

**T.C.
BEYKENT UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE SOCIAL SCIENCES
ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITETATURE**

WOMANISM VS. FEMINISM

MA DISSERTATION

Fatma Esra Güzelyazıcı

İstanbul, 2005

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SUPERVISOR: Ass.Doc.Dr.Gönül BAKAY


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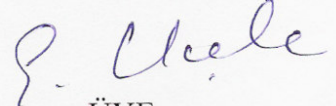
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INTRODUCTION

In this thesis, first of all, I intend to examine in detail the concepts of feminism and womanism pointing out the similarities and differences between them. Then, after giving some information about Alice Walker and Audre Lorde, I am going to give examples from Alice Walker's books *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens* and *Third Life of Grange Copeland*, and Audre Lorde's *Sister Outsider* and *Zami*. In the conclusion, I am going to summarize the important points of womanism and feminism. I chose this topic because I came to the conclusion that womanism is a new term used around the world and is not well-known. There is not any work about the comparison of feminism and womanism. So I decided to indicate the comparison of these two topics.

I intend to discuss the works of Alice Walker and Audre Lorde under the headings of "racial and social discrimination, political conditions, job opportunities and equal pay, the black woman's identity and blackness, family relations, sexism, sexual choice" and will try to find the differences and the common points of womanism and black feminism. I intend to examine the works of the two authors Audre Lorde and Alice Walker. Walker, being a womanist, and Lorde, a feminist, have developed many ideas that contributed to the acceptance and development of the concepts of feminism and womanism. In this sense, I am going to give some necessary information about both authors.

Audre Lorde was born in 1924 and since childhood, she continued to write poems, novels and critical essays. Throughout her life time, she opposed to the oppression by the male patriarchy. She fought against both the sexist discrimination and reaction against gay rights movement. She is the first black woman who published poetry in 1968.

Throughout her life, she involved in many political movements such as the civil right movement, women's movement and gay rights movement. While composing her works, she faced with much oppression, because of her choice of sexuality, her color and her option of feminism and lesbianism.

As Burr points out, Lorde uses the poetry to make people 'rethink and reshape their lives', and while doing this, she uses her life experiences. (Burr 2002: 155)Lorde uses the poetry as a dialogue between the writer and the reader, so that the reader can benefit from the writer's experiences. In addition to this, it is important to stress the differences because if the black feminists want to define themselves, they should accept their differences. These differences concern racism, of course, and racism is not the problem of conflicting races, but the imaginary superiority of one race over the other. The black feminism, according to Lorde, is not against the white criticism, but against the white race. In addition to this, Lorde thinks that the white feminists should teach Black studies, but in an objective way.

According to Lorde, the body relates to the text and as an oppressed person, she relates her body to the texts she writes. She is under the racist oppression, so she reflects her problems in her works. In her prose and poetry, the reader can observe the racism of the white community. Of course, it can be questioned whether her style is beneficial for the definition of black feminism; because the black writing can carry many aspects of African culture, and this can make the writing weird to the ones who are unfamiliar with this culture, so it is hard for the others to criticize. Nevertheless, the embodiment of the writer in the writing affects the ones, who want to break their silences. (Morris 2002: 168)

Alice Walker was born in 1944 and is known as one of the important black American female writers, who has composed a variety of poetry, novels, essays and criticism. Generally, her writings reflect the struggle of the black community and examine the lives of black people, in detail. In her works, she uses the theme of protection of the black community from outside effects and the struggle of the black people, especially the women. Another important theme in her writings is the relation between myth and the African culture. She gives importance to oral stories that are told by the ancestors; because she thinks that they have the same value with the Black heritage. Many of the female characters that she has created have come from these oral stories and these characters have different characteristics; because the oral stories include different kinds of images and myths. As a result, these characters lead us to various types of critical thinking.

Moreover, similar to Lorde, Walker uses the style of dialogue. While criticizing the works of the other writers, she uses such elements to show the racist-biased views of the writer and shares these views with her reader, the black community. Although she generally criticizes the views of other writers, especially the white ones and uses as much as Black themes-slavery, oppression and etc.-, she never rejects white criticism. For instance, her essay techniques are similar to Virginia Woolf's. She examines Woolf's essays and uses them as examples for her feminist criticism. She rewrites her essays, using Southern names instead of the white names. In addition to this, she has written an introductory part for a collection of Black autobiographies and pointed out her fear for writing about women, like Woolf did before. (Humm 1994: 182-186)

Although she is good at writing poetry and criticism, she is best known for her novels where she reflects her views best. She combines the African traditions and culture, with the Southern black migration and romance. In addition to this, with the appearance of the civil rights movement, she has started a fight against the patriarchal norms and reflected her opposition in her works and the black male critics have criticized her for this. (Ed. By Gates, Jr., and Appiah 1993: x)

HISTORY OF FEMINISM

Throughout history, women suffered because of gender discrimination and tried to find a solution to this problem. Starting with Mary Wollstonecraft in the 18th century, most of the female authors in the 19th century tried to deal with this problem by publishing books on female issues; but it was in the twentieth century and with the first wave feminism, that the gender roles were truly questioned. According to Giddens, “gender is the social concept which gives men and women different kinds of responsibilities and social roles.” (112) These roles differ from culture to culture but at the end, it can be observed that women are always powerless, not suitable for certain jobs and usually given inferior positions although they are responsible for the most holy duty; motherhood. (112) These kinds of divisions and inequalities in social life have caused the women to rebel to gain their rights.

Originally, in 1722, U.S. government took to itself The Iroquois Confederacy, as an example for its constitution, and the first roots of female power could be observed referring to that time. (Ed. Mankiller, Mink, Navarro, Smith and Steinem 1982:188) At this period, women had the control, both socially and politically. Clan Mothers had served as advisers, in all tribes and governed the tribe when making decisions about the captives’ conditions, peace agreements, or even in decisions of war policy. They had great roles in the community; they had the right to suggest their ideas about the topics that concerned the community’s esteem. (Ed. Mankiller, Mink, Navarro, Smith and Steinem 1982:118)

Many of the men and women, who came from European countries, had come from male-controlled and racist societies. When women from different continents came

to live in U.S., they had great hopes about raising the standard of their lives. But when they started to work, their skills were replaced by men's skills; so they had to leave their jobs to men. Between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, many female witches were killed to end the control of women and Christianity was spread with the effect of colonialism and imperialism. Regularly, with the changing world, the women's superior situation in U.S. lost its importance and it changed into a struggle for women to cope with racial, social and political inequality. (Ed. Mankiller, Mink, Navarro, Smith and Steinem 1982:190-191)

In the beginning, neither black nor white women, had the right to be present socially. In other words, when compared with men, they could not express themselves verbally or in their writings. They occupied secondary place in society. For instance, they could not even publish their books in 18th and 19th centuries, they either used pseudonyms or male names instead of their original names, so that they could easily print their works. Later on, as the time passed, women gradually achieved to break their silences and started to gain some rights, in society. Moreover, they tried to search ways to have equal rights with men, both in social and political life. Gradually, they achieved in obtaining certain rights, for example they could work in the fields alongside men. While solving the problems of women in the society; politically, socially or economically, the white women, mostly, have had what they aimed; but for the black women or the women of Color, the situation was different. Without doubt, they obtained certain rights while fighting besides white women against male patriarchy; but the race issue presented some problems. They were unlucky; because first of all, they were women and secondly, they were black. As a conclusion, the women of Color decided that they, no more, belonged to

the “feminist movement”, because “feminist movement” did not include their aims, their problems and their anxieties anymore.

African American women’s civil rights movement started in the nineteenth century. Many women, who were educated, established organizations and defended women in the courts. The others tried to register to vote, supported meetings and helped civil rights organizers. (Schenken 1999: 146)

When Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 in U.S.A were accepted as laws, women continued to register many women of color who wanted to vote. The influence of civil rights movement spread widely in African American community and caused other ethnic groups to think about their political and social status in the society. All kinds of people, who were under discrimination, founded organizations to face and solve their problems. (Schenken 1999: 148)

In 20th century, the feminist movement had a great impact on history. It gained strength, and in 1950s, ‘60s and ‘70s, mostly concerning black people, and brought both social and political changes, to women of all colors.

“The early women’s movement gained inspiration from the Black movement as well as an impetus to organize autonomously both a result of the demands for all- Black organizations and in response to sexual hierarchies in Black and white-male political groupings.”(Ed. Hull, Scott and Smith 1982: xx)

Feminism, in other words, Woman’s Suffrage Movement, was truly established when the women struggled against racism, slavery and equal rights, whatever the race, sex or class. Then, in 1870 the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States gave the voting rights to African women and ignored the rest of the female

population. White women were shocked because they thought that they would benefit from the support they gave to African women's struggle; as a result, they reacted to African women and created a new movement amongst themselves. Feminism, in this way, became identified with white women. (Weems 1993: 20)

Feminism, is defined as: a theory that man and woman should be equal politically, economically and socially. This is a general definition for feminism, which everybody agrees on. It is the search of woman to find herself a place in the society other than being a mother or a wife. Friedan believes that the feminist movement has started because of the hatred of man, "...embittered, sex-starved spinsters, from castrating, unsexed non-women who burned with such envy for the male organ that they wanted to take it away from all men, or destroy them, demanding rights only because they lacked the power to love as women." (Friedan 1963: 72)

"I think that feminism is a "full ideology" because it involves an entire restructuring / rethinking of much of what we have experienced in our lifetimes...and even for most of this country's and your country's existence. However, it is also "a movement that permeates political discourse" because it needs that constant outside influence to bring us closer to our goals."(amazoncastle)

Feminism is a wide-broad term, so it has some branches. For instance, Amazon feminism focuses on physical equality and is against the discrimination between men and women, physically. Cultural feminism supports the women's special qualities and accepts the biological differences between men and women. Ecofeminism stresses out the patriarchal oppression over the society. Pop-feminism downgrades men in all perspectives and praises women. "Radical feminism attempts to draw lines between

biologically-determined behavior and culturally determined behavior in order to free both men and women as much as possible from their previous narrow gender roles.”

Because feminist movement is basically concerned with social issues, it is related to other movements, as well. For example, most feminists approve of Martin Luther King’s principles for keeping justice fair in all ways, in life. Furthermore, feminists also deal with civil rights movement, which, without doubt, is the most influential among feminist movements. Because in feminism, in connection with racist issues, gaining equal rights with men is important; but these concepts lead us to the term “womanism” instead of feminism, because womanism is the term for Black feminism, in which racial difference is more important for womanism than feminism. Black feminism suggests that black women are treated in Western countries, among white people who take colonialism as a basis, as secondary citizens.

Furthermore, African Feminist Criticism is another branch of the Feminist Criticism. Like Afro-American feminist criticism, critics focus on the history, politics and white feminist theory. In addition to this, the African Feminist Criticism discusses the prejudice of white feminist criticism of the black writings. For instance, the anthologies that belong to Africans are full of oral literature and carry the specific notions of African culture. Unfortunately, the white feminist criticism lacks a summary of these anthologies because they can be either reduced or misrepresented and the white feminist is not eager to make a criticism on African writings. In spite of all the obstacles that are faced, the African women have continued to write but they are continuously ignored. Moreover, the African feminist women have faced the problem of sexism. For instance, the first African writers were males. The male writers were considered of primary importance. Many

African societies were formed by sexist beliefs, and the women were prevented from education, because it was believed that with Western education, the women would lose their instincts for motherhood, and consequently as a result of their color, the emergence of “future” female writers was prevented. As it can be understood motherhood and fertility are very important concepts for the African women and give them both the consciousness of identity and social status. The importance of motherhood and fertility distinguishes the African women from the white women, and very often the African women discuss these issues in their works.

Another branch of Feminist Criticism is the Caribbean Feminist Criticism. Similar to African criticism, Caribbean critics try to describe the Caribbean females in relation with the Caribbean history and also, The Caribbean literary canon is male-dominated. The subjects that are used by the Caribbean writers are similar with the Black Feminist critics; the writings are generally about race and exclusion from both society and literary canon. (Humm 1994: 189-205)

Since the start of history, it can be observed that the social position of the male and female in society was based on the context of being weak or strong, or powerless or powerful and unfortunately, in these circumstances, women have been forced to take the position of the weak and powerless. “It centrally names women as agents of domination, as potential theoreticians, and creators of a paradigm for social relationships wherein those groups of individuals designated as “strong” exercise power both benevolently and coercively over those designated as “weak”. (Hooks, 20)

The issue of being weak or strong seriously relates to oppression. Either male or female, everybody should think of the desire to dominate as a common trait amongst

people. In other words, whether you are a black person or not, you can be either belong to the group of the oppressed or the oppressor. Although women are the victims of oppression, in some ways, they can be the oppressors, for instance, while dominating their children. For this reason, if we do not resist the potential oppressor, we can not end domination.

Furthermore, feminism is the belief in the idea to end patriarchal domination, first in the family and then in the society and it is the foundation of all other struggles for liberation; because with feminism, people try to change themselves, resist domination and engage in struggles to gain liberation and unless we destroy racism and other kinds of oppressions, we can not get rid of patriarchy.

Moreover, white people or black males are writing about the experiences of black women, as if they are the ones who experienced the oppression. The oppressors are seen as subjects and the oppressed ones, as objects; so the oppressors think they have the right to write about the object; which is the oppressed.

“As subjects, people have the right to define their own reality, establish their own identities, name their history. As objects, one’s reality is defined by others, one’s identity created by others, one’s history named only in ways that define one’s relationship to those who are subject.” (Hooks, 42-43)

The feminist movement aims to end up patriarchy, by eliminating sexism and racism. In this sense, the education comes into the stage, because with education, we can reach a permanent result. One can not help considering that Women’s Studies department in the universities is the foundation of feminism in education. Taking this department as basis, women should show out the development and importance of feminism to the

students; so that the misunderstandings about feminism can vanish. But the most important thing is that, especially black women should set forth their struggles about their positions clearly; otherwise, white women would use Women's Studies as their power institution.

While progressing, more exemplary books of feminism can be given. Betty Friedan's "The Feminine Mystique" is one of the important books which gives details about the issues concerning feminism and casual events that stem from feminism. According to The Feminine Mystique, as Friedan suggests, women do not question their identities. (Friedan, 63) She points out that now on, American women do not respond to the question "Who am I?" as "I am Marry, I am Lisa", they answer it as "I am John's mother" or "I am Mark's wife." It can be interpreted from this point that, women are encouraged to forget their own identities, but they introduce themselves, relating to their social roles. (Friedan 1963: 68) Today, many teenager girls give up their interest for poetry or chemistry, and prefer to attract the attention of boys, or even get married. (64)

Furthermore, in the 1950s and 1960s in America, women faced the problem that has no name. First of all, women thought that there was a problem in their marriages. Many of them went to psychologists to tell about it but apparently, the problem was not sexual. It was obviously the need to fulfill themselves as an individual being. In all advertisements and magazines and etc., the image of happy American housewife was shaken and replaced with many questions that did not have answers.

It is suggested that in the beginning, the problem was seen as the loss of femininity; in other words, it is said that women have become equal with men, they can have education and they are not dependent anymore; so they lack femininity and have a

problem that has no name. But this problem cannot be understood by using general views; it is something different. This problem can not be defined with generally accepted terms by the scientists, doctors or etc. Women who suffer from this problem, have always tried to fulfill their feminine roles which are determined by the society, so they are in the dilemma of either choosing to search for their own identities or fulfilling the social roles.

Furthermore, the girls who married in early ages, even have not discovered their own identities, taken on their sexual roles, as wives; and at the end, these women suffer most because of the problem that has no name. These women do not actually suffer because of their sexual roles, but because of their social roles, which they identify with themselves. In other words, women suffer from not being able to express themselves other than being mothers or wives. They want to fulfill their individual needs as individual beings in society, other than their social roles.

Moreover, the image of woman in society is very important for woman's identity. In the beginning; the woman in the magazines or advertisements is young, childish and feminine. She is in a world of housework, children and bedroom. But later on, this image has changed. The New Woman image is also young; she has a career, she is less feminine. Her relationship with the men is somehow different. She is not a housewife. Her having a career is of major importance for the reader in the magazines; because the reader identifies herself with this woman. For the woman, career is something different because with the career, the woman fulfills, first of all, herself for doing something and being somebody for only herself, not just existing, through or for others.

In addition to this, feminism was considered something ridiculous to believe in. Women, at a time, thought that the ones who defended the idea of feminism were jealous

of men-which is named as “penis envy” and they were such fools that they fought for freedom in work and equality with men, by leaving all their domestic lives.

“In battling for women’s freedom to participate in the major work and decisions of society as the equals of men, they denied their very nature as a woman, which fulfills itself only through sexual passivity, acceptance of male domination, and nurturing motherhood.” (Friedan 1963: 71)

In recent years, women were told to stay at home; look after the children and cook. But men were free to do whatever they wanted. They could work wherever they wanted; they could behave as they liked. But the situation of the women was different. They also needed to work outside the home but were not trained to do so. Their only aim in their lives was to please their husbands and to be protected by them. Surprisingly to say, man was the only model for feminists to take as an example; because they were free human beings. (73) They could vote, have education and could contribute to social decisions. Because of this, sexism had a great importance in the society. But what was the problem for women? Why were not they allowed to do the things they want? The answer was simple: because they were women...

One of the most effective writers of the feminist thought, Bell Hooks, has developed the idea that sexism is the main tool through the way to oppression. In her critical work, “Ain’t I A Woman?”, she underlines that sexism was the most effective tool that the white colonizers brought to the black community, so that they could easily control the black slave women, for their recently-constructed colonies. There was the scarcity of black workers in the colonies; because of them, the black women, whose

numbers were few, were forced to have sexual relationships with both black slaves and white planters to produce new workers for the American colonies.

The attitudes of white people towards the black were so cruel that, in this way white patriarchy could achieve its goal to ‘transform the African free human being into a slave’. (Hooks 1981: 19) The strong and independent souls of African people were destroyed so they could more easily fulfill their roles as slaves. In this process, the white owners destructed the names and identities of the black slaves so that, the African people would not have something in common, culturally and socially. In this aspect, the black women were the ones, who ‘were the “real” victims of slavery.

During the time of slavery, white patriarchy inserted an ingenious system that psychologically, destroyed the masculinity of black males, so that these black people’s familial lives would be corrupted. For this corruption, white male patriarchy used homosexual rape and other forms of sexual violence to humiliate the black male slaves. In addition to this, the rape of the black female by white people was a humiliation to the black male and that event undermines the ability of black man to protect his wife. “Contemporary sexist scholars minimize the impact of sexual exploitation of black women on the black female psyche and argue that white men used the rape of black women to further emasculate black men.” (Hooks 1981: 34)

Furthermore, the devaluation of black women by white patriarchy is still a system that continues to destroy the black community. The image of black women is generally reflected badly as ‘the fallen woman, the whore, the slut, the prostitute’. The reason of this evil behavior towards the black women can be connected to the sexual exploitation of black women during slavery that has not changed completely for hundred years.

Unfortunately, most of the black women have accepted this image of depraved sexual morality and adapted it to their lives.

It can be considered that Bell Hooks is one of the most important feminist critics, who is involved in the feminist movement. Because of this, her works will be useful in pointing out the important issues of feminism. In her another significant book “Talking Back”, for instance, she criticizes the current developments in feminist movement and in some sense draws attention to the changes in it.

First of all, from the first chapter, she makes an analysis of her life, in which women were forbidden to mention their ideas or even to speak. She observes that silence is the best way for women, in a patriarchal society; because this way or that way, women are forced to accept patriarchy. She points out that, especially black women should make their voices heard against patriarchy because they are strongly suppressed by male power. (Hooks 1989, 6) For this reason, mentioning ideas in a patriarchal society is very important for the feminist idea. “Moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonized, the exploited, and those who stand and struggle side by side a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life and new growth possible.” (9)

Moreover, speaking out is not an easy thing to do, and many women hope that they will be listened by the others, and they can say whatever they want. Some women misunderstand the issue that, when they speak out, they instantly gain their freedom. If the society had given any value to black women’s freedom, they would not need to speak out. Moreover, Hooks observes that instead of having good responses to their speeches, black women can even be threatened by others for speaking out. It should be clearly

considered that the black women who speak out to gain freedom will obviously face the ones who will not want to listen to them and insist on ignoring them.

According to Hooks, “systematic dehumanization, worldwide famine, ecological devastation, industrial contamination, and the possibility of nuclear destruction” stem from the discrimination between male and female, in other words, sexism. (Hooks 1989, 19) This kind of notion has led Western white women to attribute these problems, including racism and class distinction, to patriarchy. So, the struggle against sexism is more important than resisting racism and other kinds of domination. Sexism is important in the struggle of feminist movement because it makes the division of strong and weak, powerful and powerless and from this point, it can be concluded that these divisions support the idea that men should have greater authority than women, and should rule over them.

In comparison with feminism, black feminism is another way towards liberation that, especially, black women followed. Barbara Smith was an important name for the black feminist criticism. She named Black feminist criticism and gave it a direction. She decided on some principles to follow. For instance, she thinks that feminist criticism should include the literary history of Black women and the Black women’s politics should affect their works. Smith mentions another problem of black women that, in the literary world, there are hardly any Black women writers and Black lesbian writers. It is obvious that the white people do not consider the Black people important because they do not accept their existences in social life. The experiences of Black people, their struggle, culture and the oppression by the white people are considered as unknown and strange. Moreover, although these kinds of struggles and oppressions have resulted from the

attitudes of the white community, the white people are indifferent to the black womanhood and their writings. This is, of course, a consequence of the denial of the black women's, not only literary works, but also their existence.

To examine the relation of the works clearly, the Black women's writings should be evaluated according to their concepts of race, gender and sexuality. In addition to this, the Afro-American feminist criticism's main concern is to bring out the issue of difference. For example it is much more essential to point out the black women's differences rather to stress an individual, in isolation. Afro-American feminist criticism is different from the other criticisms, because it has been developed from the isolation of literary criticism. And as a conclusion, it focuses on African religions, the African values and cultural norms. The difference between the Afro-American criticism and the white criticism is the Afro-American critics' concerns about the cultural history of the Black women. (Humm 1994: 174-185)

As a result of the ignorance of black people, the Black feminist criticism has created by white women's ignoring black literature and African feminist criticism grew from Afro-American feminist criticism. Until the 1970s, Black women were misrepresented in the texts of white writers. Moreover, the presences of the black writers were dismissed in the literary histories written by men. As a result, Black women critics tried hard to erase the prejudice towards the black women writers resulting in black feminist critics' redefinition and re-arranging of the literary tradition, to include the Black women's writings.

When considering the term "black feminism", African- American women define it differently. According to African Americans, feminism is the belief that women have the

rights to participate in intellectual, political, social, sexual, spiritual and economical activities, equal with men. In other words, feminism creates an ideological and political idea that opposes sexism, which is the fictitious superiority of males' authority over females.

Feminism embraces many issues such as the economic status of women and their limited rights in the field of educational opportunities, racism, employment rights and prostitution. These issues come first in the agenda, whereas gaining the right to vote, political rights for women, public transportation constitutes a secondary issue. Moreover, the marital and family issues are placed in the third stage and finally; women's health, such as pregnancy, sexuality and AIDS are some subjects that are considered as the fourth issue in the agenda. All of these topics are considered by a multitude of people in different regions of the world.

Using the term "black feminism" destroys the idea that feminism only belongs to white women. In this way, the universal thought that feminism belongs to white women is eliminated. Many African-American women challenge the term, because; they are uncomfortable for feminism's being controlled by white women. They do not want to be included in white people's movement so; generally, they choose "race" and give less importance to "gender". "In this situation, those black women who identify with feminism must be recoded as being either non-black or less authentically black." (Collins 1996: 11)

While using the term "black feminism", sometimes women can have problems. For instance, the struggle to gain political rights and economic opportunities are very important for black women. But in comparison with the white women, their search for

personal identity, political identity and the differences of black women seem less important, so black women's ideas are in the second concern. The issues of black women are not seen as the issues of the whole feminist movement and because they only relate to black women, they take less approval. Although black feminist criticism is close to womanism, one can not help concluding that womanism is more preferable; because in black feminism, there is the separation of black female culture, which has more in common with white female experience than the actual Afro-American life.

Furthermore, for a long time, because of the racist issues the Black writers did not pay attention to the white community; hence the writings of the white people have been considered as the true reflection of the African society. But later on, it has been observed that these works include racist ideas and they have lost their credibility. It is important to say that in spite of the prejudices against the black people, black people have achieved to ameliorate their ill conditions in society and the feminist movement played an important role in this development. The Black literature, black criticism and women's studies have developed a lot recently although there are not any political movements to give support to the ones who want to examine the black women's experiences. In addition to this, there is not a certain Black feminist theory to examine the works of the black women and of course, the white women examine the black writings from a racist point of view. As a result, the black feminist approaches for a piece of writing should include both the politics of sex as well as the politics of race and class.

Some works by white women are so full of the racist biased views that apparently, the white women reject the presence of the female identity. Relatively, their ignorance seems to be a conscious act and they do not even try to search for the real identity of the

black woman. Moreover, the black males, similar to the white women, also seem to be stranger to the Black women writers' existences and they do not criticize the Black women's works both in sexual and racial norms, and they are also sexist in their criticism. There are two reasons why the black woman writer is so ignored and not taken into consideration as her male counterpart. First of all, she is a woman and her works are not considered effective enough for the critics to discuss and analyze. The critics do not even try to read the black women's works; they only talk about their lives. And secondly, they are ignored because they are not willing to live under the male control and always criticize the black male's patriarchy; as a result, they are either ignored or criticized in a cruel manner.

Moreover, white journalists made fun of the efforts that black women tried to destroy their "fake" image created by white patriarchy. They mainly tried to entertain white readers with negative stereotypes of black people. According to white patriarchy, white males were right in their sexual assault of black females, because black women were morally depraved that their attitudes caused the sexual abuse.

The sexual assault was so common in both South and North that both black men and women tried to overcome the negative image of the black community and wrote articles in newspapers and magazines, to take action against the offensive behavior towards black females taken by both white and black males. In addition to this, the scholars have argued that the former role of man as a protector was destroyed in the black community during the slavery period-as it is mentioned before-so that black males lost their ability to have their traditional male roles. On the contrary, in both working conditions and educational opportunities, women were discriminated sexually and the

black males, who were eager to leadership roles during slavery, dominated the black movement and shaped it with their views, so that they reflected the patriarchal notion in the movement.

Black feminist movement, in other words, womanism developed slowly because at that time, black women were searching for identity. They tried hard to create a new identity and space in the society because they suffered as a result of black males' oppression and white females' exclusions. The division between black and white women strengthens this exclusion and the reason for the division between black and white women into two is the history of difference. Here, it can be observed that the historical background of black people, who passed the slavery period, has a great importance and can not be missed out. Furthermore, the black feminist movement's perspective should be broadened. "Inegalitarian productions of femininity and blackness in mainstream feminist and African American discourses,....., called for an alternative, competing and un-self-limiting vision from black women." (Allan 1995: 5)

Alice Walker brings a new comment on the issue and examines that the cultural difference of black women should lead to the easiest way to solve the problems and womanism can solve the problem of the difference between the black and white. In an idealistic way, womanism shows the black feminists' ability to re-define the cultural differences between white women and black women. Walker thinks that white feminism is no longer valuable and black womanism is the center of the movement. But another critic, Clenora Hudson-Weems, criticizes the idea of Walker and rejects Black feminism, African feminism and Walker's womanism; because she thinks that it results as the product of white feminism. She discusses that Black and African feminisms are only seen

as the movement which came out with the white patriarchy, and Walker's womanism is parallel with this issue. Walker's description of "womanism" includes "the woman, her sexuality and her culture" and this explanation opposes to white feminism, because Weems thinks that womanism limits itself by only giving importance to "the woman, her sexuality and her culture."

"Womanism" is lately accepted referring to African American women's struggle, to obtain a position in the society; but later on, it has become a symbol for all other women of color who have been suppressed by a sexist and racist system. According to womanism, black men also struggle for their rights in the society. Taking racism as a basis for their treatment, men are also suppressed by white people as women are. In this sense, it can be observed that womanism differs from feminism on the ground that womanism concerns with racism more than feminism.

The main issue in the womanist movement is the protection of black woman's identity and knowledge. Generally, the racial politics towards black issues is obvious. During the struggle in the feminist movement, the black women had achieved to benefit from the government, but when this movement had nearly managed to fulfill its aim, the racial issues appeared and the black people were ignored among the white society. Although black women tried to protect the unity of the race, so for a long time, their voices were not heard. Nevertheless, sometimes Black women who are womanist are criticized for ignoring the reality to protect their race and black feminists, for disregarding the racist views among the white society.

In comparison, in *American Dream in Black and White*", Jane Flax brings us to The Clarence Thomas Hearings. She divides American society into four parts as

white/male, white/female, black/male and black/female, and considers that these groups determine the race/gender issue. (Zack 2000: 201) The issue of being black or white causes inequality, such as white men exclude blacks from politics and the conflict that a black man causes helped Thomas to be an honorary white/male in Supreme Court Justice. Thomas had been accused of sexually harassing Anita Hill and he prepared The Clarence Thomas Hearings to defend himself and referred these hearings as “a high-tech lynching for uppity Blacks” (201) Flax points out that in the first hearing, Thomas used race to prove the equality in American society but other senators ignored him and declined from mentioning the inequality of black people and stood by their belief that there is justice in America and race/gender is not a problem. (Zack 2000, 201) And also, they continued to impose the idea of patriarchy to the society.

Furthermore, in *What's in a name? Womanism, black feminism, and beyond*, Patricia Hill Collins searches for the meanings of womanism and black feminism, criticizing the struggle of women. (Collins 1996: 9) Collins figures out that in 1980s and 1990s, African American women decided to make themselves heard among others, and announced their so-called black womanhood. With this development, they have aimed to “talk back” about their lives and experiences, and created a standpoint for themselves.

Moreover, recently, black women, have had the right to express themselves; but still, there are conservative institutions, like universities or colleges; although black women's works are appreciated, they are prevented from speaking out. Here, one can conclude that the oppressive society seems to accept the existence of African American women in their “institutional policies and arrangements”, but accurately, it tries to exclude African-American women from taking part in decision-making mechanisms.

(Collins, 9) In addition to this, with the aim of limiting African American women's right to express themselves, the oppressive society intimidates African American women by omitting their critical works.

The increasing freedom of expression for black women presented them with a new challenge; they could not decide whether to name themselves "womanist" or "black feminist". Alice Walker defines "womanist" as "a black feminist or feminist of color". Both feminism and womanism are similar terms and have little difference between them; because of this, many African American women define feminism and womanism from different points of views. Black feminism is sometimes referred to as "womanism" because both are concerned with struggles against sexism and racism by black women who are in the black community.

While distinguishing womanism and feminism, in other words, black feminism, it is obvious that many African American women prefer being womanist to being feminist and Alice Walker has observed this issue. Walker deeply examines "womanism" and suggests two definitions. First of all, Walker draws attention to the fact that womanism stems from the racial issues and gender oppression, but on the other hand, Walker emphasizes another meaning which is the term "womanish". In another aspect, "womanish", related with womanism, is used for the girls who want to know more, and to be free from confining limits. "Womanish girls" act freely in courageous ways disregarding the limits that white women have set for them. Womanish girls are eager to learn more than what is determined for them to learn. They are responsible and serious in their actions although they act freely.

While Walker examines the term “womanish”, it is clear that womanism is superior to feminism, because womanism believes in the equality of different races. The experiences of black women, differ from whites; so according to them, being womanist is superior to feminist. Although womanism, in some aspects, is close to feminism, it can be clearly observed that black women’s ideals and white women’s ideals are different; and because of that, black women are “womanist”, white women are “feminist”.

The word “womanish” refers the belief that white women and black women can not share the same rights in the society because white people always try to impose a system of white morality and patriarchy. On the other hand, black people support the idea that because of their suffering, black morality is superior over white morality. The term womanism suggests a distinguishing aspect that examines gender issues within African American communities. It brings both males and females together and supports the wholeness of entire people, but gives importance, mostly, to race.

When one compares feminism with womanism it is obvious that, womanism is more concerned with racism and white oppression. It simply refers to black feminism. The term was created by Alice Walker, who is a strong fighter against white oppression. Generally “womanism” is concerned with the racist issue and class-distinction. Its roots reach down to the enslavement of Africans at that time and cultural background of Africans. In womanism, being a person of color is important; because womanists believe that black women are capable of struggling against difficulties as they were used to do so during enslavement.

Alice Walker has determined three main principles for the womanist action. The first one is audaciousness, in other words, women’s rebellion against oppression. It is

important for African-American woman to defend herself against the unequal conditions in the society. Audaciousness has become an important behavior for womanists. “As a means of overstepping boundaries in familiar often familial, settings, womanist audacity becomes in the wider social context an unbidden demolisher of arrogant authority.” (Allan 1995: 11)

The second important principle is woman-centeredness. With woman-centeredness, Alice Walker aims to draw attention to the fact that the black womanhood is very important because it supports the self-confidence and close relationships of black women so that their power to search and protect their identities will be increased. The black woman is important, because she is black and oppressed and limited to live in certain circumstances; so she is the carrier of her own culture. “Woman-centeredness mirrors to the womanist the fragmented world around her and the need to seek connection.” (Allan 1995: 12)

The third important principle is wholesomeness. It is observed that to end oppression in society, unity in Black community is important. As it has been mentioned before, black history is full of psychological and physical abuses by the oppressing patriarchy and because of that, black people insist on their unity in spite of some divisions among them. It is suggested that in wholesomeness, the unity of self and Other is essential; in other words, Afro-American women should both adopt their African and American identities and keep it in one body.

Furthermore, one can not help considering that Hudson Weems’ definitions of both “Africana Womanism” and “African Feminism”, which are originally connected with womanism, are very efficient in defining the concept of womanism. One can not

help supporting the idea of “womanism”; because one finds it more effective than “feminism”; it embraces the whole female gender, especially the black women; because, one thinks, they are the ones who need most help to overcome their problems. According to Weems’ definition, first of all, Africana Womanism brings a new dimension to all forms of feminism. The term embraces both ethnicity, gender, and criticizes “the conflict between the mainstream feminist, the Black feminist, the African feminist, and the Africana Womanist”. Africana Womanism is composed of two words; “Africana” refers to the ethnicity of the woman considered, which is -African-. “Womanism” refers to the discussion of womanhood. Africana Womanism is not Black feminism, African feminism or Walker’s womanism. Africana womanism is a theory for the benefit of all African women. It focuses on the experiences, struggles, needs and the aims of African women and it criticizes the mainstream feminist and the Africana womanist. As a conclusion, the Africana womanism is different from both black feminism and white feminism and also, Africana womanism differs from African feminism. (Weems 1993: 17-24) Many Africana women have rejected feminism for several reasons. First of all, their aims are different; secondly; Africana womanism is something different; so Africana womanists want to define it as a separate term. Then, the struggles and the problems of the feminists are different from Africana womanists. And finally, Africana women do not approve of the way that the feminists touch on the issue of “racism”. Race is the most important issue for the Africana women. Africana women have been always under the racist oppression and it is obvious that the struggles and the experiences of the Africana women are different from white women’s. Moreover, in contrast to white woman, the Africana woman is pictured as the poor, struggling and weak. Obviously, Africana Womanism is

African-centered and encourages all African women. It focuses on the experiences, struggles, need and desires of the African women. As a result, they have to fight against racism, capitalism and patriarchy but the white women only struggles with capitalism and patriarchy. In the mainstream feminist's movement, the aim is to gain equal and individual rights with men, so in a way, mainstream feminist sees her male partner, as her enemy; whereas, the situation is different for the Africana womanist. His presence gives her strength; because both Black women and men share the same destiny and they support each other to gain freedom.

Moreover, Africana Womanism considers the lives, struggles and experiences of African women, so it primarily focuses on African culture.

The underlined descriptions of womanism below show out some main principles of womanism. Womanists believe that motherhood and family wholeness and relations are important, as when the lines above are taken as a reference; but feminists' ideas about these concepts are different. Feminists believe in freedom, both at home and among men. The descriptors underlined below are some of the aspects that feminism puts into second consideration.

“The Africana womanist is 1)a self-namer; 2)a self-definer; 3)family-centered; 4)genuine in sisterhood; 5)strong; 6)in concert with the Africana man in struggle; 7)whole; 8)authentic; 9)a flexible role player; 10)respected; 11)recognized; 12)spiritual; 13)male compatible; 14)respectful of elders; 15)adaptable; 16)ambitious; 17)mothering; and 18)nurturing.”(Reed 2001: 168)

In this quotation, it can be clearly observed that, the Africana womanism carries the most important features of the woman's movement; and below, I am going to try to

explain some of these features in detail, because it is obvious that these concepts are of major importance.

First of all, in Africana womanism, the naming self-namer is very important, because with the naming, the action of struggling against oppression comes into being. Africana woman identifies herself and her movement and is conscious of her fight for freedom. The Africana womanists give a different name to their movement, because they try to distinguish their movement from the white woman's movement. They had even named themselves as mother and companion in the slavery period, although they were named as "breeder for American society". Although the Africana womanist had to stay away from her children, she never lost her identity as a black woman; in spite of the white owners' control over her.

Self-definer is another feature of the Africana womanist. She has always defined herself as Africana womanist, whose history and culture are different from the white master's. She has always included the African cultural experiences and African ways into her life, and she always defines her own reality according to her culture; because she gives great importance to her African culture and experience.

Family-centered ness is an important characteristic of the Africana womanist. Unlike feminists, she is more concerned about her family, her husband and etc. than herself and her sisters. When it comes to the concern for the survival of her family, her family is her priority; she is so self-sacrificing; whereas, feminism is self-centered the woman's own self is more important than other things. The Africana womanist's concern is different from the mainstream feminist's; because the Africana womanist's conditions are different from the white one's. The Africana womanist is in the trap of race, in

addition to sex, and her struggle is not just to reach her freedom as a woman but also as a black person. In order to gain her freedom as a woman, she has to, first of all, gain her freedom as a black person and in this sense, she can not be selfish to think of only herself but not her black brothers. Until her entire people are free, she is not free. She is giving such importance to the family, because if it is observed historically, the black woman was always forced to work outside her house, away from her family, in the fields...When her situation became better, her male counterpart could not find work, she had to work. "Therefore, unlike the feminist, who discourages emphasis on the family if it 'becomes an instrument of oppression and denial of individual rights', the Africana woman is less inclined to focus primarily on herself and her career at the expense of the family and its needs." (Weems 1993: 60)

Sisterhood is very important among the Africana women. They are emotionally bound to each other; they can criticize each other and always try to do the best for their sisters. They give and receive equal love among each other, and whenever one needs help in her confusion, they, all, try to evaluate her problem and find a solution. In Africana women's relationships, their relationships do not include a sexual dimension; their sisterhood can be defined as asexual. They only focus on understanding and supporting their sisters.

Generally, it is considered that the strength of Africana women comes from a different aspect, because throughout the history, Africana women had struggled much and they had to protect themselves from the cruelty of the white master's torture. In addition to this, she has witnessed the inability of his male counterpart, because he has been taken away from the family and made to work in the fields or other places. As a

result of this, the Africana women have had to take the place of the man and played the role of husband and wife, mother and father; consequently, Africana womanist encourages her sisters in their struggles and shows respect and love.

Moreover, The Africana womanist is in alliance with the males, because both Black women and men share the same history, of slavery and torture. As it has been stated before, the most important aim of Africana womanist is, first of all, to achieve the liberation of all Africana women; so she does not object to being on the same side with Black men, as mainstream feminist. “For the White feminist, separation from the male sector, psychologically, emotionally, and/or physically, as a survival strategy is essential in order for her to become whole.” (Weems 1993: 62)

The Africana woman includes both wholeness and authenticity in her life. Unlike feminists, she sees her family, her career and her home as a whole and never rejects one for the other. As it has been mentioned before, for the Africana woman, the family has primary importance; but the factors are also needed to protect the peace of the home. Moreover, The Africana womanist is not a whole without his male partner as he needs a female counterpart. Both are essential for the survival of the human race. Africana womanist’s thought of wholeness comes from her cultural consciousness. According to her, her thoughts, her actions and her aims should carry the traces of her culture.

Another characteristic of the Africana womanist is flexible role-playing. This role playing goes back to the slavery; because at that time, the Africana women had to act the role of both Africana woman and man’s roles. The Africana men did not experience the role of homemaker; in a traditional patriarchal system, the male is supposed to earn the money and become the head of the household, but for Africana man, the situation was

different because he was forced to go to work by the white race. As a conclusion, the Africana women had to play both his role and hers.

According to Africana woman, respect and recognition are very important; because in order to achieve her goals, she has to be respected and recognized. If the Africana woman lacks self-love with the oppression of the white patriarchy, then she feels herself worthless and this negative image makes her disrespected and abused by her male counterpart. Obviously, sexism is not a major problem for the Africana womanist, but racism is the most effective one and causes poverty, crime and death. Consequently, whatever the reason is, the Africana woman has to make herself and her people respected and recognized, especially, among the white society in order to be effective in the Africana struggle.

The spirituality is very important for the Africana woman because she believes that there is a great power and she is conscious of the spiritual reality which makes her soul richer. While making her everyday decisions, she uses her inner spirit or mind. In the health area, she uses the folk medicines and uses her spiritual power to cure the illnesses. Moreover, she is connected to the spiritual world and in African culture; both spiritual world and physical world exist together.

The Africana womanist is in good relationship with the Africana men which is the positive male companionship (male compatible). Both the Africana women and men support each other and this notion is an important part of the Africana family. They both need each other both emotionally and for survival because; they try to reach their freedom in the same way. As a conclusion, they do not reject the other's presence

because this can cause racial deprivation. Consequently, the Africana womanist is in search of a positive male/female relationship.

According to Africana womanism, motherhood and nurturing are very important. In the Africana culture, the women give so much importance to motherhood; the mother commits herself to loving and caring for her children. In order to protect the concept of “family”, she tries her best. She sacrifices herself for her children and her family so that she can protect the Africana culture.

What makes Africana womanism different from any other female-based theory is that black women give importance to their unities and they are unique with men in their struggle against white patriarchy. They understand each other’s problems because they come from a communal past, so that both black women and men support each other. Africana womanism is different from other female-based theories because, in Africana womanism, women are inseparable from men in their struggle, because they both struggle equally in the society against white patriarchy. Moreover, the choice of the term “womanism” for this theory is important because this term plays a more specific role while describing the issue. Because when we use the term “woman”, and by extension “womanism”, we specifically refer to the female of the human race, but on the other hand, when we use the term “female”, we can refer to only a member of the animal race, as well as to a member of the human race.

Moreover, Africana womanism combines both racial and sexual issues, but stresses the importance of being woman, not as a sexual being, but as a human being. Africana womanism is composed of many aspects more than any other kinds of feminism because it, in every way, shows out the difficulties of oppressed people and their

suffering. For instance, Africana womanism is much more related with the issues of European-originated women, so African womanism embraces more regions.

In addition to these arguments, it is important to mention the views of Hudson Weems. According to Clenora Hudson Weems, women should improve their present conditions, but feminism is not suitable for it. It is not important to support a kind of feminism; cultural feminism or lesbian feminism or etc. Everyone can believe in whatever she/he wants, but if the women exclude men from gender issues which also include them, the struggle for freedom will not work out. Men (black) are also oppressed by the white patriarchy so Reed believes that feminists are wrong in trying to keep out men from gender issues. (Reed 2001: 171)

Furthermore, it can be clearly analyzed that the notion of “Africana Womanism” has nothing to do with Alice Walker’s “womanism”. According to Walker, “womanism” is like “Black feminism or feminism of color.” So that, Hudson-Weems’ idea of “womanism” distinguishes from that of Alice Walker’s. Consequently, Alice Walker’s description comes closer to feminism, whose principles are different from womanism.

Considering both feminism and womanism, it is obvious that the most important place belongs to the Black women. Because throughout the centuries, starting from colonialism, up to that time; both men and women had great difficulties; but women had the most difficulty because they were simply “woman”. Because of that, they were both suppressed by white people and black men.

“Because of white women’s racism and Black men’s sexism, there was no room in either area for a serious consideration of the lives of Black women. And even when they have considered 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."(Ed. Hull, Scott and Smith 1982: xxi)

A) Racial and Social Discrimination

In her critical work, Alice Walker stresses out in detail the racial discrimination in society. Being a major womanist writer, she gives great importance to the racial conditions. In her work, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*, first of all, Walker points out the wrong attitudes of white people towards black community. In one of her essays "Saving the Life that is Your Own", she underlines that American literature lacks black women writers' works. She happens to search for a voodoo book, but later on she finds out that only some white writers, who are already racists, have written about the subject, and even dared to question the size of the brain of Negro: 'did the Negro have a large brain to think?' This is an insult for the black community and for this reason; Walker questions the black community for the lack of black writing:

"Well, I thought, where are the black collectors of folklore? Where is the black anthropologist? Where is the black person who took the time to travel the back roads of the South and collect the information I need: how to cure heart trouble, treat dropsy, hex somebody to death, lock bowels, cause joints to swell, eyes to fall out, and so on. Where was this black person?" (Walker 1984: 11)

Walker progresses in her book, depicting white oppression over black society. From her own experiences, she informs that she had rejected the belief in Christianity, because she believed that this religion was used by white people to impose their thoughts and ideas; and because it was noble and simple, Christianity was not rejected by black people. (Walker 1984: 18) Walker emphasizes that today still black people imagine a white "God" in their minds and can not think it the other way round. "...their lives testify to a greater comprehension of the teachings of Jesus than the lives of people who

sincerely believe a God must have a color and that there can be such a phenomenon as a “white” church.” (Walker 1984: 18)

In the book, in her essay “But Yet and Still the Cotton Gin Kept on Working...” Walker gives some examples from her life experiences about racial discrimination. A letter was passed on to her by one of her friends by chance and, the lady has told about her experience about racial oppression. In the letter, the woman tells that because she is a good worker, she is forced to leave her house and work for the white folks. (Walker 1984: 23) But when she rejects this offer, she is accused of stealing a cow. In this sense, Walker wants to emphasize that white society sees black people not as human beings but as objects, and uses black people for work.

Moreover, this young lady witnesses some evil events in Amite, where she lives. One black man is shot because he doesn’t sell his timber. The white people go to his house, draw him to his car and put a knife behind him. When he tries to run away, he is shot.

“One of the Negroes asked Mr. Wiley (the sheriff) “what are we going to do now?” he said, “there he is take him and do anything you want with him.” All of them had guns of all kinds and we didn’t have no protection at all, when we picked him up the blood ran out of him like water through screens.” (Walker 1984: 23)

In the lines above, Walker tries to mark the cruelty and ignorance of the white race towards black people. The writer of the letter, in detail, relates the cruel attitudes of the white people to colored people and reflects the importance of the situation. In addition to this, another man is shot at the cotton gin, but nobody pays attention to him. The witnesses are made to forget what they have seen but one of them tries to testify

what he has seen, and at the end, he is shot. One can not help observing that with these two real-life events, Walker tries to draw the attention of the reader to the fact that white people see themselves superior to black ones, so they think they have the right to do whatever they want to black people, -even have the right to kill.

Furthermore, Alice Walker, when training the teachers at the new Headstart Friends of the Children of Mississippi, observes the thoughts of white people towards the black ones and concludes that the white women do not even dare to pronounce the word “black”. (Walker 1984: 29) Moreover, they reject the fact that they behave cruelly to the black people, and refuse slavery and lynching. In this anecdote, Walker, again, tries to make the reader believe that white people see themselves right in behaving cruelly to black people but never accept this fact.

In this important work of her own, Alice Walker has also dealt with the issue that also black people are ignored, in the area of literature. She finds out that many white people do not know about the black women writers. She tells that only a young black poet knows *Their Eyes Were Watching God*; because it was written by a black woman writer and her experience is not worth to be considered significant. (Walker 1984: 6) In addition to this, in Walker’s essay, Toni Morrison adds that she tries to compose works which she would like to be read because, she knows that almost every work of literature is written in racist and sexist manner, in which the lives of black people are humiliated. They appear ‘equally shallow, demented, and absurd.’ (Walker 1984: 52) These kinds of features are imposed on the lives of the black people, so black people feel themselves forced to adapt to white community’s prejudiced views. In the book, Alice Walker gives a simple example from her mother:

“She could not even bring herself to blame “them” for making her believe what they wanted her to believe: that if she did not look like them, think like them, be sophisticated and corrupt-for-comfort’s-sake like them, she was nobody. Black was not a color on my mother; it was a shield that made her invisible.” (Walker 1984: 124)

It could be definitely concluded that with the developing black community, blacks and whites have started to come together and accept each other’s race. As Walker points out, of course there have been many problems in this situation; because some of them still did not adapt to the condition. Walker gives an example from her life pointing that her own marriage with a white Jewish lawyer was not accepted, because it was an interracial marriage. But interestingly, the black community accepted this white Jewish lawyer. (Walker 1984: 192) Moreover, Walker stresses out that there is hatred towards the woman of color who marries with white man; because in the black community, there is the prevalent belief in the strife ‘to preserve the race and culture’. (Walker 1984: 315) In this way, the range of the choice for marriage is narrowed.

As it is stated before, there seems to be a great development both in the black and white communities for the better. Once, some black people had gone to North, to earn money and to have better life conditions, as Grange has done in *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*. As Walker states, recently, the ones who had gone to North for better opportunities, have returned back and, the ones who had decided to leave South have changed their minds. Walker attributes these changes to the advancing social changes such as better jobs, changing attitudes towards the blacks in a better way. Now, black people can oppose the brutal behaviors towards them, and many administrators try to prevent these behaviors, because they do not want to destroy their ‘progressive image’.

(Walker 1984: 168) Black people can vote and they can be elected. And finally, there are no more signs for black students as in the past barring them to enter schools. (168) Looking from a different point of view, it can be observed that this kind of development may have been dangerous for the black movement; because I think that in some ways, black movement may have lost its strict determination for the struggle, 'to exist'. In the following statement, Walker supports this idea: "We forget white people have been calling us 'gorillas' for years. They probably think they are right, now they see us on TV doing it to ourselves." (Walker 1984: 188)

Walker underlines an unpredictable event, taking place not in U.S.A. or in Africa, but in Cuba; black people having better life opportunities are possible for them there. In one of her visits to Cuba, Walker has observed that before the revolution in Cuba, the black people were unequally employed and they could not reach to higher positions. But now, because education is free, they can advance in their jobs. Moreover, surprisingly, Walker notes the unity of races in the society in Cuba. (Walker 1984: 210) She examines that in the schools, there are many races: black, white, yellow or brown, but there is the unity of all these races; they don't see themselves as black or white, but as Cuban. "Color remains, but beyond color there is a shared *Cubanness*." (210) Black people in Cuba had participated in the revolution, but never felt that they lost their identities by identifying themselves as Cuban; on the other hand, Walker indicates that many black Americans have found it hard to identify themselves as 'American'. Walker highlights that black Americans are so different from Cubans, because they can not identify themselves only as "American", but as "black-American." She tells that when she introduces herself as "black-American", everybody gets shocked, in the school in Cuba. "For the first time

they seemed aware of color differences among themselves-and were embarrassed for us.” (Walker 1984: 212) These people had been “Cuban” and did not need to separate themselves into categories, based on race. In this situation, Walker reflects the black people’s racial categorization of other communities.

In another important work of Walker, in *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, Walker continues to point out the racial issues. In the novel, the reader examines the relationship between the white master and the black worker. It is observed that the relationship, from the perspective of a child, is very effective. He observes that his father is expected to act as according to the master’s orders. Even the appearance of his master makes Grange uncomfortable and keeps him still.

“For when the truck came his father’s face froze in to an unnaturally bland mask, curious and unsettling to see.....A grim stillness settled over his eyes and he became an object.....Some of the workers laughed and joked with the man who drove the truck, but they looked at his shoes and at his pants legs or at his hands, never into his eyes.”(9)

One can not help observing that this passage shows out the strict oppression of Grange and his friends, by their white owner. Grange seems frozen when he sees Mr. Shipley, the master, and feels a great fear towards him because he thinks Mr. Shipley is superior to him.

Moreover, Brownfield, witnesses the silence of his father. He can not understand why he is so silent. He tries to discover what makes his father so silent towards the white man. He looks at the man; he is like his father except for the color. Ironically, Brownfield has not noticed this difference before, because it is a casual event: the white master and the black worker. (Walker 1985: 8) In addition to this, the writer directs the attention to

the fact that the black worker is so submissive and obedient that he should speak respectfully to his master. “While he stared at the hair one of the workers-not his father who was standing beside him as if he did not know he was there-said to him softly, “Say ‘Yessir’ to Mr. Shipley.” (9)

“Brownfield as a boy is puzzled at how the white man who drove the truck could turn his father into stone, and his young soul is filled with terror of this man....As if harnessed by that childhood memory, the man Brownfield does not even maintain his father’s stony silence before the boss.” (Ed. Gates, Jr., and Appiah, 1993: 57)

Furthermore, Brownfield experiences the same event with his father. His master, also, orders him to work for his son. Of course, Brownfield does not want to be under the control of the white patriarchy; but as his father, he has to accept and this event reminds him of his father.

In addition to this, throughout the book, it is stated that all the black people belonged to white masters; so that white people had the right to interfere with the family relations of the blacks. For instance, it is underlined that the black people, especially the women, do not have the right to live their own lives. The children belong to the white master. When they come to a certain age, they go sharecropping. Brownfield is aware of the event. He knows that his daughters will not ‘be a fine lady and carry parasols and wear light silks.’ (Walker 1985: 54)

It is stated in the book that black women have the influence of white patriarchy in their lives. (Walker 1985: 55) Brownfield assumes that his wife, Mem, does not need to take care of herself and she does not do anything, as if she is ordered not to take care about herself, by the white patriarchy. Actually, Brownfield feels it is the white man’s

belief that women should not take care of themselves and because he resents this, he does not want his wife to take care of herself. But the white men always have the right to make the black woman work for them and to have sexual relationships. As it is underlined in the book, Walker shows out that the white patriarchy has a great influence over the black people, and black people can not act freely. Unfortunately, the black man can not defend himself and unwillingly accepts the control of the white people. For instance, in the novel, Brownfield symbolizes the man that admires white women but never wants his wife be like them. He reminds her that she is not white and she cannot change her color. In spite of this attitude, Mem never thinks that she is inferior because of her color; she sees it 'was something the ground did to flowers.' (58) Moreover, from a perspective of a child, Daphne, the writer calls attention to the fact that the white people are seen as cruel creatures by black people, even little children. (119) Daphne sees white people as ghosts because of their colors and thinks that they belong to a horrible God because they have bad attitudes towards blacks. She finds these people strange because her world is limited to blackness, darkness, so she is afraid of the other world she does not know about.

In the novel, Walker emphasizes the different attitudes towards white people. There is difference between the views of old and the new generation. As it is stated in Walker's fictional book *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*, when the generation changes, the views towards white people change. Interracial marriages among white and black community take place. As it is marked in the novel, there are differences between Ruth's and Grange's opinions. In one of their conversations, Ruth can not give a meaning why her grandfather never liked the white people. Her mother had let her play with white

kids. (Walker 1985: 138) But Grange never lets Ruth play with the white children and tries to impose Ruth on the ideas that the white people are violent, that they have brought Africans to America and beat them and made them slaves. “They are evil. They are blue-eyed devils. They are your natural enemy.” (Walker 1985: 138) Here, one can not help regarding that the attitudes of black people against whites were stronger for the older generation. In this sense, Grange becomes a teacher for Ruth, because according to Grange, Ruth does not know about the real white people and he has to teach her. But in the proceeding generations, Ruth becomes the teacher of Grange. (Ed. Gates, Jr. and Appiah 1993: 69) In this conversation, Walker tries to emphasize differing ideas of black people. One can not help examining that, one sentence, that Grange used, summarizes the main reason behind his thoughts. “They killed your father and mother.”(Walker 1985: 139) In this sentence, one may conclude the bad influence of the white patriarchy in the lives of black people. Grange points out that metaphorically the white people killed her parents because they had a negative influence in the lives of black people, in a way they control their behaviors; they cause them to behave cruelly to their wives or struggle in bad life conditions. Their struggles for a better life, their search for their own identities are the result of white patriarchy; because of that, Grange hates white people. But considering Ruth’s generation, the situation is different; because the conditions have changed for the black community. They have better economical opportunities and better life conditions. White people’s attitudes for black are changed also for the better.

Although there are some changes in the situation of blacks in the next generations, in the novel, the feelings of both black and white people for each other are apparent. It is obvious that Grange is the most important example for this. In many of his speeches, the

reader witnesses the strict views of Grange towards white people. He thinks that the white community is the only one, with whom blacks should not be friends with, because in both communities, there is the hatred which prevents this friendship. (Walker 1985: 175) He thinks that by using the Bible, the white people try to influence black people so he does not want white people in his life. This thought goes back to the time when he meets a white pregnant woman in Central Park in New York.

He sees a couple who are kissing and hugging and speaking, and watches them emotionally because he has not experienced such a thing before where he lives and this event touches him. In the beginning, he thinks that the whites are pure, unselfish and emotional. Then, he sees that the soldier wants to leave this pregnant woman because already he has a wife. He, step by step, witnesses the changing behaviors of the white people. The woman throws the ring -that the soldier gave to her before- and the seven hundred dollars to the ground. Grange picks them and offers to give the ring and the three hundred dollars to her. At first she refuses, but then she wants all the money and insults him that she will prefer throwing them to the pond instead of giving to Grange. By accident, she falls down the pond and refuses the help of Grange because he is black. The changing behaviors of the white woman have led Grange to question his views about the white people. As it is stated before, Grange was an obedient worker, who, even, could not dare to look at his master's eyes and he thought that the white people were good because they gave him a job to work and a place to live; but now, he recognizes that his thoughts were wrong because the whites are different from his conception; they ignore the black people and behave cruelly. As a result, Grange continues to fight against the white people wherever he sees one and blames them for acting cruelly both to himself and his family.

He has learnt that the only way to survive from the oppression is to hate and fight against white people.

In this sense, it can be stated that white patriarchy has a deeper effect on black people's lives. For many years, the black people have lived under the control of white people, as slaves and since then, the black people have felt the power of white people in their lives so they see the white people as the reason of their dilemmas, difficulties worries or conflicts. Furthermore, Grange thinks that the white people do not care about the black people because he says "they don't give a damn no how as long as all we kill is another nigger!"(Walker 1985: 205)In these words, one can conclude that the white people are not interested in the arguments and conflicts between black people; because they do not give importance to black people, whether they are killed or shot. In addition to this, Grange judges Brownfield for accusing the white people for what he has done. But while observing the words of Grange, it can be examined clearly that Grange also agrees with Brownfield. "And the white folks could have forced me to believe fucking a hundred strumpets was a sign of my manhood." (Walker 1985: 207)

Besides, as it is mentioned in the novel, the influence of white people in the black ones' lives starts from the early stages of life. In Ruth's school, one can observe the clues for the white control over the blacks. (Walker 1985: 185) First of all, the books are written by whites, and come from the white schools; before that, the black kids did not have any history books. In this sense, the reader can remark that the black people are not considered as a community and under the white control; they can not have their own histories. In this way, the white patriarchy aims to destroy the community; because a community is nothing without a history. In connection to this, the writer points out the

form of the book, in the sense that the white man is at the top in “The Tree of the Family of Man.” She points out that the white society sees itself at the top of the whole societies, which is a developed and perfect community. And, interestingly (!), at the very bottom of the tree, there is the primitive black man with his grass skirt, standing over a pot of boiling water. Under this picture, there is the shocking note, “A Nigger”. In this sense, it can be clearly noticed that the black people are considered inferior creatures for the white people. They are at the very bottom of the tree, and they are also humiliated by the name “nigger”. As it can be clearly observed from these examples that racism over the black community is so strong and these effects outline the important points of the novel.

“Two elements, then- the need to accept the responsibility for one’s life, for self definition, and the obvious fact that much of it, at least in this time and place, is beyond one’s control-form the axis of the novel’s cyclical patterns.”(Ed. Gates, Jr. and Appiah 1993: 54-55)

In her critical book, the theme of social discrimination has a greater importance. Walker states that until the Civil Rights Movement, black people were not allowed to eat in some restaurants, because of racial discrimination. (Walker 1984: 142) Moreover, Walker gives an example from her childhood period that black children were not allowed to use the town pool and the town leaders never let the principal of Walker’ school, who is black, to build a private pool for black kids. In addition to this, a black kid was beaten when he was trying to fix a white girl’s bicycle chain. (166) From these examples, one can come to the conclusion that the approach of white people towards the black ones has always been cruel and inhuman. They only see black people as slaves and workers, not as human beings. They do not give importance to them; they even do not serve them in

restaurants or allow them to use public facilities. Walker adds that there are black people, who are humiliated by whites because of their proper education and important positions. (187)

Surprisingly, in *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, Alice Walker has rarely mentioned the social improvements of black people. For instance, through the end of the novel, the reader can witness the aim of Ruth to join the black movement. She wants to be present in the black movement and suggests to be the leader because she thinks that the black folks are not ready to rise up for a movement, she wants to gain her social and political rights via the Civil Rights Movement. (Walker 1985: 196) Moreover, the reader witnesses the social discrimination in the North. Grange goes to North to make his life better but he recognizes that North is not the place of his dreams. North does not accept his existence and he returns back.

In her critical work, Walker draws attention to the ideas of Coretta King, Martin Luther King's wife, and summarizes the fact that women should attend more than ever to the social events and decisions in order to gain place in the society. "She (Coretta K.) thinks that women will liberate themselves to the extent of their involvement in the struggle for change and social justice." (Walker 1984: 152) Furthermore, Walker underlines the fact that black men are ignorant of black women, and as it has been mentioned before, they do not care about the writings of black women although black women read the writings of black men as if they are Bibles, in spite of the misrepresentation of black females. (323)

In *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, first of all, the reader can observe the bad living conditions of Grange's family. The book opens to the scene where Brownfield's

cousins come from North. In this time period, “North” symbolizes the richness and the freedom of the black people. The black people see “North” as the Promised Land and consider it as an escape from social oppression. As it can be examined from the example in the novel, the cousins come with an expensive car, better than Grange’s and their living conditions seem better; but later on, Grange recognizes that the situation is different because he goes to North and sees there the social oppression over black people still exists. (Ed. Gates, Jr. and Appiah 1993: 55)

Walker points out the suppressed position of Josie among her father’s male friends. They consider Josie as a prostitute, and actually in a way she is; because of this, she is not important for the society and these men ignore her and do not take her views into consideration. Moreover, the reader witnesses her father ignoring her. (Walker 1985: 40) It is obvious that her father’s manners are not logical, because as Walker focuses in her book, she works for her father, to buy him and her family gifts but her father ignores her. One can not help observing that; instead of ignoring her, he should protect her from her bad life; but as it is generally known that there is a proverb, “People in trouble have no friends”, and her father fits that proverb. (41)

As it is mentioned before, Brownfield complains about the knowledge of his wife. He tries to bring her down to his level and prohibits her from teaching in school. He is jealous of Mem because while he scarcely knows reading or writing, Mem has enough knowledge to be a school teacher. By preventing her from teaching, he has caused her downfall and watched her serving white people in their houses. Moreover, he beats her ‘for an imaginary attraction she aroused in other men, crackers, although she was no party to any of it’. (Walker 1985: 55) Unfortunately, she is submissive and she tries to

deal with it, without rebellion. Moreover, Brownfield is so confident and leaves Mem with her struggle and goes to Josie. He thinks that by marrying Mem, he has made a great mistake and sees Josie necessary for his survival and supplying his comfort. He does not take Mem into consideration and he celebrates his victory by beating her. (55)

“Brownfield beat his once lovely wife now, regularly, because it made him feel, briefly, good. Every Saturday night he beat her, trying to pin the blame for his failure on her by imprinting it on her face.” (Walker 1985: 55)

In the beginning of their marriage, Mem and Brownfield are very happy; moreover Brownfield can learn something from Mem. Sometimes Mem corrects the wrong pronunciations of the words. At first, this sounds good for Brownfield but later on, this annoys him and accuses Mem for being so proper. “Why don’t you talk like the rest of us poor niggers?...Why do you always have to be so damn proper?” (Walker, 56) Moreover, Brownfield humiliates her in front of his friends and makes her ashamed of talking in a proper way. He does not want her to be silent; he wants her to speak in a mood of demoralization. “He wanted her to sound like a woman who deserved him.” (56) He has adapted this manner of humiliation as a job and he has continued to call her “ugly black woman” and forced her to call her ‘Mister’. (77) It is obvious that Brownfield acts like that because he is under the influence of white oppression.

“Knowing what their society denies, that they are men, the Copeland males try to free themselves first by working hard. When this fails, they hate themselves for their impotence, their inability to fulfill the masculine urge to power. Finally, they use whatever power they feel they have, primarily their power over their women, in a destructive way.” (Ed. Gates, Jr., and Appiah 1993: 57)

B) Political Conditions

In Alice Walker's critical book, *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens*,² Walker rarely uses the theme of political developments. In the book, first of all, Walker touches on the statements that William Faulkner made in Faulkner in the University. Obviously, Faulkner believes that white people are superior to black people; because of that, white people have to help the inferior ones, politically. According to Faulkner, black people are not ready to be effective in a democratic society. Moreover, he thinks that the intelligence of a black person is directly bound to the amount of white blood he has. (Walker 1984: 19-20)

In addition to this, Walker points out an important lady in her book, who tries to search for her political rights. According to Walker, this lady is abused for insisting on her rights as an American citizen. She is beaten for singing Civil Rights Movement songs and accused of praying to God and talking about freedom. Furthermore, Walker touches on the issue that the white people think that the Civil Rights Movement is over and lists some superficial results of the movement as advanced developments in school, housing and jobs. They think that black people have gained some political rights in the last few years. In addition to that, they add the changing attitudes towards Negroes, by policemen. But for Alice Walker, there is another issue that should be argued, in the first hand. Among black people, the changes which came with the civil movement were discussed for a long time. They seldom speak of changes in their lives as if they did not get influenced by the movement. (Walker 1984: 121) According to Walker, the term "civil rights movement" does not sound good enough for effective results in the lives of black people. They see it as a bureaucratic event. Walker thinks that black people do not accept

the term, because American Law has introduced it to the blacks. It includes limitation. It only considers physical freedom, not the freedom of soul. (336)

In *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*. Walker gives some examples for political developments. For instance, Ruth invites some of her friends, who work for the civil rights movement, and one of them is white. Grange does not want the white one to enter his house; because in spite of the changing situations, he has still strict views about white people. Moreover, he does not believe in the freedom of blacks' voting rights. He thinks that they will vote for someone who will never do a positive thing for them. In addition to this, he believes that this way or that way, black people fail to do some improvements. "Everyone that wanted to try somethin' to help his people got knifed in the back by 'em." (Walker 1985: 239)

C) Job Opportunities and Equal Pay

In *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*, Walker, gives an example from a woman's life experience about the unequal pay for the black people. She tells that this woman was working in a cotton farm and her two children were helping her but still she was paid 3\$ for a day for cotton chopping. Later on, she changed her job and started to work in private homes. She was working for all day long, and sometimes for three white women a day, but she was still paid 3.50\$. In sixties, she worked for only one woman 4 ½ days a week and was paid 11.25\$. This inequality lasted like that and at the end, in 1968 she received 65\$ and could improve her life. (Walker 1984: 30-31) From this example, it can be clearly understood that in spite of the hard work that black people do, they were paid less than they deserve, because of their color. Moreover, Walker gives an example from her life that her father had worked for white people as well and was forced to do hard labor but only gained 300\$ a year. (213) He was oppressed by rich people and this made Walker think that being poor was their fault and destiny.

In *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, Mem is the most important female character, who symbolizes the real struggle for a better life. She is an educated woman and is aware of the importance of the economical independence. In this way, she saves her money, someday, to buy a house. (Walker 1985: 57) At her time, she and her family live in poverty because they can only afford this; in order to save her children, she rebels against her husband, who is against the idea of moving to another apartment. (Walker 1985: 84) She voices her opinions saying: "Me and these children got a right to live in a house where it don't rain and there's no holes in the floor." (84) Brownfield is against the idea of moving to another apartment which Mem rents, because he has promised to his

master that he will move to his place and work for him. In this aspect, the reader can observe that Mem, in contrast to Brownfield, who obeys his master silently; rebels to the white master and tries to have a new life far away from him. (85) Brownfield argues with his wife that he earns money for the house and it is not important whether he can read or write, he has the control over his family. But in spite of this argument, Mem is decisive in her aim and in a way, resists the white control. (87)She has great self-confidence that she earns more than Brownfield and unintentionally, makes Brownfield feel economically inferior. (89)

Of course, everybody is not as lucky as Mem. In the proceeding years, Ruth tries to find a job for herself but the situation is obvious. Black women were not as lucky as the whites to find jobs and they could only work in secondary jobs such as cutting cotton. Ruth searches for suitable jobs in the newspapers, but can not find one; because most of the companies belong to white people: “Wanted-WHITE LADIES-to fill vacancies in sewing plant.” (Walker 1985: 194)Predictably, there is an ad for “middle-aged colored woman to do light domestic work evenings with some light ironing and cooking \$6.00 per week.” (194)From this situation, one can deduce that black people, did not have a social status, are not worth for something, they are not considered as human beings who can need jobs, desire to live comfortably or deserve the things that the whites have. In this situation, the Civil Rights Movement becomes a necessity for the survival of the black people. Before the movement, of course, black people, in some ways try to make their lives better as Ruth’s friend, Rossel. Rossel is in twelfth class when she decides to marry with the richest black man in the county. He, Walt Terrell, is a hero from World War II, because of this; he is very respected among the community. (190) He is as old as

Rossel's father, but Rossel is certain about her decision because she sees Walt as her chance for survival, away from all these problems that black people face in the society. It is obvious that she does not want to work as a slave in the farms or to feel inferior by the white people's insulting comments on the blacks; now on, when she gets married with Walt, she will be rich and will not need to work, moreover, she will be superior, psychologically, to the white people because her richness will destroy the image of poor black woman, in the eyes of white people. "I'd rather marry the devil than get stuck with any of the stinking jobs they give you round this town." (Walker 1985: 192)As a conclusion, she marries the man who is a contemporary of her father.

D) The Black Woman's Identity and Blackness

In both Alice Walker's and Audre Lorde's books, the black woman's identity is examined, in detail. *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*, Walker points out the changing identities of black woman. Now on, according to Walker, black women can survive both financially and intellectually, they are more aware of the influences of white people so that they can find the reasons of some of their problems. In addition to this, she stresses out the importance of being joined in the world community. "To know is to exist: to exist is to be involved, to move about, to see the world with my own eyes. This, at least, the Movement has given me." (Walker 1984: 126)

In her book, Walker questions Coretta King why black women are against women's liberation. Walker thinks that black women deserve to be free because for years, they have been oppressed by everyone. They did not even look like a black woman because they lightened their skins and straightened their hair. (Walker 1984: 149) According to Coretta King, Martin Luther King's wife, black women are special and different from other women. Throughout their lives, they have suffered very much and tried to do their best to struggle with their problems. Because of this, they know about suffering and have compassion for others, so they are strong. (152-153)

In the proceeding pages, Walker draws attention to the discovery of Jean Toomer. According to him, black women are really emotional and deep in spirituality but they are not conscious about what they are because they have struggled so much so far and they did not have time to recognize themselves. They are abused both psychologically and physically and they have had pain all their lives, because of that, they think they are not worth anything. "In the selfless abstractions their bodies became to the men who used

them, they became more than “sexual objects”, more even than mere women: they became “Saints.” (Walker 1984: 232)

Moreover, she points out the hidden creativity of Black women and she is shocked when she recognizes that in spite of the strict oppression, black women have achieved to develop their creativity. They use some pieces from their past and re-form them in their minds. These pieces are their knowledge and their experience. (Ed. Gates, Jr. and Appiah 1993: 50-51)

Walker agrees with Toomer’s views and adds that black women are named as “the mule of the world” because black women have faced with different kinds of problems, abuse and cruel manners both from blacks and whites, men and women. Because of their problems and wishes, black women have needed to be understood by others; but they have been misrepresented. They have looked for love and understanding, but the answer was unwanted children. As a conclusion, Walker summarizes that; black women’s wishes or desires are ignored and obstructed so; they can not be artists or writers. They are either ignored or lowered in status.

In connection with the issue above, Walker lists the reasons why the black woman writer is not taken seriously as the black male writer. First of all, she is a woman, because of this important feature, critics do not dare to discuss and criticize her works. They do not make an attempt; they only talk about the lives of black women writers, not their works. And secondly, the black women are not adorable, because of that, they come across with intentionally negative comments. (Walker 1984: 260) According to Walker, some black critics are also guilty for the misrepresentations of black woman writers, because they think that the family relationships of black people among themselves are not

important as white people's. As a consequence, many black male writers write little about the culture, history, creativity or etc., but a lot of information about white people. (261-262)

In addition to this, Walker continues to mention about the creativity of the black women. She points out that although black women do not use variety of materials to compose a work of art, they have continued to show their skills. "I went in search of the secret of what has fed that muzzled and often mutilated, but vibrant, creative spirit that the black woman has inherited." (Walker 1984: 239)

In her critical work, Walker points out the importance of the 'racial health' among black people. She thinks that in black literature, the unity of black people should be stressed. For example, Zora Neale Hurston uses the pride of black people as a subject in her works. (Walker 1984: 85) Walker stresses that Z.N.Hurston was proud of being black and reflected this attitude in her works. Walker relates this with the community Hurston lived in. In this community, black people had confidence in themselves and in their creative ability. "This community affirmed her right to exist, and loved her as an extension of itself." (Walker 1984: 85-86)

In contrast to Hurston's community, Walker marks the attitude of her community towards black black women. (291) She argues that the black black women are excluded from the community because of their dark color. She underlines the different lives of "high yellow" black women and "black black" women. She marks that the black black people should be shown respect because they are the "essential mothers" of the black generation and they should be treated kindly. One can not help observing that the treatment of black people towards the black black women is wrong and the reason for it

comes from the white oppression. Black people are forced to believe that they are not worth for anything as a human being because they are black and being white is precious. As a result, some black people give importance to “the whiteness” of the skin color, because being close to “white”, is valuable for them. For instance, Walker gives an example from her experiences; one of her friends, Doreena, had a boyfriend who was very light-skinned, but later on was rejected, when he proposed for marriage. She was very dark for his family and because of this; she left him and found the blackest man for herself. (292) In addition to this, according to Walker, black black women are excluded from the society and this has caused the division among black women. (294) So, the black society destroys itself.

Furthermore, Walker adds that one of the best known characters of Hurston, Janie Crawford, is different from the ones who reject black black women. She is also light-skinned but she completely carries the black black woman’s identity. She does not refuse the dark black women. (Walker 1984: 302) In Hurston’s another novel, Their Eyes Were Watching God, Walker analyzes the fact that the relationship of a light-skinned woman and a poor black man seems as a strange case because it is generally thought that light-skinned women always search for light-skinned men. In reality, both the dark-skinned and light-skinned men search for light-skinned women. Light-skinned men are luckier than the black black men because of their light skins; they can work in good jobs, they have the opportunities to advance to the higher classes; as a result, they are preferred mostly by light-skinned women. (304-305) As it can be observed clearly with these facts, that “whiteness” is very important for black people, especially for black men. As Walker mentions, some black men prefer fat white women because in this way, they have more

“whiteness” to be loved. (307) In addition to this, Walker argues that the situation is different for black woman. In other words, while black men and light-skinned ones are comfortable in chasing and dating white women, the black women have had problems with their white boyfriends. (316) For instance, in Walker’s example, a black woman commits suicide because she was mocked for dating white boys. In this sense, it can be observed that it is difficult for young women of Color to deal with these kinds of problems. Moreover, the reaction of the people for this issue can be guessed, as Walker states; because people did not give the necessary reaction and insisted on the importance of black women’s responsibilities towards black men. As Walker mentions, in the panel where she went to attend, the panelists supported the idea and said, “The responsibility of the black woman is to support the black man; whatever he does.” (Walker 1984: 317)

Finally, Walker stresses the division between “light” or “white” skinned black women and black black women. She underlines the fact that the difference in their colors has made them separate beings, so the “light” or “white” skinned ones can lose their unity with black black ones, and their aim to rebel against white America will fail. And for the black black ones, the aim to rebel will fail if they see “light and white black women only as extensions of white and black male oppression.”(Walker 1984: 311)As a result, Walker draws attention to the necessity of black women’s unity against white oppression.

In *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, the reader witnesses another important character, Mem. She resembles Zami’s mother-extraordinarily, different from other black characters in the novel. First of all, she is well-educated and has a good accent. Unlike her husband Brownfield, she can read magazines and book whereas her husband has to be satisfied with looking at pictures. Although he lacks education, he is interested in

learning how to read and write. (Walker 1985: 45-46) But nevertheless, Brownfield becomes uncomfortable because as the time passes, he feels inferior to Mem. She is well-educated, can read and write and has a good accent-when these count as luxury for a black woman or a man at that time, but Brownfield has nothing. He does not know how to read and write, has a bad accent and no education. When he sees Mem walking with a man who is a teacher like herself, he strongly feels his lack of education, his poverty and financial dependence to others. In this concept, the reader, first of all, observes a different black lady and her unequal lover and future husband. He insists on marrying her and having her; hoping this would bring him happiness and respect from others. Secondly, unfortunately, Mem's strength as an educated black woman is too much for the society and for him, so their relationship fails. (48)

“Mem loses her capacity for language that distinguishes her from nearly everyone else, especially from Brownfield and by extension from Josie and Lorene. Even the material signs of her literacy, the books themselves, come to have an ironic utility when she burns them for heat-sacrificing a significant part of her identity simply in order to survive the kind of life Brownfield has reduced her to.” (Ed. Gates, Jr. and Appiah 1993: 129)

In fact, in the beginning, they have not had many problems but later on, because of Brownfield's feelings, he tries to make her feel secondary and depressed. He is glad that she is depressed, uncomfortable and sad because ‘she was weak, totally without view, without a sky’ (59) In this concept, it is clearly understood that women are not considered as precious human beings, there is no respect for their education talents, skills and etc.,

and because of some inabilities of some men, they are treated as bad as Mem and the downfall of Mem can be considered an ordinary event.

Of course, there is the part where Mem becomes superior, again. She tries her best to recover from her situation; at least, she has to do it for her children. She shoots him and makes a list for a better life. For instance, she says that she will have her own house and live without interference from white people. As it has been mentioned before, white people have had a great influence over black people's lives and both Brownfield and Grange feel themselves forced to obey white men and as a result, both of their wives have suffered much.

“For most of the novel, we feel that she can not act because she does not believe or understand what is happening to her. Eventually, she becomes so desperate that she must believe in, fight for, something. The goal she puts all her energy into, as do many women, is a house, a house that can become a home, because it is stable and comfortable and commands respect.” (Ed. Gates, Jr. and Appiah 1993: 58)

Mem is able to earn enough money for a better house, she is hardworking but this makes Brownfield mad because she earns more than him. Moreover, first of all, Mem takes on the control and never lets Brownfield insult her or call her bad names. She instructs him to call her ‘Mem, Mrs. Mem R. Copeland or Mrs. Copeland’ (Walker 1985: 96) Secondly, Mem warns him not to beat the children and call them with bad names. In addition to this, she wants him to be like a gentleman, who knows how to eat and to be clean and neat. She wants peace in the house; she does not want him to beat her, or the children. As a result, she brings him round and admonishes him like a naughty child. (96) In this point, it can be concluded that when women get the power of control, they can do

whatever they want to their husbands, of course not in a cruel way, but they can manage to be respected by men. Moreover, Mem makes Brownfield work in the house in fixing some stuff. In the new house, there are new furniture and new refrigerator and etc. In a way, Brownfield is happy with them but can not accept his inferior situation and concentrates on how to overcome it. (103)

As a conclusion, it can be observed that the list of Mem symbolizes the control of woman over man and it helps Mem and the children to believe in a better life. “Put ‘fictively’, the list is her way of creating a character since it seeks to control how Brownfield acts toward her, her children, and the white world.” (Ed. Gates, Jr. and Appiah 1993: 133)

“As it was, he could not seem to give up his bitterness against his wife, who had proved herself smarter, more resourceful than he, and he complained about everything often and loudly, secretly savoring thoughts of how his wife would ‘come down’ when he placed her once more in a shack.” (Walker 1985: 103)

At last, Brownfield manages to make Mem ‘come down’. He forces her to bear children because he knows that in this way, her body will become weak and she will be defenseless. And, at the end he succeeds and acts cruelly towards her. In spite of this, she tries to recover but can not achieve it. Consequently, Brownfield kills Mem in front of her children. In his cruel behaviors, the reader observes the inadequacy of men, in comparison to women. Of course, not all the black men or only “men” are inadequate but some feel the inferiority as Brownfield. Black women were considered as “ugly” creatures by white men, for instance, and they think that they have a reason because these women are black and black is an inferior color of race. Of course, this is not an excuse for

their behaviors, because black, white, yellow or brown, all women are important for the members of the society. But the most important thing in this novel is the wild and cruel attitudes of Brownfield towards Mem. They are both black and suffering from white oppression. In this sense, Brownfield should have got rid of the white control over him and his family and support his wife's struggle against white oppression. But, one can not help considering that it is sometimes true that men can not stand women who are superior to themselves and consequently, instead of encouraging her, he treats her badly, and even kills her: "Dead, Mem became a myth of herself, a beautiful plump girl with whom he had fallen in love, but who had changed before his eyes into an ugly hag, screeching at him and making him feel small." (Walker 1985: 162)

As a conclusion, it can be observed that Mem has had many difficulties, while trying to survive in life and Grange's first wife, Margaret, has shared the same destiny. In contrast with Mem, Margaret is more submissive. Nevertheless, both have no chance in life, to advance their life conditions.

"So much for the stereotypical strong black woman who conquers all. Walker calls up the other side of that strong black woman image, as well as the reason why it is emphasized so much in American mythology. That image is necessary because so many black women, like Margaret and Mem, have been crushed and utterly destroyed precisely because they are black and because they are women." (Ed. Gates, Jr., and Appiah 1993: 63)

Furthermore, Walker explains that Grange tries to impose the idea of "blackness" to Ruth because he does not want her to lose her black identity. He teaches her how to

dance, which is one of the characteristics of African culture; so that he makes her learn the identity of a Black person. (Ed. Gates, Jr., and Appiah, 68)

E) Family Relations

Although Walker has not touched the “family relations” issue in her critical book *In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens*, she has greatly dealt with this issue in *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*. First of all, the reader observes the relation between Grange and Margaret. Walker points out the routine relationship of this couple. It is clearly understood that Grange’s behavior towards his wife is cruel; every Saturday, they quarrel, as Walker states, and the next day he becomes “morose, sullen, reserved deep in pain under the hot early morning sun.” (Walker 1985: 11) It can be realized that Grange has made it a habit to quarrel with his wife every Saturday night. (16)The absurd behavior of Grange stems from the oppression of the white patriarchy. He is dominated at work, and when he comes to the home, he tries to satisfy himself manly over her family.

Walker gives another example for the family relations, but this time, it is not the relationship of wife and husband, but the daughter and father. Josie, who is one of the lovers of Grange, seems to be calm and easy-going in the beginning, but in reality things are different. Walker mentions her relationship with her father. As Walker states, Josie became pregnant and this event has changed her life. After this event, she left home but always wished to return back. (Walker 1985: 39) Walker pictures Josie as a girl who tries to renew her relationship with her father. She gives gifts to her father and the other members of the family but her father keeps still. In his birthday, she makes a surprise and plans a party. In this party, her father lets the other men behave cruelly to her. She falls down but her father does not dare to take her up or even let the others do that. In this example, the reader can examine the cruel behaviors of the father. He is her father but although she is pregnant, he has made her vomit, and faint. Josie’s efforts to gain her

childhood and family back have failed and his attitudes towards her have dragged her into her recent situation, which is prostitution. (40-41)

“Walker’s presentation of young Josie’s fall as a woman is marked by her analysis of the difference between society’s view of her lovers, who are encouraged to express their manhood through their sexuality, and its punishment of the woman who succumbs to them.” (Ed. Gates, Jr., and Appiah 1993: 63)

Furthermore, Walker calls attention to the relationship of Mem and Brownfield. Their relationship does not resemble, to Josie’s and her father’s relationship, but to Grange and Margaret’s. As it is mentioned before, the reader is familiar with Brownfield’s attitudes, so far. In addition to all these, he accuses Mem for having sexual relationship with the white masters. (Walker 1985: 54) As it is stated in the novel, Brownfield has changed his views about Mem; who was, once, his lovely wife; but now his enemy. In Walker’s description, it can be clearly observed that Brownfield is depressed because he has debts and no proper job. He has tried his best, according to him, to overcome this problem, but can not succeed in it. As a result, he reflects his inability to his family. He thinks that he is not an important person for neither white master nor his family, so he accuses Mem of adultery. Of course, Mem denies it but later on, she pretends to admit it. One can not help observing that although Mem appears to be a struggling woman, who is well educated and decisive in her war against oppression, she is submissive maybe because she does not want to end her marriage for her children’ sake, or because she does not want to be killed by her husband, when he is angry and drunken. Whether the reason is this or that, her silence and her submissiveness have made Brownfield stronger and in a way, alerted his evil soul. “He determined at such times to treat her like a nigger and a whore, which he

knew she was not, and if she made no complaint, to find her guilty...” (Walker, 54) Walker adds that Brownfield is depressed in the way that he has given up his dreams for North and a better life with Mem and the children. Even he sees his wife as a downfall or a problem in his life and a threat to his superiority.

Moreover, Brownfield insults Mem and aims to decrease her worth in the eyes of his male friends. (Walker 1985: 56) In reality, Brownfield is aware of Mem’s situation; in other words, he knows that she is superior to him with her education, her style, her knowledge and her determination in her life, but Brownfield seems to be superior to his friends, and gives his secret formula to control her. “Give this old blacksnake to her”, he said, rubbing himself indecently, exposing his secret life to the streets, “and then I beats her ass. Only way to treat a nigger woman!” (Walker 1985: 56) In these words, it can be clearly observed that Brownfield constantly humiliates Mem and insults her in front of his friends. This is obviously the result of his lack of self-confidence and feeling of inferiority by a woman. In addition to this, he forces her to do the things that he wants and considers her views. After his achievement in weakening Mem, he wants her to obey to her decisions. As it has been mentioned before, Mem tries to overcome the difficulties of black people in the white society; she wants to move to another place with her family, in which she will not be under the control of white patriarchy but Brownfield does not want it because in a way, he is afraid of the white patriarchy. Now on, as Mem weakens, Brownfield orders her to move to Mr.J.L’s place and work in his field, and insults Mem. “My ma always told me not to git myself mixed up with no ugly colored woman that ain’t got no sense of propridy.” (Walker 1985: 86) As it can be concluded, Brownfield’s life is similar with Grange’s; as if his destiny is a kind of inheritance from father to son.

“It is later made clear that Brownfield’s parents had fought in this very same place and that Brownfield has inherited the prostitute/lover whom his father had visited every Saturday as part of his weekly binge. A renewal of hope follows when Brownfield meets and marries Mem, who is educated and ‘life-giving’. But family history is soon destined to repeat itself.” (Ed. Bloom 1989: 8)

One can not help considering the fact that the most important family relationship is between Brownfield and his children. Their relation is like Josie and her father’s; Brownfield behaves cruelly to his children. As it is stated in the novel, Brownfield is always drunk and as a result, he sometimes beats his children and insults them. For instance, Walker points out that Brownfield only loves his children when he is half-drunken. He does not see them as human beings, but sometimes pities them. (Walker 1985: 74) But generally, he humiliates them or beats them and even never touches his youngest one, Ruth. Daphne, the oldest girl, tries to make her sisters believe that their daddy was, once upon a time, a good guy; and in this way, shows a mothering behavior towards her sisters.

“As they grew older, Daphne, the only one who could remember the scanty ‘good old days’ before Brownfield began to despise them, took the baby and Ornette out under the trees and told them of how good a daddy Brownfield had once been.” (Walker 1985: 74)

Of course, this mothering manner of Daphne towards her sisters can not work out; because the kids witness the whole bad behavior of their father, they know that he is an evil person, so according to them; the only thing they can do is to protect themselves from their so-called father “Brownfield”. (Walker 1985: 91) Moreover, although Daphne tries to convince her sisters to her father’s goodness, the girls are aware of their father’s

situation. In the beginning, they think that their father is good because he treats his family nice, but when Mem's murder scene takes place, they know that their father will not change. (108) Earlier, they have thought that their father can change; his depression was caused by less work and a comfortable life, which he never deserves. But he has overcome his depression by killing their mother, who is his real problem. It can be concluded that, by killing Mem, Brownfield, in a way, feels himself superior because before that there is someone who is superior to him, with her education and knowledge and who is a woman. Of course, their mother's murder is a shock for the kids; because as Walker mentions, Mem was Santa Clause for them; she has protected them from Brownfield and tried to supply a better life, made many sacrifices for them.

“And she noticed for the first time, that even though it was the middle of winter, there were large frayed holes in the bottom of her mother's shoes. On Mem's right, foot the shoe lay almost off and a flat packet of newspaper stuck half-way out. Daphne ran up screaming and threw herself across her mother's legs. She began to rub Mem's feet to make them warm.” (Walker 1985: 122)

The other important example for the family relations is the relationship of Grange and Ruth. Bloom names their relationship as the “turning point of Grange's second life.” He thinks that the love and caring of Grange for Ruth changed Grange's life. Grange purifies himself, in a way, with Ruth; he refuses the evil manners and avoids acting like a threat to his family and the society; because, in the past he behaved cruelly to his family-wife, children-and the society-whites. Their relationship is in a different dimension, because except for Mem's and her children's relationship with each other, the reader can not

witness a true relation, which includes love and caring. Ruth changes Grange a great deal and makes him feel a strong emotion, maybe for the first time in his life. (Bloom 1989: 9)

In Grange's words, at the end of the novel, it can be clearly observed that the reason for Brownfield's behavior is the oppression of white community. He thinks that Brownfield has made himself believe that only cause of his downfall is the white people. Brownfield thinks white people have forced him to act like that, but in reality, although white patriarchy has an influence on the manners of Brownfield, he has his own identity and will. He could act differently, he could rebel against white oppression as Mem, but he chooses the easy way and blames the whites. (208) Grange criticizes Brownfield for being weak in facing the white community, for being oppressed under control and also blames himself because once, he had acted like Brownfield.

In *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, the reader can analyze the submissiveness of Brownfield's mother. Brownfield, with the events seen from the eyes of a small child, can see that his mother agrees on whatever her husband tells. She does not have her own idea and always agrees on what her husband orders or thinks. "He thought his mother was like their dog in some ways. She didn't have a thing to say that did not in some way show her submission to his father." (Walker 1985: 5)

Again in the novel, Walker mentions about a different kind of oppression and this time, the superiority of Brownfield over Mem is the so-called subject. As it has been touched on several times before, Brownfield tries to overcome the success of Mem, who manages to earn a great deal of money, which is also enough for her; at least she earns more than Brownfield; and to achieve his goal, he uses the pregnancies against Mem and weakens her. As it is mentioned in the book, Brownfield really has an evil soul; because

he is so happy when Mem becomes pregnant for the second time. Of course, she has lost her job and this is a big loss for her; but she can not guess that her husband had planned it from the beginning. (Walker 1985: 104) As it can be concluded from this example that women, at that time-before the Civil Rights Movement-could not improve themselves or their situations in the society; because men could not accept women as equal to them; so, as it can be observed in Brownfield's situation, men try to weaken women in order to gain power over them, resulting in male hegemony.

In *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, the reader can observe many examples of battering. It is mentioned in the book that Brownfield has changed so much after his marriage with Mem, and by beating her, he has changed her into an human being that 'he did not want, could not want, and that made it easier for him to treat her in the way he felt she deserved.' (Walker 1985: 57) Walker adds that her ugliness would help him beat her without his conscious because he thought a man, who has such an ugly wife, can do whatever he wants. Moreover, Walker states that Brownfield beats Mem without reason or creates meaningless reasons to beat her; and even one time, he has broken some of her teeth in front of their children; of course the reason is obvious: Mem's rebel against oppression and her final success; superiority. (58)

In connection with Mem's superiority, once, she was beaten because she wanted to live in a better house. Brownfield did not believe Mem that she was looking for a house; he thought that she was doing it on purpose to irritate him.

"He shoved her and she knocked over her flower boxes, spilling flowers and dirt. She scrambled shakily to her knees, then to her blistered and callused feet, sniffing and

putting a wrinkled hand to her head. Her daughters stood at the battered screen watching, their baby sister in their arms.” (Walker 1985: 78)

Moreover, Brownfield continues his insults and calls her ‘ugly colored woman’. (Walker 1985: 86) In a way, he wants to get over the psychology of being inferior. In reality, Mem wants to leave him, but she has nowhere to go. She can only go to Josie, but also Josie treats her bad. Her only chance, her father, does not even dare to answer her letters asking for help.

In *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, Walker generally emphasizes the prostitution of women. It is stated in the novel that Grange makes his wife sell her body so that he can pay his debts. In this sense, the reader may observe that women are used by men to get money. (Walker, 10) Furthermore, Walker states that although Margaret is happy with having relationships with other men, like the church members or with the man who drove her to the home, in her eyes, her love for Grange can be examined clearly. (20) Nevertheless, Margaret is pleased with her situation; she has new clothes and enough money to survive, including a baby boy. “The baby was a product of his mother’s new personality and went with her new painted good looks and new fragrance of beds, of store-bought perfume and of gin.” (16)

Moreover, Walker calls attention to the fact that in the bad relationship of the parents, children are the ones who really suffer. For instance, Margaret ignores her illegitimate baby because she feels respect for her husband’s feelings. She is submissive, in this sense, to her husband and moreover, according to Brownfield, his parents are wrong in ignoring both Brownfield and the baby. Both of them need their parents’ love and caring but in this situation, they fail to do this. (Walker 1985: 20) Furthermore, Walker adds the

situation of Lorene to Brownfield's. She emphasizes the bad condition of Lorene, who is growing up with a prostitute mother. Of course, she is so young and can not protect herself from her mother's male friends and as it is stated in the novel that 'by the time she was fifteen Lorene was the mother of two baby boys.' (43)

In *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*, Walker stresses the general oppression over women both in the society and at home. She points out that in the novel *Second Class Citizen*, the author shows the various difficulties that are taken over by the main character, Adah, who is a black woman. She has a husband, Francis, who sees her as his property and because he easily accepts to be the second-class citizen, makes her live in a hovel. She rebels against his husband's views which are 'that she too is now a second-class citizen and must accept work in a factory with the other African wives', and searches for a new job, but eventually, she has to give it up because as a proved method, she becomes pregnant and can not work anymore. (Walker 1984: 68)

Moreover, Adah struggles more and succeeds in writing a novel, which is her ambition in her life; but this novel is destroyed by her husband because his family does not want a daughter-in-law, who is a writer and who will shame them. (Walker 1984: 69) From this example, it can be clearly observed that the development of women for a better life or their progress in a social area, for instance being a writer, can be prevented by the society or by the family and there are not many women who are lucky as Adah, who can manage to finish her novel, at the end. (69)

Different from the example above, Walker indicates the different situation of women in Cuba. As Walker mentions, women have a right to speak in society and in addition to this, they have high positions in the society as being teachers, doctors, nurses or etc.

(Walker 1984: 217) Moreover, Walker adds that Fidel Castro supports the progressing conditions of women in society and thinks that without women's equal social conditions with men, the revolution in Cuba can not be completed. Furthermore, the equality of men and women is stated in the Cuban Family Code, which controls the family relations:

- 1) During the marriage, both parts have the equal rights and duties.
- 2) The couples should be 'loyal, considerate, respectful, and mutually helpful to each other'.
- 3) The couples should share the upbringing of the children and help each other with their education and guidance for the norms of the society. They should share the house work.
- 4) The couples should share the duty to support the family, financially.
- 5) The couples have 'the right to practice their profession or skill, and it is their duty to help each other and to cooperate in this direction and to study or improve their knowledge.' (Walker 1984: 218)

F) Sexism

In *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*, Walker highlights the image of woman, drawn by others, especially men. She gives example from Buchi Emecheta's novel *Second Class Citizen*. As it can be concluded from the title, the main character is a woman man called Adah. The story of Adah tells the real image of woman in the society. As a little black girl, she has no importance in her tribe; because, first of all, she is female and secondly, she is an uninvited guest, since her family was expecting a boy, so she is ignored till the age of eight. In her tribe, as Walker stresses, woman has two important roles; the first one is to work very hard in the house work and the second one is to bear many children, especially boys. (Walker 1984: 67)

Furthermore, unlike her brother Boy, Adah is deprived of education. With her strong will, Adah succeeds in learning something and she is allowed to stay. Her teachers tell her parents that she will be more precious while she can be sold to marry someone. The situation for women is so hard at that time because when Adah becomes an orphan in the proceeding years, and having no place to live, she has to marry with someone. She can not continue her education without a home, because women who live alone in her tribe are considered as prostitutes. (Walker 1984: 67)

Through the end of the book, Walker gives an example from her own experiences and indicates that in some ways, her father is as strict as her mother and behaves differently to her brothers. (Walker 1984: 330) He lets her brother chase after girls or something that the girls are not allowed to, whereas for instance, Walker's sister is not allowed to go out because either her dress is too tight in waist or there is some other reason for not letting

her out; as a result, she cries and questions the situation and the result is predictable:
“They can go because they are boys.”(328)

Moreover, Walker tries to find out her father’s manners, in other words, his sexism. She stresses out that after she has attended women’s liberation classes, she has found out that her father was affected by his environment while showing these kinds of manners; as sexism and also colorism. She notes that he gave importance to color and he admitted that he had married with Walker’s mother; because she had a light skin. In addition to this, she reasons his sexism as ‘an imitation of the behavior of the society around us.’ (Walker, 330) Furthermore, Walker indicates that she hoped her father and brothers would be different from white males, with their behavior and thoughts; because white men are represented ‘as dominator, as killer, and always as hypocrites’. (330) But unfortunately, her father failed to act differently, and her brothers were the same. (331)

In addition to this, as in *In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens*, Walker has touched on the issue in *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*. In this novel, for a specific time, the reader observes the superiority of Brownfield over Mem. As it has been argued before, Brownfield tries to overcome the power of Mem and succeeds in this. When he establishes his control, he does not want the house or the comfort Mem supplies. He sees these facilities as actions taken against the white master; and deep in his feelings, in a way, he rejects the power of Mem and with her downfall, he wins a victory. “I done waited a long time for you to come down, Missy....This is what I can afford and this is what you going to have to make do with. See how you like me holding the upper hand!”(Walker 1985: 107)

In addition to this, Walker points out the views of Brownfield about women. He does not want Mem to work because he knows that she earns more than him, so he is complaining about her job. He thinks that Japanese women are aware of their duties for their men. It is generally known that in Japan, the prostitution is wide-spread and Brownfield refers to that women and points out that the woman's real duty is to satisfy her husband sexually. (Walker 1985: 118)

G) Sexual Choice

In *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*, Alice Walker has treated the theme of “the sexual choice”, in detail. She points out that although there are some objections against black lesbians, this movement has come out rapidly in the black community. Walker also supports this movement and adds that black women have the right to write whatever they like, and nobody has managed to limit it, as it is seen in history. (Walker 1984: 281) She draws attention to the fact that black lesbians' writings should not be considered as “meaningless” because in their writings, they tell us about their feelings or experiences in their existences, and it is a wrong idea to name them “nonsense”, similar to hope lesbianism will fade by discouraging it. (282)

Furthermore, Walker refers to the essay in Conditions: Five, The Black lesbian in American Literature: An Overview, by Shockley, and touches on her views about black lesbianism. According to Shockley, black lesbians have not been mentioned in the novels, books or articles; because they are not present, according to the ones who do not want to see the reality, which is black lesbianism. Shockley adds that these black lesbians aren't ‘wished to behold’ by the others, and even black women writers, who can write novels or articles about black lesbians, choose to ignore them or attend to the group who names black lesbian's works as “nonsense” or “bullshit”. Walker comments on this idea, and underlines that black lesbians are misrepresented in the community and this alerts the anti-lesbian thinkers. (282)

In addition to this, Walker stresses out that there are strong racial relationships in both communities; in other words, white men with white or black women with black men; the black woman, as accepted only as a black woman, is always in the danger of choosing the

wrong identity, “lesbianism”. Walker refers to herself and analyzes that as she is not married, she is thought to be a lesbian, and because of the prejudice in the community, she will be misjudged or her works will be observed from a different point of view. First of all, because of the racial issues, she is generally considered in the second stage; secondly because she is single, the label “lesbian” will stick on her forehead. “...that I am a black woman. Something is always wrong with us. To those who feel this, ‘lesbianism’ is simply another, perhaps more extreme, version of ‘something wrong with us.’ (Walker 1984: 28)

A) Racial and Social Discrimination

In Audre Lorde's critical book, *Sister Outsider*, Lorde, first of all points out to the silence of Black women. She stresses that, in U.S., there is racial discrimination in the society and this creates differences among people. Black people are in a secondary position in the women's movement; because they are invisible to others, because of their blackness. She supports the idea that both black and white women should end their silences and speak out their problems; women should not be separated in this rebellion. (Lorde 1984: 42) Furthermore, Lorde adds that the white patriarchy, in a way, has hidden itself during the oppression over the black community. She points out that the social place of black women in relation to black men was secondary and in the sixties, this was a wonderful thing for black men. White patriarchy had introduced Black matriarchy as a disease and in this way, supported the power of Black patriarchy and tried to hide its real aim, which was to control black people. (Lorde 1984: 45)

With the effect of black patriarchy, black women try to overcome the oppression of black men. They think that their oppression over black women is different from the oppression over black men; because black women are both under the enslavement of black men and white society. According to Lorde, black men are guilty for uniting themselves with white men in the female oppression movement. (Lorde 1984: 46) In addition to this, Lorde considers that black women are the ones who are more suppressed by the patriarchal system. She suggests that white men use black women against black men, although black men and women have shared the same racist oppression. (118) But women's consideration of racism is different. As Lorde states, women assume race as 'the anger of exclusion, of unquestioned privilege, of racial distortions, of silence, ill-use,

stereotyping, defensiveness, misnaming, betrayal, and co-optation.’ (Lorde 1984: 124) In this sense, the Black women are the ones who are most affected by the racial oppression. When Audre Lorde tries to express her concerns about the issue, a white woman tells her that if she expresses herself loudly, she will not listen to her. In this event, it is apparent that the white women can not stand black women’s expressing themselves overtly. Furthermore, they do not consider the black women’s problems as noteworthy as theirs; they think that the racism is a black woman’s problem, a problem of women of Color, and only the black women can defend the problem. (Lorde 1984: 125)

Lorde questions the attitudes of the black people towards their own situations. She thinks that the black people should be conscious of other black people’s conditions. As a black lesbian, Lorde considers herself responsible for the ones whose children can not find enough food because their mothers can not find work or the ones who can not have children because of the unsterilized abortions. (Lorde 1984: 132) She suggests that if she fails to consider these problems, she will be united with the oppressors and will contribute to the oppressors’ aims.

In connection with this subject, Lorde points out the images of black women in the eyes of the oppressors. (Lorde 1984: 160) She suggests that black women are told that maybe black women can reach to better positions but never be equal to white women. And also because of the racial difference, black women will never be equal to white women. In addition to this, it is thought-provoking that a white feminist academic does not want to deal with racism, or with the harsh opinions of black people. In this aspect, one can not help observing that the white women do not want black women to defend themselves; because they do not want to confront the anger of racism.

Lorde witnesses that the white women can not easily face with the racial problems; they pretend as if they did not hear what has been said and remain silent because they are afraid of negative reactions. (Lorde 1984: 127) They show their anger by yelling at the black women.

“But anger expressed and translated into action in the service of our vision and our future is a liberating and strengthening act of clarification, for it is in the painful process of this translation that we identify who are our allies with whom we have grave differences, and who are our genuine enemies”. (Lorde 1984: 127)

In “Eye to Eye: Black Women, Hatred, and Anger”, in **Sister Outsider**, Lorde identifies herself with such multiple subject positions and one of them is race. She points out that racism has a great influence over the black people’s lives, and it devaluates the identity of black woman. This example shows her great anger towards the white people. (Morris 2002: 168) In this essay, Lorde notifies an example from her experiences and narrates the negative reaction of a white lady towards her:

“She jerks her coat closer to her. I look. I do not see whatever terrible thing she is seeing on the seat between us- probably a roach. But she has communicated her horror to me. It must be something very bad from the way she’s looking, so I pull my snowsuit closer to me away from it, too. When I look up the woman is still staring at me, her nose holes and eyes huge. And suddenly I realize there is nothing crawling up the seat between us; it is me she doesn’t want her coat to touch.” (Lorde 1984: 147)

And also in “Eye to Eye” Lorde observes the relationship between the racism and internalized racism. She points out that the most important consequence of racism is the alienation of the black women from each other. She complains about the black women’s

hatred for each other. She underlines that the Black women can have some different views or choices such as being lesbian or choosing feminism instead of womanism or etc., but these should not cause Black women's separation because they have to be together in common points and struggle against common problems.

In addition to this, Lorde adds in her essay "The Uses of Anger" that the women of Color have developed a sense of anger for being excluded from the society, in all aspects. They are not chosen, and their existences are ignored. Some of them have used their anger to survive because their anger has motivated them in their struggle, but the others failed to control their anger so they could not survive. (129)

"For a woman of Color, anger becomes the life force that allows her to survive to assert her own existence in the face of an oppression that demands silence and servitude. That demand for silence is particularly infuriating when it comes from white feminists who imagine that they are speaking for all women. Lorde challenges white women by asking, 'What is the theory behind racist feminism?'" (Morris 2002: 168)

In *Sister Outsider*, Lorde makes an important statement that there are always people who are suppressed and the ones who control them. According to Lorde, the suppressed group is the black ones and the controlling group is the whites.

"In a society where the good is defined in terms of profit rather than in terms of human need, there must always be some group of people who, through systematized oppression, can be made to feel surplus, to occupy the place of the dehumanized inferior. Within this society, that group is made up of Black and Third World people, working-class people, older people, and women." (Lorde 1984: 114)

She adds that there are differences between black and white people, racially. But Audre Lorde believes that not these differences but black people's refusal to identify with these differences and the wrong identification of these differences separate the black and white people.

In her novel, *Zami*, Audre Lorde tries to portray a different type of a black woman. The novel is a type of autobiography and the main character tells about her life in racist times. According to *Zami*, her mother is not a typical type of black woman. She sees her mother as a very powerful woman, which is a difficult thing to say at the time of white patriarchy. She thinks that, from a feministic perspective, the word "woman" and "powerful" can not be used at the same time because women can not be powerful, as men can be. The adjective "powerful" can only be used to explain bad characteristics for women. So "powerful woman" means something different to her, but not equal with man.

Moreover, in the novel, the writer points out the issue that the lives of black people are influenced by the white people's authority. (Lorde 1982: 9) In the book, the attitudes of *Zami*'s parents towards the oppression of the whites can be clearly observed. Her parents try to make *Zami* and her sisters believe that white people have the control of the world in their hands, and if the black people obey the whites and do what they are told; in the future, they can hope to have the control of the world in their hands. Her parents try to make the events seem smaller than they are, and in this way; they try to prevent their daughters' rebellion against 'divine authority'. (9) But it is hard to rebel against the white patriarchy and to search for black identity; because everything is controlled by the white people; as a result, they are united with the white identity and forget about their own identities. *Zami*, in the book, stresses that even their storybooks

are about the white people, who are different from them. Furthermore, Zami underlines an interesting way of racist discrimination in her school.

Zami's teacher, Sister Mary of Perpetual Help, divides the class into two groups as the Fairies and the Brownies. Of course, it is obvious who the Fairies and the Brownies are; good white ones are the fairies and the bad ones are the brownies. (Lorde 1982: 17) The brownies are always guilty for doing something odd as breaking their glasses or behaving in a way that reflects the lack of good manners. They are always accused of doing something but in this way or that way, Zami manages to join to the fairies group for short periods. But it is funny, maybe tragic, that Zami is accused of breaking her glasses.

“Since I could not see at all to do any work from the blackboard, Sister Mary of PH made me sit in the back of the room on the window seat with a dunce cap on. She had the rest of the class offer up a prayer for my poor mother who had such a naughty girl who broke her glasses and caused her parents such needless extra expense to replace them. She also had them offer up a special prayer for me to stop being such a wicked-hearted child.” (Lorde 1982: 20)

Racism and other aspects influence the knowledge of Zami. She is not familiar to these kinds of behaviors. She is affected by being always present in the Brownies' group and losing the class election because she is black. These events make her question her knowledge and experiences; because she faces with different events that she will not see in her culture; as a result, she starts to change her opinions.

Audre Lorde continues in the novel that the attitudes of white people for black ones are so cruel and so strange that the reader can observe the excessive reactions and

strict racist behaviors. Basically, Zami tells about their move into a new apartment with her family, but the interesting event is that after two weeks from their moving, the landlord, who is white, hangs himself. It is reported in the newspapers that he has gone into so much trouble that at the end, he has to rent his flat to black people (!). (Lorde 1982: 46) Because Zami is the only black child in her school, she is accused of being guilty along with her family, because of causing a white person's death. After this event, she struggles to search a place for herself among her classmates, because she is considered as guilty and in addition to this, her teachers treat her badly. They show Zami as an alien to the other students; they criticize her hair style and warn her mother. These warnings get worse that her classmates keep her calling 'stinky'. Her teacher has told her that it is her Christian duty to tell Zami that black people smell different from white people. Zami has related all these events to her family but the response is irritating. "What do you care what they say about you, anyway? Do they put bread on your plate? You go to school to learn, so learn and leave the rest alone. You don't need friends." (Lorde 1982: 47)

Actually, in this sense, in a way, Lorde is fooled by her mother, because her mother does not tell her the truth. She wants to adapt to the American culture to survive in this new country and creates an imaginary world for her children, because she does not want them to be sad because of the cultural change. She tries to prevent them from seeing the racist attitudes of the whites towards black people. In some ways, she wants to hide her struggle against racism. The events that she has faced do not fit to her culture or perceptions, so she makes them perceivable for herself.

Zami finds herself in a dilemma because she can not understand what is going on between the blacks and whites. She knows that American racism is cruel and strict, and because of this; her family have a hard time trying to build themselves a life in America. Her parents always try to protect their kids from the problems that racism can cause. They try to make these problems seem unimportant to them; but they always warn their kids not to trust white people. They never explain why or what the white people want from black people. Zami can not understand the racial discrimination among people and can not question or judge it. She can not question why her family is not white but has the problematic color, black. (Lorde 1982: 55)

Furthermore, in the novel, the different views of different races for each other are described in detail. For instance, black people do not accept the white people to their houses as well and the white people are uncomfortable about their relationships with the blacks. In the novel, Zami goes to one of her friend's house, who is white of course, but Zami is not welcomed with a gentle mood because she is a black person and also she lives alone. "No nice girl left her mother's house before she was married, unless she had become a whore, which in Mrs. Madrona's eyes was synonymous with being Black anyway." (Lorde 1982: 101) In addition to this, the issue of blackness and whiteness has affected the relationship of Muriel and Zami, in the novel. In the beginning, their difference in color does not prevent their relationship, but later on Zami recognizes that this difference has shaped their perceptions and the way they live in the world. (Lorde 1982: 77) As her parents had taught her before, she tries to ignore their racial differences as if they do not exist, and as Muriel thinks, also gay girls are oppressed as black ones.

In *Zami*, similar to Alice Walker's *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*, Lorde points out that there are some rules against black people that do not let them into the social institutions. *Zami* tells that between the years 1936 and 1938, black people were not allowed to work in the shops in the 125th street between Lenox and English Avenues, which was a racially mixed area. (Lorde 1982: 8) In these shops, the control belonged to the white people and black people were not accepted. Moreover, in the novel, *Zami* emphasizes that her sister Phyllis was not accepted in the trip to Washington; because all the kids in the class except for Phyllis, were white and the hotel, which they were going to stay did not accept her because she was black, so her teachers gave her back her deposit in private. (54)

Maybe the most important development about the social conditions of black people has been the acceptance of the separate education for black people by the Supreme Court. (Lorde 1982: 148) Here, the reader may be able to observe the importance of this development by referring to the example above. This change is a light of hope for the black people; because they suffer from the limitations of the oppressors. Furthermore, with this change, the reader can notice the progressing conditions of black people. *Zami* marks that being a lesbian herself, both black and white lesbians try to find a solution to solve their problems and make a contact between them. (155) They learn from each other and they think that they understand each other better.

B) Political Conditions

In comparison with her critical book, *Sister Outsider*; in her novel *Zami*, she has touched much more on political events. In this novel, the reader can observe the developing political conditions of black people. For instance, Zami's father goes to meetings. (Lorde 1982: 10) Moreover, the reader can regard the changing positions of women politically, as well as in other areas. In the novel, Zami's mother is one of the main female characters who struggles for her freedom and becomes an important character. In the eyes of Zami, she is very important because both she is interested in social and political events and she has a social life, different from other black women. She is always present in important positions during the election time. But she does not give much importance to her family, especially her children. The social and political events are much more important for her than her relations with the other members of the family. In spite of all these, Zami loves her mother as she is but sometimes she desires to have the blonde mother, whom she watches on T.V: "...I wished she would be like all other mothers, one waiting for me at home with milk and home-baked cookies and a frilly apron, like the blonde smiling mother in Dick and Jane." (Lorde 1982: 42)

Consequently, through the end of the novel, the reader examines the developing political conditions of black people and their non-stop struggles to gain their rights. At the time, when Zami is an adult, she witnesses some sort of activities that take place between her friends. They, all, attend meetings in spite of the danger of losing their jobs or to be marked by others and the threat to die or political disagreement. (Lorde 1982: 127) In this aspect, it can be clearly observed that with the changing situations, black

people find the encouragement to survive in the society, although there are some obstacles.

In Lorde's critical book, *Sister Outsider*, Lorde has rarely touched on the theme. For instance, in page 180, she has examined the issue that United States has contradictory ideas about the Caribbean. It both wants a democratic government and supports the most oppressive and corrupted governments

“The racism that coats the U.S. government lies about Grenada is the same racism that blinded American eyes to the Black faces of 131 Haitians washed up on shore in Miami, drowned fleeing the Duvalier regime.” (Lorde 1984: 180)

C) Job Opportunities and Equal Pay

In *Sister Outsider*, Lorde points out the different working conditions of women in Russia. She witnesses women working in a subway. (Lorde 1984: 16) She gets shocked when she sees women working as collectors and the station managers. In addition to this, Lorde underlines that in Samarqand, women are strongly aware of their own powers as females and producers and also as human beings. They have self-confidence, as producers and; they do not let others oppress them. (Lorde 1984: 27)

Furthermore, Lorde adds that in the black faculties of universities, it is believed that black women are more easily hired than the black men. In this case, black women are seen as the ones who take on the jobs of black men. Because of this thought, the problems of promotion and having social rights in the work field during the working period are not considered important for the employers. (Lorde 1984: 48) “Despite our recent economic gains, Black women are still the lowest paid group in the nation by sex and race.”(60)

In *Zami*, the reader, first of all, comes across the working conditions of black people in the mid-twenties. Zami explains her parents’ immigration from Africa to the United States. (Lorde 1982: 1)As Zami mentions, her parents had come to U.S.A for work and, because American people wanted to employ young people, her mother had to lie about her age. Moreover, when she was employed, her boss told her that she was lucky, because generally Spanish (!) girls were not hired. When the boss saw her husband, Zami’s father, he recognized that she was Black, too, and immediately fired her. From this event, one can deduce that because of the racist views of white people, the black people were not offered jobs and if hired in the twenties, they were not allowed to

keep their jobs. (1)As a result of this, they lived in poverty; without electricity, with various kinds of illnesses and kids who desired to have their own skates. (2)In addition to this, the war conditions were so harsh for Zami's family. The white people fed their children with peanut butter sandwiches and used margarine, they supplied pork chops and watermelons for their family whereas, Zami's mother tried to find unrationed butter for the kids, because of her refusal to accept butter substitutes. (Lorde, 11)In this way, Lorde narrates the self-sacrifice of Zami's mother for her family. Moreover, as it can be understood from Zami's narration that in the next years, economically, as a family, they had better conditions and could even hire a woman to clean their house. (11)

In the proceeding years, when Zami has become an adult, the working opportunities are better than the twenties. For instance, there are plenty of jobs for black people in Connecticut. But of course, the racist views still continued to exist. When a black person is hired in a software factory, it lasts for three weeks and before he/she joins the union of workers, she/he is fired. (Lorde 1982: 104) "You know, dear, there's not too much choice of jobs around here for Colored people, and especially not for Negro girls."(Lorde 1982: 105)This was a frequently heard statement. Moreover, when Zami is working in Keystone Electronics, she finds out that there are very dangerous and harsh working conditions in the company but nevertheless, black people are the ones who are working in cutting machines. The paragraph below would summarize the reason better:

"Nobody mentioned that carbon tet destroys the liver and causes cancer of the kidneys. Nobody mentioned that the x-ray machines, when used unshielded, delivered doses of constant low radiation far in excess of what was considered safe even in those

days. Keystone Electronics hired Black women and didn't fire them after three weeks. We even got to join to the union." (Lorde 1982: 106)

Throughout her experience in finding jobs, Zami faces racism. When she tries to find a job, the employers either tell her she is overqualified or inexperienced. Finally, she finds a job in a hospital whose head of the accounting department, is a woman. Zami examines her cold manner as the conclusion of her fight to gain her recent position in the hospital. As Zami mentions, being an accountant is not considered as a female job, because of that this accountant, Mrs. Goodrich, has tried her best. (Lorde 1982: 162-163)

D) The Black Woman's Identity and Blackness

In Audre Lorde's *Sister Outsider*, Lorde tells about the Uzbeki women and their success in changing their life conditions. She points out that many of them, after a long battle against their own fathers and brothers, were able to read. According to Uzbeki women, revolution meant being able to go to school. In addition to this, Lorde mentions that there is even a statue for the fallen women and their bravery. (Lorde 1984: 29) Now on, Uzbeki women are equal with Uzbeki men and they can control farms or become ministers. They give great importance to their children; they have daycare centers and kindergartens where children are cared in collective farms. They give importance to the image of motherhood; because of that, men are not encouraged to work in the kindergartens 'to give the children a gentle male figure at an early age.' (29)

Lorde also points out the importance of poetry for women. According to her, we shouldn't think of it as a luxury because it symbolizes the painful existence of women. (Lorde, 37) Poetry is a tool for women's liberation in the sense that, we, as women, express ourselves via poetry and, as the time passes; we will have more opportunities to express ourselves. We define our struggles with poetry, so that it becomes important for the others and makes them think about it. Our hopes and fears create our poems, and these fears and hopes stem from our daily life experiences. (37) Lorde thinks that the black women's bodies are reflected in the texts that they write. For instance, Lorde refers to herself as black, lesbian, mother, poet etc. and in her writings, these characteristics are reflected in different ways. (Morris 2002: 168)

According to Lorde, the transformation of silence into language is very important. Until the present time, women had kept silent and did not express their feelings or

problems. Lorde imposes the women that silence will not protect them, but every word that is pronounced and every expression that is spoken out brings women one step further to freedom. In this way, women can contact each other and connect through their differences, because at the end, they want the same thing: the freedom to express their feelings. With this unity, women can overcome all the problems together. Black or white, lesbian or bisexual, all the women come together and they share a common war against 'the tyrannies of silence.' (Lorde 1984: 41) We must consider the words of women, shout these words out, share them with others and use them in our lives. (43) Nevertheless, Lorde is suspicious of whether the transformation of silence into language and action will cause danger for women because in this way, women reveal their secrets to others. (42) But according to Lorde's daughter, women are half-beings if they do not express themselves because every woman wants to express her deep feelings inside her, but if she prevents herself by keeping her feelings as a secret, at the end, these feelings hurt her, because of being kept hidden. (42)

Lorde states that black women should fight against racism with black men and against sexism with white women. But more than that, black women have the responsibility and right to accept the others without fear and should come together. Sexually, both lesbian and heterosexual black women share the same historical background because of that they should not consider their sexual choices while struggling against the enemies. (Lorde 1984: 52) Moreover, she adds that it is generally believed that black women had pitied the black men who were controlled by white community. As a result, these men treated the women badly, as we can see the signs of it among the women who were battered or dead. So, women should support each other. (62) These misguided men, consequently, think

that white women fit better to the image of “femininity”, -as it can be concluded from their behaviors to black women-, because of that, they prefer to marry white women. (63)According to Lorde, for the ones who are out of category of femininity, who are poor, black and lesbian, survival is to stand alone powerfully against others. It is to create a new world in which they can develop themselves, without oppression. They want to use their differences as power against the others.(112)In the women’s movement, on the other hand, white women continue their oppressions ignoring differences of race, sexual preference, class and age.’(116)

As Lorde states that white women have created the superiority of whiteness and excluded the black woman. As a result, they have become “the other” and their experiences have become something not worth criticizing. (Lorde 1984: 117) Lorde proves it with the absence of black women’s experiences in women’s studies courses. In addition to this, their works are rarely included in women’s literature but never in world literature. Lorde draws attention to the fact that; “All too often, the excuse given is that the literatures of women of Color can only be taught by Colored women, or that they are too difficult to understand, or that classes can not “get into” them because they come out of experiences that are “too different.” (Lorde 1984: 117)

Moreover, Lorde points out the most important fact that white women have difficulty in reading black women’s writing because they are reluctant to believe the experiences of black women and their existences. (Lorde 1984: 118) Lorde emphasizes that in order to examine Black women’s experiences and works, they should be considered as separate beings who are also women, but different in color. They should be seen as a whole with both their experiences and races; they should get rid of the image of “problematic human

beings.” Lorde indicates that the literatures of all women of Color have included their own life experiences between them. The difference between the whites and blacks always causes one side’s inferiority, which is always black and this difference makes the inferior one guilty. (118)

In *Sister Outsider*, Lorde points out that the identity of “blackness” is something very important for the black people; and according to her, if black people do not identify themselves clearly, the white society will do it for them and use this to their benefit. (Lorde, 45) Moreover, she adds that this is more important for black women, who are aware of their skills and ready to express themselves; because this is the way to the Black liberation. Black women’s showing their power or their social, economical or political interests will not harm black communities’ unity, in this way; they will contribute to black movement. As Lorde states, black women and men who have noticed that they have the ability to develop their skills and interests, and they have to try to find ways to overcome the political, economical and social oppression. (46)

In *Zami*, the reader observes the black woman’s identity, from a different perspective. Lorde gives examples from her life experiences. There are three periods which determine the important parts of the novel. The first one is Zami’s mother’s struggle while trying to adapt to the new country she has come to live, the second one is Zami’s struggle in for education in the white community and the last one is the Zami’s inability to define herself.

Contradictory to other examples, Lorde creates the character of Zami’s mother, as a powerful woman. As it is mentioned before, she is, somehow, a different black woman. When she first comes to her new country, at first, she has some problems because she is

so skilled and talented for the Grenadian culture but she is unfamiliar with the American society. She knows how to prepare oils for different illnesses or etc., but these things do not fit to the new culture. As a result of this, she has to change and adapt to the new society and the new culture. Of course, these changes have affected her experiences and knowledge.

In contrast to her mother, Zami acts differently for her survival. Unlike her mother, she does not refuse to ignore the limitations set by the white patriarchy. She accepts the new experiences, and the changes. She both rejects her mother's style of refusing the white patriarchy and reshapes the oppression so that she can strengthen herself.

In the novel, Zami is proud of her mother, although she has a different 'physical substance.'(Lorde 1982: 8)Zami points out that every one, even strangers,-who are most probably the whites-ask Zami's mother's views about everything, for instance about meat in the meat market. Zami names this relation as "power", but she strongly expresses that her mother sometimes had weak times, and nevertheless, she could manage to hide her feelings. "Being Black and foreign and female in New York City in the twenties and thirties was not simple, particularly when she was quite light enough to pass for white, but her children weren't."(8)

As Zami quotes to the reader, her mother is shockingly an important black woman, in the society. Everybody asks her opinion, but the most important thing is that although she was not educated beyond the seventh grade, she could teach the first grade children.(Lorde 1982: 14)In this sense, it can be clearly observed that when comparing with the other colored women, she could have the chance to have an education and work in a school.

Throughout the novel, the reader can notice the developing of black woman's identity, in the sense that slowly black women and white women can get along with each other. *Zami* indicates that in her high school, she has met with both black and white girls, shared her feelings, ideas and dreams and she adds that there are people who respected and admired them. (Lorde 1982: 67) Furthermore, she continues with her lesbian group, whose members are all almost white. *Zami* insists on the sisterhood of all the women and tries to practice it in her own life. (155) About her group, she says that they cared for each other and loved each other. The race is not important from them; they are close friends; they eat together, sleep together. As it can be concluded, they do not include "race" into their relationships and this is a development for both communities; black and white. (155)

"Black or white, Ky-Ky, butch, or femme, the only thing we shared, often, and in varying proportions, was that we darted for connection in the name of woman, and saw that as our power, rather than our problem." (Lorde 1982: 196)

"Lorde's recreation of the gay bar scene should be understood as much a construction as is the familial tradition in which she is able to re-describe her mother as a "Black dyke" or to locate lesbianism as both innate, African, and 'a drive from the mother's blood.' In constructing this cultural fiction, Lorde first denaturalizes the African-American tradition by making clear her absence as a lesbian from it, and then rewrites the genealogy so that it includes her." (Wilson 2001: 109)

There is an important scene in *Zami* where the black woman is superior to white woman. Muriel, Audre's lover, and Audre draw lists of their achievements about the past years, and Audre lines her achievements as "went to school, wrote poems and etc."; but Muriel writes "Nothing". Obviously, from this moment, Muriel will go into depression

where Audre will continue her life. Audre is surprised to see Muriel's list empty because she has thought that because Muriel is white, she would have done much more things than her and in addition to this, Muriel is shocked because Audre is very successful for doing so much activities in different fields although she is black. "White is stuck; but also white is stuck because, as she constructs it, black is active."(Wilson 2001: 115)

In *Zami*, Zami mentions the views of other people for the place, where she lived. She stresses out that people try to be away from black people's residences because they think that, "...seemed very far away and hostile territory." (Lorde 1982: 153)

E) Family Relations

In Audre Lorde's critical book *Sister Outsider*, Lorde mentions little about the family relations. She only points out the women's need for men. Lorde gives example from a woman's life. Lorde draws attention to the fact that after her husband's death in the war, this woman longs for a new man, because she has taken over the male's role, as many women. (Lorde 1984: 20) Although in *Sister Outsider*, Lorde does not discuss much about the topic, in *Zami* she tells much more than *Sister Outsider*.

In *Zami*, the reader observes a different kind of family relations. In Zami's family, the family members are in a different situation than the members of Brownfield's family. In Zami's family, as Zami mentions, both her mother and father make decisions while discussing an issue concerning the family or the business, for even a little thing, for instance, while buying coats for the children. They never shout at each other, they speak 'with one unfragmentable and unappealable voice'. (Lorde 1982: 7) Moreover, she underlines that her father never hits Zami and her sisters, although he seems a powerful and a strong man. But this virtue has caused a myth among the people that he is so strong that if he slaps someone, he might kill. (44) Although her parents treated Zami well, still her mother is very strict with Zami. In her childhood and teenage years, she does not let her to see her friends or act like her friends. She has such problems that even in high school; she wants to leave the house, or go away to school and tells her problems to her teacher, Mrs. Flouton. "I told her about my mother's strictness and meanness and unfairness at home, and how she didn't love me because I was bad and I was fat, not neat and well-behaved like my two old sisters." (Lorde 1982: 68) Consequently, one can not

help observing that although she is luckier, for her life conditions, than Mem in **Third Life of Grange Copeland**, Zami has also some problems with her family or her life.

In *Sister Outsider*, Lorde has not mentioned about the “sexual abuse” but in *Zami*, the reader observes the first sexual experience of Zami. Although the boy who raped her is not so big, he has forced her to have sexual intercourse and threatened to break her glasses. Zami tells that she does not know much about sexual life because she is ten. As it can be concluded that although the boy is a child, he can force her to a sexual relationship, because she is unprotected. (Lorde 1984: 60)

Although in *Sister Outsider*, Lorde has not dealt with “social oppression”, she has examined this issue little in *Zami*. In the novel, Zami tells about a woman called Eudora and her struggles to attend the University of Texas. She has camped with her dog for four years in the university campus. She is determined to go to this university as her brothers; but is refused because the university does not supply accommodation for women, but at the end she manages to attend the school. (139)

Furthermore, Zami gives an example from her childhood and tells that the black children are generally excluded by white kids and teachers. Zami points out that her sister, Phyllis, was prevented to attend the trip to Washington, although deposit was given in secret for her; because the teachers told Phyllis that she, as a black kid, would not be happy for staying hotel with white kids; which meant the hotel did not rent rooms for Black people. (Lorde 1982: 54)

F) Sexism

In *Sister Outsider*, Lorde strongly points out the relationship of black men and black women. She thinks that black women are free to speak for themselves and express their feelings or problems or etc., but she can not understand why black men choose black women as their targets for oppression. She underlines that black men think that they have the right to rape black women. (Lorde 1984: 60) She says that they do not count on black women's identities and blames them for accepting the roles which are established by the society; because these roles are decided by the white society and include oppression. In the notion of "blaming the victim for victimization", black women are accused of inviting rape and murder and abuse by 'not being submissive enough, or by being too seductive, or too...' (61)

Furthermore, Lorde claims that white people are afraid of the Black pride and identity and see them as the threat for their presences, and as a result, they try to annihilate this idea of pride and identity. (Lorde 1984: 62) So, the Black men avoid the idea of black identity and confidence, and see Black women as a threat; because Black women love themselves. Lorde strongly believes in the idea that Black women should, insistently, believe their power and protect their identities. Throughout the centuries, women had to care for others; first of all, they had to care for the whites because they were their masters and oppressors and secondly, they cared for their children, fathers, brothers or etc. As a result, they could not care for themselves. Lorde points out that the history is full of the tales of "scarred, broken, battered and dead daughters." (62)

Lorde stresses that Black men should decide about their own destinies and positions, but in reality they are affected by white society's oppression. They define the term

“femininity” in the oppressors’ words and they insist on using the term “femininity” for defining female characteristics, instead of expressing their own ideas about black women; because of this, black men limit the black women’s identities. According to Lorde, both Black men and women should not ignore the oppression and male authority over women, and she adds that if the Black men continue to act like that and show this authority as a right for themselves, women should not obey this and take an act otherwise their silence will serve as a benefit to white oppressors. (Lorde 1984: 63)

Although Lorde blames black men for treating black women maliciously, she also emphasizes that they are not the only ones to blame for in a white society, but warns them to realize that sexism stems from the same source that racism stems, and this source limits the chance for the liberation of Black men. And until this realization, black men will see sexism as an unimportant part of the black struggle and, black men and women will hardly agree in the survival of the black people in the white community. (Lorde 1984: 64)

Moreover, Lorde adds that the black people should not reflect their problems outside their houses; and Black women should not, directly, address black men for their cruel behaviors towards Black women. Black men are under the control of white community and their manners are created by them. First of all, the relationship between Black women and men should be strong, so that they can ignore the white patriarchy; but if the Black men obey the white patriarchy, then the white control will reach its aims. (Morris 2002: 168) Although Lorde states her ideas about the sexism in her critical book “**Sister Outsider**” clearly, she has not mentioned much in her novel *Zami*.

G) Sexual Choice

In *Sister Outsider*, Lorde points out that lesbianism, once, was the problem of the white women, but as lesbianism appeared among the black women, black lesbianism has been considered as a threat to the black community, they are not blacks anymore and they have close relationships with white women, in other words, “the enemy” according to non-lesbian blacks. (Lorde 1984: 121) But according to Lorde, these lesbian women are in dilemma because they are excluded from their black sisterhood and white women benefit from this exclusion and easily apply racism on black lesbians.

Furthermore, Lorde mentions about the homophobia in the African American community. In “Scratching the Surface: Some Notes on Barriers to Women and Loving”, she points out to men’s intention to use the term “lesbian” to make Black women rejected in the community. They use “lesbianism” to create a fear in the society so that they can silence lesbians and African American women. (Morris 2002: 168)

In *Zami*, generally the reader witnesses the sexual life of Zami and the reaction of the society to different sexual choices. First of all, the reader comes across with the changing sexuality of Zami. At first, she is a straight girl; she falls in love with a boy and becomes pregnant. But as the time passes, she recognizes that she does not want to have sexual relationship with men; she likes women. Before her decision to be a lesbian, she has had some sexual relationships with her girlfriends. She implies that at the end she has decided to have sexual relationships with women, but does not know how. “How I was going to accomplish that, I had no idea, or even what I meant by an affair.” (Lorde 1982: 100)

The writer points out the reaction of the society and the black womanhood to the lesbianism. Zami underlines that people are reactionary to the lesbianism, both black and

white and as it is mentioned in the book *Sister Outsider*, black lesbians are uncomfortable from the prejudice of the society. “For them, being gay was ‘bourgeois and reactionary’, a reason for suspicion and shunning. Besides, it made you ‘more susceptible’ to the FBI.”

Zami draws attention to the fact that black lesbians hid their lesbian identities in the fifties. White lesbians are comfortable in showing themselves; because of this, black lesbians have relationships with the white ones. According to Zami, black lesbians are excluded from the black sisterhood because of homophobia; as a result Zami believes that there are hardly enough black lesbians so there is unity among themselves. (Lorde 1982: 153)

In addition to this, Zami examines the psychology of the black lesbians. According to Zami, Black lesbians keep themselves hidden because they are afraid of other people’s reactions and they are ignored by the Black community. Moreover, Zami points out that Black lesbians are also under the threat of racist manners of the white society. As a result, Zami mentions the hard positions of black lesbians in the society. Although she goes to lesbian bars, Zami feels excluded. Because, being a lesbian is equal to being white and middle-class; so as a black lesbian, she feels lonely. This observation of Zami points out the reason why there are a few black lesbians in the society. She reasons the scarcity of black lesbians to the racial issues; because black lesbians are ignored in the lesbian community.

“It was hard enough to be Black, female, and gay. To be Black female, gay and out of the closet in a white environment,....., was considered by many Black lesbians to be simply suicidal.” (Lorde 1982: 195)

CONCLUSION

As it is stated before, the women had started to suffer from the early ages and this suffering has greatly affected their lives. First of all, they could not express themselves, because they were women. They had to use pseudonyms in order to be able to publish their works. Moreover, the gender issues were not, even, considered in the early ages, until the first wave feminism had appeared in 20th century. The women have questioned whether they have equal conditions with black men or not. As a conclusion, they have recognized that they do not have equalities with the other men, so they have rebelled against white patriarchy.

In 15th century, it is proved that in Iroquois Confederacy, the women have had the power, and USA has taken it as an example, to use in its society. In this period, the Clan mothers had the power; they were asked for opinion and had the right to attend social decisions in the community. First of all, the women who came to USA to work had great hopes but later on, their works were replaced with the men's works; so both the racist and sexist views started to appear.

Moreover, women tried to come together to struggle against the male domination. Both black and white, they did not have the right to present themselves socially. They were in the second place in society. With the developing situations for women, they have had both political and social rights. Their struggle up to that period did not consider the racist views, but when the white women started to gain their rights, they have pointed out the racial differences between them. As a conclusion, they started to ignore the black women. On the other hand, the Black women have observed that "mainstream feminist

movement” does not focus on their aims, anymore so they have started to search for a new movement for themselves.

In a way, the Black feminist criticism developed from the lack of Black women’s works and life conditions in the works of white women. In addition to this, it can be clearly observed that the black women are misrepresented in their works or their writings are dismissed in the literary anthologies. As a result of all these reasons, the word “feminism” and “womanism” have appeared.

Feminism is a social, political ideology with broad purpose of advancing the status of women. The modern women’s movement is based largely on the civil rights struggles of the mid-20th century. Feminism as a political stand has a goal of gender equality, but there are multiple approaches within feminism, expressing different philosophical or theoretical explanations for the source of inequality.

In addition to multiple approaches to feminism, there are different ways of expressing feminist beliefs. Feminists work publicly to effect political and social change. They take place in political action groups, provide services for women who face with violence at home and sexual abuse, attend public protests and demonstrations, or engage in other visible woman-centered work.

“Womanist” is a term coined by Alice Walker (1983) to refer to Black feminists or other feminists of color. For many people, the women’s movement and feminism have been seen as a middle-class white women’s movement, leading a feminist theory aimed at providing equal opportunity for white women. African-American women and other women of color have felt deprived by the literal feminist theory which did not apply to their experiences of multiple oppressions based on race, ethnicity, class, and gender. The

womanist movement offers some parallels to feminism in the goals of equality and empowerment, but also differs significantly from the theory of feminism.

Walker first used the term in context in her collection of poems *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose*. The need for this term arose from the early feminist movements led specifically by white women who supported social changes such as the right to move from the domestic to the work field. This feminist theory ignored the fact that many women were not housewives and had been working all their lives to help support their families. In particular, African American women were already working women, but not by choice, and not as a matter of personal fulfillment. Similarly, the Civil Right Movement was also needed. It focused equality for African American men, but women were unintentionally left in the background.

Walker created the womanist movement out of these two separate movements. With the increasing use of the term, both African American Studies and Women's Studies programs began to add womanism into university courses, and historians are regarded as *womanist* historians if they have included the views and experiences of African American women in their accounts of history.

In my thesis, I have focused on the books of Audre Lorde and Alice Walker and I have observed that both have differences and similarities in their books. Concerning the racial issues, for instance, Walker points out the biased views of white people towards the black people. She generally describes the fact that black people, especially black women, are misrepresented in the books so that people have prejudices towards them.

Moreover, she adds the cruel behaviors of white people towards black people. She points out the ignorance of white people for blacks, while they are shot in the streets or

forced to work in the fields. Furthermore, she adds that the white people, even, do not pronounce the word “black” and refuse the slavery. In addition to their ignorance socially, the black people are also ignored literally. People do not know much about the works of black people and do not attempt to criticize them.

Moreover, in her novel, Walker points out the racial discrimination, in detail. She points out the characters’ downfalls through the racial limitations and their struggle against these strict barriers. In addition to this, she stresses the women’s struggle in both sexist and racist issues. She underlines that black men are under the control of white patriarchy and as a result, they are oppressed socially. They treat their kids and wives bad, although they know how to be oppressed and treated badly, from their experiences in the white community.

Furthermore, Walker points out the political conditions in her writings. She underlines that black women are discriminated while searching for their political rights. In her novel, she marks that with the changing generations, the black people’s thoughts about their political rights, also, changed. For instance, in *Third Life of Grange Copeland*, both Grange and Brownfield are not interested in gaining their political rights, but Ruth, as a new generation, seeks for her rights even attends the Civil Rights Movement.

Walker stresses that being black should be important for both black women and men, but she calls attention to the fact that they search for people who are whiter than they are. For the black men, as she highlights, the woman who is “high yellow” or “light-brown” is more attractive. As a result, there are differences in the lives of “black black” women and “light brown” women’s lives. In addition to this, there is a discrimination which alerts the

division among black women. In her novel, Walker uses “blackness” as the insult of Brownfield for Mem. Brownfield decreases Mem by calling her “Negro” or “poor black woman” although they are both black. Nevertheless, the reader observes Grange’s efforts to teach Ruth how to dance, which is one of the characteristics of African culture.

Concerning the working conditions, Walker indicates the unequal work and payment that black women and men have faced. Although they have worked hard, they are paid less than they deserve. In her novel the reader witnesses the racism in the working conditions. First of all, Brownfield and Grange are under the control of white patriarchy, so they can’t, even, tell a word to their white master and this control is reflected in their family relations at home. The reader observes the struggle of Mem, who is one of the important characters of the novel. In spite of her husband’s violent actions and insults, she wants to survive in life and seeks for better economical conditions. Moreover, it is observed that black women do not have much chance to find a proper job because in the ads in newspapers, the black women are only wanted for housework, not for higher positions.

According to Walker, the black women do not have much social rights. Moreover, they are ignored by black men. For instance, in *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, Josie is a prostitute and this makes her inferior to others, especially men and they think that they have the right to treat the women as they like. In addition to this, the reader comes across to the fact that black women are ignored by black men, in spite of their high education. As a conclusion, it can be stated that whether inferior or superior, woman has always a secondary place compared to man.

Moreover, the black people, both men and women, are ignored in the white community, socially. Until the Civil Rights Movement, they were not allowed to eat in some restaurants. Walker gives an example from her childhood that black children were not allowed to use the town pool and in addition to this, a black kid was beaten when he was trying to fix a white girl's bicycle chain. Moreover, in her novel, Walker underlines that, although North seems to have more advantages, the black people are discriminated because of their races in North as South.

In Walker's works, the reader can see the oppressed woman in the house. While they are oppressed in the society, they are also oppressed at their houses. For instance, female characters in her novel are so submissive that they are under the control of their husbands. Although they do not do bad things to destroy their family relationships, women accept the power of their husbands and obey what their male counterparts order. In addition to this, Walker adds that all the societies are not same in the decreasing process of women; for instance, in Cuba, the women have some family rights to protect both themselves and their families.

In her work, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*, Walker mentions the lack of black lesbians' writings. She thinks that black lesbians are ignored in the society and they are excluded from the black community. They are not mentioned in the novels, books or articles, because they are not present, according to the ones who do want to see the reality, which is black lesbianism. Moreover, their works are seen as "a piece of nonsense writing". Furthermore, their works are either criticized from a different point of view or misjudged.

In relation with black lesbianism, Walker points out the changing black woman's identity. In opposition with the past situations, now on the black woman can support themselves financially and they are more aware of the influences of white people so that they can find the reasons of some of their problems. Moreover, Walker indicates the creativity of black women. She points that although black women do not use variety of materials to compose a work of art, they have continued to show their skills.

In addition to this, Walker highlights the sexist behaviors of men. First of all, she gives example from Buchi Emecheta's novel *Second Class Citizen*. In this novel, Walker describes the sexist behaviors that Adah, the main character, has faced. Moreover, she gives an example from her life experience. She questions the sexist behaviors of her father. In addition to this, she draws attention to the fact that Brownfield tries to overcome the power of Mem and as Walker mentions, his thoughts about women are obvious. He thinks that the woman's real duty is to satisfy her husband sexually.

Moreover, in *Third Life of Grange Copeland*, Walker tells about the family relations of the black people. She marks that except for Mem, none of the parents have cared for her/his children greatly. They generally reject their kids and can not protect them from the white patriarchy. But Mem is different. She tries to make her children live in better conditions than she lives. She tries to buy a new house and new clothes for the kids; but nevertheless, she fails.

While comparing with Walker's works, in Lorde's works, the reader, again, witnesses the usage of racist views in the society. But, most of all, Lorde questions the place of black women, comparing them with black men. As a feminist writer she emphasizes the control over black men by white people and draws attention to the fact that white people

use the black patriarchy to control the whole black community. She points out that black men are guilty for uniting themselves with the men in the female oppression process.

In the novel, *Zami*, the reader comes across a different kind of black woman. Zami's mother, in spite of being a black woman, is respected and loved. Moreover, Zami experiences many racist events; for instance, she is always in the Brownies' group because she is black. Moreover, Lorde points out that the landlord of Zami's family commits suicide because he had to rent his house to black people. As it can be understood, both Lorde and Walker have seriously examined the issue of racism in their works.

Concerning the political conditions, Lorde has dealt with the issue little in *Sister Outsider* but in *Zami*, she points out the different aspects of black people because Zami's parents are involved in the political developments. Zami's mother, for instance, is always present in important positions during the election time. Comparing with Walker, Lorde has dealt more with the issue.

About the "blackness", Lorde points out that the identity of "blackness" is something very important for the black people; according to her, if black people do not identify themselves clearly, the white society will do it for their benefit. Black women's showing their power or their social, economical or political interests will not harm black communities' unity, in this way; they will contribute to black movement. Consequently, Lorde has dealt with the issue as well as Walker.

In addition to this, Lorde points out the different working conditions of women in different countries. She points out the women's conditions in Russia and the black women's finding jobs in universities, easily. In *Zami*, the reader witnesses the dangerous

working conditions of black women. The white people hire black women to work in the x-ray machines, which cause cancer of the kidneys. It is clear that Lorde has dealt with the issue as Walker.

Furthermore, Lorde has dealt much about the “social oppression” and “social discrimination” issues. She only draws attention to the struggle of a woman who wants to attend to the University of Texas and at the end, succeeds in. In comparison with Walker, Lorde touched on the issues very little.

In the books of Lorde, she does not mention about the “oppression at home”, but she has mentioned about “sexism” in her book *Sister Outsider*. She thinks that black women are free to speak for themselves and express their feelings or problems or etc., but she can not understand why black men choose black women as their targets for oppression. She underlines that black men think that they have the right to rape black women.

Concerning the family relations, Lorde depicts a different kind of family. In *Zami*'s family, her parents never shout at each other, and make decisions while dealing an issue concerning the family or the business. According to Lorde, for the black women, poetry is very important. According to her, we should not think of it as a luxury because it symbolizes the painful existence of women. Poetry is a tool for women's liberation in the sense that women express themselves via poetry. Moreover, in *Zami*, the reader meets a different black woman, who is respected and loved in the sense that she is one of the lucky women who could have education.

In the “sexual choice” issue, Lorde makes great explanations and in detail underlines the issue. She points out that the black lesbians are excluded from the society and this is wrong because eliminating the choices, black women should protect their womanhood.

Because of this exclusion, black women get along with white women, which destroy the unity of Black womanhood.

As it can be clearly concluded that, both Lorde and Walker have depicted the problems of black women according to their views of perception and one can not help examining that the things they value differ. For instance, Walker gives much more significance to the oppressed women, in her novel **The Third Life of Grange Copeland**, for example the violence the women faced or the society's views about women or a woman's struggle to protect her children; whereas, Lorde gives much more importance to the development of the self. For example, in her novel **Zami**, Lorde depicts the development of a young lady, mostly psychologically and sexually. In contrast with Walker, she does not refer much to the family relations as Walker does. Consequently, it is obvious that although both feminism and womanism stem from the same root; in some ways, they have both common and different notions and these notions direct views to different ways and in this way, feminism and womanism differ from each other.

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