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**MOTHERHOOD AND MATERNAL BONDS IN TONI MORRISON'S
NOVELS**

M.A. THESIS





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TONİ MORRİSON'UN ROMANLARINDA ANNELİK VE ANNELİK BAĞLARI

ÖZET

Annelik hamileliğin başlangıcı ve doğumla ortaya çıkan bir grup duygu ve davranış olarak tanımlanır. Anne ve çocukları arasındaki bağ her kültürde önemli bir öğedir. Hem anne hem de çocuklar birbirlerine fiziksel ve duygusal olarak bağlıdırlar. Fakat siyahi annelerin hikâyesi farklıdır çünkü onların kölelik sistemi tarafından şekillendirilmiştir. Bu da onları diğer ırklara göre ikinci sınıf insan yapıyor. Kölelik sisteminde, Afrika kökenli Amerikalı anneler annelik anlamında birçok zorlukla karşılaştılar. Buna ek olarak, kölelik sistemi siyahi annelerin biyolojik görevi olan çocuğuna bakma görevini yerine getirmelerine imkân sağlamamaktadır. Böyle bir imkân sağlamak yerine siyahi bir annenin kendi evladını köleliğin tehdit ve tehlikelerinden koruyabilmek için öldürmesine mecbur bırakılmaktadır. Bu sebeple, bu çalışma siyah ve beyaz toplumlar arasındaki anlaşmazlıkların yanı sıra siyahi insanların ayrıcalıklı sayılan beyaz vatandaşlar tarafından zorbalığa maruz bırakılmaları araştırmaktadır. Dahası, bu araştırma annelik kavramına odaklanmakta ve köleliğin siyahı annelerin hayatları üzerindeki etkilerini Toni Morrison'un üç kitabı; *Sula*, *Sevilen* ve *En Mavi Göz* üzerinden göstermektedir. Morrison her bir kitabında annelik konusunu kitabın kendine has bir yolla ele almıştır. Daha da önemlisi, Morrison annelik ve köleliği anne ve çocukları arasındaki bağları konu alan bütün feminist okumaları eleştirmek için değişken bir ifade olarak kullanmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın amacı siyahi köle yaşamındaki zorlukları, bunun annelik ve aile bağları üzerindeki etkilerini araştırmak ve ayrıca Afrika kökenli Amerika Edebiyatındaki popüler ve önemli eserleri analiz etmektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler : Annelik, Kölelik, Irkçılık, Siyahi Anneler, Afrika kökenli
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NOVELS**

ABSTRACT

Motherhood is defined as a set of feelings and behaviours that are unfolded with the start of pregnancy and the birth of a child. The maternal bond between mothers and children is significant in all cultures since they are connected together physically and emotionally. However, the story of black mothers was quite different because they experienced slavery in the past making them inferior to other races. Under the system of slavery, African American mothers still face difficult and diverse challenges. The hardest being their inability to practice their roles as biological caregivers. In some extreme cases black mothers even thought to kill her own children to save them from the threats of slavery. This study explores the conflict between the white and black communities and the victimization of the black people by the prevalent ideology of marginalization and suppression. It examines the concept of motherhood and the impact of slavery in the life of black mothers through a special attention on Toni Morrison's three novels *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, and *Beloved*. In each single novel, Morrison presents a unique picture of motherhood as a term bound by slavery. In the study, feminist readings of the texts as well as textual and contextual approaches are employed to study the relationships between the mothers and daughters as depicted in the selected novels. Hence, the aim of this study is to investigate the complexity of the life of black women and the impact on motherhood and family interaction of poverty, subjugation and oppression.

Key Words : African Americans, Toni Morrison, motherhood, slavery, racism, black mothers.
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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Motherhood: A Conceptual Introduction

Motherhood is defined as a set of feelings and behaviours that are unfolded with the start of pregnancy and the birth of a child. The experience of motherhood is formed by social and cultural norms. For women, motherhood is a sacred job and a spiritual journey to undertake. In literature, motherhood is a very frequent and recurring theme. Its concept and significance are studied, tackled and presented in a variety of ways and from different perspectives. Furthermore, it is like an evolving institution, which receives many definitions from different authors constantly. Religiously speaking, motherhood has a very valuable connotation.

Family and its relations have been a significant subject in literature, and they have been analysed from gender studies point of view and philosophical thoughts. As far as motherhood and maternal relations is concerned, so many assumptions have been made through different views. So, in this study, the focus will be on the topic of motherhood as the main subject. Mother will be studied as a subject not as an object, “in which men are central and women function as objects or obstacles” (Hirsch, 1993:2)

Although, throughout human history, women have acquired great respect and acceptance, in early American literature, the women have been given an inferior position. Before the eightieth century, women were often marginalized and given few representations in American literature. They were treated as mere properties and possessions belonging to the men in their lives. This shows that women’s roles were less than man’s roles not only in literature but also in society. In early American literature, the portrayal of women as mothers focused on their roles in raising children and doing household tasks. At the beginning of the twentieth century, women began to play roles that are more prominent and gain more rights as was represented in American literature. Gradually, women were able to achieve such right as equality, respect, and acceptance in American society as well.

Another essential point is that gender roles and expectations vary across the different ethnic groups, cultures and societies. These expectations were represented by the differences in dress codes, speeches and behaviours of men and women. For instance, in most cultures, a man in his family is responsible and has to take care of financial issues and do home repairs. Throughout their childhood years, boys tend to play games that involve soldier toys and weapons. These toys make them aggressive. In contrast, girls grow up to acquire maternal instincts and learn the art of taking care of children. In addition, she is learning such household duties as cleaning, cooking, and other indoor jobs. Thus, motherhood is considered an inherited feature in women, as girls play with baby dolls to prepare them as mothers. Furthermore, there have been numerous written works on motherhood by writers from different cultures all around the world. In African American literature, motherhood has been represented from different perspectives. The writers talk about mothers as artists, feminists and fighters. In order to elicit a real image of African American mothers, one must have some information about the struggles and sufferings that black mothers have faced in their lives.

Toni Morrison (1931), a contemporary black author, deals with the lives, experiences and processes of identity-construction of the black American woman as central subjects in her novels. Morrison uses motherhood as a recurrent theme in her novels, *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, and *Beloved*. She frequently returns to this topic in her interviews and literary works. Morrison believes that Black American women perceives of motherhood different from the dominant culture of motherhood.

One of the best phrases by the French Philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) is that “man is born free but everywhere in chains” (1971:34). This phrase sort of summarizes the story of the characters in Morrison’s three novels, *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, and *Beloved*. In this thesis, the focus will be on female characters. This thesis will explain the life of black women during slavery and the years of segregation in the United States of America, which shapes the identities of the black women. These three novels were written in the early 1980s, when black American women were asking for their rights and equality. Morrison is considered one of the black female writers who have painted a clear picture of black American women and

their suffering from discrimination and persecution through these three novels. The thesis will, moreover, explain the dual functions black women have. The first function is how they have suffered from and survived torture, abuse, sexual exploitation, rape, as well as racist attitudes. The second function is how they attempted to defend and protect the life of their children. As in her book *The Second Sex*, Simon de Beauvoir (1908-1986) writes “the most sympathetic of men never fully comprehend women’s concrete situation” (2015:475), Morrison gives us a clear and deep image of the life of the black woman through her female protagonists, Sethe in *Beloved*, Sula and Nel in *Sula* and Pecola in *The Bluest Eye*.

These characters and almost all other female characters in the texts are exposed to different forms of violence and are still able to display a fundamental affection towards their children. This thesis discusses motherhood, discrimination, and violence in the black American society as well as women’s solidarity and coming together in the face of these dehumanizing acts. It is obvious that along the history of black American, black women have encountered marginalization from both the white people and their own men. As a result, all black women have fought against these negative attitudes in an attempt to achieve self-assertion and identity and get free from the rules that are imposed on them by the patriarchal society. In her novels, including the ones selected for analysis here, Morrison is interested in the fact that even though women and men have historically undergone the oppression imposed by the white people, black women are further oppressed by the men in their lives. Black men’s ideology regarding the role of black women had been very negative. Morrison feels sorry for the failure of black women to live independently from the men and the lack of equality between men and women.

During the years of slavery up until the end of 20th century, motherhood had been utilized as in the American patriarchal society to politically suppress and relegate black women. This had been the case until the 1960s, when women started fighting for equality and recognition (Buell: 279). For that reason, black woman was only seen to fit the roles of mothers and house cleaners with no important roles to play in the family or society. All her jobs used to be restricted to the home only. Morrison wrote these three novels during a stringent period because black American

society was full of domestic ideologies against black women. In addition to labour exploitation, black was exploited and used as a sex tool by both white men and black men. Furthermore, they have no identity other than their masters or husbands.

The three selected novels are set during the years of slavery and the period of Jim Crow, who issued segregation laws against black people in the south of America. These laws have had a great impact on motherhood and the maternity of children during this period. As Morrison demonstrates slavery and the slave-owning system as an ideology denied black women the right of being mothers and their opportunity to have a great influence on their children. This thesis captures the condition of black women during the years of slavery and shows how environment is influential in forming the characters of people. Most importantly, the thesis investigates how Morrison describes the concepts of motherhood, violence and oppressions during the years of slavery in the selected three novels. She explains the ways in which black women present themselves and aspire to represent themselves.

This thesis consists of three main chapters. The first chapter is a general introduction about motherhood in general and presents an overview of all the subjects that are handled in the thesis. It also includes a brief presentation about the biography of the writer. The second chapter deals with various subjects regarding the state of women in African American Literature. Chapter Two also discusses slavery and slave-owning system as well as all the forms of violence and racial and gender oppression imposed on the black women. Following that, the study concentrates on the concept of motherhood and the meaning of motherhood for the black American women. Then it looks into the influences of mothering and motherhood on the black family and the lives of black women and the way this has changed their needs and desires. Additionally, it focuses on the impact of mothering on black women's perceptions of self-esteem and self-conception. Another important thing to study and understand in the thesis is the psychological impact of emotional shocks on black mothers. Moreover, mothers in Morrison's novels are human beings with broken spirits and damaged self-perceptions. Therefore, to understand or explain the psyche of black mothers, it is significant to study the intensity of slavery years and the impact of slavery on all black women and how they face so many struggles in the

processes of children upbringing. Additionally, this study focuses on the role of the father as an absent member of his family as the mother is always the provider of her family while he is always far away from his family. The absence of the father during slavery makes the black mothers face emotional and financial difficulties. This study concentrates on the life of black women and how difficult it is for them to survive in the patriarchal society and under slavery and racism. For all these reasons, black women have so many tasks and responsibilities.

Another important point discussed in the study is the identity of black American women. During slavery years, black women are obliged to express themselves as domestic servants. They try to show their loyalty to their white owners. The portrayal of those black women as loyal servants to white families has continued over the years. Hence, slavery affects the black women psychologically and makes them believe that they have really lost their own identity under such bad treatments. This study points out how violence and slavery make the black women believe that their identities had disappeared and they had to construct a new one.

The last chapter of the thesis focuses on the role of black mothers in the novels, most importantly on the need to understand the reason behind their miserable lives, which put them in troubled and uneasy relationships with their children. The chapter also explains the relationship between mothers and children under the effect of slavery and racism. The study highlights the impact of slavery upon the female characters in these three novels. The thesis further analyses the selected texts of Morrison, namely, *Sula*, *The Bluest Eye* and *Beloved* in which the representation of the concept of motherhood varies from one to the other.

This study, hence, seeks to answer some intriguing questions regarding the works of Morrison: How and why do troubles generate between the members of the same family in the black community? How can the act of killing or selling daughters become a sign of motherly love? What are the main aspects that influence the psyche of the black mothers? To answer these questions, the study offers close textual readings and analyses of the selected texts and further compares and contrasts the three novels through detailed thematic and critical examinations and explorations.

The importance of this research appears from the marginal and peripheral images of the black woman, which makes them look like as a group whose experiences would be extensive of all women. It is very important to consider and understand the unique experiences and diversities existing within this group. The significance of the study stems from the fact that it utilizes black feminist thought to examine black motherhood and challenges long-standing ideas about black women. The purpose of this study is to explain the experiences of black women under the forces of slavery, race, class, and sex oppression, offering various views of reality by those women who experience it. This research describes and analyses the individual experiences of a group of middle-aged, professional black mothers claiming that their experiences need to be moved from the margins of others' experiences to the centrality of their own experiences. Therefore, black women have both the cultural experience of being female and the cultural experience of being black. Moreover, this thesis focuses on some specific sections of interest, including the transition to motherhood and the decision to be parents, the way the life of women is changed because of motherhood and the meaning of motherhood as described by black women themselves.

1.2. The Life of Toni Morrison

Morrison was born in Chloe Anthony Wofford as the second of four children in 1931 and spent the first years of her life in Ohio. Both of her parents come from families working in agriculture. Her father's family had suffered from discrimination and a strong distrust of whites throughout his lifetime. She grew up in an airy household, which was surrounded by so many activities like songs, fairy tales, ghost stories, music, and other things of African-American heritage. All these activities contributed to Morrison's profound love for reading. Morrison's parents educated her and encouraged her to read, learn, and culture as well as to be confident in her own abilities as a woman. As an adolescent, she was highly influenced by classic literature, especially authors like, Jane Austen, Fyodor Dostoevsky and Leo Tolstoy. She received an undergraduate degree in English from Howard University and completed a master's program at Cornell. When many of her classmates had difficulty pronouncing her uncommon first name, she changed it to Toni (a derivative of her middle name). In 1958, she married Harold Morrison, an architect from

Jamaica, and the couple had two sons. They divorced six years later. As a mother, Morrison found that everything in this life is boring with the exception of parenting and writing. In an interview with Nellie McKay (1982), when asked how she manages these responsibilities, her response was, “Well, I really only do two things... It only looks like many things. All of my work has to do with books. It is all one thing. And the other thing that I do is to raise my children, which, as you know; I can only do one minute at a time” (140)

After pursuing an academic career teaching English at Howard, Morrison became an editor at Random House, where she specialized in black fiction. At the same time, she began building a body of creative work that, in 1993, would make her the first African-American woman to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature. Her 1970 novel, *The Bluest Eye* was followed by *Sula* in 1974, which secured Morrison a nomination for the National Book Award. In 1977, Morrison won the National Book Critics Circle Award for her book *Song of Solomon*. Her other works include *Tar Baby* (1981), *Jazz* (1992), *Paradise* (1998), and, of course, *Love* (2003), and *A Mercy* (2008). In 1988, *Beloved* considered by many to be her best, won the Pulitzer Prize. Besides, Morrison has several children’s books, and some of them are co-authored with her son Slade.

Later, Morrison became the Robert F. Goheen Professor in the Council of Humanities at Princeton University, where she conducts undergraduate workshops in creative writing. After teaching at this university for two decades, she retired in 2006. Morrison received several recent awards like a Pell Award for Lifetime Achievement in the Arts (2001), the Image Award for Outstanding Literary Work NAACP (2004), and several honorary degrees from great universities such as Oxford and Sorbonne. In 2012, Morrison was awarded by President Barak Obama with the Presidential Medal of Freedom and later received PEN/Saul Bellow Award for Achievement in American Fiction, which she received in 2016. Morrison was one of the first authors to appear on the TV book club with her famous friend Oprah Winfrey. Within one week, her novel *Paradise* (1998), an Oprah book of the month, sold one million copies. According to Phillips, who is an English Professor at Columbia University, Morrison has a special place in American literature, academy

world, literary writings and popular culture. In 1989, Morrison held a position in humanities at Princeton. Furthermore, in her 70th birthday, both Hillary Clinton and Kofi Annan were among those who highly praised her and the famous singer, Jessye Norman sang to her. Most of Morrison's work is fantastic and realistic. They are related to history and mythology. She organizes her fictions within the society into which she was born and lived in.

Morrison, regarded today as one of the most celebrated authors of the twentieth century, confirms her deep commitment to her people, their life and their history. From her earliest novel, *The Bluest Eye* 1970 until the most recent one *Home* 2012, Morrison's work has always been based on her desire and "realization," in Russell's words, that "she must explore the past and re-address it in order for African Americans to understand themselves and the world they live in today." (Russell, 94) Her works are concerned primarily with questions of history, memory, and trauma. The critical reception of her work is, therefore too extensive and voluminous to deal with in any single chapter or review. Those who attempted to do so have, however, employed approaches that range from critical and theoretical black feminist, post-structuralist, and post-modernist approaches (Peterson), methodological and aesthetic approaches (Conner) to psychological and socio-cultural approaches (Harding and Martin) and those who organized their accounts according to subject matter (Matus). A number of critics have, above all, based their criticism on the influence of the refer to Toni Morrison's *Beloved: A Subaltern Study* by Nabarun Ghosh pdf p: 2 Black Aesthetic Movement of the 1960s on Morrison's style and choice of subject. For instance, Sam Durrant in *Postcolonial Narrative and the Work of Mourning* demonstrates that "most critics have presented [her] novels as reclamation of black history and identity." (2004: 85). In her essay "Talking Back to School Teacher: Morrison's Confrontation with Hawthorn in *Beloved*," Caroline M. Woidat detects the allusions made in *Beloved* to Hawthorn's *Scarlet Letter*. She observes that Morrison's project, made explicit in her insistence upon her identity as an African American woman writer is to "redefine literary criticism, and to reconstruct black history and to suppress racial, cultural, or gender differences for the good of the majority." (Alsen, 2014: 193). In one of her quote, Morrison prudence into how she looks at life and people. "Make a difference about something other than yourselves"

(Toni Morrison & Denard, 2008: 8). Morrison uses her own voice and her character's voice in order to form the black history and to make a difference in her writings.



Chapter Two

Women in African American Literature

2.1. African American Women Writers

African-American are those people who were brought to America or the English colonies as slaves in the beginning of seventeenth century until late in the nineteenth century. Today, black Americans form the second largest ethnic group in the United States of America. Immigrant African people with different ethnic, cultural, national and linguistic backgrounds were displaced to the southern parts of the United States of America as possessions of white owners. Being part of the wide African culture, African American literature started to flourish with the contributions of such significant poets as Phillis Wheatley and the more modern writers as Toni Morrison.

They write about their people's experiences of racism, slavery and their struggle for equality and search for identity in the white society. African-American literature consists of various periods and after Harlem Renaissance women authors began to experiment with feminist themes and ideas that expressed their experiences and desires. Harriet Jacobs, Zora Neale Hurston Toni Morrison and Alice Walker are some important black women writers who implement the concept of "womanism" The reason behind the tragedy of African American women is the long term of slavery and gender discrimination (Spelman, 2002: 22). Black women were exposed to terrible and painful experiences of racial and gender discrimination imposed on them by both black and white men.

Literature by African American women writers is described by collectivity rather than individuality as it is produced in the form of a collective expression of a group rather than individuals. It focuses on the cultural awareness of women within an ethnic group rather than dealing with women in general. This wave of literary production is supported by a number of writers including Weldon Johnson, Claude Mackay, Sterling Allen Brown, Nella Larsen and Jean Toomer. In their works, these

women writers express the life and the problems of the black women in their writings and portray numerous images of violence and misery.

Black women are depicted as the recipients of the worst kinds of violence and oppression. In the years of slavery, black men, white men and even white women exploited and abused black women.

Hence, black women lose their self-confidence, as they see themselves through the eyes of black men and both white men and women. According to the American ideologies regarding gender and race, black women have been discredited twice. As, Patricia Morton divides black women into four main figures: the “Mammy” or the domestic servant, the “Jezebel” or the sex object, tragic mulatto and domineering matriarch. In the history of black women, the feminist movement disordered the social balance by giving equal rights to women. Both feminism and post colonialism have their impact on the black women. While the post-structuralists are always looking for the identity of the black women. They explain all the experiences of gender and ideological relations from the black women’s point of view. In the 1980s, black women’s identity is divided into some sections as race, class and sexuality which makes women’s issues open to debate.

In the very beginning, African American writers used oral forms like gospel music to clarify their ideas and culture. After that, they developed this oral form to such written forms as slave narratives, poems and plays. On the other hand, the roots of African American women’s writings can be described as led by Lucy Terry (1730-1821). She helped “establish the known beginnings of African American literature both as a poet and as historian” (Angelyn Michell & Taylor, 2009: 16). African American women’s literature began in the late 18th century starting with a first poem called *Various Subjects* in 1773, which was written by Phillis Wleatley (1753-1784), both black and slave at the same time. At the start of the 19th century, black women writers focused in their writings on such themes as motherhood, sexuality and religion. At the middle of the 19th century, slavery became the main focus of black women: “African American literature as a whole. Women’s slave narratives are

stories about injustice, atrocity and unimaginable pain but also exceptional triumph” (Moody, 2009: 110)

Furthermore, at the end of the Civil War in America and post slavery, black women focused on themes like preoccupation, citizenship and freedom: “African American women’s literature reflects this national preoccupation with defining freedom and citizenship and the connections between these ideas of the burgeoning American identity shaping those definitions in relation to African American identity” (Foster, 2009: 29). As it is mentioned before, both Lucy Terry and Phillis Wheatley are the first black American women to write and publish literary works. Another important black American woman is Harriet Wilson whose first novel, published in America, *Our Nig*, describes the difficult life of black people.

Another noticeable black woman writer is Harriet Jacobs (1813-1897), whose published book is *Incident in the Life of a Slave Girl*. It talks about the story of a black mother and her children and how they became free from slavery. Jacobs’s writings present a very clear message to white women in the north who do not understand the pains of slavery in order to develop their ideas concerning slavery. Additionally, the post-slavery period introduces many black writers as Elizabeth Keckley (1818-1907), who used to be the dressmaker of George Washington (1732-1799). France E. W. Harper (1825-1911) is another important black woman writer who writes four novels and many stories, poems and essays. In the period of Harlem Renaissance, Zora Neale Hurston (1891-1960) is one of the representative of this period. She has written more than fourteen books. Contemporary African American women writers include Toni Morrison and Alice Walker who have won the Pulitzer Prize. Toni Morrison is the first African American woman to win the Nobel Prize in literature and her writings have a substantial impact not only in America but all over the world.

In the light of the above discussion, it can be asserted that what feminism as a socio-political and literary movement stands in America means more than what it stands for all over the world, as it has different roles and concepts with the respect to the African American women. Black women can be considered feminists innately

because they have the ability to involve in transforming familiar realities. In addition, black women have a great ability to survive different types of struggles imposed on them by white American people.

On the other hand, a social reform movement for black women begins in the nineteenth century. This movement gives opportunities to black women to work hard for liberation. Within these social reforms, black women face some conflicts. For this reason, both the abolitionists and the feminists established an organization called “The American Equal Rights Association” (AERA). This organization was run by Elizabeth Stanton (1815-1902), Susan B. Anthony (1820-1906) and Fredrick Douglass (1818-1895). The actions of black women in this organization are to make a decision whether to stand up for the Fifteen Amendment, which allowed the vote for black men and excluded black women.

It is important to mention that the nineteenth century is very significant period for the struggle for rights of black women and to free the slaves. Between 1950s and 1960s, black women were great supporters of the Civil Rights Movement. They led, organized and planed the movement. In 1970s, a large number of both black Panthers and black Muslims participated in the Civil Rights Movements for the sake of black people liberation. However, black men didn’t appreciate or support black women in their participation of the movement. This attitude towards the black male creates a sorrowful situation in black male-female relationship. Joy James and T. Denean Sharply explain this in *The Black Feminist Readers*:

We understand that it is and has been traditional that man is the head of the house. He is the leader of the house/nation because his knowledge of the world is broader, his awareness greater. Women cannot do the same thing as men-they are made by nature to function differently. Equality of men and women is something that cannot happen even in the abstract world (2000: 267).

Another significant point is the main structures that black women novelists employ in African American literature. These include a focus on the representation of female protagonists, overlapping of racist, sexist, and classist oppression, using the language of black female, individual

relationships between members of family or society, power of emotion, and female bonding. Similarly, some stereotypes which came out of slavery had a great impact on the organization of black American women's social position and family role. Psychologically speaking, stereotypes is defined as ideas adopted by individuals in certain ways. The best known of these stereotypes is: Jim Crow, Sambo, Mammy, Mandingo, Sapphire, Jezebel, Tragic Mulatta, Savage and Uncle Tom. Some of these stereotypes relate to black men, and some of them relate to black women. There are other modern stereotypes as: Drug Dealers, Watermelon, Fried Chicken, Welfare Queen, Magical Negro, Angry Black Women, Controlling Image, Black Athletes, Criminal Stereotype, Fashion, Sport and New Media Stereotypes.

2.2. Slavery, Class, and Racism

Slavery is defined as an institution that is mainly based on the power and dominance of human relations. Between the 15th and 16th centuries slavery took a new form as it disappeared in Western Europe. British, Dutch, Spanish and Portuguese are European countries that continued to explore and trade in Africa and take the African as slaves. African slavery is something profitable not only for Europeans but also for Americans. Obviously, the existence of Africans as slaves in America later acquired a political importance. The first groups of Africans to come to America in 1819, as cited by Erlene Stetson (1949): "at first the Africans were not brought as slaves, but as servants under indenture" (Walvin, 2002: 71).

Those colonizers faced the problems of inexpensive and steady labor. Therefore, they tried to use Indians and white people as servants and the male slaves of Indians concentrated on hunting and they left all the work for women. In reality, there was a difference between slavery and indentured labour. The indentured labourers were not slaves, and they used to work for five to seven years or for a limited time. They were different from black slaves, because they had rights and their contracts were limited. The colonizers preferred black slaves since they were hard

workers in the farms and more used to farming due to their agricultural African background.

Furthermore, a number of laws concerning Negroes or black people were issued. Some of these statutes regarded runaway slaves, and some of them were related to the children of slaves. Around 1662, Virginia Colony issued nine laws concerning the new-born babies in which a new born in the Virginia Colony had to follow the statutes of the mother. According to Stetson (1830-1906), this law had two important aspects: First, this law is an exchange from English Common Law which “announced that a child’s status was determined by the father’s condition. “Second, “it implicitly condoned sexual intercourse between White men and Black slave women,” eventually allowing “the White men more legal, social, and psychological freedom by not holding them responsible for any offspring resulting from sexual relations with female slaves” (72).

In 1670 another important law was passed which stated that any person who was not a Christian servant and tried to travel to Virginia Colony by ship, he would be held a slave for life. Eventually, children were forced to serve till the age of thirty, while the adults had to serve for more than twelve years. In 1750, black slavery became a living reality in a lot of United States Colonies including Georgia, North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland and South Carolina. They had certain rules and codes concerning education, marriage, religion, etc.

However, American’s horrifying attitudes towards slaves were not limited to cruel treatment, overpowering or intolerable working condition, it also stresses psychological and mental oppression, identity deprivation and deprivation of essential human rights of dignity and freedom. Furthermore, under the strict economic system of slavery, slaves were obliged to work under very hard and painful conditions. The owners of these slaves were very cruel and oppressive of the black American families. Additionally, they involve their marriage and child care. Due to extreme poverty and deprivation, most slave parents were willing to sell their children for the sake of paying off their debts and preventing themselves from starvation. Some even offered themselves into slavery because their master would

feed them and take care of them. Steven Goldberg (1941) shows that “A woman’s feeling that she must get around a man is the hallmark of male dominance” (11). In this case, the children will be their master’s possession. These children must do adult’s work as terror, arbitrary power and injustice.

It is important that slaves were employed to do various kinds of work including one is servicing in the house, industry, army, and agriculture and for scarce food and clothing. Women slaves had to do the extra work at home: raising and caring for children, cooking, cleaning and other household duties. Besides, the strong female or male slaves must work in the fields for long days without any breaks.

Unyielding to their owners’ orders meant that slaves would be exposed to different forms of corporal punishment such as flogging, beating, taking off the limb, cutting of the ear, slitting the nose, etc. which caused them serious health risks. For instance, cancerous tumors could be easily seen in one out of thirteen slaves. Slaves have been scaring from so many things like: agricultural tools, knives, burns, missing fingers, hands, or arms and lost toes. Moreover, many slaves had more than a visible health problem including speech impediments, decayed teeth and physical deformities.

Furthermore, slaves were deprived from social life and socialization, hence, they couldn’t form a good unity against the dominating party. For this reason, slaves were always disconnected and had to suffer for survival. This kind of detachment had a great effect in the psychology of any individual. Ira Berlin (1941-2018) shows that:

The Second Middle Passage was extraordinarily lonely, debilitating, and dispiriting. Capturing the mournful character of one southward marching coffle, an observer characterized it as a procession of men, women and children resembling that of a funeral. Indeed, with men and women dying on the march or being sold and resold, slaves became not merely commodified but cut off from nearly every human attachment (2009: 172-173).

The owners of black slaves tried to stereotype them as weak human beings with no familial or social bonds or loyalties like white people. In black families, fathers were always absent and had no immediate contact with their children, and some didn’t know whether their children were alive or not. Harriet Beecher Stowe

(1811-1896) explains in Jennifer Fleishner's work (1956), *Memory, Family, and Identity in Women's Slave Narratives*, that "slavery dismembers families, slave and free, and it remains for America's mothers to put an end to the institution that disrupts motherhood and destroys homes" (54).

Moreover, the marriages of black slaves were not legal, because they were not registered or completed in churches. Thus, marriages didn't give legal rights to the black males as it used to do to white males. Even if the black owners didn't separate children from their parents, they had no enough time to take care of their children. The black mothers were prohibited from looking after their children because they spent most of their time working in the fields. Black mothers must go to work even if their children are in need of attention and care. Moreover, slaveholders don't want a good relationship between parents and their children. Similarly, slave's children were forced into working at a very young age; at the age of five or six. Children didn't seem to miss their parents very much because they spent most of their early years far away from their parents. For instance, if the mother is chosen to work as a house servant or a nurse, this means that she will lose control over her children. Her children would live with white people far away from their parents and relatives. These children would in turn, be taught to obey and succumb to white children. They would also prepare white children to be masters and mistresses to the slave children.

According to the oxford dictionary, race is defined as a group of individuals with a common culture, language, history, etc. On the other hand, racism describes a certain group of people that is better and superior to others on the grounds of their physical features and abilities. It is significant not to ignore that racism is about reproducing and keeping the differentials of power between different groups in the social systems (Craighead, 2012: 789). The origin of the term race goes back to Europeans whose aim behind classifying people into different statues was to obtain a strong economy and policy for a certain and powerful social group. Absolutely, the white American describe black people as a step above animals and they are suffering from mental and sexual disability. In America, racism has served not only to classify people but also to determine who was black and who was not. Whiteness and

blackness were both racial identities. Historically, racism has had a powerful influence on American history from the very beginning.

In addition to enslavement, historical atrocities practiced against black slaves on grounds of their skin colour included cruel treatment by white Americans; slaves were treated the same way a horse or any other animals were treated. Black slaves could be easily killed by white American without any punishment. The racial oppression of black slaves was not only a part of social environment in which the white people lived in, but was a very important part of very their daily routines.

It is important that, although slavery was abolished by the end of the Civil War, its effects are still very visibly intact within the American society of today. For instance, the negative stereotypical image the black American, especially the lazy, ill-mannered and violent is still persistent. For that reason, it is felt that the black man will never be equal to the white one due to his inferior racial position. During his presidential campaign, for instance, the previous President Barack Obama (1961) addressed the issue of race emphasizing that race still matters in America:

Race is an issue that I believe this nation cannot afford to ignore right now... The fact is that the comments that have been made and the issues that have surfaced over the last few weeks reflect the complexities of race in this country that we've never really worked through — a part of our union that we have not yet made perfect (232).

American literature as well as African American literature increasingly addresses the issue of racial segregation in the United States of America, especially as it concerns the black people. Literature and other artistic forms have historically been employed by African Americans as a weapon to resist racial segregation and oppression and to erase the stereotypical themes about them. It is important that there is a strong relationship between racism and social class in American society. For example, in the educational sector, African American college students are more likely to drop out of college which means taking a longer time to graduate, having lower marks, and having a weak sense of belonging to the college as compared to white students (Walton, 2007: 82-96). Additionally, sociologists explain the ways in which a person's social class is increasingly influenced by their race. For example, white middle-class families have more accumulated wealth as compared with the

black families of the same class. The reason behind this is the oppression and discrimination practiced against black families. Moreover, black families are always ringed or enclosed by poor or criminal groups, due to racial segregation. Thus, to know the culture of any society, it is significant to consider the divisions of social class.

2.3 Motherhood: A General Introduction

Motherhood is defined as “an institution with social recognitions, rules and statues.” (Silva, 2013: 12). It is a beautiful journey during which a woman experiences different types of emotions, struggles, fears, worries and opportunities. Obviously, mothers do their best to make the life of their children better and they have many responsibilities like protecting and providing for their children. In the life on any mother, children are always the main focus and, thus, motherhood can also be very difficult and contentious, because of great technological changes and legal reasons. In most recent years our view of motherhood has changed more from what a mother is represented two hundred years ago.

As far as feminism is concerned, a lot of feminists and sociologists draw on the difference between the biological and sociological aspects of motherhood. Biological aspects of motherhood relate to the way a woman gives birth to a baby, while the sociological aspect of motherhood includes the way a woman raises the child. Thus, feminists insist that the term motherhood is associated with breeding, raising and caring of the child more than the act of giving birth to him. Gillespie (1999) describes the theme of motherhood as “a fixed, natural, fulfilling and central part of femininity.” The idea of motherhood changed as mothers’ roles started to change. For instance, in the 1940s, the role of a mother used to be limited, and her position was restricted to the house only. Thus, a woman’s primary job was caring for her children at home. In the 1960s, and with the emergence of feminist movements, the roles of the mothers increasingly changed as mothers started to work outside the homes. Maxwell (1973) indicates that “during the 40s and 50s, married women with school age children were the largest increase in the labour force for the

entire fifty-year period” (1994: 3). Similarly, Ann Dally (1929-2007) explains the reasons behind women are going outside their house and seeking occupations: Not only economic or consumer pressures and the need to earn money” but the fact that “women’s horizons have widened” (294). Gradually, the number of women working outside their houses increased. By the 1980s, the plurality of women was working and having jobs and, hence, the roles of mothers changed from being restricted to the house as a wife depending on her husband to an independent woman having an occupation outside the house. Mothers begin to take care of a lot of responsibilities in their families. Discussing women’s independence, Maxwell explains:

Becoming independent does not mean separating oneself from the husband and children, but does mean becoming able to make thoughtful judgments, to think critically, to achieve independence meant no longer being able to blame others for their situations. [...] Allowing others, especially the man in the family, to make the decisions for one are often easy and comfortable (2).

Moreover, women’s work outside the home zone also means that they can enjoy better financial resources and, therefore, gain more independence. This type of independence may result in both positive and negative ways as women decide to delay marriage or even never marry. Besides, the number of divorces raised and led to a lot of single heads of households. For all of these reasons, the concept and structure of the “family” are changed, and the existence of the traditional family has disappeared. Concerning the types of families which appear, Jean Belovich (1939-1997) mentions twelve family structures which as cited by Maxwell:

There is the traditional family, where Mom stays home and Dad goes to work; the Dad-stays-at-home-and Mom-works family; the both-spouses-work family; the single-parent family; the remarried family; the homosexual family; the unwed-teenager-with-child family; the non marital family; the foster care family; the inter religious family; the interracial family; and the communal family (9).

Obviously, the ideas of the first and the second waves of feminism regarding motherhood are considerably negative. Feminists believe that the job of the mothers inside their house upbringing their children make them powerless, helpless and frustrated. However, the third wave of feminism is not so tough with the theme of motherhood. For instance, the great feminist Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) thinks that motherhood is not something damaging, but when motherhood denies a

woman her rights then she suffers from loss of self. Wollstonecraft says: “To be a mother, a woman must have sense, and that independence of mind which few women possess, who are taught to depend entirely on their husbands. Such wives are foolish mothers” (2014: 106). Wollstonecraft wants every mother to empower themselves and their children to lead a successful life.

As far as motherhood and identity are concerned, some researchers suggest that woman changes her identity the moment she becomes a mother. Motherhood has an important impact on women’s identities because it is a lifelong relationship for women. Any woman has to evaluate her sexuality, physical appearance, and occupations which impact her identity before being a mother (Nicolson, 1999: 162-178). Indeed, mothers are classified into six groups according to the age as infancy, toddlerhood, preschool aged, elementary school, high school aged, and adulthood and woman can become mothers at different stages of life. On the other hand, according to the concept of motherhood, researchers divided the identity into three types: the first type is “Fractured” identities, which means that when a woman becomes a mother, she loses her identity and develops the identity of motherhood. She is able to insert the motherhood identity and her children into her sense of self. The second type of identity is “New Boundaries” of the self, which means that so many mothers show a highly awareness of their children. They insert their children into the intrapsychic boundaries of their selves. Thus, the woman loses her identity. The last type of mother’s identity is “Living as a Mother.” (the Potentiating Effect of Motherhood). This means being a mother for some women means getting or increasing their experiences as well as strengthening their emotional and personal experiences. So, they try to enjoy themselves while being mothers and they try to be so close to their children and see the whole world through the eyes of their children. It is important to say that it is true that many women lose their identities after being a mother, but after a period of time, they gradually regain their self and confidence.

2.4 Motherhood in African American literature and culture

It is clear that motherhood is a set of emotions and behaviors that started with pregnancy and the birth of the child. Women's perception of motherhood is affected by both social context and culture. In the African culture, the image of the mother is associated with the goddess of creation. Thus in African society, motherhood is linked with self-sacrifice and is highly affected by religious mythologies. Mothers in African culture are described as providers, goddesses, cradle rockers, and breeders. In literature, motherhood has historically been a major theme.

Today, African American mothers can be seen in various forms and from different points of view. They have become civil rights activists, feminists, writers, artists, and good householders. To render a precise description and accurate picture of black American mothers, one must identify the struggles and obstacles they have faced throughout their history in America. In her essay *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*, Alice Walker (1944), the African American prominent writer talks about the image of black mothers during the slavery years explaining: "Black women are called, in the folklore that so aptly identifies one's status in society, 'the mule of the world,' because we have been handed the burdens that everyone else—everyone else—refused to carry." (Plott, 2000: 229). Walker mentions various labels used to address the black woman including; Superwomen, Mean and Evil Bitches, Matriarchs and Sapphire's Mama.

Most importantly, mothers (and women in general), have been significantly associated with productivity. The importance of women in African societies and later African America societies stem from the fact that they have the ability to be great producers and labourers at the same time. Cindy Courville (1954) writes about this point explaining:

Women's productive and reproductive capacity made their social and economic resources, which provide me with political leverage. African women were primarily responsible for the economic, social and political reproduction of the household; the bearing of and caring of children, the production, storage and preparation of food. As well, women had exchange value within the context of marriage, forming alliances between households, clans and nations (2).

As we mentioned before in the traditional African societies, motherhood has an effective role and it is something essential in the life of the mothers. In the

precolonial period, most of the African societies mainly depended on agriculture which means that African people are used to work in the land. So, if the number of people working in the land is increased, the amount of production will increase. Coquery Vidrovitch (1935) explains this and writes, “In earlier African societies, where land was seldom scarce, the concept of land ownership was meaningless. What mattered was the ability to work land and the control of enough hands to do so.” (2018: 18). Generally, in a big progeny is something to be proud of and it is a kind of social prestige. It has numerous benefits as, a source of wealth, political power and economic prosperity. For an African woman, increasing the number of children, they have means she secures her economy in present time and in the future.

An important point to mention is that, despite their socio-economic roles and participation, throughout their history, African American women have suffered from a complex web of multidimensional violence and oppression on the grounds of their gender, race and social class. As far as literature is concerned, women writers of slavery until its abolition tried to introduce the black mother as a self-confident woman. A number of black women writers including Harriet Jacobs (1813-1897), Phillis Wheatley (1753-1784), Lucy Terry (1730-1821), Maria W. Steward (1803-1879) and Harriet Wilson (1825-1900), and the writers of the Harlem Renaissance (1865-1919) describe the theme of motherhood as a strong theme which connects the African American culture with the ancestors. Similarly, the writers of American Realism (1940-1960), including Dorothy West (1907-1998), Ann Petry (1908-1997), Margret Walker (1915-1998), and Lorraine Hansberry (1930-1965) describe the concept of motherhood in a new way.

Accordingly, a substantial number of researchers and critics pay special much attention to the oppression or victimization of black mothers in different aspects and from different perspectives. Patricia Hill Collins (1948) and Aduke Adebayo, for example, encourage the black woman to be strong enough to break all the orders of patriarchy.

According to the African perception of the term feminism, African feminist thought focuses on a very distinct set of terminologies such as femalism, womanism,

motherism, Nego-feminism, stiwanism and the snail sense feminism. In her book, *Motherism: The Afrocentric Alternative to Feminism*, Catherine Objanuju Acholonu (1951-2014) insists that motherism in African literature is something alternative to the term of feminism in the west. She explains that motherhood is not something connected to the women only, maybe it is the role of both male and female. Motherhood involves cooperation, love, emotions, and understanding (1995: 44). Within many African cultures and communities, motherhood is used as a duty and each woman is born with an instinct to live her role as a mother.

Importantly, there is a historical and lengthy association between black mothers and slavery. In the United States of America, black women have a very sad experience with being mothers and having children during slavery years. Although black women were allowed to become pregnant and give birth to babies, they were not allowed to claim motherhood in the proper meaning of the word as their babies, like themselves, belonged to the owners not to them. Sally McMillen (1944) explains the state of black mothers in this bad condition in her book *Southern Women Black and White in the Old South*, and says that: “for slave women, bearing an infant was a mixed blessing, evoking love for the child, the thrill of creating a blessed and a helpless being, but also realizing that the child could be sold any time.” (2018: 59). Similarly, most of the slave masters prohibited any close and intimate relationship between black mothers and their children. For that reason, slave masters tried to do their best to separate children and their mothers by selling the children. Consequently, it was very difficult for black women to be mothers and practice motherhood due to the severity and inhumanity of slave owners towards the black woman.

2.5 The Psych of Black Women

A number of researchers define the psychology of black women by concentrating on certain subjects such as mental health and the self-images of black women. While others focus their attention to the social study of black women's life. In this study, the emphasis is on the psychology of the black mother through such attributes as their uniqueness, identities, socioeconomic states, ethnicity, context and culture. More precisely, the psychology of the black mother is studied through three points of views. These include the quality, quantity, and the multiplicity perspective. As far as qualitative methods are concerned, a new understanding in black women's psychology is raised according to their cultural and contextual sensibility, and to strength of the character of black women against the negative stereotypes which are made for black people. The second way of knowing the psych of black women is using quantitative methods which are used for testing a big sample, replication, and hypothesis exam. Sometimes using these two methods alone is not very useful. In this case using multiplicity methods or the combination of the previous two methods will be better to strength both mythology and lessen the weaken points.

Maya Angelou (1928-2014) describes the condition and the psych of black women when they were first forced into to the United States of America: "black women whose ancestors were brought to the United States beginning in 1619 have lived through conditions of horrible, so bizarre, the women had to reinvent themselves and they know the burden of feminine sensibilities suffocated by masculine responsibilities." (1989: 8). So the black women have their own perspective on special subjects like motherhood, humanity, womanhood, and blackness.

Indeed, black women have multiple identities and any psychological study has to consider issues of ethnicity and culture along with their gender-related factors. As, the experience of black women is intertwined with each other, so one can't study or isolate race from gender and identity or culture. Obviously, racism is the main factor among them, and it has interceded through the correlations of sex, gender,

class, culture, ethnicity and other factors. All these cultural factors have important roles in how a black woman thinks about the events across space and time. On the other hand, important issues appear when the psychologists study the psych of black women through the historic point of view. For example, the sexual abuses to which black women are exposed by white owners have a great impact on the psych of black women especially during the years of slavery. Physical appearance like skin colours, the shape of the nose and lips, and the curly hair of black women all have their effect on the psych of black women. These physical factors play important roles in describing the beauty and self-worth of black women. These are only two examples of socio-historical factors which have great influence on the psychology of African American women.

African American people especially black women have been oppressed in a systematic way and through different levels such as gender, sex, social aspects, and family relationships. All these levels affect the psych of black women. Through the slave trade, black people from Africa enter the United States of America. So, the black female enters under the control of the white male patriarch. In this case, the black women were mistreated by the white people. Patton (1885-1945) explains this:

The period 1820-1860 extolled the cult of true womanhood. Barbara Welter has defined the four cardinal virtues of true womanhood as piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity. These virtues defined what it meant to be a mother, daughter, sister, wife and woman. These qualities were not merely goals to strive for, but necessary components of womanhood: "Without them, no matter whether there was fame, achievement or wealth, all was ashes. With them she was promised happiness and power (2000: 29).

The purpose behind these "virtues" which are mentioned in the above passage, is to underestimate the value of the black women so, they can't be able to identify with anything. Besides, they can't express themselves as they are described as unclean, immoral and impure women. On the other hand, the black women are described as being strong. The strength of black women comes from their bearing of unique oppression from white people for a long time. Hook (1952) asserts that the feminist movement in America from having been unable to save black women from oppressions: "Feminism in the United States has never emerged from the women who are most victimized by sexist oppression; women who are daily beaten down,

mentally, physically, and spiritually—women who are powerless to change their condition in life. They are a silent majority” (2015: 1). This means that the mentality of white women matches the “cult of true womanhood” because they have always seen themselves as above black women. Notably, black women have faced various forms of oppression and historical abuses, and this has caused anxiety and eventually affected their psyches. Psychologically speaking, African American women have suffered numerous mental health problems as a result of frequent sexual victimization. Moreover, black women’s loss of self-esteem and self-confidence is an essential aspect which makes them face all types of stress.

2.6 Black Women’s Identity

According to the Oxford dictionary, the definition of identity is who or what a person is. In the 1980s the African people started to immigrate to the United States of America due to the bad situation in their own countries. People from Africa and the Caribbean are a part of the ethnic and racial transformation of America. Those immigrants have adjusted to their new cultures and new environments in the United States of America, but along the way, they have faced so many obstacles and challenges. Thus, African people in general and black women, in particular, have gone through a band of identity changes which form their self-notion which has been influenced by their skin colour. It is important to study black women’s identity because they are the victims of oppressions, racism, and sexism. Above all, they are trying to form their identity in between two different cultures.

Colonialism has had a great impact on the cultural, history and the identity of black American people and their identity is defined according to the colonizer, therefore it is so difficult to reform the identity after the end of colonization. On the contrary, from the beginning of slavery until the present time, black American culture has a significant place in the history of America. Despite the fact that Black American people have never returned back to Africa again and they lost connection with African culture, there is still the colour of their skin to define their identity. “If people look at you, and you may have a darker tone to your skin. Immediately,

they're not going to ask you if you're African or if you're from Trinidad, they're going to say that you're Black and assume that you're African American” (Jackson, 1999: 80). Significantly, black American women suffer from both racism and sexism, which are both significant elements in forming their identity as women and as black. Furthermore, the capitalist system has forced black women to work full time. There is no doubt that within this racist and capitalist system black women have been oppressed and stereotyped especially during the years of slavery and Jim Crow Era. For decades, these stereotypes have played a great role in defining the identity of black women because these stereotypes can judge black women on their race, skin colour, age, class, and gender. Barbara Christian, one of the black American feminists, defines the word stereotype “as a byproduct of racism, one of the vehicles through which racism tries to reduce the human being to nonhuman level, because stereotype is the very opposite of humaneness” (Christian, *Black feminist criticism: Perspectives on Black women writers*, 1998: 60).

There are many kinds of black women stereotypes, the first type is called Mammy who acts or works as a housekeeper. She does all the house work and takes care of the white woman’s children. The Mammy is one of the most well-known black women’s archetypes. This type of stereotype appears in the south of United States of America during the years of slavery. Generally speaking, the image of the Mammy has been described as a black or dark-skinned, an old age, a kinky hair, a disordered eating, and overweight woman. She has to do a domestic service with long hours of hard working with a little financial income. On the other hand, Mammy is so honest with her employers and she has a little relationship outside her white family (Burrell, 2010: 22). Often times, Mammy is described as the earth-mother, death dealing mother, and self-denying mother who has a superhuman task represented by maternal and nurturing white family children. There are two good and contemporary examples which describe the image on Mammy, one of them is Florida Evans (1935), she is a black mother in TV series called *Good Time*, and the second one is Nell Carter (1948-2003), she works as a housekeeper in a TV show called *Gimme a Break*. The main characters in these two-TV shows have the characteristics of Mammy stereotype. Both of them are very dark in color, very loyal, overweight, and very lively.

Another type of black women archetype is called Jezebel. It is defined as a shameless, nasty, bad, and black woman who uses her body sexually to fulfil her desire. (43). It doesn't look like Mammy in the features of external shape. Jezebel requires an image which must be closer to the standard of the beauty of white women, like the attractive face, small nose, straight hair, and thin lips. During slavery, the African American woman was described as a bitch, and the white males promoted this image to excuse their constant acts of rape and sexual abuse of these women. Moreover, the Jezebel image with the desire for sex doesn't give the African woman the right to fight rape since it is not forced on them. Overall, Jezebel stereotype describes the black woman as over sexualized, aggressive and poor in virtue. An example of Jezebel archetype is *Ally McBeal*, a TV series in which the black female character wears skinny, short and attractive clothes which reveal her legs, waist, and breasts. Thus, African women as libido is always available to satisfy the white men sexually and the blame of this immoral action is easily placed on her shoulders.

The third type of black women stereotype is Sapphire which is one way in which white American people viewed black females. The name Sapphire is derived from the main character of *The Amos 'n Andy*, a TV show which presents the black woman character as always angry, inimical, and offensive. She is the grouchy wife of a roguish and lazy African American man called Kingfish. Unlike the husband, Sapphire and her mother show that they are good supporters and breadwinners for their family. They always show their anger and disrespect towards the husband which is against the cultural norms. Furthermore, the image of the black woman in Sapphire is a practical, strong, and gusty woman and her irresponsible husband is weakened by his dominating wife. Thus, many black men feel that it is so difficult to go alongside with Sapphire image of black women. Another important feature of Sapphire or 'anger black woman' is hating the men because she thinks that she is dehumanized by both black and white men. Besides, the skin colour of Sapphire woman is the darker hue and throughout history, the black colour has a negative sign for this reason "black was the standard of evil, a plight from God and the mark of Ham, Noah's cursed son" (69). A good example of 'anger black women,' according to Madison, is the wife of the United States Ex-president, Michelle Obama, because

she proves that in one of her formal speech when she talks about how she is proud of her country. In addition, she shares her expertise as a black woman and how she revives the bad historical point about racism in the United States of America. (2009: 321). However, some black women use the image of Sapphire as self-protection. They protect themselves from malpractice like discrimination, oppression, and disappointment. They have to resist in order to survive. After all, Sapphire stereotype or 'angry black women' is more powerful than Mammy image who is passive and Jezebel image who is the object of sexual abuse.

A more recent stereotype of the African American woman is that of Welfare Queen. It can be considered as a new copy of breeder woman image during slavery years. The Welfare queen stereotype is described as a poor, uneducated and a single black woman who doesn't have the desire to work. Her only job is to have so many children in order to get benefit from the program of public assistance. (Woodard, 2005: 264). Moreover, at the beginning of the slavery period, slave-holders described black women like beasts and they asked the black women to produce more and more children. The new copy or Welfare archetype, describe the black woman as a breeding animal who wants to live off the state and not have work. Thus, according to these types of stereotypes, the African American identity is realized by the struggle between two different cultures, African and American cultures. The main reason behind this type of conflict is the normal and natural black American personality and the unusual and uncommon influence of American society.

Chapter Three

Motherhood in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye, Sula and Beloved*

3.1 *The Bluest Eye*: A Plot Overview

The Bluest Eye 1970, Morrison's first novel written after the Great Depression in Lorain, Ohio, portrayed the culture of black Americans during the 1930s and 1940s. The actions of the novel start at the beginning of autumn and last

until the end of summer. Claudia Mac Teer, the narrator of the novel is nine years old and lives with her ten years old sister called, Frieda. Claudia is a black young girl, and her life is too difficult because her parents are too busy and she always lacks compassion. The focal character is Pecola Breeslove, an eleven-years old girl, whose life is full of sadness because of living in a broken family (Carrillo, 2008: 54). Pecola becomes the neighbour with Claudia and her sister Frieda in the Mac Teer house. Her father, Cholly is always drunk and beats her mother, Pauline who works hard to change her husband. As a result, both Pecola and her brother Sammy look for a way to escape from their bad reality.

Pecola's only wish is to grow into a beautiful girl with a blond hair and blue eyes since she thinks that if she gains the aesthetic specifications, she will be able to change the world around her and every one will treat her nicely. As a black girl, Pecola has a dark skin, brown eyes and a curly hair and that make her a clear part of the majority of her town people and her classmates usually sneer her for being a black girl. Moreover, Pecola's mother works as a maid in a white family and she spends most of her time there because she loves their life and house and at the same time she despises her own family. Her father is a very unstable man, and he doesn't know how to love his children. To escape this confusion, her father drinks even more. One night, he comes home very drunken and finds Pecola washing the dishes. He rapes her and as a result she becomes pregnant with a child who dies after birth. After the rape, she goes to Soapshd Church, to see a saint who is a healer and a spiritual advisor and asks him for blue eyes. Instead of helping her, the saint attempts to use her as a mean to kill his dog which he hates. When Claudia and Frieda hear the story of Pecola's pregnancy, they pray for her and plant some marigold seeds because they thought that if these seeds grow, Pecola's baby will live. Unfortunately, Pecol's baby dies. As a result, she loses her mind and she becomes insane. Sammy escapes from his dysfunctional family. Cholly is put in jail and both Pecola and Pauline end up insane and helpless.

3. 1.1. Non- Fulfilled Maternity

In *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison presents the strengths and the weaknesses of the institution of motherhood through the two main female characters, namely, Pauline Breedlove and Mrs. MacTeer. She combines such themes as rejection, alienation and detachment to shape their roles as mothers. The novel represents the mother/daughter relationship through depicting the relationships between Pauline Breedlove and her daughter, Pecola paying a special attention to the impact on this relationship of black women's powerlessness and submission in the face of racism and sexual oppression.

Pauline, the main character in the novel, is far from being an ideal mother, that is, she doesn't appreciate the value of maternity and therefore is unable to convey her feelings as a mother to her daughter. This disconnection from her own maternal role and her disability to love and appreciate or identify herself as a black mother. Accordingly, Pecola is victimized both by her own mother as well as the ethnic and social dangers. *The Bluest Eye* defines the effect of the negative character of a black mother and the catastrophe that can result from this mother's disability to immunize her daughter socially. Although Morrison does not show a clear picture of the life of Pauline's childhood and her relationship with her mother, it is clear that she is unable to give her daughter motherly love and care. Furthermore, Pauline mistreats and belittles her daughter and does not even try to fortify her daughter socially. Moreover, Morrison describes Pauline as an unpopular girl and an outsider to her family as she is a disabled girl:

Slight as it was, this deformity explained for her many things that would have been otherwise incomprehensible: why she alone of all the children had no nickname; . . . why no one ever remarked on her food preferences. . . why she never felt at home anywhere, or that she belonged anywhere (Morrison T. , 1970: 89).

Practically Pauline doesn't know her role as a mother. Barbara Turnage shows how Pauline does not know what to do as a mother:

She signals to her daughter that she wishes to take an active role in her daughter's life. She teaches her daughter . . . that she is worthy of love and respect, that she has the right to dream and accomplish her dreams, and that others' opinion of her should be secondary (if at all) to her opinion of herself (Abbey O'Reilly & Abbey, 2000: 175-187).

Obviously, a good mother can easily empower her daughter and make her a self-confident by sharing a positive maternity component. Pauline fails to make such

a connection with her community and with her daughter. She fails to recognize the significance of nurturing her own daughter and instead she passes her daughter the isolation that she has acquired since childhood and that has remained with her throughout her life. Morrison confirms that the decadent maternal cycle leads to isolation and weakness. What is more, Pauline has a loveless husband who also has in turn had a very a difficult childhood. Pauline attempts to overcome her loneliness by building a friendly relationship with her husband, Cholly, instead they keep fighting and getting even farther away from each other. As a result, Pauline's white ma'am asks her to leave him, but Pauline says: "I didn't seem none too bright for a black woman to leave a black man for a white woman." (93)

However, having a child doesn't change anything in the life of this couple. Pauline always thinks that Pecola is "a black ball of hair" (96), and that she will be ugly and the same like her. Similarly, Pecola's birth does not change the attitudes and the life style her father, Cholly, who keeps drinking a lot and remains irresponsible and indifferent both as a husband to Pauline and as a father to Pecola. This unstable situation between Cholly and her wife Pauline leaves their children, Pecola and Sammy in a desperate position. At the same time, the continual fights between the parents lead to a gender-difference in the sense that Sammy as a boy can easily escape and run away from home: "a male privilege, which can be seen in the opposition by which it sustains itself between activity and passivity" (Wood, 2014: 265). On the contrary, Pecola as a passive girl is unable to escape. The only thing she can do is to pray for better life.

Clearly, Pecola's mother doesn't offer her any love and her family problems never come to an end. According to Collins, the main reason behind Pauline's bad behavior towards her children is that; "for far too many black mothers, the demands of providing for children are so demanding that affection must often wait until the basic needs of physical survival are satisfied." (Bell-Scott, 1993: 55). Thus, as a mother, Pauline gives her children the best of her ability, but she fails to offer them the motherly love that they need. What destroys Pecola even more is being raped and impregnated by her own father. So, she suddenly finds herself overwhelmed with motherly emotions that she does not really understand. In other words, love for

Pecola is a queer word, since her mother fails to pass love and emotions to her. As a result, Pecola is always alone and she constantly asks: “what did love feel like? How do grown-ups act when they love each other?” (44)

Pecola, subsequently, receives no love or affection from her family as well as her black community. The only haven for Pecola and the only place she can relax is the upstairs house or the house where the three whores are living in. Clearly these three whores can be considered as surrogated mothers for Pecola. She finds herself very close to them and they treated her in a nice way. Because they are pitched, however, they are unable to change Pecola’s destiny. Morrison explains that, unlike the majority of black women, these whores objectify and exploit men. In other words, men are their victims. This is opposite to Pecola and her mother’s situation, since they are the victims:

These women hated men, all men, without shame, apology, or discrimination. They abused their visitors with a scorn grown mechanical from use. Black men, white men, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, Jews, Poles, whatever-all were inadequate and weak, all came under their jaundiced eyes and were the recipients of their disinterested wrath (43).

The novel depicts other examples of the mother figure; the first one is MacTeer, who is represented as a very kind woman and loving mother dedicating all her time and energy to her family and children. The second example is Girdaline, who, unlike MacTeer, is a cruel, emotionless and cold mother. The third figure of mother in this novel is Cholly’s mother who abandons him in a trash after his birth.

Moreover, a special vision of motherhood is offered in which the emotionless black mother and the negative impact of this mother coldness the mental and physical distraction of the children is described through the mother/daughter bond of Pecola and her mother Pauline. This is a good example of maternal failure or non-fulfilled maternity. Similarly, Morrison gives another example of a kind mother, Mrs. McTeer, who tries to transfer her strength and the knowledge of life to her daughters. She does her best to protect her daughters from their hostile environment. As a result, both Claudia and Frieda are strong and lovely because they have inherited power and strength from their powerful mother. On the contrary, Pauline as a mother is “victimized by her squalid environment,” (Umeh, 1987: 38), and denies her children

and instincts the feelings of fear inside them. Her lives in a constant fear and plans to escape, while her daughter never gets this opportunity. As a result, her daughter, her black color and her ugliness make her reject her life, her daughter and even hate herself.

3.1.2. Black Women as Victims of a Racial Community

In *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison describes the main character Pecola as a black female who is unsatisfied with her own appearances. She thinks that she will only be respected and admired by the people around her if she has blue eyes. Through portraying a number of black female characters, Morrison explains to render such themes as violation, oppression, and discrimination to examine the ugliness (as opposed to Pecola's wish) of a racist community. The novel provides the stories and experiences of black woman as a victim; "Pecola and Pauline fall victim to their failure to transcend the imposing definition of the other's look." (Samuels, 1990: 10-11). According to Hooks, this type of look damages and poisons the identity and the psyche of the black woman:

For black people, the pain of learning that we cannot control our images, how we see ourselves, (if our vision is not decolonized), or how we are seen is so intense that it rends us. It rips and tears at the seams of our efforts to construct self and identity (2015: 74).

The Bluest Eye, furthermore, described the image of the community in the South of America in 1941. Mark Ledbetter defines this period when the black Americans were seen as something ill inside society (1996: 24). Morrison tries to show how racial segregation produces illness and degenerate the social unit in African American societies. So, Morrison asserts that the image of the black female has been destroyed by "the beauty standards of the white cultural." (Mbalia, 2004: 28). Examples of these standards are white skin, blue eyes, and blond hair.

Clearly, the black community wants to fit itself with the white standards of beauty, and they want to be accepted by the white people and this can be considered as a type of racist attitude and identity deconstruction represented in *The Bluest Eye*. The struggle is between the standards of white women's beauty and the

psychological oppression of black females. Similarly, there are so many events and examples in this novel which shows that Pecola as a black female has been suffering from the internal racism. For instance, she is humiliated by a group of black boys at school, and she is the subject of their own pain. Also, she is attacked and humiliated by a wealthy and light-skinned girl called, Maureen Peal. Her last experience is with Soaphead Church who is a religious man. Pecola is victimized by him because he asked her to kill his dog which he does not like. Unfortunately, Pecola does that.

Similarly, Pecola lives in a very neglectful family in which her mother works as a servant in a white family and gives all her love and emotions to the employer's daughter. Her own daughter, Pecola calls her Mrs. Breedlove, while the white girl calls her Polly. More importantly, Pauline scarifies herself for the sake of the white family, she cooks, cleans, tidies the house, and looks after the daughter of the white family and neglecting her own house and her daughter. Another point to consider is that black women in this novel are actually victimized not by the whites, but by the blacks. For instance, when Pecola is rapped by her own drunk father, he justifies his bad action as an attempt to prevent her own daughter from the discrimination of the white people. Cholly's protectiveness as a father changes into madness of her own daughter and she lost her mind. Indeed, all the black women in *The Bluest Eye*, have experience suppression, dependence, and internal racism: Pauline tires her best to achieve the role of a perfect Mammy, Maureen Peal tries to conduct unreal identities. Above all, black women in the novel only aspire and seek (pointlessly) white living style, white freedom, and white beauty.

It is important to mention that *The Bluest Eye*, is based on a conversation that Morrison had with a little schhol girl who expressed her wish to have blue eyes: "I was still wondering about how one learns that. Who told her? Who had looked at her and found her so wanting so small a weight or the beauty scale?" (167). For this reason, Morrison concentrates on the most sensitive creatures in the society, a child and a female. Additionally, Pecola is ugly, and she does not have beauty standards, therefore she is defaced from the human community. Thus, being a female, a black, and a child means a margin person in an already marginalized community.



3.1.3. The Concept of Violence in *The Bluest Eye*

The Bluest Eye represents three interrelated forms of violence against black women: physical, psychological, and sexual violence. In the Breedlove family physical violence is practiced by Cholly against his wife Pauline who constantly fight. Their marriage is obviously not based on love or respect. What Cholly does with his wife is a reflection of what he educated in his own family and treats Pauline as a sex object. In other words, violence and oppression replace love, compassion, and respect in Breedlove's family which exerts a massively negative influence the psychological state of their children:

Cholly picked [Mrs. Breedlove] up and knocked her down with the back of his hand. She fell in a sitting position. He put his foot in her chest. Dropping to his knee, he struck her several times. In the face...his wife ducked...[she] snatched up the round, flat stovetop lid...and struck him two blows (44)

Clearly, the white culture has a great influence on the relationship between Cholly and Pauline. This influence is revealed through the occurrence of violence between them: "The perpetuation of the brutal series of poverty, violence, mistreatment, and fatherlessness that are transferred, like DNA, from generation to generation." In fact, this physical violence between the wife and the husband transports to their children. This can be observed through a practical scene between Pecola and her mother in the white family. When Pecola accidentally pours a pan of blueberry on the floor and burns herself (Carrillo, 2008: 17). Paulina hits her and dismisses her from her master's house. This indicates that Pauline acts with her own daughter in a violent way.

Moreover, Pecola is the main victim of physical violence in *The Bluest Eye*, who faces indescribable forms and layers of physical violence, not only by her mother but also by other black people in their own community. This is exemplified by a black boy called Junior who is Pecola's friend at school. He invites Pecola to his house to show her his mother's black cat. All of a sudden, he throws the cat at Pecola's face tearing it very badly. Junior doesn't let her to leave the room and he starts playing with the cat in a cruel way until it is thrown against the window and

slide down on the radiator. So, the cat is killed by Junior, and he blames Pecola for doing it in front of his mother. Junior himself is a victim of physical violence as he grows up with his mother who doesn't love him. Even, she doesn't talk to him and she loves her cat more than Junior. So, Junior doesn't receive love from his mother. Thus, both Pauline and Geraldine are the same, and they are neglecting their children and they are adapted to the white community. More importantly, the lack of love and passion make Junior behave violently against Pecola. "The difference in his mother's behavior to himself and the cat." (80).

Equally important in *The Bluest Eye*, is the description of the numerous example of psychological violence within the black community. For instance, Geraldine is a black woman who hates her blackness. She hates Pecola and always talks with Pecola in a harsh and superior way, but both of them have been obsessed with white beauty standards. Likewise, Geraldine does not like the black community and is not very proud of being black. She likes the white community and always follows the ways of how white people live. For Geraldine, Pecola as a black female represents all the passive characteristics of black women: "get out, you nasty little black bitch. Get out of my house." (72). Geraldine denies her skin color, and she thinks that if she is so close to the white people, she will be superior to the black people with darker skin. Maureen is yet another example of the prevalence of violence within the black women's circles in *The Bluest Eye*. Having a relatively fairer skin than the other girls, Maureen abuses Pecola, Frieda and Claudia, calling them black and ugly: "I am cute, and you ugly, black and ugly black mess. I am cute." (56).

In addition to the depiction of physical and psychological violence, *The Bluest Eye* offer various scenes of sexual violence. It is important, here, to remember that black women have historically been double bound by the sexual oppression practiced by white male slave owners as well as by the black male of their own communities. The novel is presented numerous scenes in which black women are exposed to oppression, discrimination and sexual violence by both white and black men.

Being only eleven years old Pecola's life is full of sadness and trauma especially after being mercilessly raped by Cholly, her father. Significantly, in *The Bluest Eye*, men are used sex as a way for the injustice of women. As manifested through Cholly's action, black men exercise oppression as a reaction to the oppression imposed on them by the white hegemonic powers in America.

Morrison offers a detailed background description of Cholly's childhood and life with his family. Cholly was abandoned by his parent while still an infant and he lived with a caretaker, Aunt Jimmy for some years. Unfortunately, she died early and Cholly had to live with his father, but his father rejected him for the second time: "Tell that bitch she get her money. Now, get the fuck otta my face." (156). The absence of the father figure from Cholly's life has resulted in him being unable to comprehend the meaning of fatherhood and how to be a good father. So, as a reflection of this hard life, he has opened a new miserable chapter in the life of his own daughter. Moreover, through this incident, Morrison shows the inequality between males and females. Cholly uses his power and his masculine characteristics to justify his humiliated action. Pecola is a victim of gender inequality, as the males are used to gain their own pleasure out of the misery of the defenseless woman. On the other hand, Cholly's first sexual adventure is with Darlene whom he knew while living with his caretaker. One day, they go outside for hanging around, and they have intercourse together. Unfortunately, both of them are captured by the white hunters. They are forced to continue their 'work' while being looked at by the white hunters under a flashlight. Since he is unable to direct his anger towards the white hunters, so he directs his hatred towards Darlin: "he cultivated his hatred of Darlin." (137). Clearly, this is the first traumatic sexual experience that Cholly has been forced to undergo. After his release from slavery and from the fear of white masters, his sexual life is all corrupted and he ends up raping his own daughter twice. As a result, she becomes pregnant and after the birth and death of her baby, she loses her mind.

Another significant example of sexual harassment is Henry Washington, a new lessor in MacTeer's house, who an immoral man who has known many prostitutes. Washington attempts to assault Frieda when she is home alone by touch sensitive part of her body like her breasts, "he picked at me, picked at you? You

mean like Soaphead Church? Sort of. He showed her privates at you? Noooo. He touched me.” (99). Frieda explains this bad situation to her sister, Claudia. Knowing about the assault, Frieda’s father immediately expels him from his house as a sort of punishment. Here, Morrison wants to show a big contrast between Pecola’s father who neglects his own daughter and Frieda’s father who protects her own daughter. Whereas the image of the man, particularly, the father, in a family is associated with strength and protection, the black females in this novel are exposed to sexual violence and harassment by the men in their own families.

3.1.4. Black Woman and Discrimination

The attractiveness of any woman mainly depends on her resemblance to European standards of beauty. The Western standards of beauty include the color of the eye, the color of the skin, the blond hair, and a thin nose. Psychologically speaking, lacking these features, black American females have historically been suffered self-hatred and lack of self-admiration. Margaret Burroughs (1915-2010) describes about this type of struggle:

What shall I tell my children who are black? Of what it means to be a captive in this dark skin. What shall I tell my dear ones fruit of my womb, of how beautiful they are where everywhere they are faced with abhorrence of everything that is black...?” (1992: 19).

In 1960, “Black is Beautiful” was established as a movement to fight and erase the negative thoughts about black body features set by white hegemonic power. *The Bluest Eye* is inspired by both this movement and a conversation about beauty standards from Morrison’s childhood memory. Morrison asserts that these standards of beauty have a great influence on the psych of black women. She chooses two characters; one of them is Shirley Temple, who is a TV star with such Western beauty standards as colourful eyes, blond hair and white skin. The other characters are Pecola Breedlove and Claudia who are black and ugly and suffer from the standards of beauty determined by race. All black females want to be like Shirley; a fact that implies the influence and role of films and media in general on the image of the beautiful girls mainly the white neat girls. (Wolf, 2015: 9)

The title of the novel itself, 'Bluest Eye' refers to one of the most significant features or standards of beauty. Morrison shows the image of the black female who is fighting for the sake of beauty standards. For instance, Claudia is one of the black characters in the novel who has the ambition to be beautiful or has a beautiful standard as white women. She doesn't like her friend Maureen because she is white and she is treated in a good way. Indeed, Claudia always seeks to be a beautiful girl, but when she knows that it is impossible to change her body, she becomes upset and she breaks down her white doll.

For Morrison, the destruction of the doll is a symbol for the destruction of the idol of the Western beauty standards. These standards make the black woman look like the socially disabled person. Geraldine in *The Bluest Eye*, is a sample of beauty discrimination, she feels happy when she is far away from black people, as she considers herself as an educated coloured woman. According to colour of skin, Geraldine has divided people into three groups: the niggers, the white, and the colored people. Also, she defines these three types; "colored people are neat and quite 'as they approximate the whiteness' and niggers were dirty and loud." (67). This is very clear from Gerladine's treatment with Pecola, and she always hates and humiliates Pecola because of her dark colored skin.

Pecola is another example of beauty discrimination. She thinks that she is ugly and unwanted by the people around her because she is black. Every night, she prays for having blue eyes and white skin, in order to be lovelier and more acceptable among people. Thus, she suffers from racial standards of beauty, just like her mother, Pauline who suffers from the same thing. On the other hand, the reason behind Pecola's unhealthy desire is that she wants get out of misery.

Additionally, she wants to be happy and so close to the racial standards of beauty "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 would be different." (46). Furthermore, Pecola can realize the big difference between how Maureen with 'the light skin girl' is treated in the school and how she and the other black girls are treated. The teachers, the boys and every one

adore Maureen, because she is beautiful. However, the black woman who has a dark skin colour and a non-colourful eye is called ugly woman. What is more, black women are described as having an inferior quality, while white women are always superior. Through *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison wants to portray the influence of racial beauty on the emotions, the psyche, and the life of the black women. Whereas, Claudia attempts to cut down her white and blue eyes doll. This indicates that not all the black women admire the white beauty standards.

In fact, even nowadays racial beauty has a huge influence on the psych of women in general and they endanger their life for the sake of their outside appearance. Thus, the advantages of racial beauty is more than disadvantageous. Besides, the social media and the media have a big role in stereotyping the image of beauty. So, Morrison concentrates on two important things, the first one is the white concept of beauty which dominates the whole black community. Second, black women lose their identities, as they are internalized the white features of beauty.

3. 2. *Sula*: A Plot Overview

Published in 1973 in New York, Morrison's second novel *Sula* takes place in a small town called Medallion, Ohio in the 1900s. The residents of Medallion are mostly immigrants from Africa and Ireland. It tells the story of a black community known as the Bottom which was turned into a community when a slave master decided to give this piece of a hilly land to a former slave as a gift for achieving some very difficult jobs. In fact, this gift is just a prank because the slave master doesn't want to give the former slave a good piece of land, so he decides to give him a poor hilly land. The white master tries to convince the slave that this land is wealthy and rich. Even so, the black people create a community of lots of families, and they begin to settle in that hill.

Then, the novel moves on to describe Shadrack, one of Bottom's residents who has participated in WWI as a soldier. Shadrack's life is changed after the war during which he gets injured and scares. His constant focus on death leads him to

establish a special mysterious holiday called National Suicide Day. Annually, on June the 3rd, Shadrack encourages the people to kill themselves or kill others. First, the residents of Bottom community are wary of Shadrack, but later they become more familiar with him.

Sula is, above all, a story about motherhood, love, family relationship and friendship. So, in the third chapter, the narrator introduces two other characters in the novel: Nel and her mother Helene. Helene's mother is not able to raise her because she is a prostitute, therefore Helen is raised by her grandmother. Consequently, Helene raised her daughter Nel in a good manner and is very careful to protect Nel from immoral habits. One day, both Nel and her mother Helene go to another city for Helen's grandmother's funeral. During this journey, Nel is shocked to encounter sentiments and acts of racism and also to realize that her mother is, in fact, insecure about her identity and skin colour.

After this realization, Nel decides not to be like her mother for the rest of her life. So, when she comes home from the funeral, she decides to live independently and soon befriends Sula's, the protagonist and character title of the novel. Her family is totally different from Nel's. Sula's mother Hannah has a bad habit which is having sex with most of Bottom's men. Sula has a grandmother called Eva; they live together with three boards who used to be drunk most of the time. Sula's uncle, Plum, who returns back from WWI, is always drunk and his situation is so bad. Therefore, Eva decides to burn him while he is sleeping thinking that he is better off dead.

Consequently, both Sula and Nel become close friends, and they share their significant secrets. During the period of their relationship together, they face a lot of things as; Sula knows that her mother doesn't love her, both Sula and Nel have been involved in the accident of Chicken Little's drowning, Sula's mother burns and dies, Nel and Jude get married, and Sula leaves the Bottom for more than ten years and when she comes back, she makes a sex relationship with Jude. After some years, Sula starts a new affair with a new man called Ajax, but it is for a short period of time and they are separated. After that Sula falls ill and as a result both Nel and Sula

meet again and after Nel leaves her, Sula dies and the people of Bottom community are pleased with her death.



3.2.1. Friendship

A major idea in Morrison's *Sula* is the social relationship between people of the same community which can take different shapes: friends, mothers, and lovers. Sula Peace and Nel Wright, Morrison's two female protagonists share a very beneficial friendship and accept each other as soul mates. They are "Daughters of distant mothers and incomprehensible fathers." (Morrison, 1973: 52). Both do not approve of the actions of their mothers and their relationships with their mothers are not solid. Both also suffer the consequences of the absence of their fathers as Nel's father is always working in the sea and Sula's father is dead.

Despite the similar aspects of their current situation, Sula and Nel come from different families and environments. Sula, for example, lives in an anarchic family in which the female character dominates the house. She used to live with Hannah, her sexually active mother, and her grandmother, Eva. This is opposite to the life and the family of Nel, who lives with a regular family. Nel's mother, Helene is a strict observer, who monitors all her daughter's actions and does not accept any overrides.

Accordingly, both girls live a very lonely life that lacks true love and the warm emotions as well as a detachment from mothers. Both share a friendship that is solidly based on a deep need for collectivity, support and solidarity. They, furthermore, share many incidents that later become memories which they enjoy talking about these memories. For instance, they entertain much by the memory of how Sula moved her finger to intimidate some Irish immigrant boys. So, they spend most of their childhood and adulthood together and at each other's houses.

Different arguments by different critics are rendered regarding the bond between these two female characters and the friendship that develops between them. Beaulieu (1964) explains that Nel and Sula's friendship during their childhood and adolescent years can also be described as an attempt to mother one another (2003: 116). Because Sula and Nel do not get sufficient support and loving care from their families and especially from their mothers, they find for themselves what their mothers are unable to present them. Patricia Hill Collins (1948) also comments on

the humanistic and intimate bonds that develop between black women saying; “African American women as sisters and friends, they affirm one another’s humanity, specialness, and right to exist” (2000: 97). An important manifestation of Patricia’s argument is the friendship between Nel and Sula in which Sula is able to support her friend Nel. Nel flees the harsh and strict roles of her mother and finds consolation in her friendship with Sula to whom she can freely and limitlessly express herself without fearing any cruel judgements. This kind of friendship is a valuable one, since they can easily find each other when they need to.

Due to the intensity of the relationship between Nel and Sula, some critics such as Barbara Smith tend to describe the text as a “lesbian novel. “Smith does not specifically use the term lesbian to describe the sexual orientation of the two female characters, but applies the term lesbian to the text of the novel itself. For Smith this novel is lesbian in the sense that most of the women feel that their sexual pleasure is compelled and not freed by marriage. For instance, Nel can’t believe in sex relationship outside the marriage institutions. It is important that Smith’s idea has been rejected by Morrison because she thinks that this idea destroys concentration on the main them of the novel which is the friendship between Sula and Nel and the black women’s support to each other and she explains; “friendship between women is especial, different, and has never been depicted as the major focus of a novel before *Sula*” (Li, 2010: 46).

Significantly, for Nel, the whole world becomes more interesting and magical with the presence of her friend Sula. She emphasizes their unity and intimacy with her friend Sula during their talks together. (Christian, *Black feminist criticism: Perspectives on Black women writers*, 1998: 169). Yet, both of them have two different ideologies which separate them and they eventually end up choosing different ways of life. For instance, Nel gets married and decides to dedicate her life to her husband Jude and her three children.

Furthermore, the black women in Bottom community have the fear of being alone as explained by Bell Hooks (1952): “the fear of being alone, or being unloved had caused women of all races to passively accept sexism and sexist oppression”

(2015: 184). That is to say that Bottom's black women prefer marriage than being alone. Sula, on the other hand, rejects the idea of being related to and dependent on a man and prefers to plan and lead her life according to her own wishes. After losing her only friend, Sula decides to leave Bottom and start a new life far away from her community. Returning to Bottom ten years later, Sula tries to seduce Nel's husband, Jude. Indeed, Jude likes Sula not because she is so attractive, but because he likes the way she talks and thinks as confirmed by Morrison: "she stirred a man's mind maybe, but not his body." (104). Nel refuses Sula's friendship, and her life is finished; "that was too much, to lose Jude and not have Sula to talk to about it because it was Sula that he had left her for." (110). Nel loses both her husband and her close friend and has nothing else to do but die slowly.

3.2. 2. Mother-Daughter Relationship in *Sula*

As mentioned in Chapter One of the thesis, motherhood is a major theme in Morrison's novels and she presents the concept of maternity differently in different novels. In *Sula*, Morrison depicts the daily life experiences of a community of black mothers and how they have been marginalized and subjugated by the masculine society in which they live. According to Collins: "African American mothers try to protect their daughters from the dangers that lie ahead by offering them a sense of their own unique self-worth" (2000:127). This strong and supportive relationship between mother and daughter, however, cannot be found in *Sula*. Instead of developing an intimate and companionate relationship between mothers and daughters, the novel portrays the ways in which mothers, in an ex-slavery context, create and employ practical and responsible methods to provide their daughters with self-confidence to face different obstacles in life.

Furthermore, the Bottom community is highly sexist and racist and so the mothers and kids share the same understanding of all types of oppressions they are likely to face in their society. Thus, motherhood becomes a very challenging task for black women because they have to work hard in the planting fields and do not have enough time to take care of their children. For instance, the main protagonist in this

novel, Sula has a troubled relationship with her mother Hanna. Hanna's treatment of her own daughter Sula as an adult, not a little girl or a child that needs advice. The result of this type of bond between Sula and her mother is Sula's rude and unbalanced personality as well as her troubled relationship with her family and the whole community.

She is so harsh with her mother, especially when she suddenly hears some of her mother's conversation with one of her friend saying: "sure you her, like I love Sula. I just don't like her." (57). Sula is constantly astonished by her mother's tough words which hurt her a lot. Abbey and O'Reilly refer to this point in their book by saying:

Based on the emotional bond that developed between mother and daughter during the daughter's early years of life, a level of trust was established. That is the daughter develops a level of trust to her mother's ability to soothe and protect her. In her role as mediator, an African mother signals to her daughter that she is willing to serve as a secure base from which her daughter can explore and experience the world. As her daughter's mediator, African American mother also signals to her daughter that she wishes to take an active role in her daughter's life. She teaches her daughter to "stay the course" when times get hard (178).

More importantly, the female characters in Sula like, Eva, Hannah, Nel and Helene are affected by their mothers and their personalities are shaped through the either maternal care neglect. For instance, two examples of mothers in Sula Peace's family; Sula's mother Hannah and Hanna's mother Eva who practice motherhood in two entirely different ways. Eva as a mother gives up a lot of things to prove her love for her children and to ensure the survival of her children. Eva loses one of her legs to collect money for her three children after her husband leaves her. Additionally, she throws herself from the window to save her daughter Hannah from burning. She provides her granddaughter Sula with love and care. Barbara Christian (1943-2000) describes Eva as an example of the Mammy stereotype: "Eva, is as fine an example of the mama who is both sacrifice and sacrifice, as woman who learns to accommodate to life's meanness but only with a vengeance, she is forceful, conniving and intriguing." (Christian, *Black Women Novelists: The Development of a tradition*, 2015: 82)

Thus, in *Sula*, Eva is a model of a sacrifice mother which contrasts with Sula's mother, Hanna between whom a clear estrangement is seen and felt. There is a clear absence of mother/daughter love and warm conversation between Hanna and Sula. Significantly, common topics of discussion between any mother and her daughter are directions to how to behave, how to be polite, how to respect others, how to get dresses and how to face the troubles of life. The relationship between Hanna and Sula lacks any kind of communication and identification as Hanna as a mother doesn't know what her daughter's general preferences in life. An important illustration is when Sula hears a direct conversation between her mother and two friends talking about her children. These two friends ask Hanna if she likes Sula or not? And Sula is shocked to learn that her mother does not love her. These words have a great impact on the psych of Sula. Living in this cold loveless environment, Sula grows up without any clear aim and a solid base to stand on. More importantly, Sula's mother cannot hide her sexual desires and Sula finds her mother practicing sex with different men, "Sula came home from school and found her mother in the bed, curled spoon in the arms of a man, she taught Sula that sex was pleasant and frequent, but otherwise unremarkable." (44). Thus, Sula does not learn the moral values from her mother, and she is affected by her mother's bad behaviour. She tries to imitate her mother's action and gets many lovers in the same time.

The relationship between Nel and her mother Helene is a complete opposite to Sula's relationship to her mother. Helen is an example of a loving and caring mother in the novel. Morrison portrays Helene as a dominant mother who constantly tries to control her daughter and provide one of the most organized houses in the Bottom community. She dedicates her life for her daughter and her house because she is a perfect household. Morrison confirms that Helene: "loved her house and enjoyed manipulating her daughter and her husband." (18). Furthermore, Helene as a mother and as a wife is responsible to give orders to her family within her house and to observe and supervise her daughter Nel. There are, however, a few incidents in the novel where Nel's rebellious character is brought out. For instance, when Helene asks Nel to use a clothespin to make her nose thinner, she answers her mother: "it hurts, Mama, don't you want a nice nose when you grow up?" (55). Nel grows to

become an obedient and a polite girl and marry Jude and later establishes a beautiful family.

The relationship between Nel and her mother is complicated because Helene herself has suffered all her life from the fact that her mother used to work as a prostitute. Helen aims to protect her own daughter Nel from dealing with her bad grandmother and extremely guards her daughter's behavior and movement. A main reason behind Nel's rebellion was the strict control of her mother as manifested in small acts of disapproval in which Nel tries to break free from her mother's rigid grasp when she insists in accompanying her mother in her visit to her sick grandmother in New Orleans against her mother's wish. During the trip, Helene accidentally enters the white people section of the train and is rudely expelled by the white monitor. As a result, Helene apologizes to the monitor and smiles at him and this makes all the black people inside the train and especially Nel disgusted to see a black woman smiling at the white man. Morrison describes Nel's feelings for her mother at this situation by asserting that Nel: "felt both pleased and ashamed to sense that these men, unlike her father, who worshiped his beautiful wife." (22). More importantly, this situation gives Nel the chance to see her mother's weakness and submission and, thus, decides to establish her identity away from her mother. She looks into her mirror and says: "I am not her daughter. I am not. I am me." (28). Later, Nel discovers a new sense of life and identity actualization away from her mother's control in her friendship with Sula.

3.2. 3. The Enslavement of Black Women

The Bottom community in *Sula* is based on a real community in the United States of America and the characters are as described in the novel. Morrison shows the life of black people in Bottom, especially the black female. She ironically calls this piece of land Bottom to show the oppression exerted on the black people during and even after slavery. The story of the Bottom briefly is:

A good white farmer promised freedom and a piece of bottom land to his slave if he would perform some very difficult chores. When the slave completed the work, he asked the farmer to keep his end of the bargain. Freedom was easy— the farmer had

no objection to that. But he didn't want to give up any land. So he told the slave that he was very sorry that he had to give him valley land. He had hoped to give a piece of the Bottom. The slave blinked and said he thought valley land was bottom land. The master said, "Oh, no! See those hills? That's bottom land, rich and fertile." (5).

The white slave owner has left this poor land to African American people and after a few years, the poor valley developed into a large community and the area later witnessed various changes including the establishment of different kinds of business organizations, markets, clothing stores, companies and factories which are owned and run by black people themselves. So, the black people started working very hard to develop their community and some of the white people move to Bottom and started a new life there.

Despite these remarkable improvements, black women in the Bottom community continued to suffer from an intersectional system of oppression; racial, class and sex oppression. Hooks expresses this saying: "sexism and racism intensified and magnified the suffering and oppression of black women." (2015: 22). *Sula* is a true reflection of the reality of the life of black people in the United States of America. For instance, the black male characters in Bottom are jobless, poor and emasculate and the female characters are much better in terms of their devotion to the improvement of the family circumstances. Women in the Bottom community are successful, brave, and caring for their children as illustrated by Eva who becomes the head of her family after being abandoned by her husband and later suffers from very hard economic circumstances.

Representing the suffering of black women from different perspective and under more than one force, *Sula* has been endowed a political dimension because it not only represents the historical oppression of a black community but also deals with a number significant issues such as the harassment of Irish immigrants to the black Americans, white supremacy and the racial sources of discriminations that involves in everyday life of the black people in Bottom. This can be seen when the white people try to deprive the black community from their own rights to own the lands or even their rights to work the jobs they like during slavery years or even after slavery. One of the good examples in this novel which shows the supremacy of white Americans is clear with Jude, Nel's husband. He works as a waiter and decides to

change his job and works in the New River Road building, but he cannot because of his skin colour. According to white ideology, the black workers are not suitable to hire for jobs. The only job that is suitable for the black males and females is to be slaves through doing the hardest work on the plantation fields or raising the white children. Conversely, they don't get any economic gains or worthy payments. According to Morrison, things become much better in 1965: "you could go downtown and see colored people working in the dime store behind the counters" (163).

Another example of the continuity of the racist discourse following the abolition of slavery is Nel's trip with her mother to New Orleans. When Nel's mother accidentally enters the white people section and she receives an impolite attitude from the white conductor. This shows how black Americans live in a racial and discriminating society. Moreover, slavery makes black women, and men suffer a lot from the hardships of slavery and the hard work on the plantations and after the abolition of slavery, black women were restricted to the house. Even after slavery, the black women had to work according to the standards defined by their own masters.

In the novel, Sula is depicted as an immoral girl, and people in Bottom community call her a bitch, a witch or even a roach and this is why Sula decides to leave Bottom for ten years. Coming back, people can see she is even worse than before, worse than her mother Hanna. Thus, through the character of Sula, Morrison wants to tell the whole world that the socio-economic influences of slavery lingered on long after its formal political abolition. Despite this, people in the Bottom are hopeful as to the oppression imposed on black people, such a kind of hope make them "kept them picking beans for other farmers; kept them from finally leaving as they talked of doing; kept them knee-deep in other people's dirt; kept them excited about other people's wars; kept them solicitous of White people's children." (160). Furthermore, another good example of the effect of slavery in Bottom community is the character of Shadrack. He returns from the war as a mad person as he has lost his mind in the war. Similarly, he contrives a certain day called a National Suicide Day. Through the character of Shadrack, Morrison wants to tell the whole world that

slavery is a slow death imposed on most of the African American people by the whites.

3.2. 4. The Feminist Conflict between Good and Evil

Sula is a perfect illustration of Morrison's depiction of the theme of mother/daughter relationship as well as the friendship between the protagonist of this story, Sula and her friend, Nel. Although Nel and Sula are two different characters, sometimes they act as if they are the same. Here the main question is to what extent Sula is considered as an evil person and Nel a good person? Morrison tries to describe these two opposite characters as related and equal to each other. For Morrison "being good to somebody is just like being mean to somebody." (145)

The worst depiction of black women's improper behaviour is Eva's act when she pours gasoline over her own son Plum and burns him, as he returns back from the World War I as a psychologically damaged person and starts stealing money from his mother to buy drugs and alcohol. Eva wants to protect herself from her son's harassment and continuous dependence on her and relieves this bad situation and his pain by burning him. Another example about the intersection of good and evil in the novel is the burning of Sula's mother to death in the backyard of their house. Sula watches her mother in silence and without any reaction after hearing her mother telling some of her friends that she does not really love Sula and her actions. These words have a great effect on the psych of Sula.

One more example of the concoction of good and evil is the incident of Chicken Little. Both Sula and Nel are guilty in killing the Chicken Little because one of them throws him into the river and the other one is watching that. With this incident, it is difficult to defend their action, but the death of Chicken Little discovers the one who inherently good and the person who is inherently evil. Thus, according to this incident, the two characters are classified according to these two themes. Sula thinks that she is responsible for the death of the Chicken Little, so she has the evil characteristic. On the other hands, Nel attempts to prevent Chicken Little from death, so she has the good characteristic. Similarly, at the end of the novel, after Sula

returns back to Bottom, she tries to seduce Nel's husband. Here, it is difficult to say that Sula represents evil action, because she justifies her action to save Nel from a hard life. Likewise, Nel asks Sula "what about me? Why would you take him if you didn't love him? I was good to you." (144) Furthermore, Sula has a curiosity to know who is good, and she says "how do you know. About who was good. How do you know it was you? May be it was me." (146)

3.3. Beloved: A Plot Overview

Published in 1987, *Beloved*, which is one of the most significant novels by the contemporary African American writer, Toni Morrison, is based on a true story of a slave called Margaret Garner who kills her only daughter to protect her from enslavement. *Beloved* tells the story of Sethe, a slave woman who kills her daughter for the same reason. The novel begins by portraying the house at 124 Bluestone Road in a Black American neighbourhood in 1873 outside of Cincinnati, Ohio, after the Civil War, where Sethe, a former slave, her daughter Denver, her two sons Howard and Buglar and their grandmother called Baby Shuggs live. The house is haunted by the ghost of Sethe's one-year old daughter, who died eighteen years ago. The two sons decide to leave the house because they are constantly frightened of the haunting ghost. The grandmother Baby Shuggs, who had eight children, four of which were taken far away from her as slaves, passed away shortly after the boys' departure.

Sethe and Denver live alone at 124 until the arrival of Paul D, a former slave who used to live at Sweet Home, the same plantation where Sethe and her husband Hall lived and worked. Sethe and Paul D, who share many old and painful memories, start a new life and are surprised by the sudden arrival of a girl, appears and calls herself 'Beloved,' who claims to have run away and has nowhere to go. They host her and give her a room in their house to live.

After a very short time, both Sethe and Denver become obsessed with Beloved, who ignores and even hates Paul D's presence who chooses to leave 124 house, and resides in the local church's basement. Having more time to spend with Beloved, Sethe discovers that she is the ghost of her baby girl. Sethe starts a life of

complete devotion to Beloved in an attempt to compensate her and at the same time explain and justify for her horrible act of murder. One day, Beloved goes to the cold house, the place where Paul D lives. she seduces him, and they have a sex relationship. After that, Paul D feels guilty, and he tries to tell Sethe about what happened between him and Beloved, but he can't. He just tells Sethe one thing that he wants them to have a baby and Sethe feels happy and asks him to come again to her house to live together in the room upstairs.

A few days later, Stamp Paid, who helped Sethe get away from Sweet Home shows Paul D an article with Sethe's picture cut from a newspaper. This article tells the story of Sethe's arrest following her murder of one of her daughter. Paul D is astonished by this bad news, and he goes directly to Sethe to confront her with that piece of newspaper.

This incident brings back to Sethe's mind all the fearful and painful memories of her past life. She remembers how four men, her master named schoolteacher, a slave catcher, one nephew, and a sheriff came to her house on Bluestone Road. They found Sethe holding a child covered with blood on her chest and she holds her other infant baby by the feet in the other hand. It seems that she has killed her two-years daughter and is trying to kill the infant by a handsaw, when the Stamp Paid runs through the door behind them and takes the infant from Sethe.

Thus, for this bad crime, she is arrested, and her kids are not taken away as the slave owners thought her kids would be equally insensible. Sethe, who does not deny what is written in the newspaper, explains and excuses her bad act to Paul D, telling him that she loved her children so much that she was trying wanted to protect them from evils of enslavement. Immediately, Paul D realizes that he can't live with Sethe after knowing this and leaves the house. After the second departure of Paul D, Sethe becomes even more obsessed with Beloved and leaves her job at the restaurant in order to achieve all Beloved requests.

Soon after this, Denver grows very concerned for Sethe's deteriorating health and so decides to leave the house for the first time and goes directly to her former teacher Lady Johns to ask for help. A group of women organize themselves under the

leadership of Ella, who is working on the Underground Railroad and go to 124 to attempt to drive out the spirit of Beloved's ghost forcing the ghost to leave the house. At the end of the story, Paul D returns back to Sethe when he knows what has happened to her. He enters 124 to find Sethe lays in Baby Suggs's bed and she is grieving Beloved's departure. Paul D promises not to leave her alone again and he is ready to help her to heal herself. Finally, Paul D, Denver, and Sethe live together, and they attempt to forget the past by looking forward on the future.

3. 3. 1. The Representation of Motherhood

Beloved tells the heart-rending story of a group of slaves and all the forms of violence and oppression imposed on them in America. It represents the important relationship between a mother and her children and the way this relationship is inflicted with oppression and subjugation practiced by slave owners and sentiments of fear and pain in the part of the slaves. The concept of motherhood as portrayed in *Beloved* is approached in terms of the context of slavery. According to Terry Paul, motherhood and slavery are wrapped up, that is, both have a historical interrelated relationship in the African American context. He explains how the mother can be easily enthralled by her daughter and vice versa. Obviously, Sethe as a woman and a mother in the cruel world of enslavement has to go through massive distress and hardships. She suffers various forms of physical and psychological violence. For instance, during pregnancy, she is abused and discriminated against. After pregnancy, she has to give birth to her own child and is obliged to kill her child for the sake of saving her from the oppression and the mistreatment of the slaveholders. The journey of struggle and hardships doesn't stop here for Sethe as a black woman, but the inner struggle lives within her the rest of her life and she suffers severe mental and psychological breaks down. This is so clear when the ghost of her daughter starts haunting her, although she is changing the place of her residency. Indeed, Sethe suffers from slavery twice, firstly, she as a black woman is a slave for white owners. Secondly, Sethe as a mother is enslaved by her daughter. Even though Sethe tells Paul D about her unlimited love for her children and says:

I was big, Paul D, and deep and wide and when I stretched out my arms all my children could get in between. I was that wide. Look like I loved em more after I got here. Or maybe I couldn't love em proper in Kentucky because they wasn't mine to love. But when I got here, when I jumped down off that wagon-there wasn't nobody in the world I couldn't love if I wanted to. You know what I mean? (Morrison, *Beloved*, 1087: 190)

Indeed, Sethe, like any mother, always wants what is better for her children. She usually remembers her mother and how she was not allowed to stay with her mother because her mother was not allowed to take care of her and nurse her. Sethe doesn't know her mother very well, and somebody tells her that she is the only child that her mother could not give up. As Sethe is growing up with white owner's children, she remembers how she has felt hungry and cried for a little milk. For this reason, Sethe always shows her worried feelings to Paul D for not having enough milk to feed all her children. Thus, Sethe shows up her deep critical situation. On one hand, she expresses her deep love for her children and on the other hand, shows her fear for their future and her inability to take care of her children. However, slave children have very little opportunities to survive, either they are killed by their parents unintentionally or they die out of poverty. Here, the mothers are responsible for eliminating their children without giving them the chance to decide for themselves.

Similarly, *Beloved* can be studied from the other characters' points of view. Each character in this novel has his/her own story and he/she has suffered a lot during the years of slavery. As far as Sethe is concerned, she is the protagonist of the novel and there is a lot of information concerning the dark side of her life. *Beloved* also introduces other slaves in the novel who have their own courses of slavery.

One of these characters is Baby Suggs who has been a slave for a very long time and suffers a lot in her life. Despite her suffering, she is used to be the model woman who represents resistance, courage, determination and selflessness. She has a great impact on people around her, and she teaches them how to love themselves. Even after Baby Suggs's death, people used to imitate her and help each other. For instance, people provide Denver with food when her family go through bad circumstances.

Paul D is another character who is a former slave in Sweet Home, the same plantation as Sethe and the story of *Beloved* starts with his return back after many years. Morrison portrays Paul D as person who acts in a dual manner. On one hand, he uses physical violence against the ghost of Sethe's daughter and on the other, he provides Sethe with love and kindness. Looking at Sethe's mother's body, Paul D can the remains of both violence slavery and motherhood (Mayfield, 2012: 22). However, Morrison refuses to show the weakness of motherhood in *Beloved*. This is clear when Paul D, who is obsessed with manhood, tries to ask Beloved to be pregnant after having a sex relationship with her, but she refuses as well as Sethe. Sethe doesn't want to go through the experience of motherhood again. "Needing to be good enough, alert enough, strong enough, that caring again. Having to stay alive just that much longer. O Lord, deliver me. Unless carefree, motherlove was a killer." (Caesar, 1994: 111-120)

Nevertheless, Sethe is not entirely emotionally devastated at the death of her daughter, that is, she is still able to love. The killing of her daughter doesn't mean that Sethe is free from emotion. This is clear from her speech with Paul D about her children and how she loves all of them. She is ready to do anything for them. For instance, when Sethe knows that the ghost of her daughter is coming back in the shape of a human being, she is extremely happy and she is ready to do whatever her daughter asks her to do. Sethe sacrifices herself for the sake of her daughter's ghost so that she does not leave her again.

3.3.2. Physical Oppression

The oppression of black people starts the minute they are forced out of their native countries and taken on the slave ships and continues throughout their enslavement. One major aim behind this oppression by the white slave owners and holders has been to maintain the control of the slaves. Slave arriving into America

were treated very badly and exposed to various forms and layers of psychological, physical and mental oppression. The slave women were even more oppressed on the grounds of race and gender. Eventually, the slave owners started to employ different methods of punishment and torture against the black people to prevent them from making any unity or demonstration against the white owners. Furthermore, black people were subjected to different kinds of physical oppression and the way oppression was practiced differed from one slave owner to another.

Throughout the novel, Morrison shows some of the forms of physical oppression practiced against the black male and female. Chokecherry tree is a good example given by Morrison to describe the scars on Sethe's back because of the corporal punishment which she faces during slavery years. Indeed, flogging was one of the distinctive ways in which corporal punishment was exercised by slave owners to torture black slaves. Some slaves were known by the number of scars on their bodies which later became defining features of their bodies. Usually, the advertisements of slaves for sales were determined by the number of scars on their body (Walvin, 2011: 59). For instance, a white girl called Amy sees Sethe while she is escaping from Kentucky plantation with the scars still wet on her back. Amy is shocked from this bad view. She says, "I've never seen it and never will. But that's what she said it looked like. A chokecherry tree. Trunk, branches, and even leaves. Tiny little chokecherry leaves. But that was eighteen years ago. Cough have cherries too now for all I know." (16). Discussing the ideology behind the cruel treatment of white slave holders, Margret Atwood asserts that the bad acts towards the black slaves became "a paradigm of how most people behave when they are given absolute power over other people." (Bloom, 1999: 50).

However, Sethe is not the only character who suffers from the bad treatment of white owners, Paul D and the other slaves who used to work in Sweet Home suffer from sever whipping, cruel and inhuman treatment and humiliation. Paul D, for instance, is punished and sentenced because he tries to kill his white owner. Morrison describes the life of Paul D and other forty-six black prisoners in the jail and how they are treated with cruelty by putting them in boxes dug on the wall and "squatted in muddy water, slept above it, peed in it." (126-127). Moreover, male and female

slaves have to go through different types of physical oppressions as whipping, beating, raping, burning and killing. All these types of severing punishments are shown in the novel in order to show the barbarity of white people towards the black slaves during the years of slavery. Thus, all the characters in *Beloved* are former slaves who have experienced departure from family and friends, torture, iron bits, underground jail, and chains, while the white boys are breastfeeding from pregnant black women.

Through the portrayal of the oppression imposed on the slaves, Morrison attempts to define African society and the life of black people who lived and underwent most unusual experiences. For instance, the readers of *Beloved* as well as Sethe don't have enough information about Sethe's parents. Her mother suffers from physical oppression during slavery, and she is forced to leave the rice fields in the south of Carolina to another plantation. Sethe meets her mother once, during an unexpected visit to the Sweet Home. Her mother tells her that there is a sign under her left breast, in case she is burnt or executed so that Sethe could recognize her. Indeed, this sign is the evidence of physical oppression practiced against black mothers during the years of slavery. After that, Sethe attends the mass murder of a group of black people or slaves and she thinks that maybe her mother is one of those who were burnt or killed. Thus, the image of mother in Sethe's mind is associated with death.

3.3. 3. Psychological Oppression

Morrison's fifth novel, *Beloved* framed thematically and structurally after the classic African American slave narrative not only tells the story of Sethe, the main character but the stories of many black slaves and their experiences of slavery. It is the story of all the slaves who worked together in Mr. Garner's Sweet Home plantation. Anderws notes that in *Beloved* "Morrison constructs a parallel between the individual processes of psychological recovery and a historical or national process." (2006: 107). The idea of the relationship between the two processes of the individual recovery and the historical collective recovery is further demonstrated by Sethe when she describes the complexity of her 'rememorizes' to Denver and her disbelief in time:

It's so hard for me to believe in [time]. Some things go. Pass on. Some things just stay. I used to think it was my rememory. You know. Some things you forget. Other things you never do. But it's not. Places, places are still there. If a house burns down, it's gone, but the place—the picture of it—stays, and not just in my rememory, but out there in the world ... I mean, even if I don't think it, even if I die, the picture of what I did, or knew, or saw is still there. Right in the place where it happened. (Morrison, *Beloved*, 1087: 43)

Remembering past events and trying to reconcile with their pains, is a frequent theme in many of the postmodern narratives, in particular narratives that attempt to depict forgotten personal and collective histories. With the development of psychological studies and their wide introduction into contemporary fiction, many writers start using concepts such as re-memory and repressed memory in order to help characters trapped in past memories transform into a healthier present with a hope for a brighter future. In "Deep Memory Process and the Healing of Trauma," Roger J. Woolger and Andy Tomlinson claim that deep memory process can be divided into three levels of engagement with the psych. The first step commences through accessing traumatic residues—what remains from the memories in the mind. The second step is a somato-emotional release (catharsis or healing process), while the third step involves a re-integration of lost fragments of the traumatized self. (Roger, 2003: 5).

This psychological argument can easily be found in *Beloved* as Morrison tries to bring and re-locate her characters into the present. The conflict between re-memory and forgetting is very powerful and the struggle to reconcile forgetting and re-telling creates the possibility of healing. Morrison attempts to challenge the idea that untold stories should remain buried. Depicting the unspeakable horrors of slavery and the suffering of the black people, Morrison's process is, as suggested by Laurie Vickory in "Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction," to "recover the silenced voices and experiences of African Americans by re-creating the struggle to show the cruelty of slavery as well as the largely unacknowledged trauma of racism." (2002: 8-9). Therefore, Sethe not only claims her own history but the history of her people. The repression of her fearful memories makes her unable to move on to the future because she is disconnected from the past life. Without reconciliation with this past and the retelling of its memories, she will be trapped in the circle of the harsh past, seeing no hope of creating a positive future. Sethe, struggles to acknowledge and confront darkness and complexity to find the power that will free her from the past through revealing its memories.

Psychologically speaking, the behaviour of Beloved in this novel can be explained according to Oedipal Complex theory. This is a Freudian psychoanalytic theory which concentrates on the libidinal feelings of a child toward one of his/her parents who have the opposite sex and the child's jealous feeling toward one of his/her parents who have the same sex. Similarly, Beloved tries to compete with Paul D for Sethe. She, as a daughter, tries to have a sex with Paul D in order to overpower and drive him away. Bernadette Hawkes describes this theory according to Beloved's behaviour in her essay "Beloved, Mothering and Psychotherapy:"

When Beloved is killed there was no one in the role of father figure. On her return Paul D is in the place of the father she hardly knew. Beloved does not accept Paul D, she resents him as Sethe is obviously very interested in him. After all, like a real mother and father figure they have a life and a sexual relationship that Beloved cannot be part of. When she realizes this she becomes extremely envious. A child's feelings with regard to the 'oedipal scene' can be very strong, perhaps to the point of being murderous. The child wants to keep the mother for him or herself and in order to do this they believe that they must get rid of the father. (1997: 54)

Here, Hawkes tries to describe the behavior of Beloved and how she treats Paul D due to Oedipal Complex theory. The reason behind Beloved's behavior is to draw Sethe's attention and to keep Sethe only for herself.

Likewise, during her life in Sweet Home, Sethe meets with a black woman called Old Nan. This woman appears to be with Sethe's mother on the same slave ship. Nan tells Sethe that she is the only child that her mother does not throw or give up. Sethe always searches for her origin because there is an obvious ambiguity concerning her origins. Additionally, Sethe has another childhood difficult memory concerning the iron bit (horse's bit) which is put in the mouth of the slaves by force. At the middle of the novel, Morrison mentions that Sethe remembers how the same thing is done to her mother as well, "the iron bit clamped on the tongue that had produced that perpetual smile." (240) The meaning of Sethe's mother's smile in this context is indicated as "to smile is to know what it meant to be a slave." (Iyasere, 2000: 64)

An essential point to consider is the personification of Beloved's ghost. At the beginning of the story, Morrison describes her as a murdered baby who is chasing her mother and family. At the middle of the story, she appears as a young girl called Beloved. Morrison's purpose behind this psychic phenomenon is to show the energy of victims who are born from the institution of slavery. The story of Beloved is not a historical narrative, nor a product of memory. It is more like self-creativity. For instance, talking to Sethe Paul D describes the physical oppression against the black people and the feelings of humiliation it creates within their psyche:

I wasn't even thinking about the bit. Just Halle and before him Sixo, but when I saw Mister I knew it was me too. Not just them, me too. One crazy, one sold, one missing, one burnt and me licking iron with my hands crossed behind me... Mister, he looked so... free. Better than me (86).

As exemplified in the above passage, slaves are humiliated and treated as less than animals. They are totally denied any self-esteem or dignity by slave holders. Accordingly, the most shocking memory that hurts Sethe and affects her psych is the way milk was drawn from her breasts by some white boys while she was pregnant. This incident is copied in her mind. "After I left you, those boys came in there and

took my milk. That's what they came in for. Held me down and took it. Schoolteacher made one open up my back, and when it closed it made a tree. And they took my milk!" (20). However, Sethe and her mother fight slavery in their own way by killing their own children. Both of them have chosen the death to their children, rather than seeing them being tortured or oppressed by white people. Thus, the infanticide is one the methods that explains how slavery has had a great impact on the psych of the black mothers during the years of slavery.

3.3.4. Black Mothers as Slaves

In the inscription of *Beloved*, Morrison writes these words "Sixty Million and more." What she means by these words is that her novel, *Beloved* represents more than sixty millions of black people who were killed or died during the years of slavery. Indeed, those people haven't experienced the magnitude of pain and suffering yet. Obviously, the representation of the institution of slavery has been widely missed in the modern American cultural. Through *Beloved* and almost all her works, Morrison does her best to tell all American people that the past has not ended yet. She tells the history of the black American through the life of black people and their suffering from enslavement during years of slavery. Another essential point is that, through her works, Morrison attempts to make an effective change in the lives of African American people.

Most importantly, the events of *Beloved* starts at the beginning of nineteenth century and tells the story of a slave mother. First of all, Sethe witnesses the death of her mother, and she sees how her mother is hanged by her white master. As a result, she doesn't get any love emotions from her mother. Separation from their own children is one of the bad practices employed by slave owners against black mothers. Sethe, who was given a chance the chance to choose one of the five men working in Sweet Home in Kentucky to be her husband, becomes very concerned about the future of her four children in the face of the bondage of slavery. So, she decides to take her children far away from the oppression of slavery and, unfortunately, ends up

killing one of them. Peter Kolchin (1943), a significant American historian, asserts that that loss of children is a very common phenomenon for black women during slavery:

Good intentions alone proved insufficient to protect slaves against the dictates of economic interest, anger, or plain thoughtlessness; there were simply too many instances when it made sense or was necessary for masters with the best of intentions to separate their slaves. Most slave owners may have disliked the idea of separating their people – and some refused to do so under normal circumstances – but when push came to shove, few put their slaves' happiness above their own self-interest. (2003: 125)

Black mothers faced three types of losses in *Beloved*: death losses, passing losses and sale losses. In *Beloved* we could find examples of the first two types of losses, and a good example of a death loss is the death of Sethe's mother as mentioned above. Furthermore, the death of Sethe's daughter is another example of death loss. She kills her daughter because she doesn't want her to go through the experience of slavery and its horrible conditions. Sethe's mother in law, Baby Suggs is another example of death loss. The slave owners have taken all her children by force. She can no more remember their faces or whether they are still alive or not. "Sad as it was that she did not know where her children were buried or what they looked like if alive." (163).

The second types of losses is passing or estrangement loss. An important illustration of this kind of loss is Sethe's two sons Howard and Buglar who escape home due to the existence of baby ghost in the house. Again, the mother losses her two sons. Moreover, another example of passing loss is when Sethe losses her husband Halle in the Sweet Home. He is arrested by slave owners when he tries to escape with Sethe. Sethe as a slave mother loses her husband due to slavery oppression.

Additionally, black mother's body is always targeted by white males. They are constantly subjected to sexual and physical abuse by white masters and their sons. For instance, in *Beloved*, Morrison shows how Sethe as a black mother has been sexually abused by Schoolteacher's nephew. They attempt to steal Sethe's milk

and flog her while she is pregnant ¹ (Mitchell, 2002: 92). Sethe says: “they held me down and took it. Milk that belonged to my baby. Nan to nurse white babies and me too because Ma’am was in the rice. The little white babies got it first and I got what was left.” (231).

Sethe’s mother also is sexually abused on the slave ship by some persons and merchants for their own pleasure. Thus, she is worried about their children from the brutality of slave owners, and she decides to get rid of all of them except for Sethe. Similarly, black woman’s sexual abuse by white American male is something very normal. Few black families can keep their daughters away from the white male. Black women are obliged to do the sexual relationship with white men, otherwise they will be flogged. Moreover, Sethe is obliged to use her body even after being released from slavery. For instance, when she kills her daughter, she wants to carve her daughter’s grave, but she doesn’t have enough money to pay. So, the inscriber suggests that if she sleeps with him, he will do it for her for free. Thus, the body of the black woman becomes commercial commodities. Some black mothers or women can be easily recognized through a certain sign or mark in their body. This sign is the impact of torture on their bodies and through this sign, black women are seen as commodities.

Beloved concentrates on the private life of black people as slaves and the impact of slavery upon their life. It clarifies the way in which slavery can easily change the black people from the level of being human to the animal level. For instance, Sethe is treated in a brutal way at Sweet Home as if she is an animal and is forced into doing a lot of heavy duties every day like. Moreover, black mothers are forced into having children, because their owners are always thinking of their own personal interests rather than thinking of black mother’s prosperity ² (Stevenson, 1996: 125). Thus, motherhood is a very difficult and dangerous experience for black mothers. They are either forced to kill their children or do abortion to escape from

¹ Angelyn Mitchell, *The Freedom to Remember: Narrative, Slavery, and Gender in Contemporary Black Women’s Fiction* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 92.

² Brenda E. Stevenson, *Life in Black & White: Family and Community in the Slave South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 125.

the brutality of the slave owners. After giving birth to her baby, a black mother, have to breast feed during her working hours or she can ask for help from another slave woman to take care of her baby. In *Beloved*, breast feeding children is related to Nan and Sethe is a Nan in this novel. It is part of her duty to breast-fed both white and black children.

Motherhood in African culture is a very important and sacred part of the life of African people. Moreover, for them, motherhood is highly associated with the concept and the sanctity of the homeland. More importantly, in African culture, maternity is connected with female maturity and a woman becomes mature only when she becomes a mother. In the context of slavery, black women were not given this opportunity due to the dehumanization policies employed by white slave holders. Slave mothers were not allowed any authority over their children or even over themselves. Baby Suggs confirms this point and says: “the nastiness of life was the shock she received upon learning that nobody stopped playing checkers just because the pieces included her children.” (32). For this reason, many black mothers do not want to be so close to their children or surrounded them by compassion, because they believe that by doing this the harm will be less on themselves. On the contrary, Morrison in *Beloved* insists that black mothers often want the best for their children.

3.3. 5. The Justification of Femicide by Slave Mothers

In *Beloved*, Morrison demonstrates that Sethe has killed her daughter to protect her from slavery. The main question here is how can this horrible action be justified? Sethe escapes slavery and flees to the North of America to live with her mother in law, Baby Suggs and her children. When she is, at last, free from slavery, the Schoolteacher, her cruel white master appears one day at their house to take her back to Sweet Home. To save her children life under slavery, Sethe thinks that the only way to fight this horrible man is to kill her children or to “put her babies where

they have be saved.”³ (Mitchell, 2002: 98). Sethe justifies this unimaginable act confirming that it is done under the pressure of certain circumstances.

Through *Beloved*, it is common to find numerous types of resistance to slavery as Morrison attempts to introduce the voice of black mothers to the whole world through the book. Obviously, the black women in America struggled against discrimination and oppression of the institution of slavery. For instance, some black mothers held demonstrations and talked about the slavery institution, while others thought more about infanticide or femicide rather than to be rapped or sexually abused by slave owners.

Most importantly, the ghost of Sethe’s dead daughter that appears suddenly and haunts both Sethe and Denver is a clear manifestation of Morrison’s aim to tell the whole world that slavery still exists. On the other hand, the black male is absent in the family of black American people, so the responsibility of the family has to be laid on the shoulders of the black woman. For this reason, the black woman has to do a lot of duties like running the family and caring for the children especially daughters, because the girl will imitate and learn everything from her mother. The relationship between mother and daughter is a very strong bond in Morrison’s literary works. Obviously, when a baby is born, the mother has a complete control over him/her, but in the case of Sethe, she doesn’t have any control over her baby girl. Sethe is a slave and she knows that the moment she is captured by slave owners; she will lose control over her daughter. In chapter 26 of *Beloved*, Sethe explains how bad things will happen to her if she is captured; “that anybody white could take your whole self for anything that came to mind. Not just work, kill, or maim you, but dirty you” (251)

In her years as a slave, Sethe goes through numerous acts of cruelty and torture including being whipped while pregnant, being milked by the Schoolteacher’s nephew and being forced into having sex with the man who craves her daughter’s name on the tombstone. For all these reasons, she doesn’t want her children to be treated severely like animals. Moreover, Sethe thinks that she already becomes dirty

³ Mitchell, *The Freedom to Remember*, 98.

after her experience as a slave in the Sweet House, but her children are still clean and pure. Therefore, she kills her one-year-old daughter to keep her clean. She commits femicide to protect her children as she tries to explain herself to Paul D by saying: “it’s my job to know what is and to keep [her children] away from what I know is terrible. I did that.” (165) She also adds, “it aint my job to know what’s worse. It’s my job to know what is and to keep them away from what I know is terrible.” (165). However, Paul D refuses and disapproves of Sethe’s act and often says there must have another way to deal with this situation.

In conclusion, in *Beloved* Morrison, justifies the action of Sethe because she thinks that Sethe does that because she loves her children and tries to keep them out of the institution of slavery. However, love is not the main reason behind Sethe’s act. Love is a part of the reason, but fear has more to do with in the case of Sethe’s killing of her baby girl. More importantly, Sethe believes that no person has to love anything too much because one day he will lose that lovely thing. Thus, Sethe feels fear that in the future her children will be tortured, whipped, raped and sexually abused by slave owners. Even if Sethe does not kill her children, she will still feel fear that her children will face all types of discriminations from slavery institution.

3.3. 6. The Identity of Mother

The identity of the mother changes after she loses her child. Sethe in *Beloved* is forcefully deprived of her own daughter. She has different ways of dealing with this loss, as well as the loss of her identity and motherhood conception. Within the relationship between the mother and her child, the emphasis is always on how this mother is taking care of her child. This type of caring responsibility starts very early through the mother’s pregnancy (Brown, 2006: 206).

Furthermore, there is a strong tie between mother and children who can be put in a circular content of identifying through each other’s identity. For this reason, the death of the child destroys and sophisticates the mother’s identity. Thus, Sethe in *Beloved* is able to keep her identity as a mother. She talks to Paul D about this saying: “I don’t care what she is. Grown don’t mean nothing to a mother” (45). So,

the narrator of Morrison's novel is able to transfer all the memories and the thoughts of different characters fluently. (Rimmôn-Qênān, 2011: 77) In this case, the reader is able to identify each character of the story easily. Obviously, Sethe is already hunted by the spirit of her own dead daughter and the notion of motherhood as well as the spirit of her dead baby is never gone. Even Paul D knows the presence of the ghostly child in Sethe's house:

Paul D tied his shoes together, hung them over his shoulder and followed her through the door straight into a pool of red and undulating light that locked him where he stood. "You got company?" he whispered, frowning. "Off and on," said Sethe. "Good God." He backed out the door onto the porch. "What kind of evil you got in here?" "It's not evil, just sad. Come on. Just step through. (8)

Yet Sethe is the only character in this novel who is able to recognize the ghost of her baby child and she considers her own daughter's presence as a part of her daily life. Through this type of recognition, Sethe is able to contain the ghost of her dead baby by utilizing the feelings of motherhood. Subsequently, Sethe practices her job and holds on her identity as a mother. Moreover, Morrison describes the ghost as somebody who has a fluctuating behavior like being sad sometimes and angry other times. A good example about the anger of the baby ghost when she throws the family-dog into the wall. Yet, Sethe is never able to ignore or erase the spirit of her dead daughter. (Chang, 2004: 115) At the same time, Sethe doesn't want to leave the haunted house, and she says: "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 D Garner: it cost too much! Do you hear me?" (15)

However, Sethe is guarantees the freedom of her daughter by killing her and if she has had enough time she would kill the rest of her children and kill herself (Hirsch, 1993: 98). On the contrary, the name of Sethe itself is divided into two parts, Set-he which mean 'Set here' which means she is unwilling to leave her hunted house in order not to be far away from the ghost of her baby-girl. She is ready to bear the anger and the sadness of the ghost to stay with her for a long time. Thus, both of them are responsible for each other's identity through the bond of mother-child (Rimmôn-Qênān, 2011: 68). After the arrival of Paul D, the ghost of the baby- girl returns into the flesh of a woman called beloved. Additionally, in Morrison's novel,

the character of beloved seems envious, and she attempts to obsess Sethe “Sethe was licked, tasted, eaten by Beloved's eyes” (57).

Indeed, Beloved as a character in the novel, attempts to exploit Sethe and she wants something more than just a mother care from Sethe. The real truth in the novel is the troubled and unsettled relationship between the baby ghost, as a black and slave child who loses her black parents and Sethe who is repressed by the great sadness over the killing of her own daughter (House, 1990: 16). Both Sethe and Beloved are not from the same skin or they are not related to each other from the blood. Yet, both of them have a strong bondage through possessing each other. Thus, Beloved always attempts to attract Sethe’s attention. Subsequently, Sethe is devoted her life for the baby-ghost and she lost her job (Horvitz, 1989: 161).

Such Critics as Ashraf H. A. Rushdy, Susan Bowers, Ayesha Irafan, Barbara Hill...etc, examine the novel from a historical perspective, while others regard it as a ghost story. This means that this novel contain more than one theme and all of them describes the life of black mothers during the slavery years. For instance, Margaret Atwood looks at *Beloved* as an honorable work and admires the way in which Morrison presents the character Beloved, because it looks like a puzzle to the reader. They can’t easily distinguish between Beloved as a ghost or as a real human.

Chapter Four

The Representation of Motherhood in Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, and *Beloved*

Unequivocally, Morrison is one of the most influential and celebrated contemporary African American women writers. Morrison’s works portray African Americans: their history and their experiences in the past and in the present. Her works often represent difficult circumstances of African Americans and the dark side of humanity. The way she delivers the stories of individual lives and interweave them with the collective history of African American people gives a clear

understanding and empathy for her characters as well as her people. Her novels are women-centered and revolve around women's lives and trajectories and search for identity. Motherhood, which is a predominant theme in the works of most contemporary African American women writers, is a frequent and recurrent theme in Morrison's novels. Among her works, *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula* and *Beloved* focuses on the portrayal of motherhood in relation to women's sense of identity and resistance to the interlocking system of race, sex and gender oppression. These novels depict the black mother focusing on their problems, struggles and identities.

It is important that Morrison considers motherhood a powerful defining feature of the identity of the black woman. Also, she describes the perplexity of black women maternity in a very unique way. For Morrison, motherhood is a very significant job for black women, but she doesn't restrict the term of motherhood to women's job in the society and to biological maternity. Furthermore, Morrison presents the experience of black mothers both in the contexts of slavery as well as slavery's aftermath in which women continued to suffer growing levels of violence and exploitation. She examines the life of black mothers in American society and in Black American society too showing different types of black mother figures whose actions and behaviours are varied according to their position in both the black community and the American society.

The Bluest Eye, *Beloved*, and *Sula* all offer the figure of typical mother starting from Pauline who takes over the maternal emotions and care from her own children to the white children and as a result she, in a way, eliminates her own daughter's identity. On the contrary, both Sethe and Eve kill their children to rescue them from the difficult and unpleasant situations in life. So, all these mothers represent the ambiguous and the contradictory aspects in the lives of black mothers.

Obviously, the similarities among the three selected novels are occasioned by the three mother-daughter relationships; Pecola/ her mother Pauline, *Sula*/ her mother Hannah and *Beloved*/ her mother Sethe. This mother line or connection between mother and daughter is varied from one novel to another. In *The Bluest Eye* for instance, both Pecola and Pauline have lived a life of inevitable destruction,

shame, and self-hatred because they think they are black and ugly. A number of critics like Rosinsky and Joyce Pettis, have attempted to discuss the reasons behind Pauline and Pecola's seduction by the white people's standards of beauty of more than other characters in the novel. Part of the answer relates to the romantic aspect of their life, and they have the artist eyes and the poet's soul. Also, from the very beginning of Pauline's pregnancy with Pecola, she constantly imagines and prays for a white baby beautiful inside her womb not black one. Unfortunately, the reality is far from what she hopes for, as Pecola have a very dark skin and so Pauline finds her daughter ugly and unworthy of her motherly love and affection: "I knowed she was ugly. Head full of pretty hair, but Lord she was ugly" (Morrison, 1970: 100). Thus, Pauline as a black woman lives in a racial community is unable to mother her own daughter in a good way.

In one of her essays, Rosinsky Natalie (1951) explains that: "Pauline's transformation is a literary manifestation of Rich's observation that power relations between mother and child are often simply a reflection of power relations in patriarchal society." (Davidson, 1980: 282). Pauline's desire to be a powerful person is not expressed through her major job as a mother, but through her minor job as a maid in the Fisher house. She is powerful as a domestic caretaker, but powerless as a mother. Another critic, Joyce Pettis (1946), offers another illustration of Pauline as a mother arguing that: "the nurture of daughters in a patriarchy calls for a strong sense of self-nurture in the mother." (Beaulieu, 2003: 27). Matter of fact, Pauline herself has not been nurtured and cared for by her own mother, so, she cannot nurture and care for her own daughter. On the other hand, Pauline is highly affected by the life aspects of the white community, therefore, she is disconnected from her mother-line, loses her identity, and is unable to love her own children. Thus, Pecola has no mother to protect her and she is the victim of the racial and patriarchal community that totally destroys her.

Importantly, in many occasions in *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison mentions the word kitchen, which is the most important room in the house especially for mothers and her daughters. Morrison emphasizes on mentioning the kitchen because it is like a harbor for all the members of the black family to escape the oppression of their

racial world. Moreover, it is the place where all family members are nourished emotionally and physically. Unfortunately, the kitchen for Pecola is a place of humiliation, abuse, and hatred rather than being a place of nourishment. She is raped by her father, Cholley and beaten by her mother inside the kitchen. Thus, Pecola has no mother to protect her and as a result, she becomes a victim of a racial patriarchal community. Pauline as a mother, fails to practice her main job in life. She perceives of her children as unworthy of her care and love because they are black and ugly and she replaces her own children with white children. Moreover, she prefers to work as a black mammy rather than practicing her real job as a real mother for her own children as Harries argues:

She trades family, culture, and heritage to become an anachronistic mammy, and she recognizes no life beyond that identity. She is incapable of putting into accurate perspective the historical and social forces which cause her to be where she is, for she lacks power of introspection. (2000: 67)

Obviously, it is true that motherhood requires a lot of love, passion, and emotions and there is no doubt that Pauline is a careless mother, but Morrison draws the reader's attention to her childhood background, economical and emotional impoverished, and community's rejection. This is why Pauline is unable to present a real love as a mother to her own children. Karla Holloway (1949) describes the tragedy of Pecola's life saying: "Pecola is raped into silence, bears a dead baby, and scarifies her spirit to illusion and madness." (29). The tragedy of Pecola's life is caused by the bad relationship between the mother and her own daughter. Pauline as a mother suffers from self-disgust or self-hatred and she passes on these negative sentiments to her own daughter. So, her daughter feels inferior, ugly, and unworthy.

Similarly, in *Sula*, Morrison portrays a similar disconnection and estrangement associated with mother/daughter bond. Whereas for Pecola this kind of disconnection appears as a result of being seduced by the standards of white beauty, for Sula, the mother-line disconnection results from a rejection of the values of the ancient properties of motherhood (O'Reilly, 2008: 58). A lot of the critical reception of *Sula* have concentrated on the sentence Hannah tells her daughter: "I love Sula. I just don't like her. That's the difference." (Morrison, 1973: 57). In real life, mothers love their children unconditionally, but sometimes they dislike them for a certain

behaviour. Even Morrison in one of her interviews justifies Hannah's comment and says: "An honest statement at any rate. Hannah was not bitter, and she was not whining. She was reliable, and she was also a little off-center." (Lenz, 1984: 207)

Critics discuss Hannah's comment from her child's point of view confirming that it has a great impact on the psych of Sula. Victoria Middleton (1986) asserts that: "Hannah's candor, helps Sula distinguish herself from her mother, giving her the right to live independently." (Middleton, 1985: 375). She stills asking herself how is it that her mother does not like her and as a reflection of her mother's unusual motherly sentiments, Sula rejects the whole concept of maternity and motherhood. Sula is orphaned twice at the age of twelve, the first time, when she hears her mother's remark and the second time, when her mother's burn to death. Sula tries to show off valuable female standards such as self-reliance and independency. She refuses to be the obedient girl who is controlled by other people in the society and she refuses the black community's traditions concerning woman and marriage. She doesn't want to marry or to have children. Morrison describes her and says: "she is a masculine character. She is adventuresome, she trusts herself, and she is not scared." (Peach, 2000: 53). Critics like Simone de Beauvoir and Naomi Wolf have portrayed Sula as a feminist hero. Despite the fact that Sula doesn't like her mother and kills the ancestor by putting her grandmother away into a home, she follows their style of life. First, she imitates her grandmother, Eve who puts her leg under the train to collect money, Sula "slashed off the tip of her finger," (Morrison, 1973: 54). to frighten a group of boys. On the other hand, Sula imitates her mother in terms of sexual affairs with men. At the start of the story, she has a sex relationship with Ajax and later at the end of the story, she seduces her friend's husband.

More significantly, Sula is not abandoned by her mother like Pauline does in *The Bluest Eye*. She is a self-defined orphan and a self-invented black woman. *Sula* and *The Bluest Eye* confirm the empowerment of black females through the tragedy of the mother-line disconnection. For example, Pauline is highly affected by the model of the white family and the standards of white beauty, therefore she fails to achieve her role as a mother. While Sula rejects her mother and her mother/daughter connection.

In fact, all the mother figures in Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, and *Beloved*, are not passive, but they face too many layers and forms of difficulties in the racial societies in which they live. Poverty and a lack of self-respect in both *Sula* and *The Bluest Eye* and the savage system of slavery in *Beloved*, oblige the black mothers to kill their own children or desert them. Unlike *Sula* and *The Bluest Eye*, *Beloved* depicts slavery and its aftermath. Through *Beloved*, Morrison describes the cruel system of slavery and its power to separate the African American family through selling, torturing, and humiliating its members. Despite being the ghost of Sethe's deceased daughter, the Beloved/Sethe relationship is described as a real relationship between mother and her own daughter. Beloved is Sethe's murdered baby girl and Morrison introduces Beloved as the flesh and blood of her soul's rebirth. Additionally, it is the voice of all black women's stories of motherhood during the years of slavery. Through *Beloved*, Morrison pays attention to how black mothers save their own children through maternal nurturance from the cruel system of slavery and the emotional pains of the racial community and they try their best to heal these wounds.

According to Deborah Horwitz (1968), the ghost of Beloved: "is the haunting symbol of the many beloved generations of mothers and daughters hunted down and stolen from Africa." (Quashie, 2004: 157) Similarly, Brooks Bouson (1946) indicates that in the novel: "the psychic woundedness of those who survived the middle passage and were victimized by slavery" (152). In the novel, Sethe plays two roles; the role of the mother and the role of the daughter. Sethe as a mother believes that mothers bequest good and bad things to the children more than teaching or advising them. For instance, she believes that when a mother loves her daughter, she is in a sense preparing her daughter to love her own children when she becomes a mother. In other words, Sethe realizes that daughters learn how to be mothers through the teaching of the mother line. She fails to be a good mother because she is herself cut off from her mother-line and she emphasizes this idea through her conversation with Paul D:

So there wasn't nobody. To talk to. I mean, who'd know when it was time to chew up a little something and give it to em. Is that what makes the teeth come on out, or

should you wait till the teeth came and then solid food? I wish I'd know more, but, like I say, there wasn't nobody to talk to. (Morrison, 1087: 160)

This means that like Sula, Sethe is a motherless child who is physically and emotionally orphaned. Under the cruel system of slavery, Sethe is separated from her mother when she is only three weeks and as a baby she gets her milk from another black woman. So, her mother has abandoned her as a child and Sethe sometimes recognizes her mother just by her hat. For this reason, Sethe has a metaphoric relationship with her daughter as she is unable to be a daughter to her mother and at the same time, she is unable to be a mother to her daughter. Schapiro (1969) discusses Sethe's situation as a mother and says: "Sethe's mother, deprived of her authentic selfhood, her status as a human subject, cannot provide the recognition and affirmation that her child craves." (1992: 201)

Above all, under the cruel system of slavery, black mothers were not able to properly love and take care of their own children and, hence, children were deprived from basic humanitarian rights. For example, a black mother was rarely able to feed her own children with her own milk. To save their children from the miseries of slavery, some mothers believed that they will be better off dead and, so, decided to end their own children's lives. In a moment of traumatic reaction to the claim of Schoolteacher, her slave-owner, Sethe decides to kill her children rather than allowing them back to live the pains and horrors of slavery that she has experienced throughout her life. She murders her daughter to protect her from harm and deliver her to safety. Infanticide for Sethe is a symbol of preservative love. This is contrast to Pauline in *The Bluest Eye*, who is unable to take care of her own daughter because she is internalized with the beauty standards of white women and the normative discourse of the white family. In both cases Sethe and Pauline as mothers are unable to nurture their own daughters because of the disconnection of the mother/daughter bond.

Sethe and Pauline's behavior stands in a sharp contrast to Eve's murder of her son, Plum, to protect him from the danger of drugs. DeLancey (1663-1741) argues that this act of murder, "must deliver the adult Plum to death in order to save him from the drug addiction that is worse than death itself." (Delancey, 1990:16) So, Eve

kills her son as a symbol of motherlove. Clearly, when any child feels pain or becomes sick, the first thing his/her mother does is to stop this pain. Thus, what Eve does with her son is putting an end to his pain and suffering and she argues that she wants Plum “to die like a man not all scrunched up inside my womb.” (Morrison, 1087: 72). So, both Sethe and Eve are similar in saving their children by taking their lives. At the same time, both mothers feel a real sense of loss and an unlimited grief after their children’s death.

Equally important to the way they suffer as black mothers, women in *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, and *Beloved* suffer indescribable horrors and humiliation both by black men and white men in the contexts in which they live. In a similar manner, all the three novels show the extremely negative impacts of the absence of the man/father from the black family. The women, in these novels, are marginalized, hurt and abandoned by their husbands/fathers. This means that the black male role is absent from the black family. Also, motherhood or practicing the role of mother is a very difficult experience and the absence of a male partner, makes it even more complicated and difficult.

Thus, in all the novels, the family is headed by a single mother. In *The Bluest Eye*, Cholly’s frailty as a father and as a husband, causes the destruction of his daughter and his family. Furthermore, Black community has a good background concerning the stereotype of a perfect motherhood, so being a good mother is very significant for them. Even when black mothers attempt to fulfil their sexual desires, it is more for getting protection and security than sexual reason, and this is obvious in the case of Sethe with Paul D. During the years of slavery, Sethe has been abused by white men and now she wants to escape emotional entrapment and mental instability by seeking the protection of a black man. So, she finds herself more attracted to Paul D and feels more secure with him. On the other hand, being in a racial society as a heritage of slavery, lead black mothers to have everyday battle against racism.

Moreover, despite contextual differences, mothers in Morrison’s novels face different forms and levels of physical and psychological oppression. For instance, in *The Bluest Eye*, Pecola has been oppressed both physically and psychologically by

her father and her community. She thinks that nobody likes her because of her dark skin. Besides, she is raped by her own father and becomes pregnant, and then she loses her baby and that is driven her to madness. Similarly, Sethe and Eve face numerous kinds of discrimination and oppressions in slavery, which lead them to murder their own children so they do not become victims of the cruel system of slavery. Pauline and Pecola in *The Bluest Eye*, suffer from physical and psychological violence. They are not respected by the people around them because they are ugly, have dark skin, and do not have a white beauty standard.

Clearly, black mothers are unable to pass the knowledge of life, their experiences with racism and their racial environment, and how they have survived the brutalities they have faced to their children. Pauline in *The Bluest Eye*, who is “victimized by her squalid environment,” (Umeh, 1987: 38). Fails as a mother and as a wife and what she transmits to her children are such sentiments as isolation, repudiation, and rejection. While survival for her, “lies in distancing the possible from the impossible and in signing her allegiance to possible.” (Holloway, 1997: 42) Additionally, the oppressive social culture is the main reason behind Sethe and Eve’s infanticide. O’Reilly accepts this point and says:

The infanticide is not, however, an isolated event and thus must be read in the context of sethe’s earlier mothering at Sweet Home and the time she spends with her children at 124....Sethe behaves in the way expected of mothers. She loves her children and strives to ensure their well-being and safety.” (2008: 135)

Another important common point in *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, and *Beloved*, is that Morrison presents two kinds of womanist characters. One of them is the submissive character and the other one is rebellion character. Pecola in *The Bluest Eye* can be considered as a submissive character. Her submissive personality and her tragedy is summarized into four important points: the domination of the white community, the white standards of beauty, lack of self-confidence, and lack of compatible and cohesive family and community. This is contrast to Sula, who is opposite to Pecola and her submissive friend, Nel. She is a rebellious character and she has a high level of self-confidence. Besides, she challenges the norms of African society, but this is something unacceptable in African American society. On the other hand, some feminists have written about the relationship between Sula and Nel

describing it in terms of sexual sentiments, while Morrison proves the opposite. She insists that this strong friendship between Nel and Sula is a kind of fighting towards empowerment in the racial community.

Similarly, in *Beloved*, Morrison, argues another womanist character who is totally different from Sula and Pecola. She talks about the dark time and the cruel system of slavery, while both *Sula* and *The Bluest Eye* deal with the life of black woman after liberation. Through *Beloved*, Morrison attempts to review the past days of slavery years or the history of black people during the years of slavery. The purpose of this revision is to heal or to take care of present and future. Furthermore, in these three novels, Morrison focuses on some forms of women's bonds such as sisterhood, motherhood, and friendship. These bonds help all black women to shape their personalities and they contend against victimization. At the same time, they fight for empowerment in the black community. More importantly, Morrison insists that motherhood is not only biological. For instance, Eve brings so many abandoned black children in her own house to take care of them as a real mother, but in reality she is not their biological mother. Pecola is abandoned by her biological mother, so she finds warm love with the whores who treat Pecola as if they are her mothers. Through these novels Morrison wants to say a message that sometimes the surrogated mother is more loving and affectionate than the biological mother.

Conclusion

Women have been entrusted by God with the task of bearing the weight of an extra body and nurture a premature life for nine months. If there were no mothers to bear children, the world would end at Adam and Eve. Thus, every woman is born with the feelings of motherhood by instinct, and the experience of motherhood is both pleasant and difficult for mothers. In one hand, a mother cannot deny the enormous amount of joy she feels out of motherhood. On the other hand, no mother can deny the number of responsibilities she is vested with through motherhood. For this reason, God has honored women as mothers in all heavenly religions. Obviously, no love could compete with the love of a mother for her kids. At the very beginning of her pregnancy, the mother feeds her child with her blood in the womb, and she scarifies herself to up-bring her child.

Morrison's three novels, *Beloved*, *Sula*, and *The Bluest Eye* deal with the suffering of black mothers and their creativity during the years of slavery. Additionally, the ingenuity of black women enables them to function in inventive ways during the oppressive years they spent in slavery. Thus, they managed to gain strong personalities which helped them having a significant contribution to American literature and culture.

Since the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, black women writers have concentrated on the theme of motherhood and the impact of the white communities on the role of black mothers as sisters, mothers, daughters, and sister and mother surrogates. The African American women writers have fought the notion of motherhood as related privileges, whiteness, and wealth. They have also struggled to change such negative images and stereotypes attached to black women and black mothers as Mammy, Sapphire, and Jezebel... etc. Historically, black women have been the main victims of these negative stereotypes in American literature, as a result of social, political, and economic effects during slavery and its aftermath.

In the three novels selected for analysis here, the black mothers and their children especially the female children, endure various forms and layers of physical

and psychological violence at the hand of white slave-owners and later white community members. For instance, Sethe in *Beloved* kills her own daughter to protect her from the discrimination and oppression of white people. Motherhood means love and passion and female infanticide is something on the contrary of these feelings. Another example of the physical and psychological impact of slavery on the black mothers is Pauline's feelings of hatred towards herself as a black skin mother and her black skinned daughter, Pecola.

Another important point to mention is the way black women are exposed to sexual abuse by both black and white men. In *The Bluest Eye*, Pecola's father, Cholly, abuses her daughter sexually and as a result she becomes pregnant. This is in contrast to all heavenly religions and societies because these relationships lead to wrong production. The same example but in the different way can be seen in *Sula*, when Sula's mother used to have sexual relationship with so many men.

Most people would agree that mothers should accept the limitations of life in order to be able to provide a good nurturing home for their children. This is something difficult for black mothers to do because the notion of motherhood as a role takes on so many dimensions in the African American community. Clearly, black mothers are controlled by white patriarchal social structure, and they are obliged to find some ways to express and define themselves within the limits of being a good mother and wife.

In these three novels, Morrison concentrates on the experience black American people, especially black mother's experience in an unjust community and searching for their lost identity. She describes the hard life of black mothers and how they live horrible stories of physical and sexual abuse, unfulfilled dreams, and violence in a racial society. In fact, the character of mother in these three novels differs from one novel to another, but they still share common features, that the incidents of their life are similar in some aspects and all of them represent the image of the black mother.

Notably, one can easily observe the absence of the father figure in black families most of the time. In *The Bluest Eye*, Cholly, Pecola's father is presented in a

negative way as he is always drunk and beats his wife and children. Instead of providing love and living to her own daughter, he rapes her more than one time. In most black families, the father doesn't show love towards his family and also he is not available to solve or even listen to their problems. Subsequently, the black father thought that his black skin or blackness was the source of his anger, and he used this anger negatively by the people around him.

However, mothers in Morrison's works are sometimes forced to neglect their own children. After birth they leave them stranded, or abandon them after being toddlers, or even kill them. For example, Sethe kills her own daughter in *Beloved* and Cholly's mother in *The Bluest Eye* abandoned him after his birth. Also, Pauline in *The Bluest Eye* and Hanna in *Sula* do not take care of their own daughters. Pecola does not know anything about her body and she does not have the right to make any personal questions to her mother. So, children do not have enough encouragement to question their mothers. Children in the black American society are the real victims of poverty and racial society. Thus, what the parent do to their children matters and they cannot forget that easily.

According to Morrison, motherhood is the most powerful theme in her works. Despite all the bad action that mothers in her novels often do, she, sometimes, justifies their bad acts. Indeed, the sample of the single and surrogated mother is shown in Morrison's most novels. This means that children do not mean the same things to fathers as they do to mothers. Generally speaking, the death of the father does not significantly affect family unity, while the death of the mother causes the disintegration of the family which means that a single mother alone can manage her children and her house. As it has been asserted, a surrogated mother to an orphan or adopted child could easily play the role of mother for these children. So, the surrogated mother mean, the women who provide and protect the role of mothering.

The notion of motherhood is a long-lasting and a significant part of any woman's personality even when her child has died. For instance, Sethe in *Beloved*, she is un able to adapt herself with the loss of her own daughter. As a result, she continues her life in the framework of ghost narrative. Furthermore, there is a kind of

contrast in *Beloved's* story, as Sethe kills her daughter to protect her from the oppression of slavery system. After Beloved's return, both of them can live together far away from the bondage of slavery. Similarly, most of Morrison's characters lose their identity under the effect of slavery system, and this can easily be find within *Beloved's* novel. Sethe is able to beat the system by setting herself free at the end of the story.

During the slavery years, there was a strong relationship between the slave black mother and the society. The enslaved black mother spends most of her life and time as a slave. She does not own herself because her own self is repressed. Slavery system makes the black mothers really thought that even her own body is not her property and she has been robbed from everything. Furthermore, the white boys attempt to steel the milk of black mothers, which is the main substance of her own body and the main food of her little babies.

Another bad feature of slavery system is separating the family members from each other. For instance, the father is always absent because he works outside to provide a living for his children. At the same time, the black mothers is working, and the slave owners always separate her from her children. So, there are numerous kinds of separations between family members and friend and this make the people un able to identify with each other's kin.

To sum up, motherhood is the most difficult job, and it is a new chapter in the life of any woman. It gives women strength and a purpose in life. It is impossible to judge the black mothers as a good or bad character, because the realities of these characters linked with their experience of motherhood under slavery and in its aftermath.

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.....

Hobiler

Reading and searching



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SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ

LİSANSÜSTÜ TEZ ORJİNALLİK RAPORU

Tez Başlığı / Konusu:

TONİ MORRISON'UN ROMANLARINDA ANNELİK VE ANNELİK BAĞLARI

Yukarıda başlığı/konusu belirlenen tez çalışmamın Kapak sayfası, Giriş, Ana bölümler ve Sonuç bölümlerinden oluşan toplam 90 sayfalık kısmına ilişkin,/...../..... tarihinde şahsım/tez danışmanım tarafından Termitin intihal tespit programından aşağıda belirtilen filtreleme uygulanarak alınmış olan orijinallik raporuna göre, tezimin benzerlik oranı % 8 dir.

Uygulanan Filtreler Aşağıda Verilmiştir:

- Kabul ve onay sayfası hariç,
- Teşekkür hariç,
- İçindekiler hariç,
- Simge ve kısaltmalar hariç,
- Gereç ve yöntemler hariç,
- Kaynakça hariç,
- Alıntılar hariç,
- Tezden çıkan yayınlar hariç,
- 7 kelimedenden daha az örtüşme içeren metin kısımları hariç (Limit match size to 7 words)

Yüzüncü Yıl Üniversitesi Lisansüstü Tez Orijinallik Raporu Alınması ve Kullanılmasına İlişkin Yönergeyi İnceledim ve bu yönergede belirtilen azami benzerlik oranlarına göre tez çalışmamın herhangi bir intihal içemediğini; aksinin tespit edileceği muhtemel durumda doğabilecek her türlü hukuki sorumluluğu kabul ettiğimi ve yukarıda vermiş olduğum bilgilerin doğru olduğunu beyan ederim. Gereğini bilgilerinize arz ederim.

...../...../2019
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DANIŞMAN
Doç. Dr. Aydın GÖRMEZ
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ENSTİTÜ ONAYI
UYGUNDUR

Doç. Dr. Bekir KOÇLAR Enstitü Müdürü