T.C.
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SLAVERY VS. ENSLAVEMENT: A BLACK FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF THE SLAVERY IN TONI MORRISON'S BELOVED AND SULA

(MA Dissertation)

Written By: **Özge ALTAY**

İstanbul, 2008

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Written By:
Özge ALTAY

Student Number:
IDEG 2451- 002

Supervised By:
Associate Professor Gönül Bakay

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YEMİN METNİ

Sunduğum Yüksek Lisans Tezimi, Akademik Etik İlkelerine bağlı kalarak, hiç kimseden akademik ilkelere aykırı bir yardım almaksızın bizzat kendimin hazırladığına and içerim. 12/02/2008

Aday: Özge Altay

STATEMENT OF OATH

I hereby declare that I prepared this dissertation in propria persona in full commitment to the academic ethic principles without having any supports incompatible with these academic principles. 12/02/2008

Candidate: Özge Altay

KÖLELİK VS. KÖLELEŞTİRME: TONI MORRISON'IN BELOVED VE SULA ESERLERİNDEKİ KÖLELİK KAVRAMININ SİYAH FEMİNİST ÇÖZÜMLEMESİ

Tezi hazırlayan: Özge Altay

Özet

Bu tez Toni Morrison'ın Beloved ve Sula isimli eserlerinde anlatılan kıta Amerikası köleliğinin nedenleri ve sonuçlarını; Beyaz hegemonyanın Siyah topluluğu köleleştirmesi ve Siyah toplumun da Siyah kadını köleleştirmesi karşılaştırmasını yaparak çözümlemek amacıyla yazılmıştır. Bu karşılaştırma, köleliğin aynı kişiliksizleştirme sürecini takip ederek farklı katmanlarda hangi şekillerde-hem tarihi ve gerçek, hem de sembolik olarak- varlığını sürdürdüğünü göstermek amacındadır. Bu tahlil, bir teori olarak Beyaz egemenliğindeki Batı edebiyat geleneğinden sistematik ve amaçlı olarak dışlanmış siyah kadın kimliğini ve siyah kadın temsiline dair yapılan ırkçı ve seksist çıkarımları yapıbozuma uğratmayı amaç edinen Siyah Feminist edebiyat eleştirisi çerçevesinde yapılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Siyah Feminist Edebiyat Eleştirisi, Siyah Kadın Temsili, Kölelik, Köleleştirme

SLAVERY VS. ENSLAVEMENT: A BLACK FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF THE SLAVERY IN TONI MORRISON'S BELOVED AND SULA

Presented By: Özge Altay

Abstract

This dissertation aims to discuss the reasons and consequences of the black slavery in the continental America through a comparison of the enslavement of the Black people by the White hegemony and the symbolic enslavement of the Black female by her own community as depicted in Beloved and Sula by Toni Morrison. It intends to exhibit how slavery works on different levels-not only historical and factual but also symbolic-while it follows the same pattern in it processes of dehumanization. It presents a Black Feminist evaluation as a theory that aims to deconstruct the racist and sexist implications against the black female voice that is systematically and deliberately omitted and negated in the dominantly White Western literary tradition.

Keywords: Black Feminism, Black Female Voice, Slavery, Enslavement

CONTENTS

What life has taught me
I would like to share with
Those who want to learn...

Until the philosophy which hold one race
Superior and another inferior
Is finally and permanently discredited and abandoned
Everywhere is war, me say war

That until there are no longer first class
And second class citizens of any nation
Until the colour of a man's skin
Is of no more significance than the colour of his eyes
Me say war

That until the basic human rights are equally
Guaranteed to all, without regard to race
Dis a war

That until that day
The dream of lasting peace, world citizenship
Rule of international morality
Will remain in but a fleeting illusion
To be pursued, but never attained
Now everywhere is war, war

And until the ignoble and unhappy regimes
that hold our brothers in Angola, in Mozambique,
South Africa sub-human bondage
Have been toppled, utterly destroyed
Well, everywhere is war, me say war

War in the east, war in the west
War up north, war down south
War, war, rumours of war

And until that day, the African continent
Will not know peace, we Africans will fight
We find it necessary and we know we shall win
As we are confident in the victory

Of good over evil, good over evil, good over evil
Good over evil, good over evil, good over evil

Bob Marley and the Wailers

I. Introduction

> Our silence has been long and deep. In canonical literature, we have always been spoken for. Or we have been spoken to. Or we have appeared as jokes or as flat figures suggesting sensuality. Today we are taking back the narrative, telling our own story. Toni Morrison[i]

1. 1. The Modern Feminist Movement and the Exclusion of Race

Women's movement for equality has always been a movement that permeates political discourse. Eventually feminist literary criticism has been an extension of this broader feminist political movement that primarily seeks to remediate the sexist discrimination and inequalities. Within this context the subject matter of feminist literary criticism centered around revealing masculinist distortions and stereotypes, pointing out to the omitted and marginalized women writers in the male dominated literature and analyzing female creativity, genres, themes and literary traditions.

In her introduction to A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Feminist Literary Criticism, Maggie Humm specifies the four primary concerns of feminist criticism in the field of literary theory. Primarily there appears the need for the analyses and evaluations of the representations of female in the male dominated literary history and texts. Next, she points out to the invisibility of women writers in the literary context and implies that the first duty of the feminist critic should be paying special attention to the marginalized women writers and their texts. Thirdly Humm defines the reader in another framework, in other words, she expects the feminist reader to be more responsive. And finally she maintains that feminist criticism should be charged with new dimensions of political responsibility.

It might be implied that this also reflects the development of feminist theoretical concepts and methods and a way to interrelate many subjects from politics and biology to

psychology and cultural history. These theoretical concepts and the schools of criticism helped the literary and cultural studies by expanding the canon and critiquing the sexist representations and concepts by stressing the importance of gender and sexuality. Therefore feminist literary criticism assigned priority on the discovery and evaluation of the neglected literary works by women authors in order to eliminate the disequilibrium in the existing literary traditions.

However, the modern feminist movement as a whole seemed to speak out principally for the White, middle-class, heterosexual women and eventually this has been the focal point of many major critiques. Even though the women's liberation movement and the civil rights movement in the 1960s and 1970s attained success in many areas including the academia, the majority of criticisms were because of the limitations. Within the theoretical body of knowledge, much were devoted to defining all women's experiences as one-regardless of the differences between race, class and gender. Marry Berry in her Foreword to All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave notes that, "the women's movement and its scholars have been concerned in the main with White women", and only "their needs and concerns" (xv).

George Yancy in his essay titled "Feminism and the Subtext of Whiteness", reflects a critique by Patricia Hill Collins that; upon closer examination; "theories advanced as being universally applicable to women as a group" come along to be greatly limited by the White, middle-class, and Western origins of their proponents. Collins also gives examples regarding the two prominent figures of the feminist critical discourse; she criticizes Nancy Chodorow's legendary work The Reproduction of Mothering (1978) and Carol Gilligan's In a Different Voice (1982) as being studies of "the moral development of women" which "rely heavily on White, middle-class samples" (qtd. in Yancy 156). Although these two works made "the key

contributions" to the development of the feminist critical discourse, they "simultaneously promoted the notion of a woman who is White and middle-class" (Yancy 156).

Within the changing theoretical and critical discourse there appeared to be political differences and conflicts of interest among different groups of women. Women of colour, women from different classes, women of different sexualities, women belonging to different nations have complained that White, middle-class women often end up speaking feminism or for all women even though they tend to represent only their interests. This also induced an inevitable gap in much of the academic theorizing and research in women's studies.

Many academicians from different ethnic groups claimed that one pattern of suppression is that of omission and accused the White mainstream feminism of creating a theory for themselves only and thus omitting different voices. At this point it might be inferred that this is not merely an accusation but a rather a declaration that draws up racist implications. Barbara Smith in her article titled Racism and Women's Studies says that, the reason "racism is a feminist issue" might be explained by "the inherent definition of feminism". She further notes down that, "feminism is the political theory and practice that struggles to free all women", in other words; "women of colour, working-class women, poor women, disabled women, lesbians, old women" as well as the "White economically privileged, heterosexual women". Smith implies that any form of thought less than this vision of complete freedom and emancipation is not feminism, "but merely female self-aggrandizement" (49).

For many critics now, the feminist literary criticism ought to be perceived as a body of perspectives that acknowledges the differences and the different readings. In her introduction to A Reader's guide to Contemporary Feminist Literary Criticism Maggie Humm emphasizes the fact that the feminist literary criticism is bound to be read and evaluated from a radically new perspective of international politics. She also notes that, eventually feminism should be

acknowledged to be in constant flux of change that shapes the readings and understandings of the canon. It might be inferred that the radical change in the international politics of feminist literary criticism that Maggie Humm speaks of, starts with the activism and organization of different groups of women which feel silenced, unrepresented and marginalized in the White mainstream feminism and aim that their voices are heard.

Specifically, among these groups of women, the Black women wished for the forging and articulation of new theory and criticism for themselves only. As mentioned above, the major chunk of the critiques that are directed to the White mainstream feminism consists of the deliberate omissions of different authors from the literary field. The need for such a theoretical context was sourced from the demand to point out to the multiple oppressions lived by women of colour, thinking over, contemplating and specifying their everyday experiences in their own terms.

Now, for many Black academicians in the U.S., the solution rests on canonical revisions. Marry Berry states that practically no attention has been given to "the distinct experiences of Black women" in the education provided in the colleges and universities (xv). The absence of Black authors from the literary canon in the colleges and universities, Black feminist ideas from these and other studies placed them in a much more tenuous position. Eventually, challenging the hegemony of mainstream literary theory on behalf of all women was put at stake. Gloria T. Hull and Barbara Smith also note that merely to use the term "Black women's studies" is an act "charged with political significance" (xvii).

Within such context, it might be implied that the literature of Black women have been considered unimportant to the dominantly White academia and thus excluded from the canon. Such action has certain detrimental effects to the readers as well; Black literature is often perceived as a body of works written with specifically Black audience in mind and thus having no significance for the White reader. Alice Walker in her collection of essays In

Search of Our Mothers' Gardens recounts one incident she experienced when she was asked to give a speech at a certain college in the U.S. She was asked by one of the audience what she considered the major difference between literature by Black and by White Americans. Walker mentioned two books; The Awakening by Kate Chopin and Their Eyes Were Watching God by Zora Neale Hurston. She goes on saying that when she mentioned these two books to her audience, she "was not surprised to learn that only one person, a young Black poet in the first row, had ever heard of Their Eyes Were Watching God". She tells that the book was unknown to her audience primarily because "it was written by a Black woman, whose experience-in love and life- was apparently assumed to be unimportant to the students (and the teachers) of a predominantly White school" (6).

1. 2. Black Feminist Politics

What Black women expected to reveal through their theories was enunciating the excluded issues of interlocking oppressions of race, class and gender. This would not only remonstrate the points which White mainstream feminism left untouched but also would point out to a social and political agenda that is specific to the needs and concerns of Black women. Racial discrimination starting from the mid 1980s, has become a key point in the field, only after that the White mainstream feminist movement pointed out that race is not included in their own agenda. Barbara Christian claims that there are reactionary assertions especially in the way that American academy embraced the critical theory in the 1980's. She also claims that this race for theory marginalized often the Black and/or lesbian women (qtd. in Humm 42).

Furthermore, Hull and Smith maintain that "because of White women's racism and Black men's sexism, there was no room in either era for a serious consideration of the lives of Black women". In the same article, further down Hull and Smith note that "even when" there is a consideration of Black women, "White women usually have not had the capacity to

analyze racial politics and Black culture, and Black men have remained blind or resistant to the implications of sexual politics in Black women's lives" (xxi). In a similar context; in her other article "Towards a Black Feminist Criticism" Barbara Smith implies that the existence, experiences and culture of Black women, and "brutally complex systems of oppression" which form these are in the ""real world" of White and/or male consciousness beneath consideration, invisible, unknown" (157).

What dominated the critiques pointed to the White mainstream literary criticism was the primarily the omission and negation of the Black female voice; Jean Fagan Yellin notes that; Black women's "presence is what is most important". In her essay titled "Afro-American Women, 1800-1910: Excerpts from a Working Bibliography" which is a compilation of excerpts from the working manuscript of a book-length reference tool, Writings By and About Nineteenth-Century Afro-American Women, she draws attention to the reasons of the evident marginalization; "if we are unaware of Black women in nineteenth century America, it is not because they were not here; if we know nothing of their literature and culture, it is not because they left no records. It is because their lives and their work have been profoundly ignored" (221). She also points out to the fact that "both as the producers of culture and as the subjects of the cultural productions of others" Black women's "traces are everywhere" (221). After all, in the order dominated by White men, White women come second, then Black men and finally Black women. As Zora Neale Hurston noted; "De nigger woman is the mule uh de world" (qtd. in Walker 232).

Therefore, starting from the women's rights and antislavery movements of the 19th century to the Black and women's rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s and up to today's contemporary Black feminist activism, Black women have sought a way to have a voice in two centuries of liberation struggle. Patricia Hill Collins notes that "despite the suppression", U.S. Black women have managed to do intellectual work. Sojourner Truth, Anna Julia

Cooper, Ida B. Wells-Barnett, Mary McLeod Bethune, Toni Morrison, bell hooks, Barbara Smith, and African women writers such as Ama Ata Aidoo, Buchi Emecheta, and Ellen Kuzwayo have used their voices to raise important issues that affect Black African women. The gist of the works by these authors led the way from a theoretical framework to the fostering of Black women's activism and thus the theory known as Black feminism (3).

Social theories emerging from and/or on behalf of U.S. Black women and other historically oppressed groups aim to find ways to escape from, survive in, and/or oppose prevailing social and economic injustice. Social theories reflect women's efforts to come to terms with lived experiences within intersecting oppressions of race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, and religion. For African-American women, the knowledge gained at intersecting oppressions of race, class, and gender provides the stimulus for crafting and passing on the subjugated knowledge (Collins 9).

The origin of Black women's studies can be traced back to three major political movements of the twentieth century: The first one is the struggles for the Black liberation, second is the women's liberation movement, which fostered the growth of Black and women's studies, and finally the more recent Black feminist movement which is just beginning to show its strength. All these movements are distinct yet interconnected. The Black movements of the 1950s, '6os and '70s gave rise to new social and political change, not only in the lives of Black people, but for all Americans. Here Hull and Smith note that "women's movement gained inspiration from the Black movement as well as an impetus to organize autonomously both as a result of the demands for all Black organizations and in response to sexual hierarchies in Black-and White-male political groupings". In other words, Black women were also part of that early women's movement as were working-class women of all other races. However, Hull and Smith maintain that, "for many reasons–including the increasing involvement of single, middle class White women (who often had the most time to

devote political work)", the factious campaigns of the White-male dominated media, and "the movement's serious inability to deal with racism"; eventually lead to the reason that "the women's movement became largely apparent and White" (Hull and Smith xx).

At this point, scholars of the field note that, there is an urgent need for a "viable Black feminist movement" that will also "lend its political strength" to the "liberation of Black women" (Hull and Smith xxi). Barbara Smith in her legendary article "Toward a Black Criticism" note that a Black feminist approach to literature "that embodies the realization that the politics of sex as well as the politics of race and class are crucially interlocking factors in the works of Black women writers" is an absolute necessity (159). The politics of Black women's liberation struggle starts with naming themselves. Gloria T. Hull and Barbara Smith put forward four important issues for a consideration of the politics of Black Women's studies:

> (1) the general political situation of Afro-American women and the bearing this has had upon the implementation of Black Women's studies; (2) the relationship of Black women's studies to Black feminist politics and the Black feminist movement; (3) the necessity for Black women's studies to be feminist, radical, and analytical; and (4) the need for teachers of Black women's studies to be aware of [Black women's] problematic political positions in the academy and of the potentially antagonistic conditions under which [they] must work. (xvi)

The intersection of race, class, and gender oppression; the characteristic of U.S. slavery shaped all consequent relationships that women of African descent had within Black American families and communities, with employers, and among one another. It also created the political context for Black women's intellectual work. As a historically oppressed group, U.S. Black women have produced social thought designed to oppose oppression. Not only

does the form assumed by this thought diverge from standard academic theory—it can take the form of poetry, music, essays, and the like—but the purpose of Black women's collective thought is distinctly different (Collins 9).

Barbara Smith, Audre Lorde, Alice Walker, Barbara Christian are concerned with two major questions. The first one is how closely related the Black critic and the writer and the people and the reader, and secondly the relationship between the academic theory and the Black feminist studies. In the same book Maggie Humm further notes down that, Black feminists' literary criticism parallels between creating a literary identity in the middle of racism for the Black writers and developing the careers of Black writers (50, 251).

In the tradition of Black feminism, there appears to be many kinds of themes. Extra literary folk traditions and spiritualism created, and their power to affect the works of Black authors, the meaning of mother/daughter relations, the links of women in the restated relations of Black readers/critics/authors. The Black feminist criticism focuses on Africa's, Afro-America's and Caribbean's history and culture, for example on the energy of oral histories, songs, handicrafts, gardening and the representation of motherhood. From a Black perspective, literature seems to be incorporated with the other social activities and not a high art facility. Writing often creates the grounds on which definitions of starting points can be made. Especially in the late 1980's and 1990's, Black feminism that created the Black aesthetics started to arise on these works Conjuring: Black Women, Fiction and the Literary Tradition (1985) and Wild Woman in the Whirlwind. These works and a lot more seized the lost works of Black women and replaced them back in their places in the history (Humm 49).

Audre Lorde, Barbara Smith, Alice Walker and Barbara Christian emphasize on the important subjects of Black feminism. They reanimate the works that are not canonical and discover methods that are more appropriate for analyzing these works. More importantly, all these critics expand the Black literature to all social arts and African spirituality and question

the traditional literary criticism and literary history. Black studies create background for criticizing the literary means and methods and give a chance to see the differences between especially Black and White literatures and the meaning of White heterosexual academy (Humm 270).

Black feminist thought entails the political awareness of how race, class, and gender work together as interlocking oppressive forces. Audre Lorde notes in her legendary work, Sister Outsider that, "Black Feminism is not White Feminism in Black Face" (60). The focal point of Black feminism is the subjects that have been ignored by the women's movement. Hull and Smith state that in Black women's studies the Black women scholars constituted their agendas so that they can deal with various themes, according to these; the themes included the necessity of "Black feminisms total commitment to the liberation of Black women and it's recognition of Black women as valuable and complex human beings" (xxi).

1. 3. Black Feminism and Life Experience

The placement of Blacks in the community since their arrival to the Americas is a significant issue for the Black activists. One might infer through an objective view of the debates over discrimination and segregation in the U.S. and the academic work dedicated to these issues; that the aftermath of slavery is still existent in the U.S. demography. It is also important that, a full comprehension of the historical details of slavery is essential for any kind of analysis devoted to the understanding of Black writers in the U.S.

It is significant to note that; the ground on which the Black women's intellectual framework was based is marked by the consciousness of over a century of struggle in the U.S. As Patricia Hill Collins also records the vast majority of African-American women were brought to the United States to work as slaves under oppression. Here Collins defines the word oppression as describing "any unjust situation where, systematically and over a long period of time, one group denies another group access to the resources of society" (4). In this

context, race, class, gender, sexuality, nation, age, and ethnicity among others constitute major forms of oppression in the United States. According to writers like bell hooks, the history of these cultural oppressors can be traced back to slavery. Within her book, Ain't I A Woman: Black Women and Feminism, hooks asserts that, " As far back as slavery, White people established a social hierarchy based on race and sex, that ranked White men first, White women second, though sometimes equal to Black men who ranked third, and Black women last" (53).

The concept of Black feminism was brought forth to address the issues that the "White" feminist movement refused to, the issues pertinent to the everyday lives of Black women and women of colour. Black feminist ideologies were forged in resistance to the racism Black women and women of colour experienced in the "White" feminist movement. Black feminist and womanist thought is committed to the liberation of Black women and women of colour from the oppressors of race, class, and gender, encompassing both political cognizance and the action needed to achieve this liberation. Black feminist thought represents multiple state of consciousness, with evolving theories that recognize the resistance movements of the past and their contributions to the foundations of Black feminist and womanist thought in the present and in the future. Finally, the terms of Black feminism celebrate Black women and women of colour, recognizing a history, and validating it as having liberating power.

1. 4. The Significance of Beloved and Sula

Toni Morrison along with Zora Neale Hurston, Alice Walker and Gloria Naylor stands to be one of the Black female voice against the deliberate omission and negation of the Black female from the dominantly White and male literary canon. The presence of their works not only contributes to the constitution of a Black literary canon but also demonstrates an internalized version of the history of the Black women in the continental America. These

works draw attention to the unsung history of the Black women before, during and after the slavery and depict how and in what terms Black women were doubly disadvantaged in a racist and sexist social system. In other words, it might be implied that the insight that dominates the works of these writers is the accurate articulation of the Black female's struggle from a Black female perspective. Black feminist literary criticism renders specific importance to such articulation in two ways: Primarily because it represents the accurate story of the Black female by a Black female writer. Secondly because of the fact that such articulation counteracts the influence of the omission and negation of the Black female voice from the literary canon.

Without doubt, the Black female's struggle that is depicted in the works of these authors finds its roots in the concomitant racist and sexist preconceptions which also dominate the institution of slavery. Either implicit or explicit, the racist and exploitative social system that created the institution of slavery is ever present in the depictions of the Black female. As Patricia Hill Collins suggests in her article "Defining the Black Feminist Thought", this legacy of struggle against the racist and sexist social system is embedded into the stories the female protagonists that are created by these writers[ii].

Both Beloved and Sula present the Black female perspective through deviant female protagonists, each resisting to the racial and sexual oppression in her distinct way. The resistance depicted in these novels forms a significant reaction against the institution of slavery and reveals that the transition of the Black community from enslavement to freedom has never been pain free.

In this context, Beloved and Sula become the necessary Black female voice that critiques and analyzes the slavery, its effects on people, on the Black community as a whole both on a factual and ontological level. This is why both novels yield themselves to a Black Feminist analysis: Such analysis unveils the accurate, objective and unbiased history of the

Black existence in the continental America. It firstly brings about the negated female encounters of the factual slavery and projects the dehumanizing procedure that is employed by the institution of slavery. Secondly, such analysis reveals how slavery perpetuates itself even after the abolition, in other words, it reflects how racism takes in other forms of oppression.

Among many novels by the authors mentioned above, Beloved and Sula stand out as examples that depict the legacy of struggle of the Black female on two distinct yet connected levels. Beloved, being a slave narrative reveals the accurate details of the Black female slave and how race, sex and class work as interlocking sources of oppression, all embodied in the institution of slavery. Therefore Beloved presents a slave narrative that is entirely based on the factual depiction of the ex-slaves' lives and how the Black conscience is influenced by the factual slavery. The slavery in Beloved is in total control of the White dominancy: The slavery entails the enslavement of the Black by the White. The Black community in Beloved is far from being free and forced to stay as slaves.

However, Sula, far from being a slave narrative, deals with the reasons and consequences of slavery on an entirely different level. Sula presents the enslavement of Black women by a formerly enslaved community. The enslavement in question is not the factual slavery in America: It is the enslavement of the female individual by her own community. The Black community in Sula is free yet still racially discriminated against; however the very same community expects the Black female to come to terms with its adopted White standards. While the Blacks as a race gain their freedom in the White hegemony, they are set apart from their Afrocentricity and become ironically enslaved and oppressed by the White standards. Therefore, in the same line as Beloved, Sula reveals how race, sex and class work as interlocking sources of oppression for the Black female even in a free state.

The Black Feminist analyses of these novels also present a critique of the history that is inherent in these works. Such criticism is necessary because the retelling of the underlying history in Beloved and Sula stand as a political opposition to the White writing of history. The omission of the Black female experience of slavery and after require an action that gives political cognizance to the history as having liberating power. It might be inferred that Toni Morrison's fiction is loaded with such political awareness and clearly represent that history of the Black women's existence in the U.S. has been build deliberately according to the White and male supremacy.

The political significance of making of the Black slave in a White racist and supremacist society call for an equally important paradigm; a paradigm that itself has a liberating will and a stimulating power not only for the Black community in a White racist social system but also for Black women in any given sexist community. In this context, Black feminism presents a framework that encompasses the task of evaluating, questioning and criticizing primarily the racist discourse in which the slave is constituted, and secondly the sexist discourse in which the enslavement of the Black women by her own community is attained.

Notes

[i] Qtd. in David Gates. "Keep Your Eyes on the Prize". Newsweek 18 October 1993: 89. See Introduction titled "Toni Morrison: Bearing Witness for the Voiceless" in Solomon O Iyasere and Marla W. Iyasere, eds. Understanding Toni Morrison's Beloved and Sula Selected Essays and Criticisms of the Works by the Nobel Prize-Winning Author. (Troy, NY: Whitston Publishing, 2000) xii.

[ii] Patricia Hill Collins defines the term as one of the core themes of the Black Woman's standpoint. In simple terms, "legacy of struggle" entails that throughout the history of the U.S. White supremacy and male superiority has shaped the existence of the Black women. Black Feminist critic is therefore primarily and automatically confronted with the White and male superiority and has to bear this legacy of struggle in handling his/ her subject matter.

For further details see: Collins, Patricia Hill. "Defining Black Feminist Thought". In: Patricia Hill Collins Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment. (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 19-40.

<http://www.feministezine.com/feminist/modern/Defining-Black-Feminist-Thought.html> (28 Jan. 2007)

II. Slavery

2. 1. A Brief Account of the History of Slavery

Slavery is an institution that is based on human power relations, dominance and submission; therefore it is not surprising to find that it extends back to the ancient world. Without doubt, researching the history of an institution that extends back beyond recorded history and reaches up to today's world is a very hard task to manage. Although its form and nature varied greatly in ancient societies and despite the fact that it persisted through the ages; etymologically the word slave can be traced back to 1300s.[i] The Columbia Encyclopedia entry defines slavery as follows: "institution based on a relationship of dominance and submission, whereby one person owns another and can exact from that person labor or other services". Slavery has been found among groups of low material culture as well as in more highly developed societies such as the Southern United States.[ii]

The beginning of slavery might be ascribed to the warfare and the consequent subjection of one group by another and this is why, the history of slavery extends back to the ancient times. The general belief that the slavery was not common among primitive pastoral groups of people such as nomadic Arabs, seafaring Vikings and hunter Native Americans is contradicted with the findings that domestic and sometimes concubine slavery appeared among these groups even before the development of agricultural economy. There are references to slavery in the ancient Babylonian code of Hammurabi revealing that it seems to be common in the Tigris- Euphrates civilizations and in ancient Persia. Also, in ancient Egypt, it is known that slave labour was used in building pyramids and temples ("Slavery").

Around 1400 B.C. in Greece, slavery was an established institution; slaves were classified according to the labour as domestic slaves, agricultural slaves, and artisans and workers. These slaves were regarded as properties, to be bought and sold, and had no rights in court of law although these slaves were thought to be treated relatively better. In the early

Roman history, similar to the slavery established in Greece, a form of agricultural slavery called estate slavery was in question. This kind of slavery included a landowner having absolute power over a mass number of slaves employed for the agricultural labour. The expansion of the Roman Empire brought forth an increase in the members of the servile class. As with all other imperial states that established its existence on warfare, along with the conquering of new lands, the subjection of new people increased. With the increase of the slave supply; most of the slaves were foreign and they were employed in the theater, in gladiatorial combats and even in prostitution ("Slavery").

Even after the end of the Roman Empire, the Mediterranean pirates continued the custom of enslaving the victims of their raids, and thus the slavery also flourished in the Byzantine Empire and later in the Ottoman Empire. The reason why slavery became a standard institution in most of the Muslim lands is that Islam-like Christianity- accepted slavery. As it was in Roman Empire, in Islamic life, having a large retinue of slaves was largely a sign of wealth. In Muslim lands, the slaves were mostly of African origin and they were used as soldiers, concubines, cooks and entertainers. An important form of Islamic slavery was the eunuch guardians of the harems.

In Western Europe slavery finally largely disappeared except for the use of the slaves in the galleys, until a new form of slavery flourished in the 15th and 16th centuries. The European exploration of the African coast brought forth the exploitation of the Africans living in this continent. Although Africans were brought to Europe, it was not in Europe that African slavery was most profitable but in the Americas. This exploitation of the African as the slave lasted for almost five centuries and marked the definition of New World Slavery. The British, Dutch, French, Spanish and Portuguese, all were engaged in the African slave trade and contributed to the perpetuation of the business in favour of their profits ("Slavery").

2. 2. The Slavery in the Continental America

2. 2. 1. History

Obviously the slave and the institution of slavery can be traced back before the slavery in the Americas began. When the arrival of the Africans in the Americas and the concomitant qualitative change of their presence are taken into consideration the making of the slave gains political significance: obviously the presence of Africans in the Americas could be traced back to a time when the demand for labourers was “colour blind” (Walvin 74).

The history of slavery in the U.S. can be dated back to 1619, when the first groups of Africans and White women came to the American Colonies. As Erlene Stetson cites from Clarke and Harding that, “at first the Africans were not brought as slaves, but as servants under indenture” (71). When the colonizers faced with the problem of cheap and steady labor, they attempted the use of Indian and White indentured servants. It was soon found out that the Indians did not make satisfactory slaves because the Indian men had left that work to the women, while they concentrated on hunting and warfare.

The reality, according to James Walvin, lies in the difference between the “indentured labour” and “slavery” (74): As Clarke and Harding suggest the demand for labour especially in the northern colonies was acquired by indentured labourers (Stetson 71). These indentured labourers were serving for a limited time and usually they were bound for five to seven years. From time to time they were “auctioned like Africans at a later date”. However, different from the Africans, these indentured servants had rights, and their bondage was limited. Around 1650s these indentured labourers, many of which were Irish or Scottish “and therefore low in English social and political esteem” were the ones that met the need for labour mostly in the tobacco industry (Walvin 74).

Although they were called indentured servants, these servants were not slaves and many of them consigned to bondage as punishment or signed themselves in. For many of the

planters, the labour they received was not adequate, they needed more durable labour for longer terms, a labour "that could be managed more intrusively, that could be replaced easily" and a labour that was cheaper. For all these reasons and more Walvin maintains, "Africans began to arrive in ever greater numbers" (74).

Therefore, gradually slavery developed as a substitute for the indentured labourers, as colonizers realized that the Black slaves, who had been accustomed to farming in Africa, made more useful workers around farms and plantations. Around 1640s many Africans in the U.S. colonies were serving their life terms under indentures. Stetson notes that the first recorded case establishing a Black person as a slave for life dates back to the mid-1650, in the colony of Virginia. She also adds that by 1661, there were provisions in the law concerning "Negroes" (no longer called Africans) that contributed to the formation of Black slavery within Virginia. One of these statutes announced that "if any White indentured servant ran away with any Negro, the White servant must not only serve more time as punishment, but must serve the life term of the Black person too" (72).

The statutes were not concerned only with the runaway slaves but also with the status of the children of the slaves. By 1662, the colony of Virginia had passed nine laws specifying the status of newborn children; all children born within the colony of Virginia would follow the status of the mother. Stetson notes that this law was important in two ways. Firstly, it was a shift from English common law, which "announced that a child's status was determined by the father's condition". And secondly, "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).

By 1670, a law was passed saying that any non-Christian servant traveling by ship into the colony of Virginia was to be held a slave for life. Without doubt, Africans were the

only non-Christian servants traveling to Virginia by ship. The law also provided that non-Christian servants traveling to Virginia by land, if children, were required to serve until age thirty; if adults, for no longer than twelve years. Stetson states that by 1705, "the General Assembly of Virginia was no longer oblique". The law declared that: "… All Negro, mulatto and Indian slaves shall be held, taken, and adjudged to be real estate, in the same category as livestock and household furniture, wagons and goods.[iii]

Stetson notes that by 1750, Black slavery had become a fact of life in the colonies of Virginia, Maryland, Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina. The processes of subordination and submission of the slave to master were realized through a growth of slave codes concerning education, religion, marriage, etc. The economic grounds of slavery were ratified by law and at the same time, were reinforced by other systems that "explained" the positioning of Blacks into the nonhuman class (72, 73).

2. 2. 2. Racial Oppression

It is obvious that the institution of slavery did not start out with the transatlantic migration nor it can be politically limited to the history of Black people in the Americas; there have been slave-owning societies and nations before the slavery in the Americas flourished. However, the slaves in other slave owning societies were captives, concubines or human beings that are considered to be from a lower caste in the social order. Unlike former slaves, Black people were brought to the Americas in large numbers, already enslaved, and for the specific purpose of servitude for the White supremacy.

The issues of race and ethnicity should be taken into consideration if an analysis of the slavery in the continental America is aimed at. James Walvin in his book Questioning Slavery notes that "Blackness" in the Americas denoted slavery. He asserts that slavery became a defining institution that generated the image that to be Black was to be a slave. Further down

he inquires for the possible reasons and concludes that “such a formative link between race and slavery had not necessarily been true of earlier slave societies” (72, 73).

Walvin describes this as the “best known” quality of the “New World slavery”, and maintains that, “its link to race, or at least to colour” is perhaps the reason why “its consequences live onto the present day”. In such a context, the slave politics entail profound issues of racial discrimination (75).

From 1820s onwards, the number of transatlantic migrants grew rapidly, and when compared to the others, Africans were not “voluntary migrants”. These Africans landed in the continental America with literally nothing; they did not have any material possessions or a family, but only “a fair chance of dying soon after arrival”. The enslavement began long before they landed in America, they were bought, sold and violated before “they stumbled ashore, naked or near naked” (Walvin 20).

The immense economic change the African labour created was soon noted. The material well-being depended thoroughly on the African labour; even the North America colonies flourished “on the back of sugar-based slavery”. Therefore “in the daily economic practice” and afterwards “in legal definition” the African slave was “reduced to the level of property: to be bought, sold, bartered and exchanged much like any item of trade”. Walvin asserts; “the problem remained, of course, that they were also human” (24).

Although James Walvin explains the reasons of a subsequent racial bias with collective preconceptions of the colonizing Europeans (75), for bell hooks, the results of the perpetual racial preconception had an impact in writing of the history which eventually changed our knowledge of the Africans in the Americas. Although there were free Africans before the indentured service or the slavery dominated the plantations, bell hooks asserts that because the “racist biases shaped the historical scholarship… the story of [Africans’]

presence… would begin with slavery". bell hooks, also insists that, gradually this might have altered the way the Black community perceived itself. (hooks 89)

It is obvious that the racist discourse that dominated and shaped the continental slavery has not essentially been valid for the former slave-owning societies. Therefore what characterizes the U.S. slavery and the more recent relations of the Black community to the White has been the racist discourse. It might be added that, this racist discourse that works in favour of the White supremacy has also been the leading factor in preventing the Black community's social integration to the U.S. demography after the abolition.

2. 2. 3. Physical Oppression

Resorting to the images of slavery in the modern vernacular is often spoken out with the expressions such as, "working like a slave", or "being a slave", "to be enslaved" denoting that there is a "labouring condition beyond human endurance" (Walvin 30). Naturally, the making of the slave is not solely limited to the overpowering, intolerable working conditions or cruel treatment. The elements in making of the slave follow a dehumanizing process; it includes oppression on physical, mental and psychological levels; subjugation; a perpetual and deliberate deprivation of identity of the person; civic degradation, and the constant and controlled deprivation of basic human rights of freedom and equality in dignity and rights.

The enslavement of the slaves clearly encompassed a dehumanizing process. Without doubt such process was an absolute requisite for the slave owners to hold the absolute power over the slaves. For the perpetuation of such power oppression in any form was necessary. Patricia Hill Collins defines oppression as "any unjust situation where, systematically and over a long period of time, one group denies another group access to the resources of society" (4). It might be inferred that such a definition pretty much puts the framework for further elaborations on slavery: In very simple terms, the slave and the institution of slavery connote hard labour under physical conditions, or a systematic harsh treatment of a person. To be a

slave is to be denied of very basic human rights which "distinguish mankind from lesser creatures"; and to be reduced to "objects of exchange" in other words, as it is in a phrase coined by Orlando Patterson; "to be reduced to social death" (Walvin 30- 31)[iv].

The initiation to the dehumanization starts with the physical oppression. Obviously, the Africans were captured in Africa before they were forced to go through the transatlantic voyage. Naturally this was attained through physical oppression; the Africans were almost literally preys for the White hunters. Thus the captured Africans were moved around in a triangle of slave trade. The African captives were faced with physical oppression and assault starting from the day they were held as captives. Walvin emphasizes that "every African shipped across the Atlantic (and more that 11,000,000 Africans survived the passage) had been violated physically" (50)

From the first days of black slavery, Whites assumed that the only way to guarantee to keep the slaves in their places was repressive force. Once captured, the slaves were herded, corralled and marshaled in the slave barracoons.[v] The slaves had been held in chains, they were branded and piled up in the slave ships in which they had to pass the whole Atlantic plunged in their own filth. The slaves' arrival to the Americas was no end to the physical assaults; they were forced to learn that their existence was bound to the White power which was usually attained through guns and whips (Walvin 50).

The physical assaults and corporal punishments for the Black slaves were perpetuated even after their arrival to the continent. The punishments were carried out by overseers and drivers who watched them as the slaves worked on the fields. The physical oppression was a way for the White owners to maintain and preserve their power over the Black slaves. The flogging was one of the most common ways of corporal punishments, others included regular beatings, slitting the nose, branding in the forehead, cutting of the ears, and in some islands in the Americas, even taking off a limb (Walvin 57- 61).

2. 2. 4. Psychological and Mental Oppression

The psychology that dominated the minds of the slaves for many centuries have been sourced from the atrocious assault and battery and the fear of excruciating pain caused by corporal punishments. Obviously corporal punishments were not the only way for exerting power over the Black slaves; they were mentally oppressed as well. The slaves were relocated, they were aliens to the environment they were brought to, and they were subjected to instruction in languages they were not familiar with and most of the time, they were infected by the diseases from the passage ships. Walvin argues that all the collective remnants of the corporal hardships that the slaves endured are sealed in their psychology and thus formed another source of oppression (58).

As mentioned above, the humane treatment of the Black slaves by the White slave owners was not limited to the physical oppression. The slaves were defined and treated as non-human; they were rather regarded as chattel to be bought and sold like many other objects. The slaves were denied many areas of freedom that most people took for granted. For example, the Black slaves were denied the freedom of mobility, to buy and sell goods, to conduct social family and communal life independent of the owner. This eventually serves to the psychological and mental oppression of the slave, pointing at a non-human category for the slave to define himself/herself.

The communal agent in which the Black individual can define himself/herself with is missing in the American slave society. This, in part is maintained deliberately so that the slaves can not from a unity against the dominating party, and in part is a natural result of the humane treatment of the slaves. In either way the absence of such community reveals that the communal bonds are missing in the Black slave's life; slavery shatters these bonds leaving the individual alone in its suffering and survival.

Such sense of loneliness might reverberate in various ways in the individual's psychology. The feeling of estrangement, the absence of communal and familial bonds leaves the slave no grounds for a self discovery and self definition. As the Black slave delves deeper into a selfless state, he/she subjugates even more willfully, and is easily subjected by the White standards. This eventually generates a paradox for the slave in which the acceptance of the enslaved state brings forth an enslavement pertaining to his/her existence. It might also be implied that this eventually leads the hostility towards one's own race.

2.3. The Black Female Slave and the Slave Narrative in Toni Morrison

2.3.1. The Black Female Slave

Primarily Toni Morrison's portrayal of the Black female slave clearly depicts how slavery attains the control over the slaves through racial, physical, psychological and mental oppression. As discussed above, it can be surmised that the physical, psychological and the mental oppression directed to the Black slaves were all extensions of the racist discourse that dominated the slavery in the continental America. Secondly, Toni Morrison's portrayal of Black female slave contributes to the discussion by pointing out to the fact that Black women, in the dehumanizing process of slavery, are doubly disadvantaged. This assertion reveals that along with the racist discourse that dominated the period during and after the slavery, a sexist discourse was also prevalent and thus the Black women suffered from these two different sources of oppression.

The Black female slave depicted in Beloved clearly suffers from the racial and sexual oppression that is mentioned above. She primarily suffers as a Black slave, she gets her own share of physical oppression; she is flogged to the extent that even after years she can no longer feel the skin on her back. She is tortured by her owners, her breast milk was stolen from her, and in other words, she was reduced to a non-human state. The treatment she receives as a slave is seared so deeply in her psychology that, in her own expression of

resistance, she kills her baby girl rather than to give her in to the slavery. In this context, Toni Morrison's Black female slave suffers the consequences of slavery on an entirely factual level. Through this Black female protagonist and her relations to the other characters, Toni Morrison depicts how and to what extent factual slavery shattered the lives of Black people as a race.

The Black female slave depicted in Sula is somewhat different from the Black female slave in Beloved. This time Toni Morrison portrays the Black female in a free Black community and depicts the enslavement of the Black female by the formerly enslaved yet recently freed Black community. The Black female slave in Sula suffers from the very same racist and sexist discourse that is prevalent in Beloved. The Black female in Sula is enslaved by her own community and she is ostracized as a deviant. In a similar line as the Black female slave in Beloved, she receives her own share of psychological and mental oppression and such oppression leads her to react in her own distinct way to find a self to define herself with.

Therefore this novel is also significant in the way that it becomes a voice in the Black literature. In such a context, Sula contributes to the legacy of struggle; Katie Cannon observes, "throughout the history of the United States, the interrelationship of white supremacy and male superiority has characterized the Black woman's reality as a situation of struggle to survive in two contradictory worlds simultaneously, one white, privileged, and oppressive, the other black, exploited, and oppressed" (Qtd. in Collins). [vi]

The slave on both levels is politically significant; the first one connotes the making of the Black slave; captivation and racial oppression and the second entails the making of the Black female slave; enslavement of the female by the male principles and sexual oppression. In her essay titled "Race, Class and Gender", Rose Mary Brewer points out to the issues of race, class and gender as "simultaneous" forces of oppression; in Toni Morrison's portrayal of

the Black female, these forces seem to be "simultaneously" embodied in the factual institution of slavery and the Black community's biases against the Back women (16).

In fact, the institution of slavery in both novels stands as the corpus that all other tones of oppression derive form. Therefore as Patricia Hill Collins maintains; race, class and gender along with sexuality and ethnicity constitute major forms of oppression for the Black female in the United States.

2. 3. 2. The Slave Narrative in Toni Morrison

Although the servitude did not differentiate between the male and the female, in the writing of their histories; the slave narratives were limited with offering "masculine images". The major underlying problem for Black Feminist theoreticians such as Erlene Stetson and, Melvina Johnson Young in the recognition of slavery in the Americas was the treatment of "the slavery experience as a Black male phenomenon" that simply posited women to a level of "biological functionaries whose destinies are rendered ephemeral-to lay their eggs and die" (Stetson 62). Therefore Black Feminist critique of the study of the slavery in America aims to include major evaluations regarding the existence of female slaves. Unlike other slave narratives; Beloved presents a story build up on the fatal consequences of the institution of slavery on the life a female protagonist.

The historical factuality of slave narrative in Beloved works on various levels from a Black Feminist point of view. It is principally significant in terms being a manifestation of a retrospective response to the writing of slavery. Secondly, it exemplifies the truth about the Black existence in America; it presents an internalized and unbiased account of history of the Black people unlike many slave narratives did (Kubitschek 131). Unlike the slave narratives written by abolitionists, Beloved strikes the reader as a true Black reflection of the hardships of slavery. Such reflections are also exemplified in works like The Slave's Narrative by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Charles T. Davis but not in a fictional form.

In contemporary Black Feminist analysis, apart from the canonical revisions of the literary output, and the emplacement of the data regarding the historical facts of the Black existence in the Americas a whole bulk of study is devoted to the reevaluation of these slave narratives. Melvina Johnson Young argues that "while scholars of the institution of slavery in the USA have utilized the narrative data they have omitted analyses that incorporate an understanding of the impact of racism, sexism and classism" (5). This was in part because most of the slave narratives were written by the abolitionists to persuade the White audience to do away with slavery. According to Missy Dehn Kubitschek these narratives were shaped to show the cruelties of slavery, however these were written by White people, for a specific audience and had no literal curative effect on the lives of ex-slaves or Black people. (Kubitschek 131,132).

Although Carl D. Malmgren asserts that Beloved can not be fully defined as a slave narrative, he posits the slave narrative as the principal story that "holds the key to the narrative's unity". In other words; it is not only the slave narrative but also the "institution of slavery" that renders "the thematic glue of the text" (190). Here, Toni Morrison integrates various narratives within multiple genres; hence it "strikes" the reader as a "hybridized text"; part slave narrative, part ghost story, part love story. Malmgren argues that the conventions of the ghost story require the "partial" nullification of the "mimetic" restriction of the slave narrative. However, the historical novel is grounded on the "reality principle", its introductory commitment is to portray "the world as it is or as it has been." This is why Beloved is accurately posited in the "historical time-frame" and thus presents an accurate portrayal of the true existence of the Black slaves in the 1870s (192).

Although Sethe might be seen an analyzed as the protagonist, one might conclude that the substantial core of the novel is the institution of slavery. This is significant from a Black Feminist perspective in two ways: Firstly, historical factuality of the slave is significant in the

way that it allows to reflect the importance that Black Feminism renders to the depiction of the truth about the Black existence in America.

Secondly, the slave narrative in Beloved contemplates on the issues of race, class and gender as interlocking sources of oppression; it might be inferred that for a theory built upon the historical existence and the life experience of slavery and a theory fighting against the modern extensions and resonances of the underlying racist system of thought, the fictional depiction of the slave hints at the political making of the slave in reality.

In a way, Morrison's fiction that depicts the oppression of a female slave is a way to comprehend the oppression that modern Black women encounter today. After all, Black Feminism acknowledges and validates the eventual contribution of such narrative: the factual story of a Black woman integrated into fiction by a Black woman. This fictional triumph might also be analyzed as a way to understand the theory based on the factual story told in the book. In other words the slave in Beloved is a way to understand the underlying apprehensions that contemporary Black feminist theory bears today. It might also be said that as theory, though now it seems to fight against the theorizing racist and sexist biases in the academia, Black Feminism finds its roots nowhere but in slavery.

Notes

[i] From Medieval Latin “Sclavus “and the Old French “Esclave”, meaning “the person who is the property of another”. See http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=slave

[ii] Here the entry exemplifies “the low material cultures” as the gropus in Malay Peninsula and some Native Americans.

[iii] Qtd. in J.H. Clarke and V. Harding, eds., Slave Trade and Slavery New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1970. 37

[iv] Qtd. in Walvin, James. Questioning Slavery. New York: Routledge, 1996. Also see, Patterson, Orlando. Slavery and Social Death, Cambridge, MA, 1982.

[v] A slave warehouse, an inclosure where slaves were temporarily quartered. http://www.wordwebonline.com/search.pl?ww=5&w=barracoon

[vi] Qtd. in Collins, Patricia Hill. “Defining Black Feminist Thought”. In: Patricia Hill Collins Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment. (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 19-40.

<http://www.feministezine.com/feminist/modern/Defining-Black-Feminist-Thought.html> (28 Jan. 2007)

III. A Black Feminist Analysis of the Slavery in Beloved

3. 1. The Framework

Beloved renders the story of the Black female slave, Sethe, by re- examining the effects of factual slavery on the runaway slaves' lives through interwoven stories of Sethe, Paul D., Baby Suggs and Beloved. It explores slavery as its core theme and is set in the mid 1800s; the novel clearly represents that the racist discourse prevails in the aftermath of slavery. The novel focuses on the private lives of the slaves and how and to what extent slavery had impacts on their familial and communal bonds. The slave in Beloved reveals itself on interrelated dimensions and eventually yields itself to a Black feminist analysis in distinct ways. Principally, the historical factuality of the slave narrative in Beloved forms the grounds on which a political analysis could be executed.

Without doubt, the novel is loaded with painful imagery pertaining slavery; Toni Morrison explicitly communicates the reader the extent of slavery's destructive power. In summary, Beloved shows how slavery can reduce human beings to an animal state and categorize them as less than humans. It clearly represents how the White hegemony, for its economic gains, can turn to a destructive force and thus dehumanize the Black through physical, psychological and mental oppression.

The significance of Beloved as a slave narrative that exhibits the true story of the slaves in 1870s is in part bound to its success to relate the reader the history of the Black female slave. It might be argued that the "negation of the Black" in the Black writing as mentioned by Henry Louis Gates, is concurrent to the negation of the female Black in Black writing as well. Beloved fills an important gap in this context; it re- examines the traditional representations of Black female slave the unwritten feminine experience of the slave life (Kubitschek 135).

It might also be added that; employing these aspects, Beloved does not undervalue the encounters of the male slaves because they were too often told. The hardships of slavery that marks the lives of Sethe, Paul D. Sixo, Halle, Stamp Paid, Baby Suggs, and Ella is exemplified in different ways in all of the characters Morrison does not place the slave as one single entity that has been raped, maimed or ravaged by slavery; rather these characters stand as distinct and individual beings that got their own share of life experience from slavery.

Another distinct quality of the novel can be summarized as the slaves' various ways of resistance to slavery. Obviously Beloved, as a novel is a reaction against the institution of slavery as well as a manifestation against the negation of the Black female voice in literature. Toni Morrison exemplifies in Beloved that throughout the Black existence in the U.S. the resistance of the Black people to racism and oppression varied greatly; some chose to commit infanticide, some chose to stand and speak against the slave owners and accepted to be killed rather than to be raped or maimed, while the others resorted to a proud silence when lynch fires reached them.

The novel circles around the story of Sethe, a fugitive slave who tries to make her own way in Cincinnati living with her daughter Denver. Their loneliness in their house 124 is significant; they are strayed apart from the Black community and excluded from the social circle of Cincinnati. They are haunted by a ghost, namely Beloved, the baby girl whom Sethe killed years ago when she realized that the Schoolteacher, her former owner in Sweet Home, Kentucky came to claim her and her children as his legal property.

The infanticide marks the end of the circle of happiness that she and Baby Suggs built around 124, a communal space where fugitive, ex-slaves found refuge and comfort. With the visit of Paul D., one of the male slaves in the plantation back in Kentucky Sethe regains her hopes for a familial unity. At the same time Beloved reappears in 124, as a girl at the same age if Sethe had not killed her. The supernatural existence of Beloved in the fictional plot of

Beloved serve a higher purpose in emphasizing the existent results of slavery in America; she stands as the "ultimate victim of slavery, a living reminder of the brutality of the institution" (Malmgren 194).

Through these details and more Morrison enables her readers to "experience American slavery as it was lived by those who were its objects of exchange".[i] Morrison's dedication of the novel "To sixty million and more" is likewise significant; Morrison says the dedication honors "the number of Black Africans who never made it into slavery—those who died either as captives in Africa or on the slave ships".[ii]

3. 2. The Enslavement of the Black and the Racist discourse

3. 2. 1. Physical, Psychological and Mental Oppression

> ". . . and what came loose in his hand was a red ribbon knotted around a curl of wet wooly hair, clinging still to its bit of scalp. . . . This time although he couldn't cipher but one word, he believed he knew who spoke them. The people of the broken necks, of fire-cooked blood and black girls who had lost their ribbons.
>
> What a roaring". (Morrison 213)[iii]

The slave in Beloved lives in a constant state of subjection and oppression that finds its origins in the White racist American society (Walvin 23). It might be argued that this oppression, starting from the slave ship passage to the complete emancipation of the slaves after the Civil War, has taken different forms and acted in different roles to retain the control of the slaves. The necessary code of behavior to sustain the constant subjection not only required an incessant form of physical subjugation of the slaves but also a mentally and psychologically suppressive attitude towards handling the slaves. This eventually necessitates a dehumanizing attitude, sealing the ends for a self definition through an inhuman treatment that exerts physical, mental, and psychological oppression.

Furthermore, the White, racist and sexist social system supplies the necessary psychological framework for enslavement: The female slave is subjected to physical, psychological and mental oppression, through the memories of Sethe, Paul D and Baby Suggs, the reader witnesses the nature of factual oppression that slave owners applied on the slaves; the criticism of an analogical oppression is in question for the contemporary Black Feminist thinkers as well. (Ogundipe-Leslie 109)

As for the female slave in Beloved; she is subjugated by the White principally because of her skin colour, race, ethnic differences is a way to recognize to what degree a woman is oppressed. The enslaved women in Beloved stand as distinct characters rather than mere symbolic representations for the contemporary Black female figure. They are subjected to and subjugated by the very same sources of oppression that Black Feminism targets to destroy. All the characters of the novel- Denver as well though she has not fully encountered what being a slave is - have to deal with the consequences this state of mind. These characters are not faced with a concurrent slavery rather they try to make their ways through a racist social system in the aftermath of slavery.

3. 2. 2. Physical Oppression

Beloved exhibits most of the actual methods that are used for the control of the slaves. As mentioned before in the text, slaves were subjected to almost sadistic kinds of physical oppression in order to be kept under control. Although not all of the slave owners employed the same methods or some slightly resorted to physical oppression, it is known that corporal punishments were very common and useful for the handling of the slaves. The motive behind such physical treatment was to create a sense of fear among the slaves thus preventing them against forming a unity against the slave owners. This might be the reason why each slave in Beloved resists and reacts to slavery in his/her own way.

The most common form of corporal punishment was flogging. Sometimes, even the resulting scars could be counted and the number of the scars became a describing feature for the slaves. For instance, advertisements of slaves, for fugitives or for sales, usually specified the number of scars (Walvin 59). Morrison uses the image of a "chokecherry tree" for the scars on Sethe's back. When Amy, a white girl, finds Sethe while she is running away from the Kentucky plantation, her scars are still wet, Amy is shocked at the brutality of the view: "It's a tree Lu. A chokecherry tree. See, here's the trunk—it's red and split wide open, full of sap,. . . ..You got a mighty lot of branches. . ." As a White girl, probably an indentured servant, she can not help but think about of her whippings; "What God have in mind, I wonder" she says; "I had me some whippings, but I don't remember nothing like this" (Morrison 93).

Naturally Sethe was not the only slave to receive such punishment; Paul D. suffered through floggings and he was later sent to Alfred, Georgia as a convict because he attempted to kill his new owner. He was sentenced to stay in a penitentiary where other black convicts were held. Obviously this was no standard institution; there were ditches; "the one thousand feet of earth—five feet deep, five feet wide, into which wooden boxes had been fitted. . . . Two feet over his head; three feet of open trench in front of him with anything that crawled or scurried welcome to share that grave calling itself quarters. And there were forty-five more" (Morrison 125).

Paul D. was punished along with other convicts, in the harshest ways; the convicts always felt the power of guns threatening them. All forty six men were chained to each other with the "one thousand feet of the best hand-forged chain in Georgia", they all woke up to "rifle shots" and chained all together they were herded to work in the fields. At the end of the day, convicts were put in their boxes in the grounds where they "squatted in muddy water, slept above it, peed in it" (Morrison 126-127, 129).

It might be inferred that Toni Morrison devotes much space to the instances of physical oppression, and the depictions of corporal punishments in order to relate the brutality of slavery. Without doubt, these passages communicate the reader the true nature of slavery and its destructive power in the lives of the Black slaves. However, it should also be noted that the real destructive force of the slavery does not directly come out as physical oppression; it is rather embedded in the psychology that these punishments leave in the minds of the slaves. Floggings, beatings, rape, even killings are depicted as physical hardships that a Black slave has to deal with, and however, what really destroys the lives of the slaves is the psychology created by witnessing and surviving through this physical oppression. As Sethe remarks; “Other people went crazy, why couldn’t she?” (Morrison 83).

The characters depicted in the novel had to witness the murder, torture, or sale of family and friends; whippings, chains, iron bits in the mouth, and underground “boxes” in which the convicts are held; examinations and cataloguing in terms of “human” and “animal” characteristics, milking of pregnant women by White boys. Surviving through the “traumas of slavery”, as Caroline Rody puts, in her article titled “Toni Morrison's Beloved: History, "Rememory," and a "Clamor for a Kiss"” presents a distinctive voice in the narrative. In a similar line as discussed above Rody asserts that, these experiences fragment and block the personalities of the slaves (91).

3. 2. 3. Psychological Oppression and Resistance

As mentioned above; the physical oppression that the slaves were subjected to reverberates in a destructive manner in the slaves’ psychology. Margaret Atwood interprets the attitude of the White slave owners towards the slaves as “a paradigm of how most people behave when they are given absolute power over other people” (50). “Such power” Carl D. Malmgren asserts, “reduces people to animals”. Each paragraph devoted to the depiction of

some sort of physical oppression reflects a sense of White dominancy over the Black to such extent that the Black are seen less than human (198).

One of the most striking instances is the horse's bit that is put in the slaves' mouths. The iron bit is ever present in Sethe's childhood memories;

> "People I saw as a child, who'd had the bit always looked wild after that. . . . how offended the tongue is, held down by iron, how the need to spit is so deep you cry for it. She already knew about it, . . .The wildness that shot up in the eye the moment lips were yanked back. . . . but nothing would soothe the tongue or take the wildness out of the eye" (Morrison 84).

Barbara Schapiro, in her article titled "The Bonds of Love and the Boundaries of Self in Toni Morrison's Beloved" defines the passages describing these memories as some of the "most disturbing" ones in the novel; "having a horse's bit forced into one's mouth"; creates "the sense of deep, searing injury to one's humanity" (161). Later in the novel, Sethe would remember the same done to her mother and she "had smiled when she did not smile" because it was "the iron bit clamped on the tongue that had produced that perpetual smile" (Morrison 240). In this context, "to smile is to know what it meant to be a slave" (Rodrigues 64). Unfortunately, these memories make the most of what Sethe recalls about her own mother.

Paul D. is another character who had to have the bit because he attempted to run away form Sweet Home, the plantation in Kentucky; when Sethe asks him to tell about it, he hesitates and confesses; ". . . it wasn't the bit—that wasn't it" (Morrison 85). He further explains how the rooster Mister looked at him when he walked past him: "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" (Morrison 86).

Just like Halle, who went insane upon seeing his wife being raped and "milked" by Schoolteachers's pupils, and Sixo who was burned on the "hominy fire" Paul D. is another Black male slave who is emasculated by the slave culture. He feels the strong sense of emasculation upon his own comparison of his self to a rooster's, significantly the rooster's name echoes, "Mister", an embodiment of an overly masculine image for a man who is forced a horse's bit in his mouth.

Paul D. feels that his own self has been "severely impaired" because "his status as a human subject is denied by the slave culture". Barbara Schapiro asserts that he feels that even the old rooster Mister was allowed an essential integrity of being that was kept from him (167): "Mister was allowed to be and stay what he was. But I wasn't allowed to be and stay what I was. Even if you cooked him you'd be cooking a rooster named Mister. But wasn't no way I'd ever be Paul D again, living or dead" (Morrison 86). Sethe and Paul D meet again eighteen years only to find each other dealing with "selves fractured and reduced to things lower than animals" (Rodrigues 68). Their voices connect to those of Baby Suggs, and Denver; and start the route to a self defining process in a "world of slaves and slavery" of which "horrors can no longer be visualized today" but of which "sounds of pain and suffering still linger on" (Rodrigues 62).

In a similar line Sethe realizes that she is less than human when she overhears that her "human characteristics" and "animal characteristics" was a subject of lesson (Morrison 228); her "eyes are opened to the reality" as Carl D. Malmgren explains, that "to schoolteacher she is nothing but a creature whose value is determined in an accounts ledger enumerating her human and animal characteristics" (198).

Here an argument of how the Black female slaves were perceived and defined in the history of slave culture is essential. As discussed before in the text, the establishment of slavery according to the economic gains justified the placement of Blacks into the nonhuman

category. Historically, as Erlene Stetson notes, after 1776 the agitations in "the human rights" of the time called for the enlisting of the ideology of Great Chain of Being (73).

According to the hierarchy of life forms that Great Chain of Being established, God was believed to hold the highest position, "which proceeded downward to the weakest, most unintelligent, and inferior form of life known to humanity". Stetson quotes from Richard Erno, a contemporary writer that:

> ". . . any attempt to alter the present condition of the Negro which was ordained by providence would destroy the very fabric of universe. If the Negro was, as strongly suspected, a form of being mediate between the higher animals and man, his enslavement was justified and the social order of the South was the only social order in which was shown the will of the Divine Creator" (Stetson 73)[iv].

Further down, Stetson argues that the philosophers, scientists, lawmakers, scholars, physicians, and laymen all accord with the notion that the Black's position as "somewhere between man and the higher animals (i.e. apes) was especially borne out in the Black woman". According to Stetson, they agreed that the orangutans showed a special attraction to the Black woman; that at some unspecified point in history the Black woman and the orangutan had mated. This idea was used to explain the creation of the Black race and female slaves were often referred to as "female animals" (73).

Schoolteacher's perception of the Black female slave obviously accords with the contemporary view. Schoolteacher's treatment of the slaves; measuring their skulls, numbering their teeth, experimenting as the pregnant slave is milked, is shaped by the very same pure form of racism that ranks the Black female slave as the orangutan's mate. Before Sethe realizes that she is seen and analyzed as an animal, she "didn't care nothing about the measuring string

. . . Schoolteacher'd wrap that string all over [her] head, 'cross [her] nose, around [her] behind. Number [her] teeth". They all laughed at it only "except Sixo" (Morrison 226).

Barbara Schapiro argues that, the subjection and the oppression of the slave to the White in the context exemplified above has "deep repercussions in the individual's internal world". These reverberations that are educed from "the denial one's status as a human subject" are so deep that, "even one is eventually freed from external bondage, the self will still be trapped in an inner world that prevents a genuine experience of freedom" (155).

Likewise Sethe cannot forget when she was caught by the pupils; the moment the boys took her milk is repeated several times in the book. She retells the incident to Paul D.; "After I left you, those boys came in there and took my milk. That's what they came in there for. Held me down and took it. . . . Schoolteacher made one open up my back, and when it closed it made a tree. . . And they took my milk. . . . And they took my milk!" (Morrison 20). Such treatment, milking a pregnant woman creates deep scars in the individual's mind. This is one of the incidents which exemplify perfectly how the White domination puts the slave; and especially the female slave in a non-human category.

This in particular, and many more that Sethe witnessed as Black female slave results in her resistance and reaction to slavery by killing her own daughter: "And though she and others lived through and got over it, she could never let it happen to her own. The best thing she was, was her children . . . no one, nobody on this earth, would list her daughter's characteristics on the animal side of the paper. . . Sethe had refused—and refused still" (Morrison 296). It might be concluded that Sethe, in her own distinct way, resists to slavery through resorting to infanticide.

When murdered baby girl Beloved appears in the house and devours all the past stories from Sethe, Sethe realizes that she was not the only one who committed infanticide. As Sethe tells Beloved and Denver her memories about her mother, she understands why she killed

Beloved. It was inevitably her strong desire to protect her daughter, as well as a form of ominous legacy that by instinct drove her to kill her daughter. Her mother, one of the slaves that experienced the transatlantic passage, had killed her children on the ship. Sethe recalls Nan's narrative as she retells the story to Beloved and Denver, "She threw them all away but you . . . without names, she threw them, you she gave the name of the black man" (Morrison 74).

At that moment Sethe clearly realizes one of the reasons why she killed her daughter; "the message—that was and had been there all along" (Morrison 74). Sethe's mother, like Sethe, had chosen the death of her children, rather than to see them killed, maimed or weakened by the Whites, or the slavery. Sethe's rememory of her mother's infanticide is one of the ways how the slavery becomes a collective burden on the slaves' lives and thus impact upon their psychologies. This collective past sharply intrudes into the present and hopeful future.

This is why each character in the novel who has survived through the physical oppression of the slavery develops specific forms of reaction and resistance to what they witnessed. Such response may be defined as a form of self defence mechanism to deny the definitions of the slave owners. This might eventually help the slave to create a sense of ownership and control of one's own life and destiny.

Without doubt the most extreme form of resistance is exemplified in Sethe's killing her own daughter. Sethe's response is so powerful and stiff that even her own community declares her guilty. Sethe's action is unforgivable for the other members of the Black community, and they show no effort to understand or justify it. Even for Baby Suggs, the murder has ominous echoes; as Stamp Paid puts it; ". . . God give up? Nothing left for us but pour out our own blood?" For the Black community and Baby Suggs in specific, Sethe is

ostracized because although she has done the right thing, she has done something that she has no right to do (Morrison 211).

Paul D.'s resistance takes in a rather symbolic form; unlike Sethe, his reaction is into himself, Paul D. closes himself. His memory, rememory, tortures, floggings and all he witnessed are embodied in the "tobacco tin lodged in his chest". He "had shut down a generous portion of his head" only allowing himself to "walk, eat, sleep, sing" (Morrison 49). This tin keeps the memories of ". . . Alfred, Georgia, Sixo, schoolteacher, Halle, his brothers, Sethe, Mister, the taste of iron, the sight of butter, the smell of hickory, note-book paper. . . ". And as he finds Sethe and Denver in Cincinnati; and plans to unite with them as a family; "nothing in this world could pry it open" (Morrison 133).

The tin box of Paul D. stands for the memories of the emasculation he experienced in Sweet Home. He, just like Sethe, is in a constant state of reliving the past in his mind; this is why after his attempt of escape, when he is brought to Alfred, Georgia, he literally begins to shake from inside. The powerful shut and buried past shakes his all being; "still no one else knew it, because it began inside. A flutter of a kind, in the chest, then the shoulder blades. It felt like rippling—gentle and then wild" (Morrison 125). Ironically according to Paul D. to be put in a box; as he puts his past in box; has saved his life; "the box had done what Sweet Home had not, what working like an ass and living like a dog had not: drove him crazy so he would not lose his mind" (Morrison 49).

Baby Suggs, "the holy" as the Black community calls her, resists to the slavery in a completely different way. Unlike Sethe's, Baby Suggs's resistance is not aggressive. After her freedom is bought for her by her son Halle, she is brought to Cincinnati, to 124, a house owned by the abolitionist Bodwins. Here Baby Suggs forms a community of Blacks where the fugitive slaves can find refuge and company. With Sethe's arrival the "days of healing, ease

and real-talk" begins. Baby Suggs transforms 124 into a space where they can find people to define themselves with.

Baby Suggs is an old slave who has not encountered the humiliation of being a slave: "even when she slipped in cow dung and broke every egg in her apron, nobody said you-black-bitch-what's-the-matter-with-you and nobody knocked her down" (Morrison 164). However she has seen the worst happening to her loved ones, she knows how the slavery can sear into one's mind; she had seven babies, "seven times. . . held a little foot; examined the fat fingertips with her own—fingers she never saw become the male or female hands a mother would recognize anywhere" (Morrison 163).

Her own experiences of slavery, and what she witnessed as its effects on people, made her into a preacher who calls Black people to start loving themselves. After Sethe kills Beloved she gives up her speeches, after seeing a mother killing her own children, Baby Suggs believes that the harm is everywhere, even in the peaceful 124 that she created.

Like baby Suggs, Stamp Paid resists in a constructive manner. His first reaction is to change his name; "born Joshua, he renamed himself when he handed over his wife to his master's son . . . With that gift, he decided that he didn't owe anybody anything. . .whatever his obligations were, that act paid them off" (Morrison 218). And so, he and Ella after they are freed devote their lives to saving the runaway slaves through the underground railway. He and Ella actually help Sethe reach 124. They are closest to Baby Suggs and Sethe, and although Ella never forgives Sethe for the murder, she is the one who directs the women to exorcize Beloved from 124.

After having saved the lives of hundreds of fugitive slaves, and having witnessed the lynching and whippings stamp Paid confesses that "none of that had worn out his marrow" but "it was the ribbon" (Morrison 212). Stamp Paid as he ties his flatbed on the bank of Licking River, he sees this red ribbon, still clinging to the scalp it was once tied to. Such sight

wears out Stamp Paid, and he silently keeps the red ribbon as a reminder of the brutality of slavery.

3. 3. The Other Self and Defining the Self

The Black slave in Beloved is left in a constant deprivation of ways of knowing the self; this kind of factual omission; forms the grounds on which the political making of the slave is maintained. The process of stripping one of his/her identity is initiated through the physical, psychological and mental oppression. Eusebio L. Rodrigues in his article titled "The Telling of Beloved" argues that, at this point, the novel represents "an ongoing story" of the "process of healing"; this story implies "the achieving of inner freedom" namely, "slowly discovering themselves as human beings in a new world" because besides other matters freedom is "imposed by others from the outside" (68).

Sethe's remark at this point is significant; "Freeing yourself was one thing; claiming ownership of that freed self was another". Even after freedom, the slaves have to deal with the psychology of what they have witnessed during slavery. All the characters somehow are twisted in this quandary; because "recognizing and claiming one's own subjectivity" cannot be maintained "independently of the social environment" (Morrison 112). In this context, freedom does not really entail the freedom in the slave's mind.

This sense of freedom is directly connected to the community in which the individual lives. In the slave community they are not allowed for attempts of self definition and after their escape because the fugitive slave is bound to define himself/herself in a communal context their self definitions are never clear. Jessica Benjamin argues in The Bonds of Love that, "a free and autonomous self" is an "essentially relational self", and therefore "dependent on the recognizing response of an other" (53). The selfhood, in traditional African societies plays an essential part; self is never a solitary entity. It does not exist on its own; it is rather "made up of a web of shifting relationships to other physical and spiritual beings"

(Kubitschek,23). This web of relations is deliberately negated by the White control, and in free Black community it is very hard to attain.

This is why for the fugitive slaves forming a community is very important. Baby Suggs is respected and loved by her community because she is the one who formed the community. In her house, 124, they had "the days of healing, ease and real-talk. Days of company: knowing the names of forty, fifty other Negroes, their views, habit; where they had been and what done; of feeling their fun and sorrow". These days at 124 are not ruptured by the slave culture and the oppression that dominates it. The ex-slaves in this community feel closer to them and start to form communal bonds; this is significant in the shaping and expression of identities; each feel the individuality and thus does not lack the others to define themselves with.

However, for the slaves, being Africans brought to America by force to be made into slaves and suffering in a racist slave society there is "no reliable other to recognize and affirm" his/her existence. Schapiro illustrates the absence of this essential "other" with a theme that holds attention as well as a salient case in the narrative; the mother being the child's "first vital other is made unreliable" or "unavailable by a slave system" that "either separates her from her child or so enervates and depletes her that she has no self with which to confer recognition" (155).

The slave society denies the privilege for mother and child to see the self; the mother is powerless in recognizing the child, and the child's ways of recognition are sealed. Sethe, for example, as child, had to have her mother pointed out to her by another child. She barely remembers her mother and the language her mother speaks. Barbara Schapiro asserts; when Sethe herself becomes a mother, "she is so deprived and depleted that she cannot satisfy the hunger for recognition" (Schapiro 158). This is why Sethe feels that her maternal bonds are ruptured by the slave culture.

Sethe recalls the theft of her mother's milk so painfully, because the child owns the milk, and for Sethe the theft of the milk that belongs to the child is unforgivable. For mother and child, nursing and the mother's milk forms an indispensable bond; when Sethe survives through her escape and finally arrives on safe grounds to the home of her mother-in-law; "she lay back and cradled the crawling-already? girl in her arms. She enclosed her left nipple with two fingers of her right hand and the child opened her mouth. They hit home together" (Morrison 110).

When finally Sethe brings the milk for her children, the broken maternal bonds are replaced; "they hit home together", namely Sethe feels as a mother, she owns, nurses and feeds her children and thus, has solid grounds to define her self.

Another female character, Baby Suggs, who has been lucky enough to have her son, Halle who would buy her freedom for her, after the freeing, "expresses not" the happiness of freedom but "the deep sadness of not knowing herself, not being able to read her own story" (Schapiro 156- 171). In other words she doesn't have the map of herself:

> "No question. The sadness was at her center, the desolated center where the self that was no self made its home. Sad as it was that she did not know where her children were buried or what they looked like if alive, fact was she knew more about them than she knew about herself, having never had the map to discover what she was like" (Morrison 165)

As mentioned above, all the characters in the novel are in state of loss of the self. Paul D is another character who has to overcome the absence of the self. Carl D. Malmgren presents a different perspective of the self and other relation. Following a rather postcolonial approach, he defines self and other as master and slave; this explanation does not alter the ultimate effect; still the other, the slave is selfless. Malmgren argues that the institution of slavery "perverts the relation between self and other by thoroughly dehumanizing both

parties", and it might be argued that this is the primary agent in the constitution of a selfless slave (197- 198):

> "Whitepeople believed that whatever the manners, under every dark skin was a jungle. Swift unnavigable waters, swinging, screaming baboons, sleeping snakes, red gums ready for their sweet White blood. . . . But it wasn't the jungle Blacks brought with them to this place from the other place. It was the jungle Whitefolks planted in them. And it grew. It spread. In, through, and after life, it spread until it invaded the Whites who ad made it. Touched them everyone. Changed and altered them. Made them bloody, silly, worse than they wanted to be, so scared were they of the jungle they had made. The screaming baboon lived under their own White skin; the red gums were their own". (Morrison 235)

In the same line as Barbara Schapiro, Carl D. Malmgren claims that the common denominator in the formation of the slave as animals, objects and commodities is this "denial of the selfhood of the slave" (198).

In a similar line, another example from the personal history of Baby Suggs can be given; during the time she spent at Sweet Home, she had no name but Jenny, a name that does not belong to her, the name that reads on her bill of sale. When Garner asks herself what she calls herself she replies: "Nothing. . . . I don't call myself nothing". In her first steps to a free life, when she has to be renamed, Mr. Garner advises her to stick with Jenny Whitlow, cause "Baby Suggs ain't no name for a freed Negro" (Morrison 167). On the verge of having her first free steps in life, Baby Suggs's mind is so full of other things that, she cannot object to the attempt of a decision, being an adult herself is not allowed to pick a name for herself.

According to Malmgren the novel makes it obvious that even there are more benign forms of slavery "denial of humanity and selfhood" takes place: Paul D comes to realize:

"Garner called and announced them men -- but only on Sweet Home, and by his leave. Was he naming what he saw or creating what he did not? . . . Did a Whiteman saying make it so? Suppose Garner woke up one morning and changed his mind? Took the word away" After all had not Paul D. be a man all along before he reached Sweet Home? (Morrison 260).

"Garners seemed to run a special kind of slavery" as Bay Suggs puts it, they even allow their male slaves to hold guns; "they treated them like paid labor" and listened to what slaves said. They have not "stud" the male slaves or "rented" the female to other plantations (Morrison 165). However their perception of slavery still proves a flaw; that everything rested on "Garner being alive". Paul D. protests; "Now that ain't slavery or what is it?" (Morrison 259) Although Garners were not hard on their slaves, they were still the definers.

The concepts Malmgren and Schapiro offer are not completely incompatible with each other, since the slave does not have any reliable other to define himself or herself, he/she has to accept the definitions of the definer. After all as Schoolteacher says just before he beats Sixo, "definitions belong to the definer—not the defined" (Morrison 225). Malmgren claims that "in extreme circumstances" the logic of slavery leads from "personal degradation to self-annihilation, from debasement to extinction" It might be argued that this feeling is what brought Sethe to commit infanicide:

> "That anybody White could take your whole self for anything that came to mind. Not just work, kill, or maim you, but dirty you. Dirty you so bad you couldn't like yourself no more. Dirty you so bad you forgot who you were and couldn't think it up. And though she and others lived through it and got over it, she could never let it happen to her own" (Morrison 295).

Betty Jane Powell in her article titled ""will the parts hold?": The Journey Toward a Coherent Self in Beloved" argues that the "fragmentation of both body and mind" has similar destructive powers that confront the readers as the absence of feeling of self even in a free state

does. Because “anyone White could take your whole self for anything that comes to mind” and such possibility “denies autonomy and renders the self unrecognizable” (251). This is why Powell defines the characters as “physically and spiritually fragmented individuals who are disconnected from themselves, from each other, and from community (143, 144).

A similar argument is presented by Eusebio L. Rodrigues; “the lack of a unitary self” is brought about by interlinked words, parts, pieces and sections. The slave, in this context, besides being a selfless entity, he/she is a “bundle of pieces, of names, and a collection of fractured parts that have been defiled”. It might be argued that this is the reason why Baby Suggs bathes the rescued Sethe in sections. For Beloved, it becomes clear that, she is afraid of breaking up into pieces, “an indication that she is a composite of slave pieces of the past”. Likewise, Sixo loves the Thirty Mile Woman, because she can make “the pieces come together”. (Rodrigues 64)

Likewise Sethe’s definition to herself progresses in fragments; once she arrives to 124 she takes on the path to making of herself; “one taught her the alphabet; another a stitch. All thought her how it felt to wake up at dawn and *decide* what to do with the day. That’s how she got through. . . Bit by bit” (Morrison 111).

Similarly when Baby Suggs is freed, she perceives herself differently; in freedom she begins to see herself for the first time, but she sees “only in fragments”:

> “She didn’t know what she looked like and was not curious. But suddenly she saw her hands and thought with a clarity as simple as it was dazzling, “These hands belong to me. These my hands.” Next she felt a knocking in her chest and discovered something else new: her own heartbeat. Had it been there all along?”. (Morrison 167)

Betty Jane Powell argues that “it is Baby Suggs’s ultimate recognition of her own body that allows for salvation” (144).

The recognition of body parts leads the way to a gradual mental awareness; Baby Suggs's speech at Clearance starts pointing out to the fragments of body, the speech then evolves into a manifestation of freedom. At the end of her speech Baby Suggs addresses to a complete individual. This recognition is significant in various terms; it implies the final stage of defining oneself. The corporal awareness of the slaves symbolically stands against the omission of them as individuals.

This omission afterwards takes on a political significance; it conducts the way to Black Americans' defining themselves since they stand in history totally unsung as a race. The origins of omitting the different, finds it bases in a racist society, hence it might be concluded that Black feminism as a theory finds its roots in this omission. Amidst the unpronounced crowd of Black slaves the Black women remain as details of which stories are never articulated.

The slave and the institution of slavery that render historically factual and painful interpretations, acquire a political identity when analyzed from a Black feminist perspective. It might be implied that the slave in this context-as exemplified in Beloved- connotes a retrospective rebellion against the realities that presented an undefined state of race, gender and identity.

Most of Black writing in America expresses this kind of rebellion; the Black literature entails an experience that is specific to the African Americans. Therefore, it might be concluded that the Black literature is a cultural response that "no other group shares". As Walvin also points out; although many other ethnic and racial minorities encounter discrimination no other group was "forcibly brought or enslaved". Most of Toni Morrison's fiction is factual in terms of reflecting this historical record; the trilogy of Beloved, Jazz and Paradise clearly reflect firstly the immediate aftermath of slavery, secondly its extensions

until 1920s, and finally the racist implications that still go until the mid 1970s (Kubitschek 13).

The institution of slavery is ever- present in Black theory and literature; the acknowledgement of a historically rooted and deliberate discrimination against the Black is key to the understanding of most of the Black writing. The making of the slave; as noted above; the processes of physical, mental and psychological subjection and subjugation of the individual appear as recurring themes in the Black writing.

Naturally these themes do not exist as elements to enrich the literary narrative; they stand to be the reactionary manifestations of the Black authors- the descendants of the Black slaves in the Americas. When analyzed in this perspective, the political making of the slave and the institution of slavery is embedded not only into the Black literature but also into the whole body of Black theory.

Notes

[i] Qtd. in Carl D Malmgren. “Mixed Genres and the Logic of Slavery in Toni Morrison’s Beloved.” Iyasere, Solomon O., and Marla W. Iyasere, eds. Understanding Toni Morrison's Beloved and Sula Selected Essays and Criticisms of the Works by the Nobel Prize-Winning Author. (Troy, NY: Whitston Publishing, 2000). 190-203 See also, Margaret Atwood, "Haunted by Their Nightmares". Rev. of Beloved. *New York Times Book Review*, 13 September 1987 (1, 49-50).

[ii] Qtd. in Carl D. Malmgren in the essay mentioned above. For further details see, Terry Otten. The Crime of Innocence in the Novels of Toni Morrison. (Columbia: University of Missouri Pres, 1989).

[iii] All the parenthetical citations of Toni Morrison in this chapter refer to the book Beloved by the author. Toni Morrison. Beloved. (Great Britain: Vintage, 2005).

[iv] Erno, Richard. Dominant Images of the Negro in the Antebellum South (Ann Arbor: A Xerox Company, 1961) 62.

IV. A Black Feminist Analysis of the Enslavement in Sula

4.1. The Framework

> "Oh Babygirl, I ain't namin' off no sin. It just be life that's all. Ain't nothin' happened to you, ain't happened to most women whether they care to admit it or not. You strong, Babygirl. You a woman. You gotta be".[i]

Black Feminism as a theory does not substantially differentiate between the concerns of Black men and women, rather this theory stands in opposition to the White mainstream feminism in its embracing of the Black men and women as the victims of one common denominator; that is race. The Black Feminist reading of the slave in Sula therefore unfolds different layers of oppression; the first one being the racial oppression that is addressed to both Black men and women, and the second one being the sexual oppression that is directed to the Black women.

Such analysis and assertions are inevitable because Sula is a text that reflects a part of Black women's existence in the United States which has not been articulated-and by no means has a chance to be articulated- by the White literati. Sula's significance in this context derives from its being a story told from the Black women's perspective and therefore it should be analyzed from a Black feminist perspective.

Besides of being a fictional depiction of the experiences of Black women only, Sula stands for the necessary Black female voice that is negated from the literary canon. The absence of such a voice is what Black Feminist theory aims to defeat as Patricia Hill Collins asserts.[ii] Obviously one of the major concerns of Black theoreticians has been to write against this kind of negation; and it might be argued that this is one of the reasons why Sula yields itself easily to such a reading.

It is also important to note that, during the slavery and after the abolition the oppression directed to the Blacks were perpetuated. As Henry Louis Gates asserts, slavery

may have been abolished and the racism may have been "splintered into hundreds of fragments" yet it takes in more subtle forms (171). In such picture, Black women are doubly disadvantaged; after the abolition the Black community was shaped under the wills of White hegemony. Not surprisingly the racist and sexist biases are inflicted to the free Black community by the very same White hegemony that enslaved them. Sula is one of the works that courageously argues upon the issues of primarily Black women's and men's subjugation according to these biases.

The variations of slavery and enslavement are significant; slavery as mentioned before refers to the factual slavery in the Americas and the Black slavery in the continental America in particular. However the slavery and thus the slave in Sula refer to the enslavement of the individual by its own community; in other words the slavery in question means the enslavement of Black women and men by and to the adopted roles of the White social hierarchy.

The context how these roles were imposed and adopted is significant; Black men and the Black community assumed the sexist roles of the White supremacy while they were still racially discriminated against. With the acknowledgment of such perpetuated discrimination the Black community of the Bottom could only took "small consolation that every day they could literally look down on the White folks" (Morrison 5)[iii].

The novel represents the story of two childhood friends who find meaning and refuge in each other. Their story is told in the scope of 1919 to 1965, in the Bottom a free Black community. The Bottom, set in the town of Medallion, is a piece land given away to the Black by the White slave owners after the abolition. It is a small and free Black community, yet the racist discourse that prevailed the period of slavery and after is still discernible.

Sula and Nel are both members of free Black families, yet they are from different familial backgrounds. Nel comes from a nuclear family in which clear parental roles are adopted by both mother and father. On the contrary Sula comes from a shattered family where men are only regarded as sexual partners. Their dissimilarity in their familial spaces is embedded in their characters and pretty much shapes their relationships with men in both women's adult lives.

From the moment they meet each other, they form the grounds on which they can define themselves. They spend their early childhood period and adolescence together until the marriage of Nel to Jude. Sula leaves the Bottom only to turn back years later while Nel stays and surrenders to the conjugal life. On her return to the Bottom Sula is not welcome in the community. She sleeps with the men around the town including Nel's husband Jude, and soon after her arrival she is ostracized and excluded from the community. Sula, as a deviant, dies alone and the news of her death is insignificant to the community and Nel discovers the true meaning of her anger for Sula's intercourse with her husband years after her death.

4.2. Psychological and Mental Oppression

4. 2. 1. The enslavement of the Black community

The institution of slavery as often mentioned before in this text has various impacts on the people whom itself has turned into its objects of exchange. It might be argued that, these impacts derive from either the intentions of the enslaving party or; paradoxically, from the dehumanizing process that transforms both the enslaving and the enslaved parties. This is why Sula stands as a politically charged work from a Black Feminist perspective.

From this perspective, the novel has many issues to deal with: White supremacist social system endures through the lives of the characters- both male and female; therefore there is a racial source of oppression that is embedded in the everyday routines of the people

of the Bottom. They are sources of entertainment, they are "harassed" and scorned by the "Irish migrants" or they are tricked to be "tucked up there in the Bottom" (Morrison 5-6, 53).

The White majority's positions as the landowners and decision makers throughout the history of the slavery and after the abolition make them the enslaving party. The political reverberations of such position include, depriving the Black community of the equal dignity in the rights to own the lands they please and the rights to work in the jobs they please.

A clear example is shown in the story of the Bottom: Sula begins with the story of the Bottom; Morrison refers "the way" the Bottom "got started" as "a nigger joke". The land, up in the hills above the valley, was called the Bottom, and this could be only kind of joke the "colored folks tell on themselves when rain doesn't come, or comes for weeks, and they're looking for a little comfort somehow" (Morrison 5) In the end of the novel the reader is shown that the White farmer who promised the land to his Black slave and who gave the "hilly land, where planting was backbreaking, where the soil slid down and washed away the seeds, and where the wind lingered all through the winter" asks for the land back to build a golf course (Morrison 6).

Another example of the persisting White supremacy is shown in the racist hiring policies; Jude, Nel's husband who works as a waiter, wants to work in the building of the New River Road. When his dreams to become one of the workers are ruined because the "gang boss pick[ed] out thin-armed White boys . . . and the bull-necked Greeks and Italians" and not the Blacks he realizes that he is not qualified for the job only because of his skin colour (Morrison 82).

It is striking that the White hegemony, while not hiring the Black workers for the jobs on the fields, or in the mines did not consider the Black unsuitable for the jobs. After all it was the Black men and women who did the harshest jobs on the plantations, or raised and fed the White children. The difference was that the Blacks were not "hired" to be slaves, their

servitude did not bring them any economical gains; yet after the abolition as free individuals their service required payment. It is the racist discourse that frames the preconception that that the Black servitude is unworthy of such payment. The novel demonstrates that it was not until 1965 that the Blacks were permitted to do the jobs that the White did. “It seemed” the “things were much better in 1965”. “You could go downtown and see colored people working in the dime store behind the counters, even handling money with cash-register keys around their necks” (Morrison 163)

As one of the most striking examples of how the racist discourse prevailed after the abolition, Nel’s and her mother’s journey to New Orleans also shows that the Black community is loaded with hostility towards itself as well. In the beginning of their journey, as they rush to the train, by mistake they step into the compartment that was reserved for the White. As soon as they make their way to the compartment for “the colored” they are stopped by the White conductor; “What you think you doin’, gal?”. In such disgrace, Helene recalls the word “gal” as representative of the “old vulnerabilities, all the old fears”. Her reply is filled with “an eagerness to please” and “an apology for living”(Morrison 20).

In the compartment, among all the White faces watching the scene, Nel detects “four of five black faces” that belong to soldiers “in their “shit-colored uniforms”. What surprises Nel in the compartment is the look of the Black soldiers, and even after years when her husband betrays her with her best friend, she sees the same look in his eyes and feels the same deep sense of humiliation. Nel realizes that if her mother, “this tall, proud woman . . . could quell a roustabout with a look . . . then there was a chance that Nel was too”. The train journey to New Orleans teaches Nel about the “humiliations in store for any Black woman, no matter how beautiful or how well-bred she is” (Reddy 4).

4. 2. 2. The enslavement of the Black Female by Her Own Community

> "You can't do it all. You a woman and colored woman at that. You can't act like a man. You can't be walking around all independent-like, doing whatever you like, taking what you want, leaving what you don't" (Morrison 142).

There is a pattern of enslavement in terms of the roles tailored for the Black men and women by the White standards. In other words the Black men and women, who suffer the hardships of slavery in concert, not so long ago, now have their standardized roles in their families and community. Women's living space is restricted with the house; men ache for the manly job ironically forgetting that the slavery that was recently abolished forced them to stay at home, and forced the Black men to do the harshest job on the plantations.

Black women, once enslaved by the White slave owners, are now expected to live according to the standards defined by their White counterparts. In this context; Patricia Hill Collins asserts that this is so because the White hegemony perpetuates its existence through eliminating the Afrocentric characteristics from the Black community.[iv] A significant and frequently given example of such elimination concerns the Black women; Black women are acquainted with working outside the domestic limits unlike their White counterparts. As working outside the confines of the household represents freedom for White women, it is ordinary for the Black women as far as the Afrocentric qualities are taken into consideration.

The societal attribution of such roles to the women has always been an issue for the Black Feminist theory. In very simple terms, the male perspective becomes the domineering source of decision making which is primarily shaped according to the social wills and gains of the White supremacy and hegemony.

Here, the community expects the Black women to fit in the stereotypes that are shaped according to the White standards. Thus, underlying conscience of the community in Sula is

quite different from the one in Beloved. Medallion is near to hostile, while the community in Beloved presents a helping circle, a space for recovery and a place where the ex-slaves can find others to define themselves with.

The Bottom is unlike the communal agent that assists the individual for the recovery from enslavement; rather it is a community that has its rules that are constituted as an extension of the rules of White social system, and certainly imposes its rules to the people in the community. It could be argued that Morrison depicts the Bottom with such hostility to point out to the estrangement that awaits the future of Black community. The concept of community loaded with Afrocentric characteristics is bound to be eradicated as the capitalist dogma subsists in the society; this eventually leads to the estrangement in Black community. It might be argued that the portrayal of the Bottom, as the hostile, vengeful community is a micro projection of what Morrison observes in the modern Black community.

The community of the Bottom indulges in self hatred and self blame, and thus turns Sula into a pariah. Maureen T. Reddy in her article titled "The Tripled Plot and Center of Sula" asserts that, the scapegoating of Sula is an example of characterization of the multiple sources of oppression on the Black women's lives; Sula is blamed for conditions under which she also suffers (14).

This kind of projecting the rage inward instead of the projecting the rage to the source of oppression, as Maureen T. Reddy asserts is a dangerous response to oppression. This is in part because of the assumption that the community of the Bottom has no solid ground to define themselves against there is a lack of common enemy to bind them together because according to them "the presence of evil was something to be first recognized, then dealt with, survived, outwitted, triumphed over", and thus Sula embodies the enemy against which they can define themselves, and become united against and they triumph over Sula only to find that after her death their unity is shattered (Morrison 118).

Her deviance partly derives from what she is and partly derives from what the people of Bottom attributes to her; “a roach”, “a bitch”, “a witch”, who comes back to Medallion “accompanied by a plague of robins”, and even worse than her mother Hannah, not a prostitute but a woman “experimenting” (Morrison 90, 112, 117, 118). The presence of whatever attributed to Sula, in the same line as the negation of the Black female slave in slave narratives written by the abolitionists, stands as the negation of such voice in the Black writing.

However, another reading of the community in Sula is possible; the community of the Bottom share a collective hope; their eventual belief in the hope that the oppression they are subjected to will end one day makes them endure that oppression. Indeed this hope is what “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; kept them convinced that some magic 'government' was going to lift them up, out and away from that dirt, those beans, those wars" (Morrison 160).

Ironically, as the Black subject is negated in the White addressing, Reddy argues that the White subject is negated; it appears in the list only for once. She suggests that the list should be read with the implantation of the White subject; “it must be read into each recurring other”: It is White farmers for whom Black people sharecropped, White people for whom Black women worked as domestics, White people who started those wars, and White people, most damningly, who run the dubious "government" that has failed to "lift them [Blacks] up."

Naturally the Blacks have to have their places, not in their own wars, but the wars of others; Shadrack loses his mind in the war for Whites and metaphorically invents the National Suicide Day; because being born a Black is an eventual suicide, a kind of death that is

imposed on you by the external sources; a kind of death that is imposed on most of the Blacks by the Whites.

Shadrack's National Suicide Day can be perceived as a resistance. Each character in Sula as well as the characters in Beloved, resist to the oppression they are subjected to in a different way. In his insanity because of what he has witnessed in the war, Shadrack invents a festival, ironically named National Suicide Day. In the end of the novel, it gains a literal meaning because the community of the Bottom as they walked "old and young, women and children, lame and hearty, they killed, as best as they could, the tunnel they were forbidden to build" and as they killed many of them died on the ground (Morrison 161). Here, although what they "killed" is obscure, the members of the Bottom die along with what they kill.

This passive resistance, proves that although as a community, they are confined by the laws that are not made for them, and the racist discourse that restricts them they still have something to do; a way to express themselves, something that the sole control of which belongs to them.

4.3. The Other Self and Defining the Self

As Black people are oppressed by the White, the Black women are oppressed by the Black men in a similar way; they are confined in the household duties just as Nel adopts "conventionally feminine role of self-abnegation and self-sacrifice". This paradoxically creates a space in her and "like Sula, tries to fill up space with another, in this case her children" (Reddy 11).

The point that unites the community of the Bottom against Sula is that she is the embodiment of evil according to them; she is the source of many troubles as well as an outcast. This kind of victimization relieves them; "Once the source of their personal misfortune was identified, they had leave to protect and love one another. They began to

cherish their husbands and wives, protect their children, repair their homes and in general band together against the devil in their midst" (Morrison 117-118).

Literally, however, Sula is not the real source of their problems, yet she constitutes the perfect victim to be ostracized and she accords with the expectation of the community in this sense; as Maureen T. Reddy asserts she is “far easier” for the townspeople “to fight against than would be the complex, faceless, virtually unknowable social system of exclusion that oppresses them”. In this context, Sula is the clear embodiment of the White racist social system because her attitude towards them is “White” by their standards (12).

In such a context it is not surprising to see the townspeople clouding what Sula really is, they perceive her without any human characteristics, she is deprived of an identity as a human being; she “did not look her age”, “had no lost teeth”, “suffered no bruises” and even “never belched” when “she drank beer”. (Morrison 115) This kind of symbolic dehumanization is significant because it leads to a point where the object is literally dehumanized.

As mentioned before, Sula’s character is in part constituted through this kind of deprivation of the human characteristics that are attributed to her by the community, and in part through her inner quest for a dependable self. Obviously these concepts are significant in the making of the slave because the community deprives her of her identity and by putting her into a dehumanizing category seals her ways for self discovery and self acclaim.

She is expected to fit in the stereotypes, to be either one of the “sour-tipped needles” who are without men, or the ones whose “sweetness sucked from their breath by ovens and steam kettles” (Morrison 122). Sula perceives their wifehood as their jobs and assumes that they are only “afraid of losing their jobs” because “their husbands would discover that no uniqueness lay between their legs” (Morrison 119). As the rest of the townswomen, she is expected to be a docile wife and a caring mother, yet it is interesting to see that these are roles

tailored for all of them, and assuming these roles with haste, the Black women of Medallion easily ostracizes the one who does not.

Sula has “lived in a house with women who thought all men available, and selected from among them with a care only for their tastes”. As for the men, who gave Sula “the final label”, acknowledge that they are also racially discriminated against, a literal source of oppression, yet do not cease to be a source of another kind of oppression (Morrison 119- 122).

In this context, Sula and Nel represent the effects of internalized racist stereotypes and the multiple oppressions on Black women. Sula can be seen as a “solitary seeker” who is in search of a self, who rejects not only externally imposed limitations but also love and a place in community and thus seals her own ways of growth. Ironically by not fitting in the place the community spares for her, she becomes even smaller in the place that she spares for herself.

She rebels against the “dicta” against sexual relationships with White men and against disrespecting the elderly. The community perceives the sexual intercourse with the White as a violation of the territory of the Black men, forgetting that many Black female slaves were forced into long term sexual relationships with the White, and now in the freedom to choose, cannot forgive Sula for doing this out of her will as if a woman’s sexuality is not her own to control. So “they regarded integration with precisely the same venom that White people did” (Morrison 113).

Maureen T. Reddy argues that, Hannah may have slept with married man or Eva may have cut off her leg for money and even killed her own son, but none of them were ostracized because neither of them “treated community standards contemptuously -- both remained “womanly” (12) Here, Sula’s crime turns out to be her complete disregard of her womanly responsibilities; she chooses to step outside the community and so the community corresponds to her (Reddy 12).

Hannah is not ostracized by the “good women” of the town in the same way as Sula though she is so “nasty” that even the “whores . . . resented [her] generosity” (Morrison 44). Sula takes and “just easily discards” her sexual partners following Hannah’s pattern yet without the sort of affection for the men Hannah was depicted to have. Sula seems to be an embodiment of the evil aspects of Peace women; “Eva’s arrogance and Hannah’s self-indulgence merged in her and . . . she lived out her days . . . feeling no obligation to please anybody unless their pleasure pleased her” (Morrison 118). It might be argued that this is not because she is selfish, rather this is because she is selfless¸ “the first experience taught her there was no other that you could count on; the second that there was no self to count on either” (Morrison 119).

According to Maureen T. Reddy Sula tries to gain a self through completing the gap in her inner core; her absence of a "center, [a] speck around which to grow" (Reddy 8; Morrison 119), and her endeavour is for capturing Nel’s; she tries to do everything necessary including “having sex with Jude”. She confesses with utmost disinterest, she says that she slept with Jude because he “just filled up the space” that was “in front of [her], behind [her] and in [her] head” (Morrison 144).

In order to fill up this space that she feels in her, Sula searches for a self and this is her search for Nel, because “she had clung to Nel as the closest thing to both an other and a self”, and until she comes back to the Bottom, she cannot realize that every city "held the same people, working the same mouths, sweating the same sweat" -- there is no promised land of freedom to look toward (Morrison 119- 120). She eventually learns “that no one would ever be that version of herself which she sought to reach out to and touch with an ungloved hand" (Morrison 121).

Sula’s quest for a self is so deep that Nel’s existence is indispensable in their crime and even in her deathbed. When Chicken Little dies their secret crime becomes another layer

of their identity together. This partnership in crime assigns the roles to them; Sula the restless and Nel the restful. They complement each other and without Nel Sula sinks into deep void in which the void in her becomes rather apparent. Even in her deathbed Sula needs Nel to recount the experience if not to share it.

Sula dies knowing that she is despised by the one she ever loved. All her life, she does not condemn Nel for surrendering to her own truths and has never criticized her because Nel chose to define herself in the way she wanted. Her surrender to conjugal life to find a place suitable for her, substituting her children for Sula shattering into pieces as she loses her husband; all stand as ways to Nel's self definition. Sula does not object to any of it, she maturely respects her friend and accepts what Nel has attributed to her.

Yet in her deathbed, when Nel comes to visit her out of the goodness she defines herself with, this time Sula rejects her attribution. She simply asks Nel that how can she be so sure of her goodness; Sula questions; "Maybe it wasn't you. Maybe it was me" (Morrison 146). However until Nel visits Eva Peace she does not ask herself the same question.

Here, as Sula deeply needs Nel, Nel also needs Sula to define herself. Nel, with the preconception that it is always Sula whose actions should be criticized, does not question any of her deeds. As Eva Peace confuses her with Sula and asks her somewhat mad, if she "watched it" as Chicken Little died or not, Nel realizes that Sula was right. Nel watched Chicken Little as he died, and that made her as responsible as Sula. At this point Nel realizes that she also needs her best friend to define herself (Morrison 168).

As Maureen T. Reddy asserts, Sula's mistake is that she thinks other places could be different from Medallion and the Bottom in ways that would "significantly affect her personal possibilities and of believing that she will be able to find a self by exploring the wider world". Yet she is disappointed with Nel as well; although "Nel was the one person who had wanted nothing from her, who had accepted all aspects of her", and "the first person who had been

real to her, whose name she knew, who had seen as she had the slant of life that made it possible to stretch it to its limits", was now "one of them". Nel became one of the victims that was "touched by the snake's breath" and "they were merely victims and know how to behave in that role (just as Nel knew how to behave as the wronged wife)" (Morrison 120).

Sula's response to Shadrack's "always" as sheer terror, as if it is a statement that condemns her to a "future in which nothing changes" and there is void in her that longs for change because she does not want to live as the women of the Bottom do, "in thrall to male needs, male desires, male rules" as Nel surrenders to be. On the day when Chicken Little dies, she decides that she will have an "experimental life" a life that "she felt no compulsion to verify herself-be consistent with herself" and at twelve she learns that "there was no other that you could count on" and "that there was no self to count on either" Nel, as not being an "other" but a second self, proves her that "a lover was not a comrade and could never be—for a woman" (Morrison 118-119; Reddy 8, 9, 10).

Here Morrison addresses to Sula as an "artist with no art form", whose "craving for the other half of her equation was the consequence of an idle imagination." In this context, Nel becomes Sula's medium to transfer her imagination through, a kind of "material out of which Sula tries to create both a self and a way of expressing a self" (Morrison 121). Maureen T. Reddy links Sula's deprivation of the creative outlet to her status as a Black woman maintaining that Black women's artistic desires and talents were often "driven underground" because of the "hostility of the dominant culture" (10).

Sula is brought up in a community in which a woman's only art is "her domestic work, her care of family and home" (Reddy 10). Nel's domesticity and her self acclaim through her husband becomes one of Sula's experiments; if Nel can find a space to define her self through a male dominant relationship, then Sula is "willing to do the same" and for a little time during her infatuation with Ajax, she begins "to discover what possession was" (Morrison 131). Until

Ajax decides to leave, she feels a way to define herself. She is “astounded by so new and alien feeling” (Morrison 131).

Ironically Sula, for the first time, feels safer by surrendering to fit in the space the community wants her to fit, in home with a “gleaming” bathroom, and the “green ribbon” in her hair, “trying to decide whether she was good-looking or not” (Morrison 131). After Ajax’s leaving she returns to the same searching soul and in spite of her claim in her deathbed that she “sure did live in this world” and her insistence that she owns herself, she “never reaches a self understanding because she has no abiding self to understand nor any way of creating the self” (Morrison 143, Reddy 10).

The individual’s relation to the self, the acclaiming of the self and the sealed ways of discovery is also exemplified in the character of Shadrack. The reason for the void in Shadrack’s mind is the war; it has caused a “divide” in Shadrack that “permanently” separates his old self from what he now is:

> “Twenty-two years old, weak, hot, frightened, not daring to acknowledge the fact that he didn't even know who or what he was . . . with no past, no language, no tribe, no source, no address book, no comb, no pencil, no clock, no pocket handkerchief, no rug, no bed, no can opener, no faded postcard, no soap, no key, no tobacco pouch, no soiled underwear and nothing nothing nothing to do . . . he was sure of one thing only: the unchecked monstrosity of his hands" (Morrison 12).

Maureen T. Reddy asserts that this “definition by negation, with its almost ritualistic chanting of no its insistent affirmation of what is absent, places Shadrack the returning soldier in relationship to his enslaved ancestors” (5). One of the fiercest impacts of the slavery had been the stripping of individual’s past, language, possessions and thus dehumanizing him/her in any respect that could flourish the sense of being. Shadrack’s story could be analyzed as a

modern slave narrative in the way that it is quest for the self, although it might be argued that it has romantic connotations; Reddy insists that he is no “questing figure of romance” rather, like Sula’s quest for her self, it is “complicated by social, political, and economic forces over which the quester has little control” (5).

Nel’s quest for a self is another important point; it metaphorically ends with her marriage to Jude, it also stands for the “crippling effects” of different sources of oppression: Both Nel and Jude are victimized by the racist social system, yet Nel is doubly disadvantaged because Jude perceives the only escape from oppression as “residing in the oppression of other”. They both seem to have internalized the racist and sexist attitudes of the White capitalist society; in which “one’s value as a man is determined by one’s work and by that work’s economic rewards, including the ownership of a woman and children, and that one’s value as a woman is determined by one’s ability to attract a man and then provide that man with children” (Reddy 7).

According to Reddy, in Black writing many writers have attempted to write about this kind of determined, programmatic emasculation of Black men by the White capitalist society; however Morrison’s perspective is different. Men also suffer in Sula, Reddy quotes from James Baldwin, in No Name in the Street, a text contemporaneous with Sula, that “a man’s balance depends on the weight he carries between his legs… the word describes the male, involves the phallus, and refers to the seed which gives life" (64).

Here, according to Maureen T. Reddy, Baldwin bitterly condemns the racism that figuratively, and frequently literally, castrates Black men, and adds that "the slave knows, however his master may be deluded on this point, that he is called a slave because his manhood has been, or can be, or will be taken away from him. To be a slave means that one's manhood is engaged in a dubious battle indeed. . . . In the case of American slavery, the Black man's right to his women, as well as to his children, was simply taken from him" (62).

However the assertion is problematic, while pointing out to the fact that Black men were at the targets of racism, it ignores the ways in which Black women are "multiply oppressed" by the dominant culture and "far more painfully" by their own brothers, fathers and sons. Clearly this is an entire negation of the Black female subject as slaves; Black women were enslaved along with the men and suffered even worse consequences of the institution. Once again, Black woman was "de mule of de world" (Hurston, 60). According to Reddy, this kind of approach to the Black women's history in the United States has done to Black women something close to what war did on Shadrack and what slavery tried to do to all Black people: It left them with "no past, no tribe, no source" (Reddy 7, 8; Morrison 12)

As discussed above, the Black men though they reside in another form of oppression were also subjected to and subjugated by the White supremacy. All the male characters in Sula are shown entrapped in a symbolic childhood and thus having no way for a self discovery. In this context, Sula is significant in showing, with the exception of Ajax, the Black men of the Bottom community, who retreat to women for support but "offer very little support or even acknowledgement in return" (Reddy 8)

Here Nel's father Wiley Wright is another exception among the men of the Bottom who are "in flight from the traditional responsibilities of adulthood", ironically perceiving themselves as proving their manhood. Eva's husband BoyBoy is one of them, he abandons his three children with their penniless mother in the middle of winter only to seek for adventure in the city; on his return to home, brings his trophy, his "symbol of success" a woman in a flashy dress "to display in Eva's yard" while Eva had to give up one of her legs. His name is a "redundant remark on a kind of eternal childhood", and this eventually places him out of the adult life that all the women members of the Bottom community have reached (Reddy 6).

Further down she also notes that his name implies a "racist epithet" because it entails "the circumstances that entrap Black men in an economic dependency that replicates

childhood" (Reddy 6). Interestingly all the male characters in the book are somehow dependant on the female, it creates a paradox in which one can see the monumental position in which the Black male yearns to put himself, and the ironical dependency of these men on the women. For example, the deweys, as Maureen T. Reddy maintains, whose abnormal shortness and stunted emotional and intellectual growth are the novel's most extreme versions of childish men. They are in constant need for a woman to care for themselves; they first expect Eva to mother them and then Sula to provide their food, shelter and clothing (6).

Men in Sula are depicted as neutral agents that transfer the racist and sexist discourse that is imposed on them; without any inquiry they assume the roles given to them and expect the Black women to do the same and thus they lose their selves, identities and become enslaved.

Jude is another character who is in need of a female complementary; the mothering he expects from Nel is of a more complicated variety (Reddy 6). Jude yearns to be involved in the building of the New River Road as a way to prove his masculinity. When his dreams to become one of the workers are ruined by racist hiring policies he retreats into the decision of marriage. Upon his realization that he has no hope for such a work due to his skin colour, Nel becomes a space in which he can feel his masculinity.

Morrison leaves no doubts about his decision of marriage; ". . . it as rage, rage and a determination to take on a man's role anyhow that made him press Nel about settling down. He needed some of his appetites filled, some posture of adulthood recognized, but mostly he wanted someone to care about his hurt, to care very deeply. Deep enough to hold him, deep enough to rock him. . . . And if he were to be a man, that someone could no longer be his mother" (Morrison 82). He needs someone ". . . sweet, industrious and loyal to shore him up. And in return he would shelter her, love her, grow old with her. . . The two of them together

would make one Jude" (Morrison 83). Jude expects Nel to be a part of him, yet he is not willing to participate in with his own self.

However, Nel's motives for marriage are not quite different from that of Jude; she marries him because "she realizes that he needs her; that is she colludes in the eradication of herself in a marriage in which she was meant to be apart of Jude" (Reddy 7). She surrenders to marriage, feeling that marriage can supply her grounds on which she can define herself.

Plum as one of the male characters in the book, regardless of the brevity of his existence in the novel, is significant in the way that his death echoes the infanticide during the continental slavery (Reddy 6). He first stays away from his home to stay away from his past, but he remembers it all the same when he returns home. He is in a futile attempt to forget the present by resorting to heroine; his seek for oblivion draws him closer to his safer childhood memories. Gradually though in his oblivion he returns to his childhood, and in reality he becomes a child again, Eva soothes her in her arms just like a baby before she kills her and Plum resorts in her, his "mama", "she sure was somethin'" (Morrison 47).

Later on when Hannah asks her the reason why she killed Plum, Eva explains that "when he came back from that war he wanted to git back in. After all that carryin' on, just gettin' him out and keepin' him alive, he wanted to crawl back in my womb" (Morrison 71). Eva perceives him as a baby trying to return to her womb, and eventually she kills him because he was "being helpless and thinking baby thoughts and dreaming baby dreams and messing up his pants again". According to Maureen T. Reddy, Eva defends this murder "as an effort to save him", her murder "cuts off his retreat to infancy and echoes the motives behind infanticide during slavery" (6).

Eva's murder of Plum is a striking example of the resistance she shows against the conditions under which she suffers. It might also be argued that Plum, in his own way, resists to the reality he is in. Yet Eva cannot bear to see him giving in, rather she chooses to have

control over what she can control. After all she can not prevent her son from getting insane because of a war that does not belong to them, but she can prevent him from getting weak and enslaved. As Sethe kills Beloved, Eva kills Plum, both mothers prove that they still have something to do rather than to give away their children.

This resistance simply and stiffly reveals that both mothers do not want to see their children suffering as they did. Both Eva and Sethe do not want to witness that their children become slaves and since they have a chance to control, they choose to not to let them become slaves.

Without doubt the symbolic enslavement in Sula is literally bound to the factual institution of slavery. The domination of the powerful one over the weak, the enslavement and subjection of the inferior by the superior is present as a salient case in the novel. Such domination and enslavement, as not brutally managed as it was in the days of slavery, is a subtle form of subjection. Eventually Black women are the first to be subjected by the dominating White and male superiority. Secondly Black men are subjected, as their skin colour still represents a mark that ranks them as less than human beings.

The significance of Sula lies in the character of Sula as well as in the meaning attributed to her: As a novel, Sula puts much light on what is confined in the Black woman's sister talk; the sexuality, men, acclaiming their bodies, giving and receiving pleasure, namely Black women's sexuality. Obviously Morrison aims to develop her story around the center of Sula's character and the how she is a deviant in the community in terms of not only the ways she experiences her sexuality but all the ways she differs from the rest.

The sexual oppression directed to the Black women is in interplay with the racial oppression and thus stands as a way to an ontological if not symbolic enslavement. Such definition of ontological enslavement also counts for the white women when the issue of race

is excluded. Hence this ontological enslavement becomes an issue for a Black Feminist analysis as much as the factual enslavement of the Blacks does.

The enslavement in question clearly follows the same line as the factual enslavement in Beloved: principally it turns the Black women into subjects of both the Black male domination and White hegemony as well as turning the Black men into the subjects of very same White hegemony, next it subjugates the Black women and men; oppresses them physically, psychologically and mentally, thirdly it deprives the Black women and men of possible ways of self acclaim and self discovery, seals their ways for a self definition. In summary, if Beloved could be seen and analyzed as the story concerning the impacts of enslavement of Black men and women together, Sula could be taken as the story of the enslavement of Black women by the once enslaved Black men, and the extensions of racism that endures it in the lives of all Blacks.

Notes

[i] Marilyn Fullen-Collins. “Mama”. Sisterfire: Black Womanist Fiction and Poetry. Ed. Charlotte Watson Sherman. (U.S.A.: Harper Collins, 1994) 6.

[ii] Patricia Hill Collins. “Defining Black Feminist Thought”. Hill Collins, Patricia. "Defining Black Feminist Thought". In: Collins, Patricia Hill, Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment. (New York: Routledge, 1990) 19-40. <http://www.feministezine.com/feminist/modern/Defining-Black-Feminist-Thought.html> (28 Jan. 2007)

[iii] All the parenthetical citations of Toni Morrison in this chapter refer to the book Sula by the author. Toni Morrison. Sula. (Great Britain: Vintage, 2005).

[iv] From; Collins, Patricia Hill. “Defining Black Feminist Thought”. Hill Collins, Patricia. "Defining Black Feminist Thought". In: Collins, Patricia Hill, Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment. (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 19-40. <http://www.feministezine.com/feminist/modern/Defining-Black-Feminist-Thought.html> (28 Jan. 2007)

V. Conclusion

In very simple terms, as a theory, feminism aims to point out to the representations of women in largely male dominated literary history and texts. Feminist literary criticism has been a part of the larger feminist political movement and because it intends to remark on any unjust approach to the women or the representations of women; it is politically charged and expects the readers to be politically responsive as well. The feminist literary criticism focuses on exposing the masculinist distortions and stereotypes in the literary history and texts.

Although feminist literary criticism aimed at such deconstruction, there were critiques regarding the points that feminist literary criticism left untouched. The focal point of critiques that were pointed to the feminist literary criticism showed that, there were problematic issues regarding the definition and acknowledgement of the problems of women as universally White, middle class and Western. In other words, the majority of critiques claimed that the mainstream feminist literary criticism showed no interest in the marginalization and omitting of the women of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Among these groups of women, the Black women in particular, claimed that the limitations of the mainstream feminist literary criticism are sourced from the racist biases that underlie the whole Western literary tradition.

Therefore they wished for the shaping of a new theory and criticism for themselves only. This new criticism would focus on the limitations that White mainstream feminism neglected: Black women were faced with multiple sources of oppression. Therefore the Black women's struggle for a new theory with methods and evaluations specific to the Black women would articulate race, class and gender as multiple sources of oppression. With a theory that acknowledges race, class and gender as oppressors Black women created a political agenda that is specific to the needs and gains of Black women only.

They primarily aimed at bringing forth and evaluating the works of Black female authors that are marginalized from the literary canon and secondly targeted the deconstruction

of the racist and sexist stereotypes of Black women in the White and male dominated Western literary tradition. Theoreticians such as Barbara Christian, Barbara Smith, Gloria T. Hull, bell hooks and writers such as Toni Morrison and Alice Walker used their works to make the Black women's voice heard and acknowledged. According to these writers and many more; the Black women's voice was systematically and deliberately omitted from the literary world. They devoted their work to the naming and reevaluation of the many unsung Black women in the Western history and literature. It might be argued that the recent Black Feminist literary criticism, with the underlying conscience that Black woman should be existent in all fields of academic work, still focuses on the issues of race, class and gender.

As the historical data was brought forth, it became obvious that the Black women were omitted starting from the early days of the first Africans' arrival in the continental America. Even in the slave narratives, the first literary texts regarding the existence of Black people in the Americas, the Black woman was unpronounced. Such negation required the reverse action; and the stories of Black women written by Black female authors as racially oppressed slaves, captives or their depiction as sexually oppressed subjects after the abolition gained importance in validating the female voice and in the deconstruction of the stereotypes.

These texts are important from a Black Feminist perspective in terms of presenting an internalized view of the experiences of Black women as slaves and sexually oppressed subjects. Without doubt the Black Feminist literary criticism, while pointing out to the Black women's existence in history, does not neglect the fact that Black men suffered the subsequent results of slavery along with the Black women. In this context, the institution of slavery and its reflections in texts that it is reproduced in, stands as a key to understand how and why such criticism is necessary, and to what extent such criticism can alter the racist and sexist biases that are still existent in the U.S. demography.

Slavery denotes control, hegemony and exerting absolute power over a group of people and exacting any form of servitude from the subjugated party. Historically, the institution of slavery goes beyond the slavery in the continental America; however the slavery in this continent has many elements that distinguish it from the slave owning societies of earlier periods.

In the continental slavery the issues of race and ethnicity, and the enslaving of a certain race is in question. In this context, the enslaving party is the White supremacy and the enslaved party is the Africans that are brought to the Americas by force. This link serves as a formative element in the slavery in the Americas; the slavery in question aims to enslave only the Black, and the slave narratives, either factual or fiction, reveal that the White deliberately differentiated between the Black and White indentured servants. The White indentured labourers were given the right to achieve their freedom after period of servitude, yet the service of the Blacks remained permanent.

This eventually and automatically posited the Black as the servile class. Afterwards what they received was the unbearable treatment that was nourished by the racist assertions. This treatment included psychological and mental oppression resulted from cruel physical punishments. The enslaved Blacks were reduced to a non human category and were treated as animals. The White supremacy perpetuated this form of treatment as it yielded more and more profit, and the enslavement of the Blacks never ceased.

Naturally Black people reacted to this and resisted in different ways. From the days of Sojourner Truth, Dred Scott and The Colored Ladies of Delaware to the recent Black Liberation Movement the Blacks have sought a way for self acclaim and freedom. Their search included the destruction of complex forms of racism and oppression. Nevertheless as one can see in Beloved and Sula, each succeeded in his/her own way by showing that they still have something of themselves; something over which they can have the absolute control.

As mentioned earlier in the text; such existent consequences of slavery are bound to the institution's ultimate link to race, or at least to colour. In such a context the Black Feminist critic's major concern turns out to be the argument of the racist and than the sexist elements in the academia. Without doubt these elements determined the way Black women are perceived and the way they have perceived themselves. It might be concluded that; as it is implied along the text, the institution of slavery has been the gist of all subsequent preconceptions according to which the Black women and men perceive themselves. Ultimately these preconceptions have been the results of the slavery; and the process of enslavement. This is why; novels such as Beloved and Sula which depict the process mentioned above are of great significance.

These novels present a Black female perspective and thus contribute to the Black Feminist literary criticism on various levels: Firstly Beloved constitutes historically accurate references to the history of slavery, and it represents an internalized version of the Black female slave's experience. From a Black Feminist perspective this is significant owing to the fact that the Black Feminist critic renders great importance to the accurate articulation of the Black slave's history. Secondly Sula forms an example of the ways how the sexist discourse after the abolition became an extension of the racist discourse that subsisted during slavery. From a Black Feminist perspective this link demonstrates the significance of Black women's struggle against racism; it could very well germinate in other forms, more subtly yet tenacious.

In both novels, racist and sexist discourses are prevalent, in Beloved racism stands much more pronounced because of its direct link to slavery; in Sula the sexist discourse persists rather obviously. These two discourses define the concept of slavery and enslavement in Beloved and Sula. The racist discourse that dominates the atmosphere in the former novel

shapes the slave as depicted in Beloved and the latter is shaped according to the sexist preconceptions.

The political significance of these works derives from the fact that either depicting the fierce conditions of slavery or portraying the rather liberal atmosphere after the abolition, racism does not cease to be prevalent. If Beloved can be read and analyzed as the story of how a race is enslaved by the White, Sula can be read and analyzed how a sex is enslaved by the formerly enslaved male.

Though the psychology and politics of the slave in Beloved and Sula seem to be very different and distinct, the pattern of enslavement is similar in each novel. From a Black Feminist perspective, it might be concluded that the enslavement follows a similar path in both novels, and the reactions are distinct; the slave in Beloved and Sula stands as historical and political oppositions to the White writing of the history of Black existence in the continental America.

The slave in Beloved is men and women together acting as one slave in service of the White racist society system of post Civil War America. The segregation, and the legendary figures of the Black runaways are still eminent in this world. The slave, in this context, is the Black women and men who are subjected to the White supremacy as a whole race. The significance of this subjection from a Black Feminist perspective is that; such subjection is needed and supported so that the White hegemony and supremacy could be perpetuated.

In the making of the slave in Beloved; women were eventually doubly disadvantaged, however the White slave owners did not differentiate between the sexes. Black men suffered along with the Black woman, and most of the time the Black and women worked hand in hand in overcoming the impacts. It was in the writing of history of these people when scholars began to discriminate against the Black women. Their stories were unsung until writers like Morrison wrote their stories.

The racist discourse in Beloved equates to Blackness and slavery and the enslaved are not only women but also the men, thus making women and men partners in being the objectives of fierce indications of racism. In this context the slave in Beloved is not only real and factual but also unsung as a nation, entirely silenced, and oppressed.

As the slave in Beloved is linked to the Blackness, the slave in Sula is linked to the femininity. However the slave in Sula is rather symbolical in terms of enslavement. The slave in Sula does not represent a fiction on historical facts but a fiction built upon political echoes of Black Feminism. Contrasting with the silenced slave crowd of men and women in Beloved the slave in Sula is acknowledged but marginalized, she is subjected as well, but unlike the one in Beloved she is not subjected to the White, but she is subjected to the male dominancy- regardless of colour- or the masculine principle.

She is subjugated by men and deprived of identity because she is enslaved, and constricted within the Black male world that assumed the hierarchical roles of the White hegemony. Ironically, in Sula Black men also suffer from subjection and subjugation. They are depicted as childish characters, not accurately defined and named who are in a constant search of self, while still racially discriminated against. In this framework Sula is significant in terms of presenting a free Black female experience in a free Black community. The novel unfolds the reality that freedom does not connote the abolition only; in such a context, abolition stands as just another echo of what is imposed by the White hegemony.

The data in the book regarding the subsequent effects of slavery in the continental America is factual however, the enslavement in question is an ontological one and acts on not only by means of racist oppression of the White to the Black but also by the sexist oppression of the Black male to the Black female. Black male is also entrapped in this scheme; as still being disadvantaged because of the racist policies that the White supremacist social system

applies on Black folks. Here Black men suffer along with women, but not in the same sense as we have analyzed in Beloved. They suffer from more subtle forms of racism.

Obviously the sexual oppression that Black men subject the Black women might be seen analogous to the sexual oppression that White women are subjected to by the White men. However, as one might conclude, this argument of analogy does not substantially reflect that such sexual oppression on Black and White women have corresponding results. Without doubt, the sexual oppression that White women encounter is politically significant; however the sexual oppression that Black women are subjected to has many other political reverberations because of its ultimate link to the race.

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ÖZGEÇMİŞ

22 Mayıs 1981 tarihi, Adana doğumluyum. Seyhan Anadolu Lisesi'ni bitirdikten sonra, Beykent Üniversitesi, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümü'ne kaydoldum. 2003 yılında mezun olduktan sonra Floransa'da İtalyanca dil eğitimi aldım ve ardından Beykent Üniversitesi Hazırlık Bölümü'nde İngilizce öğretmeni olarak çalıştım. 2005 yılından itibaren de Büyükada'da açtığım atölyede seramik çalışmalarımı sürdürmekteyim.

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