. "Those white things have taken all I had or dreamed," she said, "and broke my heartstrings, too. There is no bad luck in the world but white folks" (Morrison, *Beloved* 104-105). Baby Suggs utterances help one to visualize the hardness of the black life in a racist surrounding. Being slave females, Sethe, Baby Suggs and other black women long to come together in an "...enslaved life" (111). Morrison's characters tell the inhuman slavery years:

Eighteen seventy-four and white folks were still on the loose. Whole towns wiped clean of Negroes; eighty-seven lynching in one year alone in Kentucky; four colored schools burned to the ground; grown men whipped like children; children whipped like adults; black women raped by the crew; property taken, necks broken. He smelled skin, skin and hot blood. The skin was one thing, but human blood cooked in a lynch fire was a whole other thing. The stench stank. Stank up off the pages of the North Star, out of the mouths of witnesses, etched in crooked handwriting in letters delivered by hand. (212)

One of the characters, Stamp Paid witnesses the brutality and discrimination during the Civil War. Black people have been beaten and they are raped by the white race. Even, Sethe's murder of her daughter can be seen as the race oppression. This violence is "...a living history, personal, private, ignored, shameful" (Bjork 143). It is also "...a collective racial memory within a marginalized and oppressed history" (151). Sethe has lost the maternal features though later she realizes that "...the giving of herself costs the black woman nothing" (Birch 181). Although Sethe becomes silent in front of white masters, they don't give up abusing her:

A proponent of the doctrine of black racial inferiority, Schoolteacher embodies the desire of some whites to provide scientific evidence as justification for their treatment of slaves. He obsessively records physical measurements of his human property and encourages his nephew to compile a profile of Sethe's human and animal characteristics...Overhearing this determines Sethe to escape. In a vividly economic passage Morrison sketches in the historical record of the corrosive racial prejudice on which slavery was perpetuated and which threatened to destroy the humanity of both the oppressors and the oppressed. Blacks always had to prove their humanity to whites, and those who achieved middle-class status became the over-burdened representatives of their whole race, under constant pressure to prove a humanity they never felt they lacked. (Birch 183)

White race's thoughts on blacks, especially on slaves indicate that blacks have been treated as if they are not human beings. In *Beloved*, one of the representatives of white race, Schoolteacher states this truth by saying his nephew, "I told you to put her human characteristics on the left; her animal ones on the right. And don't forget to line them up" (Morrison, *Beloved* 228). This expression about Sethe clarifies the reason of white race's brutality towards black ones:

Very few had died in bed, like Baby Suggs, and none that he knew of, including Baby, had lived a livable life. Even the educated colored: the long-school people, the doctors, the teachers, the paper-writers and businessmen had a hard row to hoe. In addition to having to use their heads to get ahead, they had the weight of the whole race sitting there. You needed two heads for that. White people believed that whatever the manners, under every dark skin was a jungle. Swift unnavigable waters, swinging screaming baboons, sleeping snakes, red gums ready for their sweet white blood. In a way, he thought, they were right. The more colored people spent their strength trying to convince them how gentle they were, how clever and loving, how human, the more they used themselves up to persuade whites of something Negroes believed could not be questioned, the deeper and more tangled the jungle grew inside. But it wasn't the jungle blacks brought with them to this place from the other (livable) place. It was the jungle white folks planted in them. And it grew. It spread. In, through and after life, it spread, until it invaded the whites who had made it. Touched them everyone. Changed and altered them.

Made them bloody, silly, worse than even they wanted to be, so scared were they of the jungle they had made. The screaming baboon lived under their own white skin; the red gums were their own. (Morrison, *Beloved* 234)

As one of the characters of the novel, Stamp Paid emphasizes in fact the behaviors of white race has caused black ones to feel themselves worthless. The reason of aggressive acts of colored people is white people and their inhumane acts. It is clear in *Beloved* that there is "...racial inferiority in slavery..." (Birch 182) and "...the systematic degradation of blacks" (182). So, what gives pain to Sethe is "...all of the unspoken – unspeakable horrors of a collective racial memory" (Bjork 155). The brutality of plantation life leads "...the destruction of black families" (Peach 97). Not only black women but also black men influenced by cruel hands of slavery:

Paul D slid the clipping out from under Stamp's palm. The print meant nothing to him so he didn't even glance at it. He simply looked at the face, shaking his head no. No. At the mouth, you see. And no at whatever it was those blacks scratches said, and no to whatever it was Stamp Paid wanted him to know. Because there was no way in hell a black face could appear in a newspaper if the story was about something anybody wanted hear. A whip of fear broke through the heart chambers as soon as you saw a Negro's face in a paper, since the face was not there because the person had a healthy baby, or outran a street mob. Nor was it there because the person had been killed, or maimed or caught or burned or jailed or whipped or evicted or stomped or raped or cheated since that could hardly qualify as news in a newspaper. It would have to be something out of the ordinary – Something white people would find interesting, truly different, worth a few minutes of teeth sucking if not gasps. And it must have been hard to find news about Negroes worth the breath catch of a white citizen of Cincinnati. (Morrison, *Beloved* 183)

In most parts of the novel, the racist thoughts and attitudes are displayed vividly. Knowing the truth that Sethe has killed her own baby daughter, Paul D insists to look over the newspaper pages. "Stamp Paid reluctantly shows Paul D the clipping from the newspaper concerning Sethe's crime. Even so, the very fact that he has kept the clipping is significant" (Rice 110). Both of these characters know that if a black's face is seen on

papers, there should be an unusual event, since black race is ignored even in newspapers. To white people, Sethe's act is seen as a "...private story" (Rice 111). In addition to this, there is a mystery meaning under this news. "The newspaper is the product of white society" (111). There is also an implication that the reason of Sethe's behavior is white race.

#### 4.1.3.3. VIOLENCE AND RAPE

In Morrison's novel *Beloved*, at first violence is seen with the scene that shows the white men's attacking. The nephew of Schoolteacher attacks Sethe when her husband isn't at home. Especially, "...violence against women" (Kubitschek 28-29) is the focus of *Beloved*. White nephews of Schoolteacher "...abuse Sethe sexually, sucking milk from her breasts and whipping her back bloody" (116). Sethe expresses this brutality with these utterances:

"They used cowhide on you?  
 "And they took my milk."  
 "They beat you and you was pregnant?"  
 "And they took my milk." (Morrison, *Beloved* 20)

The expression of Sethe demonstrates that the white men attacking her are very violent in their acts and Sethe has suffered too much. It is an undeniable fact that "...slavery is brutal..." (Rice 106) As Sethe also a slave woman, she experiences the evil of white race. She is also exposed to "...a whipping which almost kills her..." (Peach 94) The horrors of slavery lead her "...to commit an act of violence against their child" (96). Although most of the black community sees this act as an unreasonable choice that is decided by a mother, Sethe explains that she should do it. As a mother, "...Sethe makes it quite clear that in her eyes she has done the only thing that she possibly can do" (Rice 106). After murder of the baby, Sethe takes her other children and runs away:

It was in front of that 124 that Sethe climbed off a wagon, her newborn tied to her chest, and felt for the

first time the wide arms of her mother-I-law, who had made it to Cincinnati. Who decided that, because slave life had “busted her legs, back, head, eyes, hands, kidneys, womb and tongue,” she had nothing left to make a living with but her heart... (Morrison, *Beloved* 102)

As indicated, white oppression that Sethe has experienced during the slavery times is the mark of all brutal acts against black women. To Sethe, slave life has damaged nearly all her body parts, except her heart. She is a “...frantic mother who will not allow her children to be returned to slavery and will not endure the same loss of her children...” (Bjork 156) Actually, she is one of the “...slavery’s victims...” (158) Sethe is a representative of black female who has “...been abused by white men” (Matus 119). As a reaction to the beating, “...the killing...” (Birch 184) is “...the consequence of...” (184) fear towards white race. As Sethe is a helpless colored female slave, only way of protecting her children is shown by murder:

Morrison graphically delineates how a lack of black self-esteem is the inevitable consequence of such systematic brutalization, which can only be expunged by the constant reiteration of the beauty of self, and a self-construction as preached by Baby Suggs. (184)

Being a powerless black woman, Sethe choose to destroy the material presence of her daughter. She doesn’t want to leave her little daughter at the cruel hands of white men. She gets rid of slavery, but her “...attempt to terms with everything is inevitably painful” (Peach 95). Killing her daughter, Sethe shows her violent side however “...the real responsibility lies with white people and the inhumane system they have imposed upon blacks...” (97) Actually, her anger causes this violence:

Sethe’s decision to kill her child rather than have her taken into slavery has to be seen in the context of her past. Only a month previously she had endured an almost fatal whipping and suffered the degradation of being chained while the white men sucked her lactating breasts. (97)

The brutal behaviors of white race causes Sethe's act to seem more compulsory. She is beaten as if she is not a human and is abused sexually. The fear of these races leads her to commit a crime. To Sethe, she didn't do "...anything wrong" (Kubitschek 117). However, she is exposed to "...social isolation for the next eighteen years" (117).

In *Beloved*, not only the violence acts of white race and Sethe are seen, but also her dead daughter's presence has caused too much violent acts. At first, the baby girl who has been killed, appears as, "...a ghost in the house, that much we know; it is a ghost that shatters mirrors, that puts its "tiny hand prints in the cake..." (Bjork 141) At the beginning of the novel, Baby Suggs states "We lucky this ghost is a baby" (Morrison, *Beloved* 6). On the contrary, in time the ghost's anger causes to come their house as a grown-up girl. Thereafter, she starts to show her rage towards Sethe:

"You are my face; I am you. Why did  
You leave me who am you?  
I will never leave you again  
Don't ever leave me again  
You will never leave me again  
You went into the water  
I drank your blood  
I brought your milk  
You forgot to smile  
I loved you  
You hurt me  
You came back to me  
You left me." (256)

Although Sethe is very happy to have her daughter again after so many years, in fact *Beloved* comes her only to revenge. She remembers all the past story of Sethe and knows that she has killed her. "*Beloved*'s arrival and presence gradually unleash in Sethe a chain of repressed memories... those memories are painfully available to Sethe, but about maternal loss" (Matus 109). Her daughter *Beloved*, "...possesses many of the characteristics typically attributed to ghosts, including new skin marked only by the scars of her violent death..." (113-114) Her anger towards Sethe shows itself in *Beloved*'s manner:

Greedy for the mother-love of which she was deprived  
by violent death, *Beloved*'s ghost returns to demand

attention from a mother overcome with grief and guilt, yet overflowing with maternal love. Beloved's materialization occurs when Sethe's plantation past re-emerges with a visit from a fellow ex-slave, Paul D. This encounter with her own history, when Sethe is offered the possibility of new life and love by Paul D, triggers the materialization of Beloved who is clamorously jealous for recognition as the living proof of her mother's deed. Sethe's guilt and the manifestation are mutually sustaining, one feeding on the other. (Birch 177-178)

Beloved comes in sight at a time when Sethe starts to forget her violent act towards her own baby girl. Then, Beloved starts to show her anger day by day. Sethe's other daughter, "Denver thought she understand the connection between her mother and Beloved: Sethe was trying to make up for the handsaw; Beloved was making her pay for it" (Morrison, *Beloved* 295). Beloved, little by little demonstrates her evil thought:

Strengthened by the gifts of food, the source of which neither Sethe nor Beloved questioned, the women had arrived at a doomsday truce designed by the devil. Beloved sat around, ate, went from bed to bed. Sometimes she screamed, "Rain! Rain!" and clawed her throat until rubies of blood opened there, made brighter by her midnight skin. Then Sethe shouted, "No!" and knocked over chairs to get to her and wipe the jewels away. Other times Beloved curled up on the floor, her wrists between her knees, and stayed there for hours. Or she would go to the creek, stick her feet in the water and whoosh it up her legs. Afterward she would go to Sethe, run her fingers over the women's teeth while tears slid from her wide black eyes. Then it seemed to Denver the thing was done: Beloved bending over Sethe looked the mother, Sethe the teething child, for other than those times when Beloved needed her, Sethe confined herself to a corner chair. The bigger Beloved got the smaller Sethe became; the brighter Beloved's eyes, the more those eyes that used never to look away became slits of sleepiness. Sethe no longer combed her hair or splashed her face with water. She sat in the chair licking her lips like a chastised child while Beloved ate up her life, took it, swelled up with it, grew taller on it. And the older woman yielded it up without a murmur. (295)

Beloved always asks questions about past and wants Sethe to feel pain in her heart. Seeing the violent behaviors of Beloved, Denver begins to think that “The lifelong worry that something would provoke her mother again to kill now becomes the worry that Sethe will not stand up to Beloved...” (Matus 118) In the novel, “...the final vision of Beloved is grotesque-pregnant, inflated, swelling, and insatiable. She is in the process of feeding off and consuming Sethe’s life...” (119) It is apparent that “...the spirit is covertly attacking Sethe” (Kubitschek 118). Soon, Denver realizes that “Beloved is trying to kill Sethe” (124). She attempts “...to kill her so that they will be dead together” (125).

## CONCLUSION

Written with the impacts of experience of slave life, the social movements emerged in the United States during 1950s and 1960s. and the violent racial forces, the novels of contemporary writers, Alice Walker and Toni Morrison *The Color Purple*, *Meridian*, *The Bluest Eye* and *Beloved* succeed in displaying the suffers colored women. The black characters in these novels try to endure gender discrimination, violence, racial attitudes and sexual abuse. These writers, especially Walker even deals with the forbidden issues, like incest, since she wants to show the truth of black women's life.

In *The Color Purple*, Walker "...focuses on incest in a Black family and portrays Black lesbian relationship as natural and freeing" (Evans 470). Although most black writers of contemporary period sees it is hard to focus on these subjects, Walker dares to express them in order to write about the real experiences of Black females. The protagonist of the novel *The Color Purple*, Celie, at first cannot do anything to object the brutality of both black men and white men.

However, in time by the help of her female friends, like Sofia and Shug Avery, she realizes the fact that she has the right to act as she wants. After so many years of racial oppression, sexual abuse and brutality, she encourages herself to object all this hard conditions of black woman's life. She starts to struggle for liberation from hands of men, both black and white. She reaches her ideal plucking the chain of oppression. "...Walker is able to have her major character Celie to express the impact of oppression on her spirit as well as her growing internal strength and final victory" (469).

Likewise, in her novel *Meridian*, Walker portrays the struggles and suffers of a black woman, Meridian. Being a Civil Rights worker, Meridian needs to give up her family affairs, motherhood and traditions of her ancestors. Joining the movement begins to affect her physically, spiritually and psychologically. Even in her love affairs, she faces the cruel hands of racism. Being a black woman Meridian compares herself with a white woman, Lynne. In fact, she is aware of the fact that white ones have superiority not only in their society, but also in black society that is understood when Truman marries Lynne, not Meridian.

*Meridian* aims to struggle for "...a reluctant world" (Cooke 158). She longs for a society in which both blacks and whites have equal rights. During the acts, she and her friends march together and are exposed to violence and punishment. However, they do

not lose their hope for future. In *Meridian*, Walker "...reminds us the fact that suffering need not be random and meaningless, nor a centripetal human purpose without humor or hope, or mercy, or effect" (159). Despite all the obstacles that cause her to suffer *Meridian* doesn't give up the "...liberation struggle..." (Lauret 73)

Similarly, Toni Morrison focuses on suffers of black females in a white society in *The Bluest Eye*. This novel "...shows racism's damaging effects on the black community at large and on black families" (Kubitschek 27). In *The Bluest Eye*, a black girl Pecola Breedlove realizes the supremacy of white society and longs to have the features of white females. She starts his desires by praying to have the bluest eye in the world. The superlative form of this word is used to demonstrate the willingness to have even more superior features than white race.

Being a black child, Pecola is exposed to the violence and abuse of both white society and her own family. She is a member of a black family who has "...self-hatred" (Kubitschek 27) thoughts due to the racial attitudes of white society. Like Walker's fictional character, Celie, Pecola is raped by her father. Expressing this incest, Morrison helps one to remind what it is to be even a little female in black family. After this sexual abuse, her mother escapes from her daughter, so this time Pecola has to endure the pain for which in fact she is not responsible. Being at a school where there are both white and colored children, she should bear racist behaviors and utterances of her white classmates. Beginning during her childhood, Pecola's personal destruction is completed at the end of the novel.

Morrison's other significant novel *Beloved* is very successful in displaying "...the most painful part of the African American heritage, slavery..." (115) The protagonist of the novel, Sethe remembers the cruel times of slavery. Although she longs to start life again without remembering suffers of past, the ghost of her baby girl does not leave her and her daughter, Denver. The spirit of her dead daughter changes into a grown girl and begins to disturb her life after so many years. She goes the place where she is killed by her own mother, Sethe. She always reminds her mother the brutality of slavery and the scene of murder.

Even though it is not so easy to Sethe to get well, *Beloved* continues to affect her psychologically. Even she wants to kill her mother, Sethe for taking revenge on her. To Sethe, her act of crime is not wrong and if she hasn't killed her baby, she cannot endure to see her at the hands of white race. During slavery years, Sethe has endured the violent

abuse and whipping of slave holders. However, to her a little baby should not be suffered by this brutality. Beloved cannot understand this truth and decides to give pain to her mother. Even though experiencing the hard conditions of slavery is lasted, Sethe now suffers at the hands of Beloved.

It is obvious that these four novels of African-American writers, portray suffers of black women. Even sometimes suffers vary, like motherhood, violence, rape, the most important reason that causes their pains, is racism, that is their color. They are discriminated by the white society because of their God-given colors. They are seen as the objects that do not have any feelings. In novels of Walker and Morrison, some black female have the opportunity to find their identity and survive in the hard atmosphere of racial society. However, some black women characters do not dare to object the discrimination and prepare their lives' end.

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**ABSTRACT**

In this study “the suffers of black women” in the novels of Alice walker *The Color Purple* and *Meridian* and the novels of Toni Morrison *Beloved* and *The Bluest Eye*, the popular and significant works of African-American Literature are examined. It is obvious that the source of these writers knowledge about suffers of the black women is their life experiences in the black community. One can say that being colored women, both Walker and Morrison have the advantage of portraying what it is to be a woman of color in the society. It is obvious that their slave ancestors and the years of struggle of woman rights give them the opportunity to create life-like characters in their novels.

## ÖZET

Bu çalışmada Afro-Amerikan Edebiyatının ünlü ve önemli eserlerinden, Alice Walker'ın *Mor Renk* ve *Meridyen* romanları ve Toni Morrison'ın *Sevilen* ve *En Mavi Göz* romanlarında siyah kadınların acıları incelenmektedir. Bu yazarların siyah kadınların acıları hakkındaki bilgilerinin kaynağının siyah toplumdaki yaşam deneyimleri olduğu fark edilmektedir. Renkli tenli bayanlar olmanın, hem Walker hem de Morrison'a toplumda siyah kadın olmanın ne demek olduğunu tasvir etme avantajını sağladığı söylenebilir. Köle ataları ve kadın hakları için yapılan mücadele yıllarının, bu yazarlara romanlarında gerçek gibi karakterler yaratma fırsatını verdiği açıktır.