

**T.C. İSTANBUL KÜLTÜR UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

**COLONIZED BLACK WOMEN'S BODIES RESISTING OPPRESSION IN
MORRISON'S *BELOVED* AND WALKER'S *POSSESSING THE SECRET OF JOY***

Master of Arts Thesis

Makbule ÖZTÜRK

2000002650

Department: English Language and Literature

Programme: English Language and Literature

Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Gillian M.E. ALBAN

JANUARY 2023

T.C. İSTANBUL KÜLTÜR UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

**COLONIZED BLACK WOMEN'S BODIES RESISTING OPPRESSION IN
MORRISON'S *BELOVED* AND WALKER'S *POSSESSING THE SECRET OF JOY***

Master of Arts Thesis

Makbule ÖZTÜRK

2000002650

Department: English Language and Literature

Programme: English Language and Literature

Supervisor : Assoc. Prof. Gillian M.E. ALBAN

Jury Members : Assist. Prof. Ayşegül Turan

Assist. Professor Sanaz Alizadeh Tabrizi

JANUARY 2023

PLAGIARISM

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Name/Last name : Makbule ÖZTÜRK
Date:

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the marginalization and violation of black female bodies within the oppressive power mechanisms of the colonial and patriarchal ideologies in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) and Alice Walker's *Possessing the Secret of Joy* (1992). Resistance of the oppressed bodies of female characters is scrutinized through a comparative analysis. Postcolonial and black feminist/womanist points of view along with a feminist understanding of the so-called subordination of black female bodies are applied in a deconstructive method. The colonial and patriarchal ideologies are put under scrutiny to show that these two ideologies resemble each other in terms of their hegemonic structures highlighting the dichotomized thinking inherent in the western understanding which leads to the so-called subordination of black women. Logocentrism of the colonial system and phallogentrism of the black patriarchal perspective locating black women in the "inferior other" position of the binarized thinking is demystified. For this end, Michel Foucault's idea of power and knowledge; remarks of bell hooks, Angela Davis and Audre Lorde on the state of black female bodies in the sexist-racist systems along with Morrison's concept of Africanism are referred to deconstruct the binarized thinking. Additionally, the womanist discourse of Toni Morrison and Alice Walker; and feminist perspectives of Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray's theories of repression of the female body are visited to undo the discourse of the power. This study problematizes the colonizing mentality prevailing in American society through the analysis of Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and shows that the same colonizing manner is mirrored in the fictional Olinkan tribe in Alice Walker's *Possessing the Secret of Joy*. The female characters in both novels carry the traces of the brutal treatment on their bodies but strike the reader as defying characters to the manipulations of the oppressive systems through resorting to violence as a means of resistance, thereby moving from the state of passivity to activity by taking control of their lives.

Key Words: Black Body, Colonialism, Patriarchy, Resistance, Oppression, Power, Violence, Toni Morrison, *Beloved*, Alice Walker, *Possessing the Secret of Joy*

ÖZET

Bu çalışma, Toni Morrison'ın *Beloved* (1987) ve Alice Walker'ın *Possessing the Secret of Joy* (1992) romanlarındaki kolonyal ve ataerkil ideolojilerin baskıcı iktidar mekanizmaları içinde siyah kadın bedenlerinin marjinalleştirilmesini ve ihlal edilmesini incelemektedir. Kadın karakterlerin ezilen bedenlerinin direnişi karşılaştırmalı bir analizle irdelenmiştir. Postkolonyal ve siyah feminist/kadıncı bakış açıları, siyah kadın bedenlerinin sözde aşağı konumuna ilişkin feminist bir anlayışla birlikte yapısökümcü bir yöntemle uygulanır. Sömürgeci ve ataerkil ideolojiler, bu iki ideolojinin hegemonik yapıları açısından birbirine benzediğini göstermek için inceleme altına alınır; bu da, siyah kadınların sözde aşağı kılınmasına yol açan batı anlayışının doğasında var olan ikiye bölünmüş düşünceyi vurgular. Siyah kadınları ikilileştirilmiş düşüncenin “aşağı öteki” konumuna yerleştiren siyah ataerkil perspektifin sömürgeci sistemin logosantrizmi ve fallosentrizmi, Michel Foucault'nun güç ve bilgi fikrinin yardımıyla bu ikilileştirmenin yapıbozuma uğratılması yoluyla gizeminden arındırılır; Angela Davis ve Audre Lorde'un cinsiyetçi-ırkçı sistemlerdeki siyah kadın bedenlerinin durumu ve Morrison'ın Afrikacılık kavramı ile desteklenir. Ayrıca Toni Morrison ve Alice Walker'ın kadıncı söylemi; Hélène Cixous ve Luce Irigaray'ın kadın bedeninin bastırılması teorilerinin feminist perspektifleri, iktidar söylemini bozmak için incelenir. Bu çalışma, Toni Morrison'ın *Sevilen* adlı romanının analizi üzerinden Amerikan toplumunda hakim olan sömürgeci zihniyeti sorunsallaştırıyor ve Alice Walker'ın *Sevincin Sırrına Sahip Olmak* adlı eserinde de aynı sömürgeci tavrın kurgusal Olinkan kabilesinde yansıtıldığını gösteriyor. Her iki romanda da kadın karakterler bedenlerinde gaddar muamelenin izlerini taşırlar, ancak bir direniş aracı olarak şiddete başvurarak baskıcı sistemlerin manipülasyonlarına meydan okuyan karakterler olarak okuyucuya çarpar ve böylece hayatlarını kontrol altına alarak edilgenlikten eyleme geçerler.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Siyah Bedeni, Sömürgecilik, Ataerkillik, Direniş, Baskı, Güç, Şiddet, Toni Morrison, *Sevilen*, Alice Walker, *Sevincin Sırrına Sahip Olmak*



*To my dear mother; who is the embodiment
of female power and motherhood strength*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would first like to express my deepest gratitude to my thesis advisor Assoc. Prof. Gillian M.E. ALBAN for her invaluable guidance and professional attitude. Without her patience and constant encouragement, I wouldn't be able to complete my thesis in a year's study. She has been so generous that she shared her own books with me without hesitation. Her generosity of sharing her precious time to answer all my questions is beyond words. I want to thank you with all my heart for your valuable remarks related to my topic and insightful comments whenever I needed, Dr. Alban. Your contribution is priceless. I would like to give my special thanks to Assist. Prof. Ayşegül Turan, whose inspiring, illuminating and eye-opening lectures I had the chance to attend. Each week I used to look forward to her lectures with great enthusiasm. My deep gratitude is to Asst. Professor Sanaz Alizadeh Tabrizi for her kindness to honor me by accepting to be a member of the committee.

I was indepted to express my honor to attend the classes of Professor Himmet Umunç, Professor Deniz Bozer, and Assist. Professor Alev Karaduman, who illuminated my way by their academic knowledge during my undergraduate education at Hacettepe University. I would like to express my admiration for Professor Işıl Baş, who is the embodiment of grace, female strength and academic intellectuality. She stands as an idol for us, and I feel myself fortunate to have had the opportunity to attend her fascinating lectures. I express my gratitude to Derya Altınmakas and Assist. Prof. Özlem Güner at Istanbul Kultur University for their contributions to improving my academic knowledge of the English Language and Literature during my postgraduate studies.

I would like to thank my dearest class-mates at Kültür University for sharing the tough times during Covid-19 pandemic and motivating me continually; assisting, listening and finding solutions to my personal and academic problems immediately. My special thanks go to Gizem Serdar Ömür for her support during the completion process of my thesis, to Merve Güler who was my study buddy during a whole year and relieved me through her constant encouragement when I was stuck; Irem Gököz, for her academic guidance and precious remarks, to Halenur for her cosy friendship, contribution, assistance and comments.

Finally, I owe a great gratitude to my mother Fatma Bayram, my father Ömer Bayram, my sisters Gönül Bayram and Gökçen Görgülü; and my brother Sinan Bayram for being there whenever I need help. Though they were not near me, they supported me from long-distance through their heart. I feel fortunate to have such a good family, who raised me to be a strong woman now. My dear husband Onur Öztürk and my beloved son Ozan are expecting my return to them after two years' study, thus my biggest gratitude go to them for their patience and understanding to help me fulfill one of my dreams.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

PLAGIARISM	i
ABSTRACT	ii
ÖZET	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
INTRODUCTION	1
 CHAPTER 1: COLONIZATION, THE CONCEPT OF BODY AND FEMINISM	
1.1. Colonization of Black People	8
1.2. Colonization of Women.....	14
1.2.1 Colonization of Black Women.....	18
1.3. The Concept of the Body.....	27
1.3.1 The Female Body.....	31
1.3.2. Black Woman's Body.....	33
1.4. Black Feminism.....	39
 CHAPTER 2: RESISTANCE OF THE BLACK SLAVE WOMEN	
2.1 Resisting the <i>White</i> Lies to Colonize Black Women's Body in Morrison's <i>Beloved</i>	52
 CHAPTER 3: RESISTANCE OF THE BLACK FEMALES UNDER PATRIARCHY	
3.1. Resisting the <i>Black</i> Lies to Colonize Women's Pleasure in Walker's <i>Possessing the Secret of Joy</i>	72
 CONCLUSION	 89
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	 96

INTRODUCTION

*You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.*

-Maya Angelou, "Still I Rise"

The state of black women has been one of the most miserable ones in world history. Having been subject to both colonial and patriarchal oppression, black women have faced torments and have had to endure miserable situations. As a black person, she has been an "other" for the white colonizer, and as a woman she has been an inferior for both the black and white patriarchal system. Besides being portrayed as inferior, she is seen as a threat to the white phallogocentric system and thus has been labelled as "other". The woman as an object of fear has its roots in the phallogocentric discourse. The two systems go hand in hand and resemble each other so much in terms of black women's situation, which are doubly marginalized by racist-sexist ideology. It is apparent that black women have suffered the most in the racist-sexist system through the violation of their bodies in numerous ways. This study analyzes how the black woman's body is oppressed both by the white American colonizer and by the patriarchal system in the black community of a fictional African tribe respectively and successively.

In this thesis, I will be examining the bodily violation and the resistance of black women in Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved* (1987) and Alice Walker's novel *Possessing the Secret of Joy* (1992) with regard to the colonization, marginalization, devaluation and manipulation of female bodies under logocentric and phallogocentric implications. The aim of this study is to reverse the so-called inferior position of black women both in white and black communities and to demonstrate that women characters, though tortured by the sexist-racist systems, do not yield to oppression but rather rise against suppressing

mechanisms. In this respect, the two novels will be evaluated through a comparative analysis of the oppression of women's bodies which are located as subordinate in colonial and patriarchal economies, and the resistance of women characters in these two novels will be displayed by the help of post-colonial, feminist and black feminist/womanist points of view.

The research topic I chose is the result of my interest in postcolonial studies after my first encounter with the era during my undergraduate education. *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad has given me the inspiration that there must be a different history other than that narrated by white men regarding colonized people. While reading about black women's writings during my postgraduate education, I came to an understanding that there must be "another (her)story" related to black women. The miseries they have endured throughout the ages became one of my biggest concerns while reading *Beloved* by Toni Morrison. The novel seems to be about the implications and effects of slavery on black people/women on the surface; however, another story lies behind the novel as its female characters defy the narratives; i.e. the colonial oppressions imposed upon them. The tree scar which the protagonist of the novel, Sethe, carries on her back was a strong motif that captured my attention immediately and led me to wonder where the root of that tree could reach. Reading other black female writers, I came to understand that it was not only slavery and white phallocentrism that destroyed black women's lives, but also the inhumane traditions going on in every part of the world even today, often in the name of tradition. Alice Walker's novel *The Color Purple*, the winner of Pulitzer Prize for Literature, has been analysed multiple times in terms of black patriarchal oppression on female bodies. Her less known novel, *Possessing the Secret of Joy* needs to be scrutinized as it problematizes the tradition of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). Throughout the novel, Walker explores the roots of this inhumane practice and makes the reader beware the inherent oppressive mechanisms in the black community. I argue that Tashi, the heroine of *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, and Sethe in *Beloved*, "resist the grip" of the power mechanisms which torture their bodies in numerous ways (Foucault 174). The main questions I explore in this study, thus, are "What does a black body come to mean in the slave system?", "How is a black woman's body located in the sexist-racist system?", "How do Morrison's and Walker's novels problematize and deconstruct the so-called

inferiorized images related to black bodies?” and “What are the commonalities of the two novels in terms of resistance of black female bodies to oppression? ”. For this end, I refer to the works of black feminists bell hooks, Angela Davis and Audre Lorde; I use Franz Fanon’s ideas for postcolonial criticism, Michel Foucault for his views related to power and implications of power in terms of colonization, and Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray for deconstructing the inferior position of women.

This study aims at unveiling how the female body is lodged as “the inferior other” in the colonial psyche which view black female slaves as sexually loose, lascivious and wanton and attribute them negative names like “fallen, whore, slut” to justify the rape of black female slaves. Colonial view additionally makes use of the stereotype of the black female as breeders to better exploit them as labour force in the colonial economy. Furthermore, the Christian belief of the colonizers picture women as sinful creatures which lead men to corruption and sin. This view, along with the stereotype of breeder, is used as the pretext by the misogynist colonizer for raping black female slaves. With a similar attitude, black patriarchal psyche shares the sexism of the white colonizer attributing negative images to black women like they are sexual heathens. Though slavery fed the black male psyche that women are inferior to men, the inherent black sexist structures show that misogyny goes back to times before slavery in African communities. As bell hooks states, “Black male sexism existed long before American slavery” (hooks 123). Black females, as a result of these two ideologies, are mistreated in accordance with the colonial and patriarchal attitude in the novels analysed in this thesis. There are studies relating to colonial and patriarchal oppression on female bodies, however this study takes the two ideologies as parallels rooted in the dichotomized thinking of the hegemonic powers to torture the female body. The outcome of oppression is resistance shown by the female characters and bear resemblances in the two novels. The *colonization* of the black female bodies is central to this study. Being black and being a woman are significant aspects of women’s oppressions and are dealt with separately in this study, but these two aspects end in alike results. Michel Foucault states “Where there is power, there is resistance” (95). In a similar understanding of Foucault, Brent L. Pickett articulates that “Resistance is what threatens power and, hence it stands against power as an adversary” (458). The female characters in both novels show similar acts of resistances to the power mechanisms oppressing them.

In *Beloved*, the operating ideology is the colonial discourse which locates black people in the less privileged position in the western logocentric and dichotomized thinking and subjugate black female slaves, while *Possessing the Secret of Joy* lays bare the black phallogocentric ideology repressing female sexuality. Toni Morrison and Alice Walker's legacy of "womanist" discourse helps demystify the concepts attributed to black women and deconstruct the degraded position of black women. The two authors use language as a tool to defy the discourse of the hegemonic power mechanisms. They are politically inclined writers who struggle to deconstruct the myths and stereotypes relegated to black women. Their discourse strives to undo the "traditional notions of what counts as knowledge" as Rose M. Brewer highlights (99). In *What Moves At the Margins*, Toni Morrison states that the nineteenth century is marked by the view that black people deserve to be slaves and calls "the Age of Enlightenment" "the Age of Scientific Racism". She criticizes the western thinkers David Hume, Immanuel Kant and Thomas Jefferson for "document[ing] their conclusions that blacks were incapable of intelligence" (Morrison 69). She refers to Hegel who claimed in 1813 that 'Africans had no "history" and couldn't write in modern languages' (ibid). However, the elaborated language of the novels of Morrison and Walker prove black women's deconstructing the claims of the western discourse related to black people and black women. Both Morrison's and Walker's elaborated works point at the significance of language and how language is used as "the instrument through which [...] power is exercised" (Morrison *What Moves* 199). Their womanist discourse aims at deconstructing this hegemony by using the language as a weapon to turn the concept related to black women upside down.

This study investigates a comparative analysis of Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Alice Walker's *Possessing the Secret of Joy*. These novels are similar in that though the oppressors change, the mentality of oppression which takes its roots from power and hegemony remains the same, since colonialism and patriarchy resemble each other a lot. As bell hooks states, "white racist oppressors were able to establish a bond of solidarity with black men based on mutual sexism" (hooks 113). Therefore, this study lays bare how the "white phallus" of colonizers and the "black phallus" of the tribal community *colonize* black female bodies. The main motive behind these two ideologies is the so-called

subordinated position of women. Additionally, being a black woman deepens this subordination. For Angela Davis, colonial and patriarchal power cannot be separated easily. They resemble each other significantly, as she suggests: “If Black women had achieved a sense of their own strength and a strong urge to resist, then violent sexual assaults—so the slaveholders might have reasoned—would remind the women of their essential and inalterable femaleness [...] this meant passivity, acquiescence and weakness” (Davis 23). The two novels central to this study demonstrate how these two ideologies operate through hegemonic power mechanisms and a dichotomized way of thinking, and how the characters in the two novels disrupt these dichotomies.

Black women’s subordination by colonial ideology and sexist black patriarchy overlaps in their shared belief about black females. The reproductive function of women and their commodification are two of these views. For colonial ideology, black bodies meant a “force of production” for the slave holders (Foucault 173). *Beloved* tells the stories of black female slaves who are valuable as long as they function as breeding machines. The myth of the breeder is problematized by Angela Davis, which will be discussed later. However, when we look at the female image since ancient times, apart from the colonial economy, women’s position as reproductive vehicles stands out immediately. For Luce Irigaray, patriarchy reduces women to their reproductive function merely. Furthermore, for Irigaray, female sexuality is reduced to being a passive receiver of men’s semen. She criticizes the mentality that sees female reproductivity as “factory, bank-to which the seed capital is entrusted,” however she is not given the right to claim to “either capital or interest since she has only submitted "passively" to reproduction” which results in “[h]erself held in receivership as a certified means of (re)production (Irigaray *Speculum* 18). This attribute of women’s passivity and their being seen as reproducing machines problematized in *Possessing the Secret of Joy* will be analysed in Chapter 3.

In Part 1.1 of Chapter 1, I discuss the colonial mentality that is rooted in the logocentric western view which justifies colonialism creating binary oppositions and locating black people on the subordinated side of the binary. To do so, western colonizers’ use of a number of justifications to locate black people as inferior to whites is elaborated.

In Part 1.2 of Chapter 1, the woman as a *colonized* object in general is problematized. Women's subordination by patriarchy, seen as passive objects is shown through an overview of the sexist ideologies dating back to Platonic times. Women's degradation and humiliation is deconstructed by the help of feminist writers in this section. In Part 1.2.1, the situation of black women as subordinate is problematized. In this part, I aim to lay bare the negative attributes given to black women to subordinate and oppress them. The stereotypical images used by the white colonizers to exploit black female slaves are also problematized here. Additionally, this part analyses how black females are located in the racist and sexist systems of white and black patriarchal systems. The suppressive methods used by the hegemonic power holders like rape and other forms of oppression to passify and annihilate black women are explained. The black women's subordination in the sexist-racist system is handled in a broad sense with the remarks of bell hooks, Morrison, Walker and other black feminist writers/critics.

In 1.3. The Concept of the Body, I explore the body politics since Platonic times to show the concept of the body in its problematic place in the dichotomized thinking of western ideology. To this end, Foucauldian idea of power and knowledge are referred to explain how the body is located in colonial and hegemonic structures. In 1.3.1 part of this chapter, the female body and how it is located in the misogynist systems are elaborated. Additionally, the body's association with womanhood and its secondary position in western dichotomized thinking is problematized in this part.

In Part 1.3.2, black women's body as a target of multiple oppressions is handled in relation to its place in the slave system and in the black community. In this respect, it explores body politics in feminist and postcolonial-black feminist perspectives. This part also explores how the black women's body is located in the sexist-racist system, and the motives behind the attributed inferiority of black female bodies are questioned. In the racist structure, their bodies are seen as inferior to the bodies of white women through scientific explanations. In this respect, the idea of "racial pelvises" coined during 1980s, which ranked African women's pelvises devoid of the "transparent delicacy characteristics of the female European" is visited in this part (Schiebinger 27). In the same manner, black females are debilitated by the sexist black patriarchal community through

“a systematic devaluation of Black women” as Audre Lorde articulates. This devaluation, for her, results in black men’s following the “white male disease of sexism” (Lorde 73,71).

In Chapter 2, *Beloved* is analyzed in terms of the exploitation of black females’ bodies through multiple practices of the colonial system. In this chapter, I explore the colonial justifications to exploit the black female body through a close-reading of the novel. The novel tells the story of a former slave, Sethe, who escapes from the plantation with her children to Ohio, where her mother-in-law Baby Suggs lives. Her body carries the traces of the violations of slavery. However, this violation and oppression of the body, which the colonization causes, is the very means that enables the heroine to show resistance through infanticide and other forms of resistance of black female characters. In Chapter 3, violence used as a way of resistance by Tashi, the heroine of *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, in a similar manner is analysed in depth. After learning that she is deceived and abused by the patriarchal system in her own community, Tashi kills the circumciser, who is the tool of the patriarchy in the novel. Like Sethe, Tashi’s body bears the traces of torture. However, the oppressions they both go through act as triggers for these characters to claim their own bodies and their own selves and clears the way for other females to rise against oppressive mechanisms.

The black female bodies have been located as the “inferior other” in the sexist-racist mentality since Platonic times. The tortures black females go through are the results of the misogynist point of view of white colonizers and the black patriarchal structure, which resemble each other in terms of hegemonic power implications. *Beloved* and *Possessing the Secret of Joy* are analysed here in terms of how these ideologies operate to subordinate black female bodies, and how black women defy the discourses of these oppressive mechanisms despite being surrounded and dominated by them.

CHAPTER 1: COLONIZATION, THE CONCEPT OF BODY AND FEMINISM

1.1. Colonization of Black People

Africa or the “dark continent” has been seen by white western colonizers as savage and unexplored territory, and this made African people open to exploitation. Colonizers have created a discourse to justify the destructive deeds they have inflicted upon these people. As J.C. Young states “Colonial and imperial rule was legitimized by anthropological theories which increasingly portrayed the peoples of the colonized world as inferior, childlike, or feminine, incapable of looking after themselves (despite having done so perfectly well for millennia) and requiring the paternal rule of the west for their own best interests (today they are deemed to require development)” (*Postcolonialism* 2).

Additionally, colonialist westerners hold a kind of fear of the Negro (Negrophobia) (Fanon 160). The reason behind such fear is to hide their own inferiority. Morrison explains this as their “fear of boundarylessness, ... their fear of absence of so-called civilization, their fear of loneliness, of aggression both internal and external” (*Playing* 37). Similarly, Fanon explains the reason behind colonialism by seeing black people as savage, as identified with animals: “To suffer from a phobia of Negroes is to be afraid of the biological. For the Negro is only biological. The Negroes are animals. They go about naked” (Fanon 155). Furthermore, Mannoni states that: “In his urge to identify the anthropoid apes, Caliban, the Negroes, even the Jews with the mythological figures of the satyrs, man reveals that there are sensitive spots in the human soul at a level where thought becomes confused and where sexual excitement is strangely linked with violence and aggressiveness” (qtd. in Fanon 166). Lkening black people to animals and mythological figures like the satyr, who is half goat and half human, helps the westerner to place themselves in a superior position to black people, demeaning them to bodily functions: “In relation to the Negro, everything takes place on the genital level...As for the Negroes, they have tremendous sexual powers. What do you expect, with all the freedom they have in their jungles! They copulate at all times and in all places. They are really genital”

(Fanon 157). Additionally, Fanon admits that “What is important to us here is to show that with the Negro the cycle of the biological begins” (Fanon 161). Thereby, Fanon reminds us of the westerner’s associating Negroes with the body and thus vulgarity and using it as a pretext to “civilize” them.

The body/mind dichotomy which plays an important role in the western ideology during the Enlightenment period actually goes back to ancient times. Westerners construct their ideology of imperialism mainly upon this dichotomy, seeing themselves in a superior position associating themselves with mind and the colonized with body. Lois McNay touches upon this issue asserting thus: “One dualism of central importance to Classical thought is the Cartesian opposition between mind and body. This dualism privileges an abstract, prediscursive subject at the center of thought and, accordingly, derogates the body as the site of all that is understood to be opposed to the spirit and rational thought” (126). Body is in the degraded position in this duality. Thus, the western ideology identifies itself with mind, allocating the body part of the duality to the colonized. Elizabeth Grosz makes reference to the western philosophy of body/mind duality: “Body is thus what is not mind, what is distinct from and other than the privileged term. It is what the mind must expel in order to retain its “integrity.” (*Volatile* 22). Black slaves’ association with body helps colonizers justify the misuse of black slaves for their own ends as colonizers claim that body is “unruly, disruptive, in need of direction and judgment, merely incidental to the defining characteristics of mind, reason, or personal identity” (*Volatile* 22). Like body needs to be directed by mind, slaves are in need of white colonizers’ direction.

Like the body/mind duality, the black/white dichotomy has been another pretext used by the colonizer. In his famous Chariot Allegory, Plato talks about the double nature of the human soul: ‘One of the horses which is white in color and its “determination to succeed is tempered by self-control and respect for others” while the other horse is “black in colour, with grey, bloodshot eyes ... and scarcely to be controlled with a combination of whip and goad” (Plato *Phaedrus* 38). The idea that white is pure and good while black is wicked, bad, animalistic and inferior is apparent from Plato’s idea of two horses, and it is this idea the colonizer makes use of to degrade black people. Fanon comments on this

issue thus: “In Europe the Negro has one function: that of symbolizing the lower emotions, the baser inclinations, the dark side of the soul. In the collective unconscious of *homo occidentalis*, the Negro—or, if one prefers, the color black—symbolizes evil, sin, wretchedness, death, war, famine. All birds of prey are black” (Fanon 191).

The black person image has been reinforced and retold throughout centuries in the collective unconscious of white westerners. “In some countries the Negro has entered into the culture” says Fanon touching upon stories told to white children in America depicting how they see black people:

These stories belong to the oral tradition of the plantation Negroes. Therefore it is relatively easy to recognize the Negro in his remarkably ironic and wary disguise as a rabbit. In order to protect themselves against their own unconscious masochism, which impels them to rapturous admiration of the (black) rabbit’s prowess, the whites have tried to drain these stories of their aggressive potential. (Fanon 174)

For Fanon, white people feel the urge to purge themselves from the more destructive instincts and free themselves from them, they reflect their fear of unwanted feelings to black people with the claim that “The black man naturally feels that he is in closer touch with the ‘lower animals’ than with the white man, who is so far superior to him in every respect” (Fanon 174).

In addition to his criticism of white Europeans’ locating the black on the less privileged side of the dichotomy, Fanon questions the Jungian idea of collective unconscious that European civilization is characterized by: “an expression of the bad instincts, of the darkness inherent in every ego, of the uncivilized savage, the Negro who slumbers in every white man” (Fanon 187). However, Fanon doesn’t agree with Jung and deconstructs him saying “But the collective unconscious, without our having to fall back on the genes, is purely and simply the sum of prejudices, myths, collective attitudes of a given group” (Fanon 188), not something natural yet something constructed by the ideology of the powerful. The ones holding the power create the ideology in order to subordinate others, as Michel Foucault highlights. For him, those holding power create the discourse, as he states “power produces knowledge” through which the colonization is justified (Foucault 175). Sima Farshid and Jalal Sokhanvar refer to the Foucauldian idea of power in terms of colonization: “post-colonialist critics turn to his ideas when they explore the ways via

which colonizers exerted their power in colonies and how they sustained that power by gaining knowledge about the colonized, and also when they inquire into the resisting and subversive movements in colonies (Frashid and Sokhanvar 299).

In addition, Fanon gives many more instances related to how the Europeans see black people. He suggests that “*In Europe, the black man is the symbol of Evil [...]*The torturer is the black man, Satan is black, one talks of shadows, when one is dirty one is black—whether one is thinking of physical dirtiness or of moral dirtiness” (Fanon 189). All the negatives attributes are cited for black people like “[b]lackness, darkness, shadow, shades, night, the labyrinths of the earth, abysmal depths” while white Europeans attribute themselves more positive and appealing adjectives like “the bright look of innocence, the white dove of peace, magical, heavenly light”. These are engraved in the psyches of white and black people and negroes are seen as “the symbol of sin”. As a result, maintains Fanon, “The archetype of the lowest values is represented by the Negro” (Fanon 189).

Toni Morrison also refers to the collective unconscious of the American people, and for her the reason behind white people’s othering the blacks is their fear of their own powerlessness. She explains it as follows: “This black population was available for meditations on terror- the terror of European outcasts, their dread of failure, powerlessness, Nature without limits, natal loneliness, internal aggression, evil, sin, greed” (Morrison *Playing* 37-38). She comes up with the term “Africanism” to explain how the American identity is constituted in its relation to “the other”. For Morrison, Africanism is an essential component to form an American identity as:

Black slavery enriched the country’s creative possibilities. For in that construction of blackness *and* enslavement could be found not only the not-free but also, with the dramatic polarity created by skin color, the projection of the not-me...What rose up out of collective needs to allay internal fears and to rationalize external exploitation was an American Africanism- a fabricated brew of darkness, otherness, alarm, and desire that is uniquely American. (*Playing* 38)

Africanism also helped them define themselves in relation to the other as Morrison states: “Africanism is the vehicle by which the American self knows itself as not enslaved, but free; not repulsive, but desirable; not helpless, but licensed and powerful; not history-less, but historical; not damned, but innocent; not a blind accident of evolution, but a progressive fulfillment of destiny” (*Playing* 52). Placing the African people on the less

privileged side of the dichotomy helps create a strong white American identity, according to Morrison.

Additionally, Morrison challenges the ideas of Hume and Kant, the representatives of the 18th century Eurocentric thought which “relegated Black people to a lower rung in the Great Chain of Being” (Pal 2440). They designated the view that ‘the African "species of men" were "naturally inferior to the whites"' (ibid). This ideology put the grounds for justifying the servitude of African people in America.

Morrison deconstructs all these attributes and also subverts the myths that black are savage. As Farshid and Sokhanvar state, “she has ardently resisted the dominant Euro American power and its prevalent discourse, and has subverted several American myths such as virtue, innocence and benevolence of the white and savagery and violence of the black – presented and sanctified by Euro American discourse” (302). Resistance through her writing is apparently a powerful method, as she inquired what caused the prototypical black imagery. At this point, she refers to her long-term interest in “the way black people ignite critical moments of discovery or change or emphasis in literature not written by them” (*Playing* viii). In *Playing in the Dark*, the writer describes her encounter with an autobiographical work by a woman named Marie Cardinal who tells of her recovery from madness. Morrison describes it as follows: “In fact I had started, casually like a game, keeping a file of such instances” (viii). The work captures her attention with the detailed and clear description of the cause of her trauma: a concert she attends and the jazz music she listens to there. Her reaction to powerful jazz music lays bare the unconscious of a white woman about the black image. Associating jazz music with blacks and blacks with negative attributes create a kind of trauma for Cardinal.

In the following parts of her work, we learn of this trauma as Morrison refers to the book of Marie Cardinal and her overcoming madness incited by the “Thing” as Cardinal names it. As Morrison states, the woman “names the manifestations of her illness-the hallucinatory images of fear and self-loathing-the Thing” (viii). According to the statements of Cardinal, the Thing is incited by the jazz music during a Louis Armstrong concert. After hearing the rhythms and beat of the music, she feels a kind of panic disorder. In this event, Morrison mentions that she starts to think whether this woman’s

“possession” was related to the mythical African image as she remarks: “What solicited my attention was whether the cultural associations of jazz were as important to Cardinal’s “possession” as were its intellectual foundations” (*Playing* viii). Morrison goes on to tell another event that caused Cardinal’s illness which is related later in the diary. It is about this woman’s reaction towards a non-white, black figuration. As Morrison conveys, Cardinal writes in her diary as follows: “It seems to me that the Thing took root in me permanently when I understood that we were to assassinate Algeria” which is the place of her roots, as “she was a colonialist, a white child”, a French born in Algeria, the country which faced the tortures of France. Morrison comments on the issue as follows: “In moving images of matricide, of white slaughter of a black mother, she locates the origin of the Thing” (viii). The black image lurking in the woman causing devastation in her was also accompanied by a social awareness of race; that she was warned constantly against the Arabs. For Morrison, she was ‘white camellia “svelte in appearance but torn inside”’ (viii). Morrison comments on the black image lurking in the unconscious of every white person as follows: ‘In Cardinal’s narrative, black or colored people and symbolic figurations of blackness are markers for the benevolent and the wicked; the spiritual (thrilling tales of Allah’s winged horse) and the voluptuous; of “sinful” but delicious sensuality coupled with demands for purity and restraint’ (*Playing* ix).

Cardinal additionally realizes a prepubescent sexuality during therapy and connects the black figure in the therapist’s office: ““You shouldn’t keep that gorgoyle in your office, it is hideous.” And to remark further, “It was the first time I addressed him other than as a patient”. Signaling the breakthrough, and strategic to its articulation, is this sign of horror and fear lodged in a gorgoyle over which the now liberated patient has some control’ (*Playing* ix). It is the unconscious of the patient about black people, and Morrison is specifically interested in the idea that taking control over something you fear is a key point to define yourself in relation to the other. The myths about black people as horrible creatures lurking behind Cardinal’s notions is a commonality shared by white westerners.

1.2. Colonization of Women

Franz Fanon's insightful remarks have helped to shed light on the mindset of the colonizer. However, his ideas don't help in relation to black women's problem because black women have suffered from white colonizers' abuses and oppressions twice as much as black men. Additionally, black women have endured tortures in the phallogentric black community. To gain a better understanding of the black women's problem, it is significant to identify women's position in the phallogentric and colonizing system as black women have been subjected to both intensively. In this part, I will analyse the problems of dicothomized thinking in relation to woman's subordination and how women have been oppressed through created ideologies that take their roots from this dichotomized thinking.

Woman's image as a passive object goes back to Plato's views. In *Timaeus*, in the dialogue between Socrates and Timaeus, Socrates describes how women should be: "Neither did we forget the women; of whom we declared, that their natures should be assimilated and brought into harmony with those of the men, and that common pursuits should be assigned to them both in time of war and in their ordinary life." (Plato *Timaeus* 57). Elizabeth Grosz comments on the Platonic idea of woman as a passive receiver and refers to Aristotle's work *Timaeus* in which he follows Plato's idea of chora. In his work,

maternity is regarded as a mere housing, receptacle, or nurse of being rather than a coproducer, distinguished matter or body from form, and in the case of reproduction, he believed that the mother provided the formless, passive, shapeless matter which, through the father, was given form, shape, and contour, specific features and attributes it otherwise lacked. The binarization of the sexes, the dichotomization of the world and of knowledge has been effected already at the threshold of Western reason. (Grosz 5)

In a similar manner, Luce Irigaray criticizes women's passive role in the phallogentric ideology as she states: "Woman is nothing but the receptacle that passively receives his product" (Irigaray *Speculum* 18). Women as creatures to be assimilated, to be taken under control is at the core of western ideology, however not limited to it. Women all over the world face the oppressions sugarcoated by ideologies like their being physically weak, or as inferior because of having no penis. These ideologies to degrade women through oppressing their bodies are central to this study and will be analysed in detail.

Women have been subordinated throughout history and they couldn't find the place they deserve. Hélène Cixous asks the place of woman: "Where is she?" in the hierarchized position in the logocentric and phallogocentric way of thinking ("Sorties" 287). She counts a number of dichotomies like "activity/passivity, sun/moon, culture/nature, day/night" and points out that woman is on the less privileged side of "man/woman" dichotomy (287). She refers to a "battled" in which "the couple [of male/female dichotomy] is destroyed" and there is a victory of one side: 'And we perceive that the "victory" always amounts to the same thing: it is hierarchized. The hierarchization subjects the entire conceptual organization to man. A male privilege, which can be seen in the opposition by which it sustains itself, between *activity* and *passivity*' and suggests that "In philosophy, woman is always on the side of passivity" (288). This ideology of male privilege at the core of western philosophy degrades women throughout the ages. Cixous problematizes this degraded position of women as follows:

When I say "woman," I'm speaking of woman in her inevitable struggle against conventional man; and of a universal woman subject must bring women to their senses and to their meaning in history. But first it must be said that in spite of the enormity of the repression that has kept them in the "dark"-that dark which people have been trying to make them accept as their attribute —there is, at this time, no general woman, no one typical woman. (*The Laugh* 875-876)

For her, women are made to internalize this darkness and accept it as something natural which makes it easier to subordinate them. Additionally, women's so-called submissive position is reinforced through myths like they are inferior to men as they don't have penis, thus they lack. Cixous refers to Freudian and Lacanian views which define women as 'lacking'. She challenges this idea saying: "we're not afraid of lacking" (*The Laugh* 878). Furthermore, just like colonial ideology creates an "other" through attributing blackness and thus inferiority to the colonized, men have taught women to accept the inferior position the moment they step into the symbolic realm of the language, as Cixous remarks:

As soon as they begin to speak, at the same time as they're taught their name, they can be taught that their territory is black: because you are Africa, you are black. Your continent is dark. Dark is dangerous. You can't see anything in the dark, you're afraid. Don't move, you might fall. Most of all, don't go into the forest. And so we have internalized this horror of the dark. (*The Laugh* 878)

She resists the patriarchal imposition of women's negative attributes, to passify and to colonize them. She also resists the way phallogentric ideology tries to manipulate women using their body.

Women's body is a significant vehicle to oppress them in numerous ways. Women's sexual organs have been violated by the phallogentric view to subjugate them. Women's genitalia has been given a number of degrading names like black hole, lack. Cixous comments on the issue by referring to the Lacanian view that women lack: "We don't fawn around the supreme hole. We have no womanly reason to pledge allegiance to the negative" (*The Laugh* 885).

This idea that women's sexual organ is a black hole is also problematized by Barbara Creed who refers to a number of female mythological figures represented as monstrous by the patriarchy as she names it "representation of woman-as-monster" (*Monstrous* 26). Creed remarks that "All human societies have a conception of the monstrous-feminine, of what it is about woman that is shocking, terrifying, horrific, abject" (Creed 26-27). She refers to Freud who "linked man's fear of woman to his infantile belief that the mother is castrated". She further draws our attention to Freud who puts forward as follows: 'Probably no male human being is spared the fright of castration at the sight of a female genital' (Freud qtd. in Creed 27). Creed also refers to Joseph Campbell who "drew attention to woman as castrator and witch" in mythology (Creed 27). However, for Creed, men's fear of women is caused not by her being castrated, but her power to castrate. She points out the myth of *vagina dentata* which "generally states that women are terrifying because they have teeth in their vaginas and that the women must be tamed or the teeth somehow removed or softened — usually by a hero figure — before intercourse can safely take place" (Creed 28).

Another negative attribute to women are their so-called "affinity" to monsters. Creed remarks that "Both are constructed as 'biological freaks' whose bodies represent a fearful and threatening form of sexuality" (Creed 45). Creed additionally refers to the depiction of women as fearful creatures like Siren and Medusa.

When we look at the issue of darkness being attributed to women, Cixous defines it as follows:

The Dark Continent is neither dark nor unexplorable[.] And because they want to make us believe that what interests us is the white continent, with its monuments to Lack. And we believed. They riveted us between two horrifying myths: between the Medusa and the abyss. (Cixous *The Laugh* 884-885)

It is the phallus that is the reference point in western ideology and women are made to position themselves according to this ideology: they are women, thus they are inferior to men; in other words they are black and inferior to the white continent, which is the territory of men. For her, the problematic outcomes of this phallogentric view is two-dimensional. While women are made to “idolize [phallus], that which [they] cannot brandish”, men have their share since they are “being reduced to a single idol with clay balls. And consumed, as Freud and his followers note, by a fear of being a woman!” (*The Laugh* 885). Cixous points out that it is not only women who are the victims; men fear being castrated. This idea reverses the myth that women feel inferior for being castrated; it rather reinforces the power that women have as they might castrate. The castration myth is used by the phallogentric view to reinforce women’s so-called secondary position, as it claims that women feel inferior because of being castrated as mentioned above.

Luce Irigaray also problematizes womanhood in the eyes of the phallogentric world questioning the limited role given to her: “What is a woman, apart from her social and material function in reproducing children, nursing, renewing the work force? (Irigaray *Body* 10). For her, women are demeaned to their reproductory functions. She also touches upon the issue of women’s being the “dark continent”: “The relation to the mother is a mad desire, because it is the “dark continent” par excellence. It remains in the shadow of our culture, it is night and hell. But men cannot do without it anymore [...]” (*Body* 10). Additionally, she problematizes the scientific discourse that belongs to men who constantly and easily declare women “mad” and other mechanisms of power through which they claim to hold the right to control and to judge. She remarks as that “Everywhere, in everything, men’s speech, men’s values, dreams and desires are law” and men use these laws to decide on women’s roles and identities since “men have access to the truth, not [women]” (Irigaray *Body* 10).

All the false attributes to women such as black hole, lack, Medusa, castrator, weak and mad have helped perpetuate the patriarchy. Likewise, when we look at black women's situation, Toni Morrison questions the black women's place in her writings. She asserts as follows: "My work requires me to think about how free I can be as an African-American woman writer in my genderized, sexualized, wholly racialized world" (*What Moves* 4). She problematizes the dichotomies like black/white, superior/inferior in her novels. It is not so surprising to see that black women are subordinated in their own phallogentric community. However, their subordination is much deeper than white women's as they face racism in addition to sexism. Their fight has been against multifold forces: images created by the white phallogentric world in addition to the inherent phallogentrism in the black community. Thus, the two novels that will be analysed in this study show how women are subordinated in these two worlds through the oppression of their bodies.

1.2.1. Colonization of Black Women

Black woman has been the most degraded in the hierarchized system in the USA. For bell hooks, she is the lowest caste in the hierarchy; with white men at the top, white women or black men coming later and the black women the last. She has faced oppressions both from white colonizers, and at the hands of the black patriarchy. As a black person, she is othered by white colonizer; as a woman she is subordinated in the phallogentric system. Being made to deny her identity as a woman, she has faced many miseries at the hands of the white colonizers. bell hooks refers to the problems of black women slaves who are made to ignore their identity as women. Women's movement in America, for her, has been unable to defend the rights of black women because of the "sexist-racist" attitude which "had conditioned [black women] to devalue [their] femaleness and to regard race as the only relevant label of identification" (hooks 14). This, for her, made them refuse to acknowledge one of the most significant part of identity: womenhood. It is apparent that sexism was made unseen "in light of the harsher, more brutal reality of racism", but this caused many to ignore the idea that "sexism could be just as oppressive as racism" (hooks 14).

For hooks, however, racism and sexism are two significant elements that oppress black women and the two cannot be separable: “From the onset of my involvement with the women’s movement I was disturbed by the white women’s liberationists’ insistence that race and sex were two separate issues. My life experience had shown me that the two issues were inseparable, that at the moment of my birth, two factors determined my destiny, my having been born black and my having been born female” (hooks 28) and she continues: “In a retrospective examination of the black female slave experience, sexism looms as large as racism as an oppressive force in the lives of black women. Institutionalized sexism—that is, patriarchy—formed the base of the American social structure along with racial imperialism” (hooks 30).

When we look at black women’s situation in the USA, we come across the accusation that black women were accused of being “castrators”, the concept which will be highlighted in the following chapters. bell hooks refers to Daniel Moynihan who claims that black women are matriarchs and hooks states that he was not the first to claim this as “it was popularized by certain psychoanalysts who had their heyday in the 50s. They imposed upon the consciousness of the American public the notion that any career woman, any woman who competed with men, was envious of male power and was likely to be a castrating bitch” (hooks 242). hooks refers to the 1965 publication of Daniel Moynihan’s report “The Negro Family: The Case for National Action”, which claims that “the black American family was being undermined by female dominance” (hooks 241). hooks states according to Moynihan that black men’s facing racist discrimination resulted in the matriarchal family structure which “was out of line with the white American norm”, and this caused, for Moynihan, “prevented the black race from being accepted into the mainstream of American life” (241)

For hooks, Moynihan tries to assert that these black women who take part in the work force are “the enemies of black manhood” (hooks 242). Furthermore, she asserts that Moynihan “continued to perpetuate one of the United States’ most popular sexist-racist myths about black womanhood—the myth that black women are inherently more assertive, independent, and domineering than white women” though it was far away from the truth (hooks 243). The motive behind the matriarchy myth and the myth that black

women are castrators is what Moynihan tries to prove: black men couldn't assert/ create their manhood because of these matriarchs. However, the reason is far behind what is declared by this phallogentric racist view, as "[s]exist ideology was the core of the matriarchy myth". According to this ideology, black women's subordination is necessary for the development of black manhood and that their underachievement could only be erased with black women's being "passive, subservient and supportive of patriarchy" (hooks 243).

The accusation that black women demasculinized black men has helped the white colonizer impose the patriarchal view upon these people. Hortense Spillers has a parallel view as she touches upon "ethnicity" told in literary works that is "perceived as mythical time enables a writer to perform a variety of conceptual moves all at once". For her, "Under its hegemony, the human body becomes a defenseless target for rape [...] and the body, in its material and abstract phase, a resource for metaphor" (Spillers 66). The myths created by this hegemony help abuse the black female body. As an example she also refers to the Moynihan report which "suggest that black males should reign because that is the way the majority culture carries things out". Spillers declares that Moynihan accuses black women of the "underachievement" of black males and rejects this view which label patriarchal patterns as "social 'pathology'" (ibid). As a representative of the patriarchy, Moynihan describes the patriarchal structure of the blacks and marginalizes those who do not comply with the discourse they have created.

When we look at the earlier periods of slavery, it is so heartbreaking to see black women violated by the white colonizer while sugarcoating their brutal deeds. They have hidden behind the stereotypes they have created and made use of myths and religious doctrines to abuse black women's bodies. As bell hooks remarks, upon coming to colonies, white colonizers brought along their religious doctrines which see women as seducers, the initiator of the original sin according to Christian doctrine. For hooks, the motive behind it is the misogynist approach prevalent in colonialism and the Christian belief which portray women as "an evil sexual temptress, the bringer of sin into the world" (hooks 49). According to this ideology, "men were merely the victims of her wanton

power”. These accusations helped white colonizers create an “anti-woman sentiment” and help justify their brutality (hooks 49).

Though two thousand years have passed, the oppression of women hasn’t ceased. Additionally, after the 19th century, the angel-like image attributed to white women who are made to repress their sexual feelings has helped the colonizers to demonize black women, as hooks remarks: “The shift away from the image of white woman as sinful and sexual to that of white woman as virtuous lady occurred at the same time as mass sexual exploitation of enslaved black women [...] As American white men idealized white womanhood, they sexually assaulted and brutalized black women” (hooks 53). It should be noted that there is a hypocrisy here, as white women were seen as dignified while black women were mass exploited and sexually harassed. For hooks, the violence of white men over the enslaved black women through “cruel and sadistic acts” doesn’t stem only from racism. She claims that racism is not the sole cause of violence on black women, yet “[t]he deep hatred of woman that had been embedded in the white colonizer’s psyche” is (hooks 53). Both patriarchal ideology and anti-women religious teachings imposed on the colonized caused hatred and thus it “both motivated and sanctioned white male brutality against black women” (hooks 53).

Loaded with these doctrines, black women have been labelled “sexual savage”, “sexual heathens” and the like, as hooks states: “Since woman was designated as the originator of sexual sin, black women were naturally seen as the embodiment of female evil and sexual lust. They were labeled jezebels and sexual temptresses and accused of leading white men away from spiritual purity into sin.” (hooks 53). Thus, white colonizers justified their brutal deeds on the black women's body by claiming that black women were responsible for their rapes by seducing men. However, black activist Angela Davis argued that “the rape of black female slaves was not, as other scholars have suggested, a case of white men satisfying their sexual lust, but was in fact an institutionalized method of terrorism which had as its goal the demoralization and dehumanization of black women” (Davis *Feminist* 45). It is not just an act to satisfy their lust. Rather, it reflects the power of the colonial discourse. In addition, black women sold for sex have been labelled as “prostitutes” and this helped men justify their deeds. hooks comments on the issue as follows: “But the use

of the word prostitution to describe mass sexual exploitation of enslaved black women by white men not only deflected attention away from the prevalence of forced sexual assault, it lent further credibility to the myth that black females were inherently wanton and therefore responsible for rape” (hooks 55). This ideology that black women are seducers was readily accepted both by white men and women, and black women were held responsible for their own sexual exploitation.

Misogyny towards women was the most significant reason behind the torture of the black female body and additionally sexism was more effective than racism for the exploitation of black women slaves because “anti-woman attitude was endemic to patriarchy” (hooks 140). For bell hooks, patriarchal and misogynist colonial politics made it easier to better exploit black slaves with the help of the laws that never protected them. Black women’s state was much harsher than black male slaves. Slaveowners supported black male-female mating and this led to “the establishment of a black slave sub-culture” (hooks 66-67). This black-slave sub-culture imitated the system of white colonizers: “Sex roles in the black slave sub-culture mirrored those of patriarchal white America” (hooks 68). Just like in white patriarchal order, doing the housework was seen as women’s duty and black women eventually had to submit to the role: “enslaved black females did conform to existing sex-role patterns that granted men higher status than women” (hooks 68). With the help of religious doctrines brought with the colonizers, “[a]cceptance of male superiority was particularly emphasized in the religious teachings preached to slaves” (hooks 68). However, patriarchy had already been prevalent in the black community. hooks refers to the black manhood in American society that is “rooted in his internalization of the myth that simply by having been born male, he has an inherent right to power and privilege. When racism prevented black people from attaining social equality with whites, black men responded as if they were the sole representatives of the black race and therefore the sole victims of racist oppression. They saw themselves as the people who were being denied their freedom, and not black women” (hooks 139-140). This double standard takes its roots from black patriarchy that ignores “the sufferings of black women as unimportant because sexist socialization teaches them to see women as objects with no human value or worth” (hooks 140).

hooks narrates the mentality of black patriarchy that takes its roots from how manhood is constructed in the black community thus: “At very young ages, black male children learn that they have a privileged status in the world based on their having been born male; they learn that this status is superior to that of women. As a consequence of their early sexist socialization, they mature accepting the same sexist sentiments their white counterparts accept” (hooks 141). As a result, the women who defy the patriarchal structure that sees women as subordinate face “contempt and hostility” (hooks 141).

Yet again, the inherent status of women as subordinated in the black community has been perpetuated in contemporary America, says hooks, as “sexism has taken the form of outright misogyny—undisguised woman-hating...” As a result, while white patriarchy exploited black women whom they reflect as “sex objects”, and through “rape and pornography”, black males expressed their hatred by “increased domestic brutality (white men also) and their vehement verbal denouncement of black women as matriarchs, castraters, bitches, etc.” (hooks 142). Thus, black women have been violated by both white and black patriarchy.

Stereotyping the black female was one of the most effective methods to exploit them. Aoi Mori defines a stereotype as “a convenient, psychological tool for the oppressor, banning the oppressed from expressing their thoughts and feelings and from seeking self-esteem and an integral autonomy” (*Toni Morrison and Womanist Discourse* 10). That is why it is a powerful tool to oppress black women. As hooks remarks, in America, “whites deliberately cast them in a negative light. They labeled hard-working, self-sacrificing black women who were concerned with creating a loving, supportive environment for their families Aunt Jemimas, Sapphires, Amazons—all negative images that were based upon existing sexist stereotypes of womanhood” (hooks 101). Hortense J. Spillers comments on the fabricated names ascribed to her as follows: ‘Let's face it. I am a marked woman, but not everybody knows my name. "Peaches" and "Brown Sugar," "Sapphire" and "Earth Mother," "Aunty," "Granny," "God's "Holy Fool," a "Miss Ebony First," or "Black Woman at the Podium[...]. My country needs me, and if I were not here, I would have to be invented’ (Spillers 65).

During slavery, white male slaveowners created the stereotype of black women as “masculinized sub-human creatures” (hooks 101) due to the fact that black women could cope with work which required strength: “they were capable of performing so-called “manly” labor, that they were able to endure hardship, pain, and privation but could also perform those so-called “womanly” tasks of housekeeping, cooking, and child rearing”. This disturbed white male patriarchal system because “Their ability to cope effectively in a sexist-defined “male” role threatened patriarchal myths about the nature of woman’s inherent physiological difference and inferiority” (hooks 101). As a result, they created the myth and justified it as hooks explains :“To explain the black female’s ability to survive without the direct aid of a male and her ability to perform tasks that were culturally defined as “male” work, white males argued that black slave women were not “real” women but were masculinized sub-human creatures” (102). This justification is a way of escaping the reality for men as it contradicts the notion that women are physically inferior. Thus, they labelled black women as “sub-human” creatures to distort the reality and to hide their false attributes.

Though slavery has long been history, labelling black women hasn’t ceased in America. hooks remarks that “[i]n more recent years the labeling of black women matriarchs emerged as yet another attempt by the white male power structure to cast the positive contributions of black women in a negative light” (hooks 101). But, says hooks, the situation is not as claimed and there is no existing black matriarchy in America. She explains the rights and status of a matriarch in a society with a number of examples. For instance, a matriarch holds the right of decision, has the control over her body-in terms of reproduction etc. However, this is not the situation for black women in America. Patriarchal forces label black females to “perpetuate the negative images of black womenhood” (hooks 107) and to “discredit black women and men” who are presented as victims of these matriarchs (hooks 107). hooks states that “Black women were told that they had overstepped the bonds of femininity because they worked outside the home to provide economic support for their families and that by so doing they had de-masculinized black men. Black men were told that they were weak, effeminate, and castrated because “their” women were laboring at menial jobs” (hooks 107). But it is white patriarchy’s assumption that black men feel the desire to be the providers of house.

Additionally, hooks suggests that black men readily accepted the patriarchy myth as “a psychological weapon to justify their demands that black women assume a more passive subservient role in the home” (112). The motive behind their adherence to the myth is “regard[ing] black females as a threat to their personal power”(112). hooks suggests this view is “not peculiar to black men” as “[m]ost men in a patriarchal society fear and resent women who do not assume traditional passive roles”(112). However, black men’s view related to black women’s eradicating black men’s power is supported by white racist oppressors as the latter wanted to escape the responsibility for the unemployment of black men. In this way, they were able to “establish a bond of solidarity with black men based on mutual sexism” (113).

Matriarchy myth has also been used as a means of brainwashing, and thus distorting the reality concept of the colonized. Hooks remarks that slave people were made to believe they are “taken care” of better than “they would be as free people”. This was done intentionally to avoid “rebellions and uprisings”. She also draws attention to how black women were indoctrinated with a similar method: “White colonizers encourage black women, who are economically oppressed and victimized by sexism and racism, to believe that they are matriarchs, that they exercise some social and political control over their lives” and many black women “embraced the label” says hooks (114).

The mammy figure was another stereotype that helped colonizers draw an image that exactly complies with colonial ideology as they were passive and giving; thus they wouldn’t be a threat for the patriarchal order. hooks describes how and why this image is created: “Considering white male lust for the bodies of black females, it is likely that white women were not pleased with young black women working in their homes for fear that liaisons between them and their husbands might be formed, so they conjured up an image of the ideal black nanny” (119). She is described as “asexual”, “fat”, “wearing greasy and dirty headrag”, and “her too tight shoes from which emerged her large feet were further confirmation of her bestial cow-like quality” (119). Apart from her physical appearance, her most outstanding characteristics is “her love for white folk whom she willingly and passively served” (119). For hooks, these imaginary characteristics related to black women as “mammy” helped white colonizers fulfill their desire to abuse them.

Additionally, “They saw her as the embodiment of woman as passive nurturer, a mother figure who gave all without expectation of return, who not only acknowledged her inferiority to whites but who loved them. The mammy as portrayed by whites poses no threat to the existing white patriarchal social order for she totally submits to the white racist regime” (119).

Black women as Sapphire figure is described as “evil, treacherous, bitchy, stubborn, and hateful” (hooks 119). Though containing negative attributes, black women were eager to accept Sapphire identity as a defence mechanism. They embraced the stereotype, though it connotes negative meanings, “as a reaction to the harsh treatment of black women in society” as hooks contends: ‘The “evilness” of a given black woman may merely be the facade she presents to a sexist-racist world that she realizes would only exploit her if she were to appear vulnerable’ (hooks 120-121). Bombarded with negative stereotypes taking its roots from anti-woman mythological figures, black women were unable to form positive identities. These images were imposed upon them as “role models” says hooks and continues: “Enslaved black people accepted patriarchal definitions of male-female sex roles (121). They believed, as did their white owners, that woman’s role entailed remaining in the domestic household, rearing children, and obeying the will of husbands” (hooks 72). Furthermore, they wished to form identities similar to the white women image that contains “modesty, innocence, sexual purity” (74). However, embracing the image determined by the patriarchy, “enslaved black women embraced and upheld an oppressive sexist social order and became (along with their white sisters) both accomplices in the crimes perpetrated against women and the victims of those crimes” (ibid). In other words, the submissive role attributed to white women by patriarchy was taken as role-model by black women.

The situation of black women didn’t change either during the Civil Rights Movement. Black community has been not much different than the white phallogentric system, and black leaders haven’t given much place to black women during the time. bell hooks refers to Amiri Baraka who “published an essay in the July 1970 issue of Black World that publicly announced his commitment to establishing a black patriarchy” declaring that “black women are complement to men, we are not equal” (hooks 132-133). Black Power

Movement leaders like Malcolm X were underlying the sexist attitude as hooks remarks: “they had not been taught to really believe that social equality was an inherent right all people possess, but they had been socialized to believe that it is the nature of males to desire and have access to power and privilege ” (hooks 136). White and black men are parallel in that both support patriarchy, though black men blamed white men for racism. Yet, they shared a “bond of solidarity”, since “they both believed in the inherent inferiority of woman and supported male dominance”. Their shared sexism is supported by another alliance: “violence as the the primary way to assert power” (hooks 137).

Elizabeth Hood refers to how sexism and racism operate together: “Racism defines blacks as inferior beings and assigns them race-coded roles in the economy. Menial jobs, low pay and limited opportunities for advancement are the plagues of black workers. Sexism keeps women in their places- women playing out their sex-coded roles- ornaments, toys, servants, underpaid laborers” (Hood 46). The ideas she put forward are parallel to hook’s notions on sexist-racist discourse: “Racism has always been a divisive force separating black men and white men, and sexism has been a force that unites the two groups” (hooks 137).

1.3. The Concept of the Body

The dichotomized thinking in western philosophy related to black people strikes us immediately when we mediate on the concept of the body in the body/mind duality. As the main concern of this study is the oppression the black female body through colonization and patriarchal impositions, it is significant to have a closer look at the concept of the body in these two mentalities. Michel Foucault’s idea of power on the oppression of the body will be analysed to have a better understanding on the control of the body in general and on the body as a colonized object. Additionally, the problematic way of dichotomized thinking related to the body and its association with the female body in general will be explained in this and the following part.

The body has been seen as a counterpart of the mind and is degraded to a minor position throughout centuries as a philosophical concept. Just like blackness is situated as the

inferior counterpart of whiteness in dichotomized colonial mentality, the body is also located as the subordinate in western dichotomy. While the body has been discussed in dichotomized terms in philosophy throughout the centuries, Elizabeth Grosz states that “it is conceptualized in narrow and problematic, dichotomized terms. It is understood in terms that attempt to minimize or ignore altogether its formative role in the production of philosophical values—truth, knowledge, justice, etc.” (4). For Grosz, dichotomous thinking is problematic in that it “hierarchizes and ranks the two polarized terms”, so one side of the dichotomy becomes the privileged term while the other becomes its “suppressed, subordinated, negative counterpart”. As a result, “[t]he subordinated term is merely the negation or denial, the absence or privation of the primary term, its fall from grace;” (Grosz 4).

The way the body is handled is a matter of concern for Michel Foucault, who evaluates the body in terms of power. He remarks that “The classical age discovered the body as object and target of power” (147) and scientific discourses have been used to control people through controlling their bodies. For Foucault, power infiltrates the society and people cannot escape from its pressures. The body is the vehicle on which to exercise this power, as he suggests: ‘Furthermore, this power [the power exercised over the body] is not exercised simply as an obligation or a prohibition on those who “do not have it”; it invests them, is transmitted by them and through them; it exerts pressure on them, just as they themselves, in their struggle against it, resist the grip it has on them. This means that these relations go right down into the depths of society,’ (Foucault 174). Additionally Elizabeth Grosz refers to thinkers like Nietzsche, Foucault, Deleuze, Lingiz and others who evaluate the body “as a social object, as a text to be marked, traced, written upon by various regimes of institutional, (discursive and nondiscursive) power” (Grosz 116). For her, body is a cultural product and shouldn’t be reduced to binaries. It is a cultural product with a number of dimensions as she suggests: “The body is neither—while also being both—the private or the public, self or other, natural or cultural, psychical or social, instinctive or learned, genetically or environmentally determined” (Grosz 23).

In addition to its place in power relations, Foucault also puts forward that the body has a political function. He refers to the body politic used as a means to subjugate the human

body: 'One would be concerned with the "body politic, " as a set of material elements and techniques that serve as weapons, relays, communication routes, and supports for the power and knowledge relations that invest human bodies and subjugate them by turning them into objects of knowledge' (Foucault 175-176). Through knowledge and created discourses, to exercise power "over madmen, children at home and at school, the colonized; over those who are stuck at a machine and supervised for the rest of their lives", such mechanisms as "scientific techniques and discourses, and the moral claims of humanism" have been made use of (Foucault 177). For him, the body has been analysed in numerous terms through history and indeed it has a political function to be examined: "[...] body is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs" (Foucault 173). That is why the body has a close relationship with colonial ideology due to "its economic use; it is largely as a force of production that the body is invested with relations of power and domination" (Foucault 173). The body is particularly significant in slavery since "in a slave economy, punitive mechanisms serve to provide an additional labor force" (Foucault 172). Due to its role in the colonial ideology in which it is used as a labor force and in the patriarchal system in which it is misused, the woman's body will be analysed deeply in this study. In this respect, it will be meaningful to have a close look at the body in the context of colonialism. The dichotomized thinking in western philosophy is at the root of both colonialism and patriarchy, two of which are the accomplices of the torture of black woman's body. Thus, how the body is given meaning since ancient times will be useful to understand its function in both colonial and patriarchal discourses.

The dualistic view related to the body goes back to Plato's time. For Plato, body is the prison of the soul. Elizabeth Grosz refers to the Platonic idea of soma(body) as a dungeon, and it is seen by the priests as the prison of the reason as she suggests: "In the *Cratylus*, Plato claims that the word body (soma) was introduced by Orphic priests, who believed that man was a spiritual or noncorporeal being trapped in the body as in a dungeon (sema)" (Grosz 5). She refers to a somatophobia in the western philosophy that positions body in a degraded place in body/mind duality. The traces of this dichotomized thinking can be

seen in Plato's "World of Ideas". Grosz refers to Plato's doctrine of the Forms in which "Plato sees matter itself as a denigrated and imperfect version of the Idea. The body is a betrayal of and a prison for the soul, reason, or mind. For Plato, it was evident that reason should rule over the body and over the irrational or appetitive functions of the soul" (5). In Christian thinking also, the body is in a degraded position in opposition to the soul. It is sinful, full of lust, and also mortal. Grosz suggests that "Christ was a man whose soul, whose immortality, is derived from God but whose body and mortality is human." (5). In colonial ideology, the body - black woman's body in particular as a colonized object- plays a major role, which is the central issue of this study. Thus, it is significant to have a closer look at it in terms of colonization.

We instantly come across racism when we meditate on the body politics of slavery. Shatema Threadcraft suggests that the black body was of utmost significance in slavery issues: "Frederick Douglass's claim that a slave must free his mind aside, slavery was first and foremost a system of control and use of the black body;" (Threadcraft 9). Franz Fanon comments on his own body as a black person as follows: "And then the occasion arose when I had to meet the white man's eyes. An unfamiliar weight burdened me. The real world challenged my claims. In the white world the man of color encounters difficulties in the development of his bodily schema. Consciousness of the body is solely a negating activity" (Fanon 110). For him, the schema is "a definitive structuring of the self and of the world-definitive because it creates a real dialectic between my body and the world" (Fanon 111). Having realized their skin color, a black person feels unease and tries to create an identity out of this. Feeling degraded because of their black colour, they try to whiten the skin colour. He asserts that "For several years certain laboratories have been trying to produce a serum for "denegrification"; with all the earnestness in the world, laboratories have sterilized their test tubes, checked their scales, and embarked on researches that might make it possible for the miserable Negro to whiten himself and thus to throw off the burden of that corporeal malediction" (Fanon 111). But Fanon emphasizes "a historico-racial schema", not the corporeality, as black body is constituted of how the white westerner "[has] woven [him] out of a thousand details, anecdotes, stories" (111). For David Marriott, these "stories, and anecdotes [are] endowed with certain meanings or

signs by virtue of which the sensible life of the body is incarnated: the link between that body and certain gestures, attitudes, expressions remains if not arbitrary, at least entirely historical” (Marriott 164).

Toni Morrison also talks about the hierarchized notions and makes use of the term “Africanist other” to contemplate on these notions. For her, this Africanist other is a vehicle to contemplate on body/mind issues: “The American nation negotiated both its disdain and its envy...: through a self-reflexive contemplation of fabricated, mythological Africanism. For the settlers and for American writers generally, this Africanist other became the means of thinking about body, mind, chaos, kindness, and love;” (Morrison *Playing* 47). Morrison’s ideas on the representation or presence of Africans in literature are similar to western discourse of Othering the body. The Africanist other is also crucial in terms of thinking about “freedom and [...] aggression, permitted opportunities for [...] following out the ramifications of power” (Morrison *Playing* 48).

1.3.1. The Female Body

The body’s association with womanhood made it easier for patriarchy to impose power over womb, thereby repressing their bodies. As Grosz remarks “As a discipline, philosophy has surreptitiously excluded femininity, and ultimately women, from its practices through its usually implicit coding of femininity with the unreason associated with the body.” (Grosz 4). Thus, it is crucial to understand what body connotes in a feminist understanding. The idea that biological difference between male and female bodies has been used by patriarchy as the pretext to subordinate women is useful for a feminist understanding. For McNay, “On a fundamental level, a notion of the body is central to the feminist analysis of the oppression of women because it is upon the biological difference between male and female bodies that the edifice of gender inequality is built and legitimated” (McNay 128). Likewise, Elizabeth Grosz remarks that woman’s association with the body is problematic. She criticizes western philosophy due to its “its practices through its usually implicit coding of femininity with the unreason associated with the body” (Grosz 4).

The body's position to its binary —the mind— has made it a focus of feminist thinkers as Price and Shildrick remark: “[F]eminism has long seen its own project as intimately connected to the body, and has responded to the masculinist convention by producing variety of oftentimes incompatible theories which attempt to take the body into account” (1). The body's dichotomized notion in terms of its association with womanness is also seen as problematic by Elizabeth Grosz. In this respect, Grosz criticizes both western thought of body/mind dichotomy and feminism that “uncritically adopted many philosophical assumptions regarding the role of the body in social, political, cultural, psychical, and sexual life” (Grosz 4). Hence, she assumes, feminism became “complicit in the misogyny that characterizes Western reason” (4) in the understanding of the body. For her, both philosophers and feminists share the belief that “the human subject... [is] made up of two dichotomously opposed characteristics: mind and body, thought and extension, reason and passion, psychology and biology” (4). She also suggests: “Given the coupling of mind with maleness and the body with femaleness and given philosophy's own self-understanding as a conceptual enterprise, it follows that women and femininity are problematized as knowing philosophical subjects and as knowable epistemic objects. Woman (upper case and in the singular) remains philosophy's eternal enigma, its mysterious and inscrutable object—this may be a product of the rather mysterious and highly restrained and contained status of the body in general, and of women's bodies in particular, in the construction of philosophy as a mode of knowledge” (Grosz 4-5).

Furthermore, woman is regarded as much closer to the body in the Cartesian duality and this view is used as a justification to degrade them. Grosz criticizes the patriarchal view as follows: “Misogynist thought has commonly found a convenient self-justification for women's secondary social positions by containing them within bodies that are represented, even constructed, as frail, imperfect, unruly, and unreliable, subject to various intrusions which are not under conscious control” (Grosz 13-14). Additionally, for Grosz, patriarchy pictures women as “vulnerable” and “in need of protection” due to its so-called closeness to the body taking female sexuality and reproductive capacity to define women culturally (Grosz 13-14). In this respect, patriarchy creates justifications to oppress the female body in terms of “‘natural inequality,’ as if there were a standard or measure for the value of bodies independent of sex” (Grosz 14). Woman's body, in other words, is

regarded as if it is the only measure to define their being / becoming. Furthermore, the patriarchy implies openly and closely that “women’s bodies are presumed to be incapable of men’s achievements, being weaker, more prone to (hormonal) irregularities, intrusions, and unpredictabilities. (14). Thus, through these pretexts, the woman’s body has always been under the close examination of patriarchy and “[t]he hostility that misogynist thought directs toward women and femininity has been commonly rationalized through the deprecation and derision of women’s bodies” (Grosz 14).

There are diverse views about the corporeality of the female body among feminists. Some view female sexuality and reproductive capacity as a hindrance to asserts themselves against patriarchal discourse that demeans them to motherhood, while others see it as a gift given only to women. However, for Grosz “What needs to be changed are attitudes, beliefs, and values rather than the body itself” (18). The patriarchal ideology which continues naming, renaming, dividing, and stereotyping women and creating hostility among them is seen as problematic and is what should be changed according to Grosz who suggests: “Women can no longer take on the function of being the body for men while men are left free to soar to the heights of theoretical reflection and cultural production. Blacks, slaves, immigrants, indigenous peoples can no longer function as the working body for white “citizens,” leaving them free to create values, morality, knowledges” (22). As she suggests, feminism should encompass all women including black women, which is the core of this study. So how do we locate black women's bodies in this racialized and sexist system? As a woman, her body is *colonized* by both white and black patriarchy. The next part of this study focuses on how black woman's body is located in this racist-sexist system through the practices of white and black patriarchy.

1.3.2. Black Woman’s Body

When it comes to the situation of black woman, it can be asked “What does the body come to mean in black feminist understanding?” The answer to this question is multidimensional, as black women are subject to both racism and sexism. In this respect, it will be convenient to understand the body in terms of racism first, as it takes its roots in colonial ideology. For David Marriott, “It is racism that produces the racialized body. This

body is formed through racist doctrine and belief and is the channel and point of transmission through which a racist notion of humanity is inherited and passed down” (163). David Marriott refers to the myths created: “in Fanon’s various texts, the racialized body is made up of several racist fantasies or ‘myths’; each myth is contiguous in so far as they fuse a Manichean logic – of self and other – with stereotypical languages and images of racial difference” (163). Through the scientific discourse of the west, black women have been pictured as though they were inferior to white women. Londa Schiebinger refers to some of the so-called scientific findings related to black woman's body as she suggests “Buffon assured his eighteenth-century readers that African women bring forth their children with great ease” (26). She refers to black women’s giving birth easily as part of the myth to make use of women slaves as a work force: “The historian Barbara Bush has pointed out that this myth justified working slave women throughout their pregnancies and returning them to the fields shortly after parturition” (26). She further refers to the Great Chain of being and how black women have been situated at the bottom of the chain. She mentions the concept of “racial pelvises” and suggests that black women’s presence in the chain hadn’t been acknowledged till the concept of “racial pelvises” emerged. In the 1980s, with this idea: “When pelvises were studied systematically, they were ranked superior or inferior, lower or higher in accord with the principles of the supposed chain of being. Studies of the 'racial pelvis' brought the female pelvis into line with the chain” (Schiebinger 26). Thus, it was scientifically justified that the pelvis of African women were ranked as inferior, devoid of “transparent delicacy characteristic of the female European” (Schiebinger 27). According to “[t]he Dutch anatomist Willem Vrolik... no matter how light or fine the pelvis of African females, they were of the same race as African males. Their pelvises shared with the males the Urform of that race: an elongated form said to recall the shape of the pelvis in apes” (Schiebinger 27).

As a result of the racist ideology of the white colonizer, the black female body has been tortured through multiple ways. Oppression of black women through rape and other ways of tortures has been made easier by the false attributes given black women. The stereotype of black woman in American society is “sexually depraved, immoral, and loose” which was rooted in slavery as hook states (hooks 77-78). These negative images are used by

white men to better exploit black female slaves with the pretext that “they were the initiators of sexual relationships with men”. As a consequence of this mentality, the stereotypical image of black women “as sexual savages” emerged. Thus, according to this sexist mentality, “a sexual savage, a non-human, an animal cannot be raped” (hooks 77-78)

Black women slaves had to endure physical tortures even before they were carried to the plantations, which is told by hooks as follows: “Women were lashed severely for crying. They were stripped of their clothing and beaten on all parts of their body” (hooks 33). To dehumanize them, women were left naked. In slave ships, the situation got much harder as rape was a dark reality: “After the branding all slaves were stripped of any clothing. The nakedness of the African female served as a constant reminder of her sexual vulnerability. Rape was a common method of torture slavers used to subdue recalcitrant black women. The threat of rape or other physical brutalization inspired terror in the psyches of displaced African females” (hooks 34).

As mentioned above, whipping naked slave women was to add to their degradation and humility in addition to rape. hooks narrates the miserable situation of female slaves as follows: “Sadistic floggings of naked black women was another method employed to strip the female slave of dignity. In the Victorian world, where white women were religiously covering every body part, black women were daily stripped of their clothing and publicly whipped” (hooks 59)

The situation of black women was so harsh that there were no laws to protect them from being exposed to rape in America as rape “meant, by definition, rape of white women,” and black women’s rape was not recorded as crime in law (hooks 57). As hooks narrates, black slaves were not convicted and fined when they committed an act of sexual abuse. Only the master of the guilty slave men could give his punishment. Even the white mistresses saw the black slave as guilty of the rape due to the common belief during the 19th century that black women were “sexual temptress[es]” as mentioned above (58).

Another form of repression on the black female body was through forcing them to breed. Normally, a black woman in her own community would suckle the baby for two years and

during that time, she didn't have intercourse to avoid pregnancy. This helped them regain their physical strength for another baby. However, as slaves, they were seen as breeding machines. As hooks remarks: 'Advertisements announcing the sale of black female slaves used the terms "breeding slaves," "child-bearing woman," "breeding period," "too old to breed," to describe individual women' (62), which indicates they were regarded as devices to produce new slaves for the system. Sunanda Pal describes the issue: 'Slaves not only worked tirelessly for their masters but were themselves marketable commodities. Young and healthy Black female slaves, prolific in childbearing, were highly valued for their capacity to "make little niggers for Massa"' (2440) and the breeding ones were sold for higher prices. The owners/ masters compelled them to breed and "Some slaveholders preferred to breed black women with white men, as mulattoes frequently brought a higher price on the market or were easier to sell" (hooks 62). On the other hand, barren women were the greatest sufferers in the system in which breeding was of the utmost importance: "In a report presented to the General Anti-Slavery Convention held in London June 1840, witnesses testified that barren black females were the victims of great physical and psychological abuse" (63). Barren or fertile, being a black woman was enough to cause oppression.

Repression of black women in the USA continued during the 1920s till 1980s through practices on their bodies. Forced sterilization known as "Mississippi Appendectomy" was applied on black women in more than thirty US States. Some women were sterilized unnecessarily in teaching hospitals as part of the practise of medical students. Elizabeth Hood remarks that "The black and poor are urged to choose "voluntary" sterilization as their method of family planning". They were made to "choose" to be sterilized if they wanted to get an abortion (54). Shatema Threadcraft states that Elanine Riddick was one of the victims raped at the age of thirteen who was sterilized forcefully in the name of "eugenics" which was prevalent in more than 30 states in the USA. She comments on Riddick's situation: "Days before the surgery welfare officials informed Riddick's grandmother that she must "consent" to the procedure or the family would no longer receive state assistance" (viii). It was performed forcefully and intentionally as she comments:

Such sterilizations had been performed routinely since Southern states opened “maternity clinics” with the explicit aim of lowering the black birth rate in the 1930s. One imagines those responsible were not unaware of the sinister irony of the clinics’ names. Southern doctors also frequently rendered black women infertile during other procedures. So useless was the black uterus in both the doctors’ and the wider community’s opinion that this came to be known as a “Mississippi appendectomy.” (Threadcraft 2)

Black woman's body as controlled through this “sterilization abuse” has another issue to consider: the number of black women sterilized during 1970s were twice as many as that of white women who were sterilized. Again sexist-racist politics makes black women much more vulnerable to oppression.

The oppression of the black female body during slavery is one side of the coin while sterilization is the curse haunting black women as Threadcraft states: “Many black feminist activists drew a direct connection between sterilization abuse and coerced reproduction and enforced child neglect in the period of enslavement,” (5). While white women struggled for abortion rights, black women’s struggle was more than that as they also struggled for “reproductive rights”; “a struggle marked by infanticides, widespread and systematic sexual violence as a weapon of racial terror, coerced sterilizations, and other racially targeted techniques of population control, as well as racially biased child removal policies” (Threadcraft 5-6). Thus, the black women's body has to be regarded in a much broader sense as it has a multidimensional side.

One of these dimensions is how the black woman's body has been located in the work force. Black women have been seen as a means to serve a white body. As Threadcraft suggests, black women who worked in the homes of white people “served to meet the bodily needs of white families often at the expense of care for the bodily needs of their own” (Threadcraft 9). And these works were the most dehumanizing, “the least desirable tasks— including pre- mechanized laundering, washing dishes, and taking care of children on evenings and weekends” (Threadcraft 9). As a result, says Threadcraft, this work, though seen as women’s work, “functioned to diminish their expansive use of the powers and capacities of the female body for themselves and their families” (9). In addition to the arduous work which black women carried out on plantations, domestic duties in white homes were so “marginal, menial, thankless, and very often invisible labor within white

households that kept them out of their own homes” and denied black women the care for their own body and for their families; they were “unjust and indeed dehumanizing,” as “they denied women the time and ability to love and provide care for their families” (Threadcraft 9). Black feminists fought against such violence as “The root cause of the violence was the belief that the black body existed to serve whites and that the black female body, in particular, existed to meet the physical, emotional, and sexual needs of the white body” (Threadcraft 11).

Another dimension of the colonized black body is its objectification as spectacle. Felly Nkweto Simmonds comments on the situation as follows: “In this white world, the Black body, my body, is always on display. It has been documented by western disciplines such as anthropology” (55). Simmonds refers to the 19th century anthropologists as they “used the authority of photography to construct and display knowledge of the 'other'” (55). She states that their studies have made the female body to be evaluated in terms of race and adds that female bodies were objects of display. She refers to “[t]he African woman named Saartjie Baartman, also called Sarah Bartmann or Saat-Jee and known as the 'Hottentot Venus'” who “was on public display in London and in Paris in 1810. After her death in Paris in 1810, her sexual parts, her genitalia and her buttocks were preserved and continue, to this day, to be displayed in the Musee de l'homme in Paris” (Gilman qtd. in Simmonds 56). To degrade black women through their bodies in the 19th century, the example of Hottentot Venus has been made use of, as Schiebinger states: “The notion that Africans had crudely narrow pelvises spawned the absurd notion current in the late nineteenth century that steatopygia (the enlarged buttocks characteristic of Hottentot females) was a natural adaptation mimicking the large pelvis of the 'higher races'. Their large buttocks were seen, in other words, as nature's way of compensating for racial deficiencies” (27).

Simmonds narrates her own experience as a black woman in a powerful way as follows:

One day, I walked from the bus with an Italian waiter I knew a little, I'd been in the restaurant in which he works several times. Suddenly he said, 'I bet you have a beautiful body'. In his imagination, in his fantasy, of course I have. He has seen Black female bodies. The Black female body is etched on his sexual unconscious. As a white man he also has the weight of history behind him, which tells him Black women are available to him. Suddenly conscious of my missing breast I say, 'No actually, no. I had a bad illness two years ago'. Illness? He

vanished, didn't even wait for the end of the sentence, having conjured up in his imagination all the awful things I could be carrying. Blackness, dirt, disease . . . HIV AIDS, Ebola fever? He vanished. (57)

The anecdote above reflects the white patriarchal mind in locating a black woman as a sexual object and additionally as a source of fear and dirt, which has been analysed in detail in previous chapters. Simmonds comments on this experience of hers as “I carry a contradictory body, so exotic and desirable, so threatening and deadly” (57). Her next comment is her own buttocks as she compares it to the image of Hottentot Venus- which comes into existence in Sarah Bartmann as it “has also fed countless white fantasies about the Black female form” (58). This is the situation black women have had to endure throughout centuries.

The objectification of the black woman's body has also been mentioned by Hortense Spillers. She refers to it as a “captive body” since it has been subject to horrifying practises as a slave. She contends that it has been “the source of sensuality”, being “reduced to a thing,” as she articulates:

1) the captive body becomes the source of an irresistible, destructive sensuality; 2) at the same time-in stunning contradiction-the captive body reduces to a thing, becoming *being* for the captor; 3) in this absence *from* a subject position, the captured sexualities provide a physical and biological expression of "otherness"; 4) as a category of "otherness," the captive body translates into a potential for pornotroping and embodies sheer physical powerlessness that slides into a more general "powerlessness," resonating through various centers of human and social meaning.” (Spillers 67)

The black woman's body has been reduced to a sexual object, “other” and the center of powerlessness for Spillers. The implications of this ideology have been reflected on female body through multiple practices ranging from physical tortures and rapes to sterilizations, which has been related in detail above. The female body's sexuality to be controlled is the other side of the coin, and it will be handled in detailed in Chapter 3 through the analysis of Alice Walker's *Possessing the Secret of Joy*.

1.4. Black Feminism

Black women's degraded situation in the colonial and patriarchal ideologies have been discussed in the previous sections in detail. In this section, I aim to show that the

movement seeks to turn the negative and degrading concepts related to black women upside down. For this end, I will explain the black female liberation from the onset of the black female movement in detail. The movement's significant names and how the movement started and evolved in time and how it separates from feminism will also be explained.

Rose M. Brewer defines black feminism as follows: "Black feminism propagates an intersectional analysis which... catalyzes a series of organizing ideas which emphasize the multiplicity of oppressions" (91). bell hooks, prominent figure in black feminism, defines feminism as follows: "To me feminism is not simply a struggle to end male chauvinism or a movement to ensure that women will have equal rights with men; it is a commitment to eradicating the ideology of domination that permeates Western culture on various levels—sex, race, and class, to name a few—" (261). As discussed earlier, black women have suffered from the sexist-racist oppressions in America and hooks' viewpoint contains the intersectional relationships of oppressions on black women. The liberation of black women has shared a similar fate. During their struggle against white and black patriarchy, black women have faced racist treatments from white feminists. bell hooks criticizes white feminists for ignoring black women's oppression through "romanticiz[ing] the black female experience rather than discuss[ing] the negative impact of that oppression." For hooks, they also claim that black women are strong enough to "circumvent the damaging impact of oppression by being strong" (hooks 20). However, hooks doesn't agree with them, finding such a view problematic.

Thus, a multidimensional lens to approach the place of black feminism under the umbrella of feminism is required. In this part, the development of the black female liberation till the 1990s, during which Toni Morrison and Alice Walker wrote their works, will be referred to and their view related to black liberation will be handled in a broader sense. The liberation of black women has a long history. Although 1970s constituted a milestone for contemporary black feminism, which can be identified with black feminists like Alice Walker, Angela Davis and Toni Morrison to name a few, who gave voice to the black woman problem in terms of gender, the struggle of black females goes back to much earlier periods. During mid 1800s and early 1900s, the Club Women Movement was a

major influence in giving inspiration to black feminists of later periods. In 1896, the National Association of Colored Women was founded and it was the largest club among others all around the USA. The movement's three important figures inspired black women in such issues as imperialism, colonialism, racism of white feminists and black male sexism. Journalist and activist Ida B. Wells is one of the icons of the movement due to her defiance against the extreme lynchings of black people at the time. Sojourner Truth's iconic speech named "Ain't I a Woman" that she delivered at Women Rights Convention in 1851 stands out as a resistance to slavery, a demand for equality both for black men and black women. Truth gave inspiration to a great many black feminists including bell hooks who gave her book the same name as Truth's famous speech. hooks writes about Sojourner Truth, underlining her role in the black women's movement to get the right to vote. hooks states that Truth maintains "without this right black women would have to submit to the will of black men" (hooks 17). hooks draws our attention to Truth's famous statement: "Her famous statement, "there is a great stir about colored men getting their rights, but not a word about the colored woman; and if colored men get their rights, and not colored women theirs, you see the colored men will be masters over the women, and it will be just as bad as it was before" Truth's statements brings the outcomes of sexism to the light and underlines the possible dangers of sexism which is as a real "real a threat to the freedom of black women as racial oppression" (17).

Sojourner Truth and the other early women rights defenders enlightened a way to fight against discrimination and marginalization of black females by white women and black men. The 1970s constitutes a significant era in terms of contemporary black feminism. It is an era full of social movements like the second wave of feminism and Black Civil Rights Movement. Black feminism is born out of the reaction to the racism of white feminists and the sexism of black men. Black female liberation found it difficult to locate itself in these marginalizing ideologies. As hooks states, black women were in between, either to support black male suffrage – "who would grant them no political voice" or support white women activists (17). Black females couldn't find a place for themselves as '[w]hen the women's movement began in the late 60s, it was evident that the white women who dominated the movement felt it was "their" movement,'" says hooks and adds: 'They urged black women to join "their" movement or in some cases the women's movement'

(186). Thus, black women had to struggle with both sexism and racism in varying proportions. Gloria T. Hull and Barbara Smith state that the women's movement during 1950s, 60s and 70s was mainly the movement of white women due to reasons some of which were "increasing involvement of single, middle-class white women,...divisive campaigns of the white-male media, and the movement's serious inability to deal with racism" (Hull and Smith xx).

In this respect, we will take a close look at how the liberation of black women has evolved in time. As mentioned above, both feminist movement and black Civil Rights Movement incited the emergence of black female liberation through ignoring the presence of black women's rights. Elizabeth Hood argues that Black Civil Rights Movement acted as a kind of "catalyst" for black women's struggle against sex discrimination. It opened the stage for "consciousness of themselves as victims of a paternalistic structure" (45-46). This awareness has helped groups of women from different races to enable activities that brought self-liberation. Black females struggled for "equal pay for equal work, federally subsidized day care, the right to choose abortion, legal protection against domestic violence and rape, affirmative action in training programs and employment, more representation in the media, and entry into traditional male structures of the world of work" (Hood 50).

Elizabeth F. Hood also refers to the limited sisterhood between white and black women though the shared oppression of both groups under white phallocentrism. For her, white liberationists failed to identify with the problems of black females. Though black and white women have shared similar oppressions from the patriarchy, the two "did not form a close alliance against their common enemy, the patriarchal system" (Hood 46). There are some reasons behind this. First of all, white women have held some privileges against black women due to their belief in "rightness" of "whiteness" (47). Elizabeth Hood refers to the work of Thomas Malthus, *Essay on the Principle of Population* (1826) which 'is embodied in all the attempts at genocide against the "inferior" races on the bases of their "low" intelligence, tendencies to overbreed, and proclivities to immoral and criminal behavior' (Hood 47). White women, surrounded by the codes of their fathers or husbands and living a separate life from that of black women, couldn't appreciate the oppression of

black women. Additionally, having “[v]arying amounts of privilege and differing levels of wealth” affected their perception in understanding the disadvantaged group. However, it should be noted that racist ideologies imprinted on white women has been the real reason behind it. For bell hooks, it is white patriarchy that creates “hostility” between white and black women, “pit[ting]the two groups against each other, preventing the growth of solidarity between women and ensuring that woman’s status as a subordinate group under patriarchy remains intact” (hooks 210). White women got the support of patriarchal power thanks to the racism promoted by them who made white women that “no connection exists between her and black women” (210). As a consequence, black women were left alone in the defense of their rights.

As a result of these, in 1973 National Black Feminist Organization was founded. It is known to be the first organization that used the term “feminist”. The NBFO also gave voice to lesbian black feminists. Audre Lorde, bell hooks, Patricia Hill Collins and Barbara Smith are activists who stand out in this organization, which evolved to become as Combahee River Collective. Shatema Threadcraft refers to the collective as “[o]ne of the most significant and enduring insights of black feminist thought— most powerfully and succinctly stated by the members of the Combahee River Collective— is that race-, class-, and gender- based oppressions are inextricably bound together,” (Threadcraft 8). She also suggests that “the members of the Combahee River Collective went on to claim that black women’s liberation was not adjunct to anyone else’s, not black men’s, not the workers of the world, and not white women’s.” (8). In the Statement of the collective, they affirm as follows: “we are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression, and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking” (1). Rosa M. Bower refers to The Collective which “utilized the idea of the simultaneity of oppression, that is, all of these systems are at play at the same time. The idea is that there is no singular discussion of gender without race and class. This is the epistemological underpinning of Black feminist thought” (96).

Black feminism of the 1970s onwards have become a much more inclusive ideology as it reflected black females’s struggle against multiple forms of oppressions. Threadcraft

suggests that “One important aspect of this interlocking oppression to which black feminist writing and activism consistently returns is the longstanding inhibition of black women’s intimate— that is sexual, reproductive, and caretaking— capacities under successive systems of racial domination.” (8). Gloria T. Hull and Barbara Smith define their struggle as follows: “Only a feminist, pro-woman perspective that acknowledges the reality of sexual oppression in the lives of Black women, as well as the oppression of race and class, will make Black women's studies the transformer of consciousness it needs to be” (xxi). This idea has inspired Crenshaw who coined the word intersectionality, which is a key word in understanding black feminism. The issues problematized by the black feminists in Combahee River Collective Statement have been discussed and named under the umbrella term “intersectionality” by Kimberlé Crenshaw, an American civil rights advocate. Crenshaw claimed that race, gender and class cannot be divided and that feminism of the era does not cover the oppressions of all women. According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, “intersectionality” is “the network of connections between social categories such as race, class and gender, especially when this may result in additional disadvantage or discrimination”. In her work, Crenshaw suggests that she will focus on the “multidimensionality of Black women's experience with the single-axis analysis that distorts these experiences” (57). She remarks that “I argue that Black women are sometimes excluded from feminist theory and antiracist policy discourse because both are predicated on a discrete set of experiences that often does not accurately reflect the interaction of race and gender” (58). Intersectionality encompasses all the dynamics that constitute black women’s oppression such as gender, race, class but is not limited to the three. It also includes that these dimensions creating oppression are closely linked. She proposes a new dimension to approach the black female problem as “the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated”. Thus, black female liberation must go beyond ‘the framework that has been used as a basis for translating "women's experience" or "the Black experience"' (58). Her argument also includes the double oppression of racial and sexual discriminations as she suggests: “Black women sometimes experience discrimination in ways similar to white women's experiences; sometimes they share very

similar experiences with Black men. Yet often they experience double-discrimination-the combined effects of practices which discriminate on the basis of race, and on the basis of sex” (Crenshaw 63). However, what Crenshaw tries to lay bare is beyond the structures through which the problems of black females are tried to be located as she suggests: “Black women's experiences are much broader than the general categories that discrimination discourse provides. Yet the continued insistence that Black women's demands and needs be filtered through categorical analyses that completely obscure their experiences guarantees that their needs will seldom be addressed” (64).

Audre Lorde, one of the significant black women thinkers, problematizes a number of issues in her book *Sister Outsider*. She discusses the intersectional outcomes of black male sexism and Black women’s liberation. She refers to the inherent sexism in the black community as follows: “The results of woman-hating in the Black community are tragedies which diminish all Black people. These acts must be seen in the context of a systematic devaluation of Black women within this society. It is within this context that we become approved and acceptable targets for Black male rage, so acceptable that even a Black male social scientist condones and excuses this depersonalizing abuse.” (Lorde 73). She contends that black men should quit following the “white male disease of sexism” that created discourses to “define femininity” (Lorde 71). For Lorde, sexism and misogyny take its roots from the same ideology of racism and homophobia. Thus black men shouldn’t ignore this sexism: “But the Black male consciousness must be raised to the realization that sexism and woman-hating are critically dysfunctional to his liberation as a Black man because they arise out of the same constellation that engenders racism and homophobia” (Lorde 71). In terms of black feminism, Lorde opposes the idea that black feminism is a continuation of white feminism as she suggests: “Black feminism is not white feminism in blackface. Black women have particular and legitimate issues which affect our lives as Black women, and addressing those issues does not make us any less Black” (Lorde 68). She has anti-separatist views. She invites black men to join black female liberation.

Out of black feminism has evolved different ideas, like Alice Walker’s idea of womanism. The intersectional point of view has been maintained by Toni Morrison and Alice Walker,

who are central to this thesis. The two writers differentiate from their forerunners in their discourse called “womanism”. As a black writer, Morrison emphasizes the significance of racism and articulates that black people have been ignored and behaved as if they were nonexistent in literary texts. For her, blackness in American literature has been unseen, ignored, like a shadow. Though the black characters play an important role, they seem to nonexistent. She contends that ignoring black existence appear intentional. She continues as follows: “In matters of race, silence and evasion have historically ruled literary discourse...It is further complicated by the fact that the habit of ignoring race is understood to be a graceful, even generous, liberal gesture...To enforce invisibility through silence is to allow the black body a shadowless participation in the dominant cultural body” (9-10). As a black writer, she defies all the constructs related to blackness. She suggests that ‘I cannot rely on these metaphorical shortcuts because I am a black writer struggling with and through a language that can powerfully evoke and enforce hidden signs of racial superiority, cultural hegemony, and dismissive “othering” of people’ (*Playing* x-xi). [see Chapter 1 for her idea of Africanism]

Additionally, she has been a “politically inclined, race-conscious writer who is quite aware of the functioning of power mechanisms and the considerable role of discourse in sustaining it” as Farshid and Sokhanvar state (296). They suggest that ‘Her work is and “must be political”’ as she brought those at the margins to the centre (295-296). Morrison is highly interested in “the pressures of ideological and imperialistic rationales for subjugation” (Morrison, *Playing* 8). In her Nobel Lecture, she questions the power that creates discourse through “mastery” and “policing” (Farshid and Sokhanvar 303) and through the discourse of that mastery. As Morrison states in her lecture, “Oppressive language does more than represent violence; it is violence; does more than represent the limits of knowledge: it limits knowledge” and discourse of the power mechanisms use sexist, racist or theistic language which are “typical of the policing languages of mastery” (Morrison qtd in Farshid and Sokhanvar 303). She sees her duty as a writer is to question, defy and reconstruct these discourses.

Though Morrison problematizes the miseries of black women in her works, she does not put herself as a writer under the term “black feminist”. In one of her interviews, Zia Jaffrey

asks her whether she agrees with those who call her novel *Paradise* a feminist novel and she says as follows: ‘Not at all. I would never write any "ist." I don't write "ist" novels’.

Further, Jaffrey asks the reason why she distances her from feminism, she suggests:

In order to be as free as I possibly can, in my own imagination, I can't take positions that are closed. Everything I've ever done, in the writing world, has been to expand articulation, rather than to close it, to open doors, sometimes, not even closing the book -- leaving the endings open for reinterpretation, revisitation, a little ambiguity. I detest and loathe [those categories]. I think it's off-putting to some readers, who may feel that I'm involved in writing some kind of feminist tract. I don't subscribe to patriarchy, and I don't think it should be substituted with matriarchy. I think it's a question of equitable access, and opening doors to all sorts of things. (*The Salon Interview*)

Her stance is on the side of equality. She doesn't look for the subordination of men to the women, either. Further, she draws the attention to the sexism of the question articulates that the same question wouldn't be asked to a male writer.

Morrison has been regarded not as a black feminist writer. Some critics regard her as “womanist”, the term coined by Alice Walker. In *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*, Alice Walker defines womanism in a number of ways as 1. “a black feminist or feminist of color”, a meaning deriving from word “womanish” which is a way of folk expression of black women to their daughters that come to mean “outrageous, audacious, courageous or willful” and also comes to mean the will to act like a grown up, 2. “a woman who loves other women sexually and/or nonsexually”, 3. ‘Loves music. Loves dance. Loves the moon. Loves “the Spirit”, “love and food and roundness”, “struggle”, “the Folk”, “herself” and is “[r]egardless”. (*In Search* xi-xii). The last definition Walker gives in a way summarizes the relationship between womanism and feminism: “4. Womanist is to feminist as purple to lavender” (*In Search* xii). By looking at the definition Walker makes, womanism is a much more inclusive term to define a black woman writer/thinker/intellectual. Aoi Mori comments on the term “womanist” as ‘manifest[ing] a tremendous potentiality for forging a new inclusive female autonomy regardless of race, sex or “sexual preference”, transcending the overwhelming argument between white feminists and women-of-color thinkers and activists, the latter criticizing the former for dominating female discourse’, which has been analysed deeply in this study (2). In this respect, Mori regards Toni Morrison as a womanist, though Morrison rejects such

categories. In terms of black woman's relation to white feminism, Mori articulates that Morrison criticizes the elitist white feminists of the early Women's Lib, as they did "not pa[y] attention the problems of most black women" (Morrison qtd. in Mori 2). Mori further states that Morrison is disturbed by the in between situation of black women to support either civil rights movement or feminism (Mori 3). For Mori, though "Morrison and other women-of-color writers fundamentally share with white feminists the same concern for recuperating the neglected subjectivity of their ancestors from patriarchal oppressions" (3). Toni Morrison is also of the view that black women's relationship to black men is different from white women's to white men, since slavery brought black male/female relationship to a different dimension as she remarks: "They [black women] were required to do physical labor in competition with them, so that their relations with each other turned out to be more comradeship than male/female subordination" (Morrison interview with Leste qtd in Mori 7). Thus, black females' struggle differs from that of white women who see men as "the major source of repression" (Mori 7). It is apparent that labor before and after the Emancipation of black people has played a significant role in black women's situation, which has been analysed in detail in this study before. Mori states that with Emancipation, "By becoming a work force outside the house replacing men, black women faced another form of ironic gender parity which white women desired to obtain" (7). Additionally, Mori refers to the black matriarchy myth as "a controlling tool to restrict African-American female behaviours and consciousness, relegating them to the periphery of society in order to preserve the hierarchy of racism" (8-9).

Besides matriarchy myth, other stereotypes attributed to black women have reinforced their subordinated state. In this respect, Mori underlines the significance of the role of a womanist to "deconstruct these controlling images and retrieve the subjectivity of color long hidden under the masks of stereotypes, and thereby to defy the reductiveness of sexual and racial oppression" (10-11). It can be claimed that Morrison rejects and deconstructs the prevailing sexist and racist discourse of the patriarchy in her novels. Mori puts forward Morrison's stance as follows: "Morrison, acutely aware of the place historically assigned to black women [...], refuses to be influenced by stereotypes but rather attempts to depict her female characters as subjects that emerge from an oppressed situation and who seek survival" (29). Morrison also finds it problematic to conform with

the rules of the white patriarchy that imposes ideals like beauty and she rejects the slogan “Black is Beautiful”. For her, it is diminishing the value of black identity to appearance as she suggests: “When the strength of a race depends on its beauty, when the focus is turned to how one looks as opposed to what one is, we are in trouble” (Morrison *What Moves* 38). Thus, her novel *The Bluest Eye* is a reaction to the beauty standards dictated by the white society with the help of mass media. In the novel, there is a little black girl, Pecola, who yearns to have blue eyes, since blue eyes, white skin and blonde hair are the beauty standards of the ideology. As Mori Suggests, “In *The Bluest Eye* she [Morrison] represents the detrimental effects of the way white culture prevents African-American girls from developing their own identities.” (Mori 30). In the novel, Pecola gets obsessed with having blue eyes; she drinks three quarts of milk from a cup which has a picture of Shirley Temple – a representative of perfect beauty given by the society. “Her inability to be incorporated into white standards of beauty destroys her self-confidence” says Mori (31). Another figure Pecola admires is Mary Jane who has blue eyes. Pecola’s admiration to a Mary Jane figure on a candy wrapper shows how she idealizes her. Eating the candy, she thinks she would be identified with her. By the end of the novel, Pecola goes insane thinking that she really has blue eyes. The richness of Morrison’s writings come from her subverting the myths related to black women. Aoi Mori suggests that her novel *Beloved* is a deconstruction to “correct stereotypical images” in *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe (Aoi Mori 23).

Alice Walker is a significant black writer, womanist, activist and “humanist” as named by the American Humanist Association” in 1997. She is the first African American woman to be awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction for her novel *The Color Purple* in 1983. Her novel received a number of reactions including negative ones as she was attacked “for her alleged negative portrayal of African American men” (Byrd Intro 23). She was born to a family who suffered from the segregation of the South. She was also exposed to pelvic examination to control the sexuality of black women at school (Byrd “Introduction” *The World Has Changed* 7). Her relation to the problems of black women and black people in general goes back to her active participation in demonstrations as part of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, who conducted non-violent reactions against the segregations of black people during 1960s. Influenced by Rosa Parks, Walker describes

her encounter with segregation on the bus by sitting in the front section during her journey when she was a student at Spelman College and adds: “A white woman complained to the driver. He- big and ugly- ordered me to move... But in those seconds of moving, everything changed. I was eager to put and end to the South that permitted my humiliation” (Walker, “Interview with John O’Brien” *The World Has Changed* 42). Then began her involvement with the movement. She also attended the March on Washington in 1963. Walker describes her views related to the movement as an ‘awakened faith in the newness and imagination of the human spirit, because of “black and white together”—for the first time in our history in some human relationship on and off TV—because of the beatings, the arrests, the hell of battle during the past years, I have fought harder for my life and for a chance to be myself, to be something more than a shadow or a number, than I had ever done in my life’ (*In Search of* 125).

During the 1970s, Walker took part in the group named Sisterhood with black women writers, one of whom was Toni Morrison. She recalls how Morrison was accused of writing merely on black women in the *New York Times* and how she wrote a letter to defend Morrison. The letter is significant in “reminding [the writer] that [they] will never have to be other than who [they] are in order to be successful” (Walker *the World* 279). In her interview with Rudolph P. Byrd, she describes the purpose of the Sisterhood as follows: “We thought we must create a space for black women writers to honor each other, to know each other, so that nothing from outside could make us fight over anything” (319). As stated earlier, the era was full of social movements and Walker’s involvement in Civil Rights movement led her to the women’s movement, as the two are closely linked. Rudolph Byrd states that “Her deep commitment to the women’s movement and the end of violence against women is manifest in her life in a variety of ways, including her attendance at Boston’s first Take Back Night rally in the 1970s” (29). Her role as editor at *Ms.* reflects her deep “condemnation of sexism and patriarchy in documenting the racism in the women’s movement as well as the particular forms of oppression experienced by black women and other women of color” (29-30). The term “womanism” she coined has led the theoreticians to form the “interlocking oppressions of African women” (30). In *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, she lays bare the violence committed on black women through the practise of clitoridectomy, or female genital mutilation (FGM).

Walker is highly critical of patriarchy that is the cause of miseries in the world as she articulates: “The patriarchy has ruined the world” (128). In this respect, the black patriarchy that has made use of myths prevalent among the African communities she problematizes in *Possessing the Secret of Joy* will be analysed in elaboration in this study.

When we have a look to Walker’s term womanism, Rudolph P. Byrd regards it as a more radical term than feminism. She replies Byrd’s question on the relationship between feminism and womanism as follows:

Generally speaking, for instance, white feminists are dealing with the oppression they receive from white men, while women of color are oppressed by men of color as well as white men, as well as by many white women. [...] Given a fighting chance at living her own life, under oppression that she resists, the womanist has no or few complaints. Her history has been so rough—captured from her home, centuries of enslavement, apartheid, etc.— [...] Whatever women’s liberation is called, it is about freedom. This she knows. Having said this, I have no problem being called “feminist” or “womanist.” (Walker *The World* 318-319)

It is clear from her statement that womanism is a much more inclusive term as it covers the intersectional oppressions of all women. Furthermore, for Walker, through the term womanist she coined she lays bare the fact that women of color “had enough of being second- and third-class citizens of the earth” and are to be represented “in the rainbow” from then on (ibid). Her aim is to integrate black women and women of color to the women’s movement. Rose M. Brewer states that Walker uses the term womanism to “connect Black women to feminism” (97-98) and adds: “Alice Walker contends that at the heart of Womanism is its holism, the whole sense of being a woman” (Brewer 97). As mentioned earlier, Walker as a politically inclined writer coined the term womanism “embedded in Black political struggle as Walker so elegantly articulated” (97). To sum up, black feminism and womanism are rooted in “subvert[ing] traditional notions of what counts as knowledge” (99). Both Toni Morrison and Alice Walker fight against white and black sexist-racist ideologies while Morrison deals with the white slaveholders and the institution of slavery to oppress women, Walker investigates the traditional practises and myths to propagate these ideologies.

CHAPTER 2: RESISTANCE OF THE BLACK SLAVE WOMEN

2.1. Resisting the *White Lies* to Colonize Black Women's Body in Morrison's *Beloved*

Toni Morrison is a prominent African-American writer who has been awarded with Nobel Prize. She problematizes the dichotomies like black/white, superior/inferior in her novels. In *What Moves At the Margins*, she elaborates on the situation of the black people in the 1970s, during which her grandparents lived through oppressions and “headed to the north” (4). Her ideas about racial issues developed in her family, in which there was a pessimistic grandfather who didn't believe in white people's good intentions and that there would be a progress in the situation of the blacks, while on the other hand a grandmother who held the opposite ideas and “like the slow walk of certain species of trees from the flat-lands up into the mountains, she would see the signs of irrevocable and permanent change” (5). Morrison has developed a mixture of both ideas and she depicts how her views were formed:

So I grew up in a basically racist household with more than a child's share of contempt for white people. And for each white friend I acquired who made a crack in that contempt, there was another who repaired it...And like most people of my generation, I suffer from racial vertigo that can only be cured by taking what one needs from one's ancestors. John Solomon's [Morrison's grandfather] cynicism and his deployment of his art as both weapon and solace; Ardelia's [her grandmother] faith in the magic that can be wrought by sheer effort of the will; my mother's open-mindedness in each encounter and her habit of trying reasonableness first; my father's temper, his impatience, and his efforts to keep 'them' (throw them) out of his life. And it is out of these learned and selected attitudes that I look at the quality of life for my people in this country now” (*What Moves* 8).

Afterwards, Morrison asserts that her “conflicting views” have been shared by most black people. She asserts that “There is a repetition of grotesque in our history. And there is the miraculous walk of trees”, the belief she inherited from her grandmother (8). Though she believes in progress, hers is not a mere belief as we understand from her words: “The question is whether our walk is progress or merely movement” (8). Questioning this, she problematizes certain problems black people go through like job opportunities, residency

rights, the salary gap between white and blacks and asserts that though there have been some improvements, there have still been “disappointment in practically every place where we thought we saw permanent change” (10). Her interest is not limited to black people’s problems during her era. Through her novels, she pictures how black people were tortured during their initial transfer from Africa to America during Transatlantic Slave Trade. Her novel *Beloved* is dedicated to “*Sixty Million and More*” who lost their lives on the slave ships as stated in the epigraph of the novel and is based on the sufferings of these people on the ships and on the plantations.

As stated earlier, Toni Morrison is a politically inclined writer who is aware of the discourse of the hegemonic power holders to oppress and annihilate black women. In her “Nobel Lecture”, she refers to this and criticizes the language of these power structures which use language to subordinate black women as “the other” stating:

There is and will be more seductive, mutant language designed to throttle women, to pack their throats like paté-producing geese with their own unsayable, transgressive words; there will be more of the language of surveillance disguised as research; of politics and history calculated to render the suffering of millions mute; language glamorized to thrill the dissatisfied and bereft into assaulting their neighbors; arrogant pseudo-empirical language crafted to lock creative people into cages of inferiority and hopelessness. (Morrison *What Moves* 201-202)

She is highly aware of the fact that language is used as a means of “menace and subjugation” (Morrison 201). Her works aim at overturning all the negative attributes related to black women and to break down the subjugation created by the discourse.

In this section, I will focus on the racist implications of white slaveholders on black women’s bodies in Toni Morrison’s novel *Beloved* and how Morrison deconstructs the so-called inferior position of black women in the white phallogentric system of slavery. In this respect, I will have a close look at the implications of colonialism in terms of bodily violation of black woman’s body, which include physical violence, rape, forceful breeding and women slaves as labor force through close-reading of the novel. Afterwards, I will analyse how Morrison deconstructs the myths to subjugate black women and creates strong women characters out of the traumas they have experienced as slaves.

Beloved deals with the implications of slavery upon the lives of black people. It tells the story of a former slave of Sweethome Plantation, Sethe, who escapes from the plantation to live with her grandmother Baby Suggs in Ohio. Sethe is now haunted by Beloved, the spirit of her daughter, that settles in the house. The ghost reminds both Sethe of her tragic past and the readers of the sufferings experienced by a whole nation. The novel depicts the healing process of characters after confronting memories through a fragmented narrative of the characters in the novel. The novel, written in 1987 and set in the aftermath of the American Civil War, is based on a true story of a black slave, Margaret Garner who runs away from a Kentucky plantation with her husband and her children and arrives in Ohio. According to the Fugitive Law, when captured, fugitive slaves would be returned to their masters. Margaret Garner and her children are caught by the slave holders and Garner murders her own child in order not to give her to the slaveholders, just like Sethe does in *Beloved*. This is a powerful novel picturing the destructive legacy of slavery and miseries of slaves and eventually emancipation from the haunting memories of the past.

Beloved opens in 1873 in Cincinnati, Ohio where the protagonist Sethe lives with her daughter Denver. The house they live in is called 124 which is described as “124 was spiteful. Full of a baby’s venom” in the novel (Morrison *Beloved* 3). The house is said to be haunted by the ghost of Sethe’s daughter, who was murdered by Sethe and named “Beloved” later. As described in the novel “Sethe and her daughter Denver were its only victims. The grandmother, Baby Suggs, was dead, and the sons, Howard and Buglar, had run away by the time they were thirteen years old” as they couldn’t bear living with the spirit anymore (Morrison 3). One day, a man, Paul D. who is a former slave and companion of Sethe from the slave home named Sweet Home comes to 124 bringing along memories related to Sethe’s traumatic past which was repressed by Sethe for many years.

Morrison in her novels rewrites and deconstructs the history written by white people. Sunanda Pal claims that “Refusing to accept existing traditional history written by the whites as absolute and unquestionable, Morrison questions the paradigms on which historical 'facts' were constructed” (2441). In *Beloved*, we come across slaves being carried to America from Africa and how they faced death in inhuman conditions. Morrison devoted the novel to “Sixty Million and more” that have lost their lives during the

inhumane journey to America. Pal refers to this event thus : “The devastating experiences of slaves during the Middle Passage from Africa to America is another period of history that needs to be written. Cruelly snatched from their homeland and dehumanised aboard the slave-ships, the slaves suddenly and unexpectedly were confronted with the agony of displacement and commodification”(2442). In the novel, *Beloved* is depicted as one of the survivors of this devastating experience. Additionally, along with *Beloved*, Sethe’s mother is another survivor. Both characters symbolize the sufferings of slaves on the slave-ships. The inhumane condition on the slave ship is pictured vividly by *Beloved* as follows:

I am always crouching the man on my face is dead his face is not mine his mouth smells sweet but his eyes are locked

some who eat nasty themselves I do not eat the men without skin bring us their morning water to drink we have none at night I cannot see the dead man on my face daylight comes through the cracks and I can see his locked eyes I am not big small rats do not wait for us to sleep ...one time they bring us sweet rocks to suck we are all trying to leave our bodies behind the man on my face has done it it is hard to make yourself die forever you sleep short and then return in the beginning we could vomit now we do not now we cannot his teeth are pretty white points someone is trembling I can feel it over here he is fighting hard to leave his body which is a small bird trembling there is no room to tremble so he is not able to die my own dead man is pulled away from my face I miss his pretty white points (*Beloved* 250-251)

The narrative goes on to tell how piles of dead bodies are thrown into the sea. Thousands of slaves died of hunger and disease during middle passage as can be understood from this short excerpt.

The novel deals with the tortures slaves experienced both before and after they were kidnapped to work for them on plantations by white slaveholders. Colonial ideology is at the root of the violence exercised over slaves. White European colonizers, seeing themselves in a superior position, have found justifications to exploit the people of Africa, as analysed in detail above. The fear of the Negro and the supposed danger that will come from black people lurking behind the colonizer’s psyche is reflected in the novel as follows:

Whitepeople believed that whatever the manners, under every dark skin was a jungle [...] The more coloredpeople spent their strength trying to convince them how gentle they were, how clever and loving, how human, the more they used themselves up to persuade whites of something Negroes believed could not be questioned, the deeper and more tangled the jungle grew inside. But it wasn't the jungle blacks brought with them to this place from the other (livable) place. It was the jungle whitefolks planted in them. (*Beloved* 234)

The colonial ideology makes use of excuses to beat back this supposed danger. Thus, they root their ideology on the so-called inferiority of blacks to colonize them easily due to their so-called affinity to animals. In *Beloved*, we see a number of scenes in which women characters are dehumanized. In the novel, Sethe's milk was stolen by Schoolteacher's nephews while she was suckling her two year old baby Denver and was pregnant with Beloved. Sethe recalls the memory of those dreadful moments: "I am full God damn it of two boys with mossy teeth, one sucking on my breast the other holding me down, their bookreading teacher watching and writing it up" (83). In this scene, we see a woman who was treated like an animal, "milked like a cow" (Watson 330). From Sethe's mouth again we hear the event as follows: "after they handled me like I was the cow, no, the goat, back behind the stable because it was too nasty to stay in with the horses" (Morrison *Beloved* 236-237). Her words depict slaveholders' view related to slaves as animals; even worse than animals.

African slaves were seen as a commodity, as objects by the white slaveholders. In the novel, Morrison states through Baby Suggs that slave "men and women were moved around like checkers" (27). Further, Morrison depicts that "[a]nybody Baby Suggs knew, let alone loved, who hadn't run off or been hanged, got rented out, loaned out, bought up, brought back, stored up, mortgaged, won, stolen or seized" (27). Morrison comments on Baby Suggs in the novel as follows: 'because slave life had busted "her legs, back, head, eyes, hands, kidneys, womb and tongue", she had nothing left to make a living but her heart —which she put to work at once' as Baby Suggs was a freed slave now, living in Cincinnati and decided to become an "unchurched preacher" to help other ex-slaves in the neighbourhood to find their way (Morrison 102).

Black women's situation was much harder as they endured sexist-racist colonial ideology. They were physically violated by the slaveholders through the created stereotypes. The stereotype of breeder is one of them. Angela Davis this issue as follows:

During the decades preceding the Civil War, Black women came to be increasingly appraised for their fertility (or for the lack of it) [...] In fact, in the eyes of the slaveholders, slave women were not mothers at all; they were simply instruments guaranteeing the growth of the slave labor force. They were "breeders"—animals, whose monetary value could be precisely calculated in terms of their ability to multiply their numbers (Davis *Women, Race* 10).

The violence on black women slaves' bodies is justified through these created stereotypical images, as Khamsa Qasim also states: "White slave owners used to enjoy a sense of power by subjugating the black bodies to extreme sense of torture and pain. Different stereotypical images were promoted and used to mask this heinous display of power" (Qasim 212). Thus, they could justify the violence they imposed as "The controlling images of Jezebel, whore and breeder were used to control slave women's bodies" (Qasim 212). However, Morrison deconstructs these images in the novel, to be analysed in this section.

Sexual exploitation is the most encountered form of bodily violation of black women slaves. Black women slaves were raped by their slave masters, as hooks articulates: "Rape was a common method of torture slavers used to subdue recalcitrant black women. The threat of rape or other physical brutalization inspired terror in the psyches of displaced African females" (hooks 34). Reginald Watson refers to the rapes in *Beloved* as "another dominant motif, especially since the black woman's body is constantly violated by the white phallus of slavery" (Watson 313). Morrison pictures a number of instances of rape. Sethe's mother-in-law Baby Suggs has been raped multiple times by slaveholders and not given the right to keep her children with her as told as follows:

So Baby's eight children had six fathers. What she called the nastiness of life was the shock she received upon learning that nobody stopped playing checkers just because the pieces included her children. Halle she was able to keep the longest. Twenty years. A lifetime. Given to her, no doubt, to make up for hearing that her two girls, neither of whom had their adult teeth, were sold and gone and she had not been able to wave goodbye. To make up for coupling with a straw boss for four months in exchange for keeping her third child, a boy, with her—only to have

him traded for lumber in the spring of the next year and to find herself pregnant by the man who promised not to and did. (27)

Rape was “the institutional method of terrorism” as described above. The sexist-racist colonial ideology is the motive behind these acts. It starts just on the slave ships as Qasim also remarks: “the middle passage [is], where black woman’s institutionalized rape began” (Qasim 219). Sethe’s mother in *Beloved* is one who was raped on the slaveships multiple times. Nan, who brought up Sethe also faced multiple rape along with Sethe’s mother: “She told Sethe that her mother and Nan were together from the sea. Both were taken up many times by the crew” (Morrison 74). Like Baby Suggs, she had a number of children from different white men as a result of these rapes. For Watson ‘the black woman is clearly a sexual object, a human mule present to bear the burdens of oppression from men’ in *Beloved*’ (Watson 313). Ella is another black woman who experienced sexual violence of white men. She is an ex-slave who lives in Baby Suggs’ neighbourhood and who supported slaves during their escapes from plantations. Ella is held captive by a white father and son and was traumatized by their sexual harrassments. She calls these two men as “the lowest yet”: ‘ It was “the lowest yet” who gave her a disgust for sex and against whom she measured all atrocities’ (Morrison *Beloved* 301). She had a ‘hairy white thing, fathered by “the lowest yet”’ but she couldn’t nurse it nor did the baby live (*Beloved* 305). Rape was not the only torture on her body, she was “beaten every way but down. She remembered the bottom teeth she had lost to the brake and the scars from the belt were thick as rope around her waist” (*Beloved* 305).

Another victim of sexual harassment is Vashti, the wife of Stamp Paid- a slave on Sweet Home Plantation. Stamp Paid is also a man who helps escaping slaves to cross the Ohio River. He tells how his wife is made to become a mistress to the white slaveholder and that he cannot do anything to prevent it. In the novel, he remembers how Vashti is made to go to the master “almost a year” (*Beloved* 274). Stamp Paid wants to kill the master yet his wife doesn’t let him, and he tries to end it through making master’s wife avoid it, yet it doesn’t work as he tells: “I ...thought she might stop it, but it went right on” (275). She is made to serve the master till the master lets her go. In this part, we also come across the oppressing patriarchy as master’s wife cannot avoid the sexual abuse which is also an insult to her womanhood. She is aware that her husband commits adultery

but she can do nothing about it. Moreover, another side of this event is the patriarchal attitude of Stamp Paid. He doesn't forgive his wife for being a mistress to the master, though his wife is a victim of the master. He describes his anger as follows: "I looked at the back of her neck. She had a real small neck. I decided to break it. You know, like a twig—just snap it. I been low but that was as low as I ever got" (275). For him, he is degraded due to her act, but she is more degraded than him.

In the novel, Schoolteacher stands as the emblem of white colonial mentality that tortures slave bodies. He is the man who runs the plantation called "Sweet Home" where protagonist Sethe, her husband Halle and other slaves live. He is the embodiment of how western colonial discourse view slaves as *subhuman creatures* and behaves to them accordingly. As Sima Farshid states, he is the embodiment of so-called civilized Westerners who see the black slaves as the inferior other: "He scrutinizes slaves as the unknown, subhuman other – the amalgam of human and animal to his racist mind, standing on a lower-than-human rung on his social Darwinist ladder" ("Political Technology" 159). The scientific discourse through which the colonizer/westerners claim the so-called inferiority of slave people discussed above is underlined in the novel when schoolteacher tries to measure the qualities of Sethe's body. Sethe overhears the pupils and Schoolteacher talking about herself:

He was talking to his pupils and I heard him say, "Which one are you doing?" And one of the boys said, "Sethe." That's when I stopped because I heard my name, and then I took a few steps to where I could see what they was doing. Schoolteacher was standing over one of them with one hand behind his back. He licked a forefinger a couple of times and turned a few pages. Slow. I was about to turn around and keep on my way to where the muslin was, when I heard him say, "No, no. That's not the way. I told you to put her human characteristics on the left; her animal ones on the right. And don't forget to line them up." (Morrison 228).

In the given excerpt, we come across the racist ideology of the westerners who assert power over their supposed inferior. As Michel Foucault puts forward, "power produces knowledge (and not simply by encouraging it because it serves power or by applying it because it is useful); that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge" and schoolteacher claims to hold knowledge, thus power over the slaves (Foucault 175). In the novel, in a conversation between Schoolteacher and Sixo — one of the slaves of Sweet

Home—, Schoolteacher beats Sixo for stealing shoat despite Sixo's clever answer that he has eaten the meat in order to work harder on the field and produce more for the master. Yet, his defining his act is not a valid one for schoolteacher, so he "beat[s] him anyways to show him that definitions belonged to the definers—not the defined" (Morrison 225). In another instance, Sethe remembers Schoolteacher literally measuring her body: "Schoolteacher'd wrap that string all over my head, 'cross my nose, around my behind. Number my teeth. I thought he was a fool." (226). Toni Morrison deconstructs the myth of the white civilizer through Schoolteacher and his use of scientific discourse to claim power over the so-called inferior slaves. The "callous" schoolteacher is "[o]ne of the most inexorable characters Morrison has created to subvert such Euro-American myths as the virtue, benevolence and righteousness of white people" (Farshid 159). He is such a murderous, heartless character that as mentioned above he keeps recording how Sethe will act while her milk is being stolen. However, a more brutal act is yet to come. After her milk is taken, Sethe informs Mrs. Garner, the wife of former master of Sweet Home, who is in bed due to some illness. Schoolteacher gets angry and punishes Sethe through torturing Sethe's back by whipping her, creating a scar that resembles a chokecherry tree. It is a strong motif repeated many times in the novel. Sethe tells the event as follows: "Schoolteacher made one [white boy] open up my back, and when it closed it made a tree. It grows there still" (Beloved 16). The tree scar on her back is a reminder of the torture she experienced in Sweet Home plantation. In the novel, the scar Paul D sees on Sethe's back is described as follows:

He rubbed his cheek on her back and learned that way her sorrow, the roots of it; its wide trunk and intricate branches...And when the top of her dress was around her hips and he saw the sculpture her back had become, like the decorative work of an ironsmith too passionate for display, he could think but not say, "Aw, Lord, girl." And he would tolerate no peace until he had touched every ridge and leaf of it with his mouth, none of which Sethe could feel because her back skin had been dead for years. (*Beloved* 20-21)

The roots of this tree goes back to the origins of slavery which has affected black people for ages. Sima Farshid comments on the tree scar as follows: 'The ruthless violation of Sethe's body by the schoolteacher and his nephews is one of the thousands of instances of inscribing "the discourse of slavery" on the body of powerless slaves to make them

“subjected” labor forces. Slave-owners marked slaves’ body to confirm it as their property’ (“Political Technology” 162).

The tree scar Sethe carries has another importance. It is a motif used by Morrison as a reminder of history and the tortures of Sethe’s mother along with other women abused by white slaveholders. For Karin Luisa Badt, the maternal body is the ultimate place which represents the site of history for black people. Thus, Sethe’s tortured body is a reminder of “her own longing for her murdered mother.” Badt also states that “The only trace Sethe has of her awful maternal past is her body: the tree-scar on her back. The novel concerns the return to this scar as the site of history. *Beloved* begins with a scene in which Paul D. traces this scar with his hands. This historic mapping is what inspires the trajectory of the novel’s movement from dead flesh that has forgotten to sensual (maternal) flesh that remembers. The “scar,” history, becomes a living part of the present” (Badt 569).

Another example of physical torture is depicted through Sethe’s mother who was made to wear the “bit” several times for punishment as Sethe recalls: “days after it was taken out, goose fat was rubbed on the corner of the mouth but nothing [could] soothe the tongue or take the wildness out of the eye” (Morrison *Beloved* 84). As far as Sethe remembers, her mouth always seem to smile because she “had the bit so many times [that it seemed] she smiled. When she wasn’t smiling she smiled, and [Sethe] never saw her own smile” (240). Additionally, her body was tortured so badly that her body couldn’t be recognized before finally being hanged: “By the time they cut her down nobody could tell whether she had a circle and a cross or not, least of all me and I did look” (73).

The black slave body has been the object of the colonizer’s scrutiny, which Farshid refers to as “the political technology of the body” as a reference by Michael Foucault, whose ideas related to power, knowledge and political function of the slave body has been analysed. In the novel, slaveholders see the slaves as objects, as a force of production. Baby Suggs is an example of how black women were alienated from their bodies and sex was only for reproductive means. As stated in the novel, “Baby Suggs is clearly a woman who has been used as a brood sow” (Watson 330). The slave women had no value except for their reproductive function; they were commodities who produced new slaves for the

master. In the novel, Paul D. refers to his own price as a slave by comparing himself to Sethe, the woman slave whose price “was greater than his” as she was a “a property that reproduced itself without cost” (*Beloved* 269). As property, they were not supposed to have feelings or have any joy from sexual acts: “The black woman rarely experienced tenderness and affection in her sexual encounters. For Baby Suggs, sex is without joy, an act committed in the name of power. The black woman's body became an assembly line for the production of more babies” (Watson 331). In the novel, Sethe’s daughter Denver recalls her grandmother Baby Suggs’ words on the point: “Slaves not supposed to have pleasurable feelings on their own; their bodies not supposed to be like that, but they have to have as many children as they can to please whoever owned them. Still, they were not supposed to have pleasure deep down. She said for me not to listen to all that. That I should always listen to my body and love it” (Morrison *Beloved* 247). Though despised both by white and black community for having “eight children with different men”, Baby Suggs advises Denver “not to listen to all that” and to “always listen to [her] body and love it” . Her advice is significant in that as an unchurched preacher Baby Suggs tries to motivate ex-slave black people to acknowledge and love their bodies during her speeches on the gatherings at “Clearing” as follows:

“Here,” she said, “in this here place, we flesh; flesh that weeps, laughs; flesh that dances on bare feet in grass. Love it. Love it hard. Yonder they do not love your flesh. They despise it. They don’t love your eyes; they’d just as soon pick em out. No more do they love the skin on your back. Yonder they flay it. And O my people they do not love your hands. Those they only use, tie, bind, chop off and leave empty. Love your hands! [...] You got to love it, you! And no, they ain’t in love with your mouth. Yonder, out there, they will see it broken and break it again [...] You got to love it. This is flesh I’m talking about here. Flesh that needs to be loved. Feet that need to rest and to dance; backs that need support; shoulders that need arms, strong arms I’m telling you. And O my people, out yonder, hear me, they do not love your neck unnoosed and straight [...] the beat and beating heart, love that too. More than eyes or feet. [...] More than your life-holding womb and your life-giving private parts, hear me now, love your heart. For this is the prize. (Morrison *Beloved* 103-104)

This motivating speech of Baby Suggs is reciprocated with the black folk present there through their mouths giving music to Baby Suggs’s dance: The speech makes an impact on the listeners as it is described in the novel: “Saying no more, she stood up then and danced with her twisted hip the rest of what her heart had to say while the others opened

their mouths and gave her the music. Long notes held until the four-part harmony was perfect enough for their deeply loved flesh” (Morrison *Beloved* 104). Crashed under dehumanizing slavery, slaves could not realize that they owned bodies belonging to them as their bodies belonged to the master. Only after her being freed could Baby Suggs acknowledge her own body. When she became a free woman after her son Halle bought her freedom in return for losing his free weekends, she felt there was a problem with herself. This is the first time she comes to realize her own body as stated in the novel:

Something’s the matter. What’s the matter? What’s the matter? she asked herself. She didn’t know what she looked like and was not curious. But suddenly she saw her hands and thought with a clarity as simple as it was dazzling, “These hands belong to me. These my hands.” Next she felt a knocking in her chest and discovered something else new: her own heartbeat. Had it been there all along? This pounding thing? She felt like a fool and began to laugh out loud. Mr. Garner looked over his shoulder at her with wide brown eyes and smiled himself. “What’s funny, Jenny?”

She couldn’t stop laughing. “My heart’s beating,” she said. (*Beloved* 166)

As their bodies are colonized by the slave system, freed slaves are alienated from their own bodies and find it difficult to acknowledge their own bodies, as seen in Baby Suggs’ example. Sima Farshid refers to this issue as follows: “Consequently when they escaped to the North or were freed, they did not properly feel the ownership of their body, or even if they did, the mere sense of owning their body was not enough to pursue their life as unfettered, dignified people. The wise old woman of the novel properly recognizes this defect and makes efforts to help other ex-slaves discover the apt, necessary means for gaining the mastery of their body and free self” (“Reclamation” 497). It is difficult for them to claim ownership of their bodies, just like they cannot claim their own children, their own milk, their own lives. Like other slaves who arrive in the North to live freed, Sethe acknowledges that it is highly difficult to accept your own body as they are used to accepting their bodies the property of their masters’. Upon coming to Sethe’s house, Sethe states this nearly impossible acknowledgement: “Freeing yourself was one thing; claiming ownership of that freed self was another” (*Beloved* 112-113). However, Baby Suggs helps them love their own flesh through defying the colonial view, as Farshid maintains: ‘Baby Suggs’ “reclamation” and “consecration” of slaves’ exploited/mutilated bodies is simultaneously a contest against the discursive power of slave-holders such as

Schoolteacher who regards the black as subhuman creatures' (Farshid "Reclamation" 500).

Slave bodies were also crushed under the dehumanizing work conditions. In *Beloved*, Baby Suggs' previous workplace before she was sold to Sweet Home is depicted as follows: "field work that broke her hip and the exhaustion that dragged her mind" (*Beloved* 165). The lives of slave people are measured by their use value for the master. After her hip is injured, Baby Suggs is discarded by her master and "she [i]s a real bargain (costing less than Halle, who [i]s ten then) for Mr. Garner [master at Sweet Home]" as she becomes useless (*Beloved* 164). Sethe's mother is another example of women slaves who work ceaselessly like machines on the plantation and cannot build up a mother-child bond with their children. Sethe depicts her mother's situation after Denver questions whether her mother ever fixed her hair as follows: "If she did, I don't remember. I didn't see her but a few times out in the fields and once when she was working indigo. By the time I woke up in the morning, she was in line. If the moon was bright they worked by its light. Sunday she slept like a stick" (72). This is how slavery separated mothers from their children as mothers even couldn't nourish them with their own milk. In the novel, using Nan as the wet nurse; they first suckled the white baby then what was left was given to the black babies. They even couldn't claim their mothers' milk, which nature granted to them. However, the slave system not only ruins the familial bonds, it also spoils the mother-child bond, too. Sethe relates the situation of her mother answering Denver's question: "She must of nursed me two or three weeks—that's the way the others did. Then she went back in rice and I sucked from another woman whose job it was. So to answer you, no. I reckon not. She never fixed my hair nor nothing. She didn't even sleep in the same cabin most nights I remember." (*Beloved* 72). Mother's milk is, thus, a crucial motive in the novel as Sethe is obsessed with her baby's milk being stolen, which traumatizes her much more than her being whipped.

Being unable to claim ownership of their lives, their children, their bodies is demystified by Toni Morrison. She deconstructs the colonial point of view through creating resisting characters through her powerful and penetrating narrative. Though colonial forces seem

to oppress, torture, and annihilate the bodies of black women, it is through these bodies that the story starts to be rewritten once again. The physical torture and sexual exploitation of these women act as the driving force for them to come together. The female community at the end of the novel comes together to get rid of the vengeful spirit of Beloved. Reginald Watson states that for Horvitz, Beloved is an "inter-generational, inter-continental, female ghost-child who teaches Sethe that memories and stories about her matrilineal ancestry are life-giving" (Horvitz cited in Watson 314). She also adds that the memories of traumas Beloved brings along is shared by a whole community of women and reminds Sethe of "her own nameless mother who, along with other black mothers, was victimized and forced into unspeakable degradation and sexual exploitation in slavery" (Watson 324). The ghost of Beloved tortures Sethe for a long duration of time. The news spread to the whole community that "this daughter beat her, tied her to the bed and pulled out all her hair" (Morrison 301). The reason why Sethe becomes a passive victim of the ghost is related as follows: "Sethe was trying to make up for the handsaw; Beloved was making her pay for it" (*Beloved* 295). It is the remembrance of the atrocities of slavery that is consuming Sethe, but she is freed in the end. Watson sees the sexual exploitation as an igniter to unite those who suffers from these exploitations: the female community that "cleansed" Sethe in the end and got rid of Beloved the ghost; the ghost of slavery in a sense. Watson contends that "It is this exploitation that leads to the unity of mothers needed by work's end to rid the town of the vengeful ghost" (333). She asserts that "These women nourish not only Sethe but also her Denver. So despite their victimization, these mothers are able to bring about constant renewal, rebirth, and cleansing, a function which is a fitting end many instances of sexual exploitation treatment that these victimized women had to endure" (Watson 334).

Violence is a defiance of black women to the oppressions of their bodies in *Beloved*. As Michel Foucault put it "Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power" (Foucault 95). The women characters of Toni Morrison in the novel choose to resist the colonial oppression of their bodies through infanticide. For Foucault, "there is a plurality of resistances, each of them a special case: resistances that are possible, necessary, improbable; others that are spontaneous, savage, solitary, concerted, rampant, or violent;

still others that are quick to compromise, interested, or sacrificial; by definition, they can only exist in the strategic field of power relations” (Foucault 96). The resistance of Sethe in *Beloved* is of a violent one, as she cuts the throat of her two- year-old baby in order not to give her back to slave hunters. Regina Watson comments on the infanticide as follows: “black women fight back against their oppression through the act of infanticide, choosing to take the lives of their own children rather than let them be material possessions for the master” (315). In the novel, Sethe’s mother doesn’t let her children to live since they are the outcomes of rapes on the slaveship. Nan relates this event to Sethes as follows: “She threw them [her offspring] all away but you. The one from the crew she threw away on the island. The others from more whites she also threw away. Without names, she threw them” (*Beloved* 74). Watson refers to Sethe’s mother’s act as follows: “she regains control and freedom by taking back lives that would soon be enslaved” (Watson 328). Without a moment of thinking, she just throws all her babies to the sea, except for Sethe whom she conceived from a black man. It is an act of resistance as she denies the control over her body by the slave system. Watson puts it this way: “Through such acts, Sethe's mother, like Sethe and other enslaved black women, would reassert rights to her own womb” (328). Though their acts seem to be brutal and unacceptable, ‘Sethe's Nan and Sethe's mother are powerful examples of how, through infanticide, African mothers fought back against their sexual oppression through what can be called "love-murder"' (Watson 328). Sethe is criticized harshly by Paul D. for her love being “too thick” and he abandons her after learning the event, and she is excluded from the black community in the neighborhood (*Beloved* 193). So, it can be asked “what does a mother-love incapsulate?” Do the black women in the novel defy the motherly roles which is destroyed by the slave system? Can we talk about a bond between the mothers and children, who are deprived of their mothers’ milk? Morrison problematizes all these questions in the novel. As a result, “By choosing death for their children, these mothers claim their motherhood in ways that are challenging to understand—yet, in doing so, these female characters achieve astonishingly powerful personas” (Putnam 27). They are powerful, as they claim authority over their children, otherwise they would be “property” of the master as Putnam states: ‘by destroying the “property” for which the bounty hunter and slaveowner have come’ in Sethe’s case (37). Additionally, though her act seems to be impenetrable and “ghastly, [it

is] also compellingly dominant—she chooses what will happen to her and to her children...Sethe reprojects the violence that has oppressed her for years and takes control of what little she can. Sethe loves her children enough to choose death for them instead of a tortuous slave life” (Putnam 38). In the novel, Sethe shows her determination against the slave hunters who have come to take her precious things through denying what awaits her children once they are taken back to slavery:

That anybody white could take your whole self for anything that came to mind. Not just work, kill, or maim you, but dirty you. Dirty you so bad you couldn't like yourself anymore [...] The best thing she was, was her children. Whites might dirty *her* all right, but not her best thing, her beautiful, magical best thing—the part of her that was clean. No undreamable dreams about whether the headless, footless torso hanging in the tree with a sign on it was her husband or Paul A; whether the bubbling-hot girls in the colored-school fire set by patriots included her daughter; whether a gang of whites invaded her daughter's private parts, soiled her daughter's thighs and threw her daughter out of the wagon. She might have to work the slaughterhouse yard, but not her daughter. (*Beloved* 296)

Her reaction is not only against the physical violence imprinted on the bodies of slaves, but also the scars on their souls, which Sethe resists violently. Being treated like an animal herself, she doesn't let the slaveowners “dirty her best things” or let them be treated in accordance, as she states: “And no one, nobody on this earth, would list her daughter's characteristics on the animal side of the paper” which is done to her by the schoolteacher (*Beloved* 296).

Gillian M.E. Alban refers to Sethe's power despite the harsh realities: “Overwhelmed by the forces of nineteenth-century slave-owning American society, she savagely determines to control the fate of her beautiful children created in love” (Alban 55). Alban also refers to the powerful gaze in Sethe's eyes when Schoolteacher comes to take back his “property” of the slave system; Sethe and her children. However, like the powerful Medusa gaze that petrifies the one who looks at her eyes, Sethe's eyes are so stunning that when she looks at the eyes of Schoolteacher, “Sethe exerts a particularly powerful and deadly gaze that petrifies its objects and prevents them from exerting agency” and “Her look disempowers this savage man who evaluates his negroes in terms of their financial value to him” (Alban 54, 56). For Alban, her gaze is a reflection of “her formidable nature” (Alban 56). She is so determined that she ‘decides that they will go to the “other side”

together and be safely dead and beyond further white, inhuman cruelty, in preference to suffering slavery under the savage schoolteacher” (Alban 56).

Violence directed towards children in the novel through infanticide most of the time helps the reader understand how Morrison rewrites the attributed roles of motherhood as these women “act in unsanctioned ways, forcing a redefinition of what black femaleness and black motherhood can and should be, especially under oppressive conditions” (Putnam 41-42). The familial relationship is destructed under the slave system in which mother-child bond is not permitted. Thus, these fierce actions show the reader how Morrison “[es] a new vision of African American femininity and femaleness”. The women in the novel “are not powerless or without options; instead, they can create new patterns and refuse socialized gender and racial identities that attempt to constrain them” (Putnam 26). Morrison’s women characters act beyond the roles attributed to them as breeders. Thus, infanticide brings along a new perspective to the myth of black women as breeders; it demystifies this concept.

Breeder myth is one of those that the white colonizer makes use of to control black women's bodies. Qasim remarks that “Morrison presents slave women as subjects who challenge different racial stereotypes. The image of a breeder was used to exploit black slave women during the slave era. They were considered breeders and compared to animals... This image was used to claim that black women can produce children as easily as animals. In this way the dominant groups justified their interference in an enslaved African’s reproductive lives” (Qasim 213). The control of black women slaves’ bodies in terms of reproductory function goes in line with the colonial ideology as they claim power and the right over women slaves, who are seen as animals for breeding by the slaveholders. However, Morrison deconstructs the myth of breeder through the acts of women characters Baby Suggs and Sethe’s mother. Sethe “challenges the image of a breeder by killing her baby girl, asserts her identity as a mother... During slavery the breeder image was used to manipulate black woman’s body and her sexuality, this image provided justification for interference in enslaved Africans reproductive lives” (Qasim 221).

Morrison deconstructs the myth of breeder through infanticide as Qasim states: “A slave woman has no right to love anyone, especially her own children. Thus by cultivating a powerful identity as a mother, she destroys the image of the breeder” (Qasim 214). Sethe’s mother is a perfect example for this as she is “a powerful and strong woman who has been raped by several white men but still resists the image of breeder”. As stated above, she throws her babies away and “Sethe is the only one whom she gives a name. Thus she proves that the white masters can claim her body but not her soul” (Qasim 214). In conclusion, “These female characters, all flawed but also all attempting to manage situations far beyond their control, choose violence. In doing so, they transform from powerless subordinates into dominating forces” (Putnam 41).

In addition to the violent resistance of black women, the awakening of sensuality of the main character Sethe can be claimed as sort of creating an identity and defying the colonial impressions. The representation of the black body in American literature is problematized by Morrison. She articulates that black women's bodies are ‘transferred internal conflicts to a “blank darkness,” to conveniently bound and violently silenced black bodies’ (Morrison *Playing* 38). Through her writing, she gives voice to these silenced bodies and rewrites the history told by the white people as she creates strong figures in her novels. *Beloved* is one of the great examples of this through the character Sethe, who comes to realize her sensuality during the novel. Awakening of sensuality is a major theme in the novel as it serves as an identity formation after oppression as Karin Luisa Badt discusses. For her, remembering sensuality is remembering history as “Desire, in Morrison's works, is cast as a birthright of the African-American people; realizing it is to realize one's roots in the African-American community” (Badt 573). As she discusses throughout her article, the maternal body symbolizes the repressed mother continent Africa. Thus, remembering sensuality of themselves, Sethe and Paul D. come closer to realizing and remembering the maternal body. Thus, the characters are “reborn through contact with the maternal” as Badt argues: “Going back to the maternal, understood as the roots of black culture” (574). The two characters develop a kind of identity formation through their inner journeys till the end of the novel. Upon Paul D.’s coming to 124, Sethe comes to realize her own body and her own sexuality. At the opening chapters of the novel, Paul D. comes to visit 124 and after some talk about the past, the two get closer. Paul D. hugs Sethe from the back

and encounters the tree-shaped scar and fondles her breasts. Then suddenly the house starts to shake due to the ghost Beloved. Paul D. shouts loudly and stops the ghost's act and the two go upstairs to have intercourse. In this scene, sexuality is used as an instrument to get rid of the atrocities of slavery which never lets the slaves acknowledge or claim their sexualities. The two go upstairs "[n]ot quite in a hurry, but losing no time" and Paul D. comments on the previous scene as follows: "Merely kissing the wrought iron on her back had shook the house, had made it necessary for him to beat it to pieces. Now he would do more" (*Beloved* 24). We can infer from his words that he will try to get rid of the ghost through sexuality. The two have a hasty intercourse which "was over before they could get their clothes off", yet feel "resentful" and "too shy to make talk" (*Beloved* 24,25).

The intercourse helps both Sethe and Paul D. remember the past desires at Sweet Home Plantation. As slaves, they were not allowed to claim their sexuality; women were "breeders" and men "studs" to make them produce new slaves for the system. Yet, Sethe and her husband Halle were able to have their desires fulfilled before they get married. Sethe's intercourse with Paul D. helps her recall how she and Halle made sex on the cornfield before they get married (as slaves, their marriage was not official). She remembers the desire as "she had forgotten how it worked" (*Beloved* 24). Awakening of her sexuality plays a significant role in her identity formation as its function is to assert a new identity after oppression: "Morrison's eroticized characters, driven after years of repression/oppression to assert their own deepest wants, are stimulated to redefine their sense of boundaries and their relation to themselves, others, and white culture" (Badt 571). Paul D. acts as a trigger to awaken the tortured body of Sethe, the numb skin on her back which "had been dead for years". Through remembering sensuality, the heroine starts remembering both her own and the communal history. This remembering through eroticism plays a role that "such an experience of the body does exist, that eroticism is possible. The contemporary feeling of desire evokes buried memories of other desires. Sensuality surges forth as an awakening, an experience that jostles the memory: It brings the characters to their "senses" -a sense of their deepest "core" selves and their places in history" (Badt 571). In other words, remembering the sensuality and the history with that remembrance makes the character not a passive object but a desiring subject, as Badt

states: “Morrison's elision of erotic memory with historic memory expresses a provocative interpretation of what it means to desire a past: inclusion in a dynamics of narrative as an agent-a desiring subject- and not as a passive object of discourse” (571).

Toni Morrison's women characters in *Beloved* are strong characters who defy the colonial repression even though their bodies are tortured and scarred. Morrison deconstructs the myth of breeder through the main character Sethe who “resist[s] the grip” of the powerful through her act of violence and via remembering her sensuality (Foucault 174). Along with Sethe, Sethe's mother, Baby Suggs and Ella defy the colonial pressure through infanticide. Baby Suggs' speech upon acknowledging and loving their bodies no matter if they are seen as commodities of the slaveholder is a “contest” against that oppression.

CHAPTER 3: RESISTANCE OF THE BLACK FEMALES UNDER PATRIARCHY

3.1. Resisting the *Black Lies* to Colonise Women's Pleasure in Walker's *Possessing the Secret of Joy*

Alice Walker's novel *Possessing the Secret of Joy* is a deconstruction of black women's so-called secondary place in the black community. It is an influential work drawing attention to the inhumane tradition of female genital mutilation (FGM) in African communities. The aim of this part of the study is to lay bare the phallogocentric implications of black community that tortures women's body through FGM in the name of religion and tradition via repression of women's sexuality and silencing them. Afterwards, I will analyse how the main character in the novel resists the grip of the power mechanisms through a journey of personal growth and asserts her resistance through violence. It comprises a close reading of Walker's attempt to deconstruct the inferiorized position of women by her reference to matriarchal symbols in the African communities.

Alice Walker's *Possessing the Secret of Joy* is acknowledged as a sequel of her novel *Color Purple* (1982), which won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and National Book Award for Fiction. The main character, Tashi, in *Possessing* is a minor character in *Color Purple*. This novel deals with the miseries of black women and their gaining strength and constituting a strong identity by the end. Similarly, *Possessing* sheds light on the miseries of African women who face genital mutilation; yet the justifications used by black patriarchy behind this horrible practise is unveiled throughout the novel. Tashi is a tribal African woman living in a fictional Olinka community, which requires all the female children to be genitally mutilated with religious and traditional excuses. Yet it is taboo to speak about this practise. Tashi gets married to an African-American man, Adam, the son of a missionary and goes to the USA to live there, yet afterwards she decides to go back to Olinka in her teen years to have the tribal rituals of scarring the face and genital mutilation, which was practised on female children before they reach puberty. Tashi chooses to be circumcised to show her adherence to her roots. Following the circumcision, she starts to suffer from a lifelong trauma which impinges on her body and soul and is

caused by the practice. She gets a number of psychotherapies, one of which is carried by a fictional character, Jung. Jung is named as “Mzee” which means “Old Man” and is uncle of a French woman, Lisette, an old friend and lover of Adam for years. (The two have a child, Pierre, who also plays a significant role as an anthropologist who occupies himself with a dream of Tashi’s and finds what it comes to mean in Tashi’s subconscious.) Jung unearths Tashi’s traumas, caused both by her own circumcision and the childhood trauma embedded in her subconscious due to her sister, Dura’s death through being circumcised. The moment Tashi acknowledges what was done to her sister as “murder”, she begins to cope with the overwhelming scar on her soul and body. Having come to an understanding of why the ritual doesn’t end throughout centuries and the long-lasting damage done to the women who experience mutilation, she takes action to kill an old woman “*tsunga*” M’Lissa who is both the midwife and the circumciser of women in the community along with Tashi and who is the culprit in killing a number of women both literally and figuratively. After Tashi’s killing the *tsunga*, she is condemned to death by the African government. However, her death does not mean an ending, as she incites the awakening of tribeswomen to rise against the patriarchal grip.

Nawal El Saadawi proposes that the oppression of women all around the world is grounded in “capitalist patriarchal system” (El Saadawi 149). For her, Female Genital Mutilation is “inherited from the slave system, or the class patriarchal system” and is part of a “package” which includes “[c]utting the sexual organs of the female child, especially the clitoris, to guarantee their virginity before marriage and their fidelity after marriage” along with physical violence such as “severe punishment” to ensure obedience to husband; and acknowledging the fatherhood to ensure loyalty and “therefore virginity and monogamy should be enforced on women by physical, mental, religious, moral, social, legal, political and economic means” (151). All these systems are applied to ensure the subordinate and passive state of women.

Likewise, Hélène Cixous suggests that women are suppressed and silenced by patriarchy in such a way that they cannot claim ownership of their own bodies. Female sexuality has been repressed by patriarchal ideology which Cixous defines as follows:

the superegoized structures in which she has always occupied the place reserved for the guilty (guilty of everything, guilty at every turn: for having desires, for not having any; for being frigid, for being "too hot"; for not being both at once; for being too motherly and not enough; for having children and for not having any; for nursing and for not nursing ...)... A woman without a body, dumb, blind, can't possibly be a good fighter. She is reduced to being the servant of the militant male, his shadow." (*The Laugh*, 880)

Women are alienated from their bodies and silenced throughout ages. Repression of their bodies has been ensured through repressing their sexuality and cutting their relationship to their bodies. They are "turned away from [their] bodies, shamefully taught to ignore them, to strike them with that stupid sexual modesty" as Cixous points out. (*The Laugh* 885). Likewise, Luce Irigaray problematizes how women have been located in the phallogentric world as "lacking" and having "penis envy". For Irigaray, patriarchy devalues women's sexual organ glorifying the penis. She criticizes the phallogentrism as follows: 'About woman and her pleasure, this view of the sexual relation has nothing to say. Her lot is that of "lack," "atrophy" (of the sexual organ), and "penis envy," the penis being the only sexual organ of recognized value' (Irigaray *This Sex* 23). In a similar manner, hooks refers to the phallogentrism in the black community that "[T]here is a social process by which patriarchy confers power, prestige, privilege, and prerogative on people who are born with cocks, and that there is a sexual program promoted by the patriarchy (not Mother Nature) for how those cocks are supposed to function" (hooks 138-139). Despite locating women to a secondary position and recognizing it as 'the other sex being only the indispensable complement to the only sex' which is penis', Irigaray maintains that the reason behind this ideology is autoeroticism of female genitalia which causes a threat for men (28). For her,

woman's autoeroticism is very different from man's...As for woman, she touches herself in and of herself without any need for mediation, and before there is any way to distinguish activity from passivity. Woman "touches herself" all the time, and moreover no one can forbid her to do so, for her genitals are formed of two lips in continuous contact. (*This Sex* 24)

In other words, any dependance of female pleasure on the male sexual organ is made redundant thanks to autoeroticism and thus it causes a threat to men as they would not be needed anymore. Ramin and Roshnavand comment on African men's patriarchy that sees

women's autoeroticism as a threat, and its relation to mutilation as follows: "Cutting a woman's vulva in fact obviates the possibility of oral stimulation, so a woman would remain dependent forever on masculine (and masculinist) phallus as the only fetish which can induce her orgasm. This fear of women's sexual autonomy [...] goads African men into a vicious struggle to maintain their supremacy" (Ramin and Roshnavand 88). This is the reason why African men are against banning this dehumanizing practice. Thus, any act against their hegemony to annihilate circumcision is regarded as a "treacherous act against their time-honored beliefs and customs, while in reality it is just an excuse to further reinforce their hegemonic domination over women" (ibid).

In *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, all the women in the community are required to go through FGM with a similar motivation, which is stated in the novel as follows:

Man is jealous of the woman's pleasure, Pierre says after a while, because she does not require him to achieve it. When her outer sex is cut off, and she's left only the smallest, inelastic opening through which to receive pleasure, he can believe it is only his penis that can reach her inner parts and give her what she craves. But it is only his lust for her conquest that makes the effort worthwhile. And then it is literally a battle, with blood flowing on both sides. (*Possessing* 172)

The glorification of men and their need to be indispensable would only be fulfilled through demeaning women to such a passive position. Yet, the novel brings forth multiple sorts of female pleasure. One example is Adam and Lissette's son, Pierre's girlfriend who can get pleasure from anything as Pierre states:

She'd been brought up by pagan parents, earth worshippers, on a little island somewhere in Hawaii. She could experience orgasm doing almost anything. She said that at home there were favorite trees she loved that she rubbed against. She could orgasm against warm, smooth boulders, like this one we're sitting on; she could come against the earth itself if it rose a bit to meet her. However, says Pierre, she'd never been with a man. Her parents had taught her early on that it wasn't absolutely necessary, unless she wanted to have children. (*Possessing* 170)

Another example is Lissette, Pierre's mother who becomes orgasmic during giving birth, which is a homebirth. Lissette refers to her midwife "whose radical idea it was that childbirth above all should feel sexy" (*Possessing* 94) and describes the event as follows: "My vulva oiled and massaged to keep my hips open and my vagina fluid, I was orgasmic at the end" (95). These two examples alone are strong vehicles Walker uses to glorify

women's potential to embrace their sexuality, and to reinforce the miseries of Olinkan women who undergo FGM. On one side, there are these western women (Pierre's girlfriend and mother- Lisette) finding pleasure so easily; while on the other there are women like Tashi and other Olinkan women whose vaginas are cut open and sewed so tight that they can't even urinate. Adam describes Tashi's crippled body after being mutilated, which exposes the effects of mutilation on the body of all circumcised women as follows:

It now took a quarter of an hour for her to pee. Her menstrual periods lasted ten days. She was incapacitated by cramps nearly half the month. There were premenstrual cramps: cramps caused by the near impossibility of flow passing through so tiny an aperture as M'Lissa had left, after fastening together the raw sides of Tashi's vagina with a couple of thorns and inserting a straw so that in healing, the traumatized flesh might not grow together, shutting the opening completely; cramps caused by the residual flow that could not find its way out, was not reabsorbed into her body, and had nowhere to go. There was the odor, too, of soured blood, which no amount of scrubbing, until we got to America, ever washed off. (61-62)

The practice she goes through is a pharaonic mutilation, which means that all the outer and inner parts of her vulva is "scraped away and sewed up and has to be reopened with every... Intercourse is often preceded by being opened, often with instruments" (Walker *The World* 189). Walker describes this inhumane practise as "an incredible violation of the body and the spirit" (190). In the novel, other effects of the practice on Tashi is seen in her conceiving her son, Benny. Adam calls it as "immaculate conception" as they couldn't have intercourse: "After three months of trying, he had failed to penetrate me. Each time he touched me, I bled" says Tashi (Walker *Possessing* 57). However, giving birth was much harder as "The obstetrician broke two instruments trying to make an opening large enough for Benny's head. Then a pair of scissors used ordinarily to sever cartilage from bone" (*Possessing* 55). As a result of this difficult labour, the baby was born mentally disabled. Additionally, Tashi has to abort another child as she cannot bear being opened once again. The horrendous results of the practice on women's body is described in the novel as follows:

Tashi is convinced that the little girls who are dying, and the women too, are infected by the unwashed, unsterilized sharp stones, tin tops, bits of glass, rusty razors and grungy knives used by the *tsunga*. Who might mutilate twenty children without cleaning her instrument. There is also the fact that almost every act of

intercourse involves tearing and bleeding, especially in a woman's early years. The opening that is made will never enlarge on its own, but must always be forced. Because of this, infections and open sores are commonplace. (*Possessing* 235)

Tashi is the representative of millions of tortured women. Not only her body, but also her soul is crippled. Adam describes Tashi as he goes to find her on the M'bele Camp where she has the practice done as follows: "Her eyes no longer sparkled with anticipation. They were as flat as eyes that have been painted in, and with dull paint" (*Possessing* 43). Olivia, Adam's sister, states that "It was heartbreaking to see, on their return [from M'bele Camp], how passive Tashi had become. No longer cheerful, or impish" (63). Before being circumcised, Tashi has a vivid personality, as Adam recalls: "I liked her mealie row fan hairstyle and her impish, darting ways. I liked her self-possession" (26). All these free spirit and self-possession and the pleasure she experiences before circumcision have been stolen from her by the brutal tradition of the black Olinka community. She is put into a passive state, and is devoid of any joy life can give a person. As an uncircumcised woman, Tashi is described as a woman aware of her sexuality. In the following excerpt we see it openly, as her psychologist asks a question to understand her former life before circumcision:

And yet it is from this time, before circumcision, that you remember pleasure?

When I was little I used to stroke myself, which was taboo. And then, when I was older, and before we married, Adam and I used to make love in the fields. Which was also taboo. Doing it in the fields, I mean. And because we practiced cunnilingus.

Did you experience orgasm?

Always. (113)

In another example, Adam recalls Tashi as a demanding woman: "Each time we made love, she'd wanted me as much as I'd wanted her. She had engineered most of our meetings. Whenever we held each other, she was breathless in anticipation" (31). How come, then, that a woman aware of her body and her pleasure quits it? It is a question asked by her psychiatrist Raye. Tashi answers the question as follows:

To be accepted as a real woman by the Olinka people; to stop the jeering. Otherwise I was a thing. Worse, because of my friendship with Adam's family and my special relationship to him, I was never trusted, considered a potential traitor, even. Besides, Our Leader, our Jesus Christ, said we must keep all our old ways

and that no Olinka man—in this he echoed the great liberator Kenyatta—would even think of marrying a woman who was not circumcised. (113)

Apparently, it is the patriarchy and the tradition that pushes Tashi to have a voluntary circumcision in her adult years. This point will be analysed below.

The tortures women go through is so crucial for Alice Walker. Her efforts to put an end to the sufferings of black women through the inhuman practise of female genital mutilation has achieved its goal with the documentary *Warrior Marks* that she produced in collaboration with Prathibha Parmar. The documentary caused a global awareness related to FGM and helped diminish the practise in African countries. She states in the “To the Reader” section of the novel that there are nearly one hundred million women who have experienced FGM all around the world (*Possessing* 266). That is why the novel is dedicated “with tenderness and respect to the blameless vulva” as Alice Walker states in the epigraph. In this novel, Walker aims at deconstructing the subordinated position of women through patriarchy’s repression of female sexuality. For her, women's sexuality “has been colonised” (*The World* 82) and this colonisation is done through religious myths and in the name of tradition. Walker states in *Possessing* that “[r]eligion is an elaborate excuse for what man has done to women and to the earth, says Raye [Tashi’s psychologist], bitterly” (*Possessing* 218). She states in an interview that the religion she accuses is the organised religion; i.e. Christianity brought along with the white colonizers and the religious teachings of tribal people. For her, Christianity is “a reflection of a male-dominant tradition that has been reinforced by a slave culture” (*The World* 90). Aforementioned, bell hooks maintains the same thought. For hooks, naming women “sinful creatures” according to Christianity is the idea behind claiming to become “the judges and overseers of woman’s virtue” as women were wicked and “could only be purged by the intercession of a more powerful being” (hooks 49). In the novel, Lisette harshly criticizes the church. She contends that ‘I could not reconcile with the word “obedience” that the bride says in the church wedding with any kind of spiritual or physical expansion for myself’ (30). Adam contemplates on this and says: “But why did the word [obey] exist, in a ceremony between equals and loved ones? Well, obviously because the woman, who was required to obey, was not considered equal” (*Possessing* 31). Tashi is not apparently one of those obedient women as stated by Adam

above. Additionally, the novel is highly critical of the religion dictated by the Olinkan tribe male elders.

In the novel, the prevalent religious doctrine of the patriarchal tribesmen serves the same function as Christianity: to subordinate women. They appoint themselves the role of ruling over women. In the novel, Pierre refers to a book named *Conversations with Ogotemm'eli* written by French anthropologist Marcel Griaule. The book is about Dogon people whose elders “were the guardians of the knowledge of the beginning of man” (218). In Griaule’s book, the creation myth Dogon people believe is described. These are the people who lived in Africa in ancient times. Pierre comes across the book when he is trying to understand a recurrent dream of Tashi, in which she sees herself trapped in a termite hill as an ant and her wings are being broken. The creation story is cited by Pierre to Tashi as follows:

“This body, lying flat, face upwards, in a line from north to south, is feminine. Its sexual organ is an anthill, and its clitoris a termite hill. Amma, being lonely and desirous of intercourse with this creature, approached it. That was the occasion of the first breach of the order of the universe...

“At God’s approach the termite hill rose up, barring the passage and displaying its masculinity. It was as strong as the organ of the stranger, and intercourse could not take place. But God is all-powerful. He cut down the termite hill, and had intercourse with the excised earth. But the original incident was destined to affect the course of things forever... (*Possessing* 1)

According to the myth, the God Amma created mother earth and wanted to copulate with her, yet due to earth’s rising clitoris, which resembled to a “termite hill” the intercourse couldn’t take place. That is the justification lying behind the excision of clitoris through genital mutilation. Additionally, as Pierre goes on to narrate from the book, after man and woman are created, both are said to carry the spirit of the opposite sex, and sexual duality people carried is seen something to be got rid of according to the belief. “In the man the female soul was located in the prepuce; in the woman the male soul was in the clitoris” says Pierre and continues: “Man’s life was not capable of supporting both beings: each person would have to merge himself in the sex for which he appeared to be best fitted” (165). This is another reason for the circumcision of clitoris as “the woman is excised to rid her of her masculinity” while “man is circumcised to rid him of his femininity” (165). Yet again, Alice Walker problematizes the myth through Tashi’s questioning of the last

part of the myth. According to it, the pain is concentrated in the clitoris during parturition; thus it is excised by an “invisible hand” to let go of the pain. However, this is the pretext to cut off a woman's genitalia as Tashi says: “And what if pain wasn’t what she felt at the moment of parturition? After all, pain was what I felt, having given birth, and I did not have a clitoris for it to be concentrated in” (167). It is apparent that the invisible hand is God’s, which Tashi comments: “Even so long ago God deserted woman, I thought, staying by her just long enough to illustrate to man the cutting to be done” (167). Men, thus, got the role to resemble themselves to God in a way as they became God’s hand in torturing annihilating woman genitalia, along with her joy.

The patriarchal symbol in the novel culminates in the man called “Our Leader” who was described as a charismatic leader like Nelson Mandela. He is imprisoned by white colonisers, has a high influence on the tribespeople and sends his messages from prison. He is one of the most influential reasons why Tashi decides on being circumcised. Tashi conveys his messages coming from prison as follows:

From prison Our Leader said we must keep ourselves clean and pure as we had been since time immemorial—by cutting out unclean parts of our bodies. Everyone knew that if a woman was not circumcised her unclean parts would grow so long they’d soon touch her thighs; she’d become masculine and arouse herself. No man could enter her because her own erection would be in his way. (112)

According to Leader’s message, women must have circumcision to be proper women in the community, otherwise they would be named “masculine” and “dirty”. To be accepted by her own tribe, and not to be alienated; “[t]o be accepted as a real woman by the Olinka people; to stop jeering” as she is “bound to look odd” and “The girls who had been would sometimes actually run from [them], as if [they] were demons”, Tashi takes action to submit to FGM (113). However, after being circumcised and going through the miseries caused by the practice, Tashi comes across with realities when she goes to kill M’Lissa. She learns that she made a big mistake believing what the Leader ordered, or what the tradition required. Tashi asks M’Lissa what she thought of her when she came to the liberation camp M’bele (to fight against white colonisers), M’Lissa says “I thought you were a fool” to come to be “bathed” (227), as “the camp itself needed liberation” since the old ways were continuing; women’s position hadn’t changed, they were “be[ing] screwed” as before, so they had left the Camp. However, Tashi’s nationalistic feelings

had brought her there. After some conversation, Tashi states that she came because of Leader's order, and M'Lissa's words lay bare the hypocrisy of patriarchal attitude: "Did Our Leader not keep his penis? Is there evidence that even one testicle was removed? The man had eleven children by three different wives. I think this means the fellow's private parts were intact" (228). Moreover, during her therapies later on, Tashi questions Leader and asks herself "But what if he'd told you to do something that destroyed you? Something that was wrong?" (109).

To torture women, another method of patriarchy is stereotyping as aforementioned. According to the sexist point of view, a woman who embraces her sexuality is loose, wanton or monstrous. This belief is prevalent in the Olinkan tribe, too. Adam and Pierre talks about Pierre's ex-girlfriend who can have pleasure easily, Adam is surprised to learn that "any woman's pleasure might be found so easily" and Pierre clarifies it: 'woman who is sexually "unrestrained," according to the dictionary, is by definition "lascivious, wanton and loose." But why is that? A man who is sexually unrestrained is simply a man' (169). Then he adds that the reason behind the insistence of circumcising women "in mutilating cultures" is that "a woman's vagina be tight" (169). The thwarted image of masculinity is also reflected by M'Lissa's remark as she says "you know, the men like it tight." (229). Another distorted belief of patriarchy mentioned above in these men's conversation is the beliefs related to women's chastity. Aforementioned, black women were stereotyped as "loose", the mentality which takes its roots in the slave culture as hooks stated. The similar attitude is prevalent in the Olinkan tribe embedded in the culture. Tashi accuses T'sunga M'Lissa who taught women how to be proper women. It is stated in the novel as follows:

But you taught them this, I said. It is what you told me. Remember? The uncircumcised woman is loose, you said, like a shoe that all, no matter what their size, might wear. This is unseemly, you said. Unclean. A proper woman must be cut and sewn to fit only her husband, whose pleasure depends on an opening it might take months, even years, to enlarge. Men love and enjoy the struggle, you said. For the woman... But you never said anything about the woman, did you, M'Lissa? About the pleasure she might have. Or the suffering. (207)

Here we see Tashi questioning the inhumane practice and the mentality that dehumanizes women. With her remarks and deeds, Tsunga represents the patriarchal mentality. She is the accomplice of the crimes perpetrated on women. Alice Walker describes a tsunga in

the novel as follows: “the *tsunga* was to the traditional elders merely a witch they could control, an extensions of their own dominating power” (260). M’Lissa is the culprit of many crimes, including Tashi’s sister Dura’s death after the initiation ritual and Tashi’s own circumcision which caused her mental breakdown. However, M’Lissa has internalized the patriarchal mentality so much that when Adam encounters her at the Mbele Camp to get Tashi back, she explains her justification of circumcising an adult woman, accusing Tashi’s mother who turned Christian and didn’t let her daughter have the ritual done earlier.. She states that she supports what Tashi chose, “wanting the operation because she recognized it as the only remaining definitive stamp of Olinka tradition” and adds that Tashi is now saved from the “shame of being unmarried” (60-61). However, Adam asserts that he wants to marry her, M’Lissa finds it inconceivable “Nothing in her experience had prepared her for a possibility such as this” (61).

The patriarchal mentality of the elderly tribesmen is apparently seen in a conversation Tashi overhears when she was a child. It is again related to the religious myth and how they use it as a justification stating it freely:

Number one: Man is God’s cock./Number three: God’s blind cock produces God’s blind eggs./.../Number two: The *tsunga*’s stitch helps the cock to know his crop./.../Number four:...the *tsunga* though herself a woman/Number one:helps God./.../All: Woman is queen./Number one: She is Queen./.../Number four: Since God has given her to us, we must treat her well./Number one: We must feed her so that she will stay plump./Number two: Even her excrement will be plump.(They laugh.)/Number three: If left to herself the Queen would fly./Number four: But God is merciful./Number one: He clips her wings./Number two: She is inert./.../Number one: And did He not put the Queen’s body there to make our offspring?/Number two: And to be our food?/.../Number four: And when she rose up.../All: Hah!/Number four: As a man would!/.../Number three: God struck the blow that made her Queen!/Number four: Beautiful enough for him to fuck./Number one: God liked it fighting!/(Laughter)/Number two: God liked it tight!/Number three: God liked to remember what He had done, and how it felt before it got loose./Number four: God is wise. That is why He created the *tsunga*./All: With her sharpened stone and bag of thorns!/Number one: With her needle and thread./Number two: Because He liked it tight!/Number three: God likes to feel big./Number four: What man does not?/(Laughter)/Number one: Let us eat this food, and drink to the Queen who is beautiful, and whose body has been given us to be our sustenance forever./(Laughter, and the noisy eating of food) (*Possessing* 220-222)

Mocking women and demeaning them to breeding instruments, they also justify their cutting off and sewing her genitalia with the help of t'sunga, with the motive that "God liked it tight". This excerpt also reveals the role given to t'sunga. Ramin and Roshnavand comment on the above excerpt as "one of the most revealing passages of the novel in that it wraps up the *raison d'être* of the African patriarchal discourse, culminating in the practice of female circumcision" (88). In this part, Tashi's recurrent dream is unveiled through her remembering the long-forgotten event. Through termite hill symbolism, Walker lays bare how women are enslaved and imprisoned. Pierre analyses the dream and finds similarity of a termite hill to the primary formation of African societies. Tashi, imprisoned in the dark tower and her wings broken, is the Queen ant who has to be nourished and to get fat to give new offspring to the colony, yet is consumed by the colony in the end. Pierre asks Tashi how she came to know this first formation of African society. The answer is the collective unconscious, passed down through generations "told in code" as stated in the novel (*Possessing* 217). According to the code, women were "expected to reproduce as helplessly and inertly as a white ant" yet were to be "desexed" (216,217).

Through anthropological references, Walker demystifies the myths and beliefs perpetuated by the black patriarchy. She juxtaposes the self-possession of women living in ancient times to the crashing black sexist system that subordinates women through sexist narratives. In the novel, clay figures play a significant role. They represent the empowerment of women's desire. When Tashi is in prison, Olivia (Adam's sister) brings her a small doll made of clay. She then remembers seeing a similar one at M'Lissa's hut when she was a child. M'Lissa slaps her in the face as Tashi articulates: "claiming the thing I held—a small figure playing with her genitals—was indecent" (104). M'Lissa also narrates how she discovered the secret place where her mother keeps a "small smiling figure with one hand on her genitals, every part of which appeared intact" (205). She articulates that discovering the figure meant discovering her desire:

This was before I was circumcised, and so, with the ready curiosity of a child, I lay right down to compare my vulva to the little statuette's. Hidden behind a boulder, I very cautiously touched myself. The blissful, open look of the little figure had aroused me, and I felt an immediate response to my own touch...

I never again touched myself. If I had, then at least I would have known the experience that the work of the tsunga was trying to prevent. (203)

This excerpt clearly demonstrates that the role given to tsunga is to prevent female children discover their pleasure, even before they learn that they possess it. These clay figures are so powerful that patriarchy tried to eradicate them. Tashi is in prison now and Olivia brings in potter women who make the replicas of “ancient fertility dolls”. Potter women bring along pictures of cave paintings which show clay figures touching their genitals. Tashi describes the figures as follows:

If the word “MINE” were engraved on her finger, her meaning could not be more clear. She is remarkably alive. Nor is she alone. Another photograph shows a figure with her hand around the penis of the figure next to her. She is also smiling. Another shows a figure with her finger in another woman’s vagina. She too is smiling. So is the other woman. So, indeed, are they all. Other photographs show women figures dancing, interacting with animals, nestled cozily underneath sheltering trees, and giving birth.(189)

Here we see the powerful free women content with their bodies and desires. However, patriarchy must have been disturbed by the self-possession of women and “when women were subjugated, these images were sent literally underground, painted on the walls of caves and sheltered enclosures of rock” (189). The empowerment of women is put onto the stage and all the negative attributions and repressions on the female body are demystified by Alice Walker through the main character Tashi. Mary Donnely describes Alice Walker heroines, along with Tashi as follows:

Robbed of power and the right to make decisions about their own lives by a range of forces standing against them—their religious leaders; a brutal economic system; racial prejudice, which is often encoded into law; and the frequent misogyny of the men with whom they choose or are forced to share their lives—Walker’s heroines nevertheless articulate clear visions not just of the wrongs they face, but also of the hope and strength that cannot be quenched within them.” (Donnely 7)

Though Tashi scars her face like other people in her community and has the ritual done and nearly goes crazy, she stands as a symbol of female resistance and liberation. Donnely refers to Tashi’s resisting role in a mutilating culture as follows: “Tashi strikes an important symbolic blow against the patriarchal structures that demonize female sexuality and destroy women’s lives in the name of protecting their chastity” (Donnely 119). Firstly,

her voluntary genital mutilation reminds the reader of her resisting character against the white colonisers. Carmen Gillespie comments on Tashi's choosing to be "circumcised" as an act of defiance to the colonial pressure: "Tashi has the procedure, it seems that she does so because she is making a choice of her own free will...she decides that she wants to have the operation as a sign of defiance against colonial oppressors and as a marker of solidarity with the customs and traditions of her people" (Gillespie, 148). Tashi is actually proud of her origin. She wants a scar on her face, that is a tradition done on tribal people. "These marks gave me courage. I want such a mark for myself" says Tashi (*Possessing* 23). Initially, her choice to be circumcised is an act of defiance to colonial oppression. She articulates her wish to be as strong as those women who are circumcised at M'bele Camp, (she thinks it is a camp to fight against the colonizers):

The operation she'd had done to herself joined her, she felt, to these women, whom she envisioned as strong, invincible. Completely woman. Completely African. Completely Olinka. In her imagination, on her long journey to the camp, they had seemed terribly bold, terribly revolutionary and free. She saw them leaping to the attack. (*Possessing* 61)

However, this vision doesn't come true and she feels the first disillusionment when she experiences her crippled walk after the circumcision ritual "she noticed her own proud walk had become a shuffle" (61). From then on, she starts questioning the system which so horrendously tortures women's bodies. Losing her mental stability, she has a number of therapies from Lisette's uncle, whom she calls M'zee. These therapies help her gather her fragmented identity caused by the ritual, and identify what is done to women's bodies as torture. With the help of Jung's psychoanalysis, Tashi recovers from her lifelong trauma through art—her painting reveals the event buried in her subconscious that she witnessed the ritual of her sister Dura who "had bled to death" (8). Then, finding out the culprit, she decides to kill M'Lissa. In this respect, it is crucial to have a close look at Tashi's individual recovery from her wounds. It clearly indicates that women can heal themselves despite the "grip" of the patriarchal power. By applying Jungian psychoanalysis, Walker aims at the individuation process of Tashi and to "downplay the power of society over the individual" (Moore 13).

Tashi's fragmented self is reflected as a means to show her attaining unity at the end. The novel is written through characters' multiple voices. Tashi has a number of identities; she is given a number of names which reflect her mental and psychological state along with her identity as an African American woman. Moore describes six personas Walker creates as follows:

Tashi, the troubled African child who submits to the tribal rites of scarification and circumcision and upon whom silence is imposed; Evelyn, the scarred adult Tashi who becomes an American citizen; Tashi-Evelyn, the African American whose cultural duality is dominated by the nightmarish remembrance of her African past; Evelyn-Tashi, the Americanized African whose cultural selves coalesce into a picture of herself as a Wounded American (167); and Tashi-Evelyn-Mrs. Johnson, the aging matriarchal composite of selves who confesses to killing M'Lissa, the mutilator or tsunga... (Moore 114)

Tashi, as Tashi-Evelyn-Mrs. Johnson, uses violence as an act of resistance. The murder of M'Lissa, "a prized midwife and healer" later announced as a national emblem, is highly significant in that it symbolizes the death of a tradition. She is the extension of the dominating power as stated above. Tashi in a way shows an act of resistance to the patriarchal grip by killing a national ikon. M'Lissa who is an "African wom[a]n as complicitous with the androcentric status quo" has a significant function created by Walker "deliberately" to give the message 'that patriarchy can be exterminated only if in the very first place, women "unlearn" sexism and emancipate themselves' (Sample qtd. in Ramin 89). Yet again, murdering M'Lissa has another aspect to consider. The death of a national ikon makes it possible for the taboo of voicing women's miseries to be questioned. T'sunga's death helps people question the inhumane tradition of FGM. Even talking about the miseries of women in Olinka is taboo. Showing feelings when a female died is also taboo. The patriarchy doesn't want to confront women's sufferings. During Tashi's trial, M'bati, a young woman whom Tashi feels is like her daughter, tells about her mother and the judge silences her. At that moment, Tashi's inner voice comments on it: "How did your mother die? It is a taboo question, in Olinka. One never asked for fear of the answer." (*Possessing* 151). The brutal treatment of women's bodies is kept like a secret among the community and speaking of it is one of the biggest taboos. Again during the trial, Adam wants to defend his wife who is tortured by a "ritual" and this scene is depicted as follows: 'As soon as he utters the word "ritual" there is a furor in the court.

Male voices, and female voices, calling for Adam's silence. Shut up, shut up, you disgraceful American! the voices cry. This is our business you would put into the streets! We cannot publicly discuss this taboo' (152). In the following chapter, we come across Adam's views related to silencing women's voices. He articulates that "They don't want to hear what their children suffer. They've made the telling of the suffering itself taboo" (155). By "murder[ing] a monument. The Grandmother of the race!", Tashi makes it possible for what is unspeakable to be spoken. Thus, Tashi is convicted not only for murdering tsunga, but she also "dies for breaking the silence surrounding the misery of women's lives in general and their circumcision in particular" (Moore 121).

Tashi's being condemned to death to commit the crime of killing the national emblem has another aspect to consider. The patriarchal black Olinka government aims at punishing a strong, brave women who doesn't obey the patriarchal grip. As Nawal El Saadawi states "When women fight for their human rights under any capitalist-patriarchal system, they are labelled traitors to their religion, their country, their culture, their authentic identity, their morality, and their chastity" (152). In the novel, Tashi confronts with similar accusations. Her crime of murdering a person is sugarcoated and shown as a crime committed against the government. That's why she is convicted to death. However, she stands as a figure of liberation to fight for female rights as Saadawi also suggests: "But we have to go on fighting; we should not be intimidated. We should organize globally and locally" (ibid). Tashi is the symbol of this fighting in the novel to give voice to the oppression.

The name of the novel implies how possessing the secret of women's joy can be achieved: through resistance. Tashi's act of resistance is through violence firstly, by killing M'Lissa. Secondly, on her way to execution, as she writes in her letter to the already dead Lisette, she is not afraid of death and that she had already experienced it. She rejects blindfold to "see far in all directions" (261). For her, uniting with the beautiful scene lying ahead in the distance means "eternity" (261). In her final remark in her letter, she describes herself as "Reborn, soon to be Deceased" (261). She is reborn by achieving to rise against the patriarchy, by finding her true self and by paving the way for women to end the brutal treatment. She does not see death as an ending. In the end, she becomes Tashi Evelyn

Johnson Soul, 'who achieves the Self upon her reconciliation of opposites, resistance to lies, and acceptance of death for her "crime" of alerting other women to her conviction that resistance to lies (imposed through silence upon suffering women in a patriarchal social order) is the real secret of joy' (Moore 114). She fulfills her desire to unite women against the lies imposed upon them. Like in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, women in *Possessing the Secret of Joy* come together, show their resistance outside of prison through demonstrations, sometimes singing, "bring[ing] along wildflowers, herbs, seeds, beads, ears of corn, anything they can claim as their own and that they can spare." (183) The demonstrations of these women are like a festive atmosphere.

Thanks to Tashi's resistance, they can now learn to speak up against the patriarchal oppression silencing them to death: "[S]he has already united native women against patriarchy and its discriminatory discursive practice" (Ramin and Roshnavand 90). At Tashi's execution, her ideal is represented by the banner her family and friends hold, which says: "RESISTANCE IS THE SECRET OF JOY!" (264) and seeing this, Tashi's final words are as follows: "There is a roar as if the world cracked open and I flew inside. I am no more. And satisfied" (264).

In conclusion, African women are tortured by the inhumane practise of female genital mutilation in Alice Walker's *Possessing the Secret of Joy*. Furthermore, they are silenced to death as it was made a taboo to speak of the miseries they go through. The black patriarchy in the Olinkan tribe in the novel hides behind tradition and religion to impose their crushing ideals upon women. However, *Possessing* is "a political diatribe against the social diseases of tribalism and sexism" (Moore 113). The novel's heroine, Tashi's body and soul are crippled by the inhumane practices of the tribe; however, she does not yield to the oppressive mechanisms and fights against the sexist patriarchy through violence, and finally she achieves uniting women against the oppressors. She is the symbol of liberation, and her story is "the phoenix-like rise of the protagonist from the ashes" (Ramin 92). Through her, we learn that resistance is the secret of women's joy.

CONCLUSION

Black women's sufferings throughout ages have originated from their being marginalized as black and as females by the patriarchy. Their bodies have been the arena of power struggle. As Brent L. Pickett articulates, "The body itself is the object of power" (Pickett 460). Blackness and womanhood are the two aspects in the oppression of black women by colonial and patriarchal structures. White colonial phallocentric structure has drawn a negative black woman image and stereotyped black women to better exploit them as slaves. However, the black women subordination exists not only in white phallocentric discourse, but also in the black patriarchy, too. A strong woman image is not favored by both patriarchies and seen as a threat to their hegemonic powers. Thus, this study lays bare the implications of the discourses that delineate women as passive creatures in need of protection of a stronger figure, or sexual temptresses that lead men to sin. This study deconstructs the passive image of women, showing black women who do not yield to the power structures, though their bodies and souls are exploited. For this end, the female characters in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Alice Walker's *Possessing the Secret of Joy* are analysed and seen as defying figures that resist the discourses of the systems and remain as a "ray of hope" for the future generations (Watson 333).

Throughout this thesis, the colonizing mentality of white American slaveholders in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and the black patriarchy in fictional Olinka tribe in Africa in Alice Walker's *Possessing the Secret of Joy* is put under scrutiny to have a better understanding of the sufferings of black people and thus black women. As a result of the analysis, I found out that these two ideologies resemble each other deeply. Both locate themselves on the privileged side of the discourse of dichotomies. Western philosophy follows the Greek viewpoints related to categorizing notions and objects as superior or inferior. Additionally, just as the white colonizer sees the black colonized as the "other", the black phallocentric view subordinates women as a threat to their hegemony. The bodies of black women are exposed to numerous tortures, both by white colonizers and by black colonizers; i.e. black males. In this respect, Toni Morrison's *Beloved* is analysed in terms of the violation of

women's body under colonial pressure, and Alice Walker's *Possessing the Secret of Joy* is handled to investigate the patriarchal oppression of the female body in the black community. The parallelism between the two ideologies central to this study is present in the two novels in terms of locating black females in the "inferior other" position. Both novels problematize the narratives given as facts related to black females. In *Beloved*, Morrison refuses the history told by white men who depict black people as "animals", "savages", and themselves as civilized and superior. The Western civilization is put to question through the character Schoolteacher as a heartless person measuring the bodies of slaves through so-called scientific discourse. Schoolteacher is the symbol of white colonial mentality which see black slaves as animals and scrutinize their bodies. In *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, the power holders are the male elders of the Olinka tribe and the man they name as "Our Leader". The narratives of the black patriarchy are traditional and religious beliefs to endorse passivity on black tribal women through female genital mutilation to subordinate their bodies. Alice Walker demystifies these narratives through her female characters. In the novel, Tashi, the heroine, questions the orders of the Leader to circumcise all female girls in the community and this paves the way for her awakening and taking action against this brutal practise.

In *Beloved* the slave, Sethe, whose body is tortured by the brutal implications of slavery, is bold enough to escape from the slaveholders and start a new life, though all the miseries she experiences lie deep down repressed in her memories. The event that nearly leads to her mental breakdown is her act of resistance through infanticide. To prevent her children from being taken from her and given to the slaveholders, she tries to kill all her four children and was able to kill only her baby daughter who is "crawling already". This event causes her to repress her memories in her subconscious, along with other tortures she has gone through as a slave. However, with the arrival of Paul D., a former slave at Sweet Home Plantation, Sethe's buried memories come back to life, along with the arrival of the ghost of Sethe's murdered child Beloved. The ghost represents the miseries of millions of slaves that died during their transport from colonies to America and after coming to America to work on plantations. Sethe, whose body is tortured by white slaveholders through whipping — as she carries a tree-shaped scar on her back— and her milk being

stolen from her breasts, is also subjected to the humiliation of being behaved like an animal as Schoolteacher scrutinizes slaves with the help of his so-called scientific discourse. Other women who are violated by the white colonizers along with Sethe are Sethe's mother whom Sethe barely remembers and who was raped multiple times and lynched in the end, and her mother-in-law Baby Suggs who was raped many times, too. However, Baby Suggs believes in the freed slaves claiming their identity, and as an unchurched preacher she encourages them to love their bodies, which formerly belonged to the slaveholders. It is time for them to claim their bodies. Sethe, though a tortured woman, stands as a strong figure who leads other women in the neighbourhood to come together, to remember and get rid of the awful memories repressed in every one of the now freed slaves. These women in the end gather and exorcise the ghost Beloved, which means attempting to eradicate the dreadful memories of slavery.

Alice Walker's *Possessing the Secret of Joy* also stands as a resistance to the black patriarchal structure in the black community of the fictional Olinka tribe. The main character Tashi is the symbol of that resistance. Like Sethe in *Beloved*, she uses violence to defy the destructive legacy of the practise done on female children in the community: Female Genital Mutilation. The black phallogentric community makes use of myths to subordinate women in the community for their own ends. Repressing the sexuality of women and silencing them through taboos is the method used by black patriarchy. Religion is the myth used by the tribesmen to endorse FGM on women. The creation myth of Dogon people is what Olinka tribesmen believe. According to the myth, God Amma created the earth which is feminine and wanted to have intercourse with it. However, the rising earth which resembled to a termite hill; i.e clitoris of women, barred the way and the intercourse couldn't take place. This is the justification used for cutting off women's genitalia. However, other traditional beliefs like uncircumcised vagina is dirty, or uncircumcised women are loose, are embedded in the psyches of tribespeople for ages. This ideology of attributing black women negative images is parallel to the white racist ideology which name black women negative stereotypes like "jezebels", "black matriarchs" and "castrators". In *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, Tashi chooses to go through FGM in her adult years since her mother had turned Christian and didn't let her experience

the practise. To avoid being categorized as “loose”, “dirty” or unfit for marriage, and to feel a part of the tribe, to be “clean” by cutting off the unclean parts of her body, as their imprisoned Leader orders from prison, Tashi decides to have the practise done. Tashi’s voluntary circumcision has a significant aspect to consider. It also shows her courage and strength since she chooses to be circumcised as a reaction to the colonizers in her country. Yet, her body and soul bear the scars of the brutal treatment so much that she now has a lifelong trauma. Her subconscious carries another trauma due to her sister Dura’s death during circumcision, and she has to have a number of therapies, through which she comes to the realization that what was done to her sister and to herself were “violence”. After this realization and having the courage to voice that the practice scars women’s bodies and souls, she determines to kill the circumciser, *tsunga* M’Lissa who is the embodiment and representative of the patriarchy. The parallelism between the *t’sunga* and Schoolteacher as the emblems of colonizing mentalities are significant. After murdering the *t’sunga* —who is the ikon of the nation—, Tashi gets the death penalty by the Olinka government. Yet again, her death signifies not an end, but a new start for women in the community who come together during her trial and hold demonstrations. The execution of Tashi is symbolic in that she is the means through which women can show resistance to the oppressors who prevent women from connecting to their bodies. During her punishment, Tashi’s friends and family hold a banner which says “RESISTANCE IS THE SECRET OF JOY!” (*Possessing* 264). Her resistance makes her the igniter of female freedom against the brutal treatment of women's bodies.

The two ideologies analysed throughout this study show the subordination black women face through myths and stereotypes. The subjugation of black female slave bodies is analysed in its relation to the colonial economy. In colonial economy, slave female bodies are viewed as “brood sows”, as commodities who produced new slaves. The breeder myth prevalent among the white slaveholders is reflected on slave women in *Beloved*. The myth is used as a justification to exploit female bodies. Black women’s affinity to animals by the colonial ideology help perpetuate this racist view. According to that view, black people can “produce children as easily as animals” (Qasim 213). However, the female characters in *Beloved* defy this stereotype. For instance, Sethe’s mother and mother-in-law throw

away their babies from the slave ships as they conceived these babies as a result of the rapes of slaveholders. These women don't want to add new slaves to the system. Their act of defiance shows these women's control of their bodies despite such oppressive mechanisms. In *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, black patriarchy demeans women to their reproductive function as well. As the heroine Tashi's dream of tower reveals, women are the "queen ants" who produced babies for the system in the ant colony. As a result, women are to be desexed, and their whole presence is restricted to reproduction, hence they are not allowed to embrace their sexuality. Luce Irigaray refers to female pleasure as 'it serves as security for a narcissism extrapolated into the "God" of men' (Irigaray *This Sex* 77). For her, female sexuality is necessary for men to feel significant; women are a kind of mirror to watch their narcissism. This is the very situation in *Possessing* as men attribute themselves the role of God and the women as passive receiver of this God's; i.e. men's fruit, as "Man is God's cock". Like God, they "like to feel big" (*Possessing* 220,222). As a result of the image attributed to them, black females are expected to have no pleasure from their sexual relationships in both novels. However, the female characters claim their pleasure and desire as their "birthright" as they represent the mother continent Africa. For Irigaray again, the pleasure of women crosses the boundaries, achieving "self-affection" which she defines as 'Of her "God"' as opposed to the "God of men" (*This Sex* 77). At this point, Morrison and Walker make use of the theme of remembrance as a means of these characters' claiming their sexuality. Though repressed, both Sethe and Tashi remember how they achieved pleasure before their bodies were tortured by the hegemonic powers and remembering is an igniter to claim it once again. Walker and Morrison strive for what Luce Irigaray suggests: to cross the boundaries set for women, which is "playful" and "unsettling" (*This Sex* 77). In *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, the passive state of female sexuality is reversed through recurrent references to the clay figurines caressing their genitals with content faces. They symbolize the "birthright" of African females; i.e. their pleasure, and accompany women throughout the novel. However, the misogynist patriarchal structure must have been disturbed by this self-possession of ancient women figurines that, as stated in the novel, they are "sent literally underground" by the patriarchy. Similarly, eroticized Sethe is not a "passive object" but a "desiring subject of the discourse" (Badt 571). The awakening of her desire is central to the novel and signifies

a contest against the slave system which represses slave women's sexuality. For the slave economy, female slave is not to feel any sexual pleasure from her acts as she is the reproducing machine, "breeder", "assembly line for the production of more babies" and "a property that reproduced itself without cost" (Watson 331, *Beloved* 269). Yet again, both Sethe and Tashi remember their former states of acknowledging their pleasure even under the oppressive mechanisms, and these feelings buried in their subconscious come out through the end of the novels by the help of remembrance. Paul D.'s coming back to Sethe's life triggers her previous memories related to pleasure, while Tashi's self-possession is recalled by her husband in the novel. It can be deduced from both novels that claiming ownership of one's body and pleasure is significant in the formation of identity during and after their oppression, and these two characters achieve it substantially.

Resistance to the oppressive mechanisms is the central issue in this study. The resistance of the heroines in both novels culminates in similar acts. They both resort to violence to show control over their lives, though limited. As for Tashi, she resorts to violence to eradicate the implications of the misogynist black patriarchal community. To achieve this, she firstly realizes the brutal treatment which harms women's bodies brutally and define her sister's death "murder". After she brings the taboo of women's suffering and losing their lives due to this horrible practise to the daylight, she determines to put an end to this inhuman practise by killing the circumciser t'sunga. Being condemned to death, Tashi gives voice to issues which are forbidden to be spoken out.

As the nature of resistance has a close link to "the practise of self-creation", Sethe and Tashi go through a process of formation of identity after oppression (Pickett 464). In effect, oppression is the very means for these characters to return back to their original selves, which remember sensuality and which claim ownership of their bodies. While Sethe's body carries the inscription of the discourse of slavery on her torn-apart back, Tashi's circumcision is the symbol of the inhuman tradition that annihilates female bodies both literally and figuratively. After the infanticide, Sethe is at the point of a mental breakdown, while Tashi nearly goes mad after the practise of FGM is applied on her body. Yet again, both novels suggest a beam of hope. The two characters go through a healing process and are able to form better identities after oppression. While Sethe is supported

by the community of women to get rid of the atrocities of slavery through the exorcism of the ghost Beloved, Tashi comes to realize the power of women through the clay figurines she encounters throughout the novel. Clay figurines given to Tashi as a present by the females around her during her imprisonment signify her rejoining the female power. Both Sethe and Tashi feel the healing support of the female community in their tough times and are accompanied by the warmth and support of female solidarity. Sethe is saved from the ghost of Beloved, which symbolizes the atrocities of slavery, by the help of women community, while Tashi witnesses the unity of tortured women who are ready to defy the phallogocentric implications.

This study problematizes the binaries the roots of which go back to Platonic times and shows that these binaries are the results of power formations: logocentric and phallogocentric structures. Praising the female body and locating it to the place she deserves, in this study Morrison and Walker deconstruct the so-called inferior black female image in both novels. The female characters in *Beloved* defy the roles given to black women by the colonize through showing resistance to oppression; so does the heroine in *Possessing the Secret of Joy* given to black women by the patriarchy in the community. Female heroines in both novels carry the burdens of oppressions on their bodies, yet both employ acts of resistance through violence. Their acts of defiance create awareness in the women in their communities to speak up against the oppressors. The two novels lay bare the atrocities of oppression which lead to defiance and strength.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. *We Should All Be Feminists*. Fourth Estate, 2014.
- Alban, Gillian M.E. *The Medusa Gaze in Contemporary Women's Fiction: Petrifying, Maternal and Redemptive*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018.
- Badt, Karin Luisa. "The Roots of the Body in Toni Morrison: A Matter of 'Ancient Properties.'" *African American Review*, vol. 29, no. 4, [Indiana State University, Saint Louis University, African American Review, African American Review (St. Louis University)], 1995, pp. 567–77, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3042150>.
- Beal, Frances M. "Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female." *Meridians*, vol. 8, no. 2, Indiana University Press, 2008, pp. 166–76, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40338758>.
- Berry, Mary. Foreword. *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies*. Hull, Scott, and Smith, pp. xv-xvi.
- Buckman, Alyson R. "The Body as a site of Colonization: Alice Walker's *Possessing the Secret of Joy*." *Journal of American Culture* 18, 1995, pp. 89–94.
- Brewer, Rose M. "Black Feminism and Womanism." *Companion to Feminist Studies*, edited by Nancy A. Naples. John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 2021. pp. 91-104. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119314967.ch6>.
- Brown, Cecil, and Toni Morrison. "Interview with Toni Morrison." *The Massachusetts Review*, vol. 36, no. 3, 1995, pp. 455–73. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25090662>. Accessed 5 July 2022.
- Caesar, Terry Paul. "Slavery and Motherhood in Toni Morrison's 'Beloved.'" *Revista de Letras*, vol. 34, 1994, pp. 111–20. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27666617>. Accessed 25 June 2022.
- Cixous, Hélène, et al. "The Laugh of the Medusa." *Signs*, vol. 1, no. 4, University of Chicago Press, 1976, pp. 875–93, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3173239>.
- . "Sorties". trans. by Ann Liddle, *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*, ed. by David Lodge. Longman, 1988.
- Corbin, Alain, et al. *Bedenin Tarihi 2: Fransız Devriminden Büyük Savaşa*. Translated by Orçun Türkay. Alfa, 2017.

- Creed, Barbara. *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*. Routledge, 1993.
- Davis, Angela Y. *Feminist Legal Theory: Readings in Law and Gender*. Edited by Katharine T. Bartlett and Rosanne Kennedy. Westview Press, 1991.
- . *Women, Race and Class*. Vintage, 1983.
- El Saadawi, Nawal. *The Essential Nawal El Saadawi: A Reader*. Edited by Adele Newson-Horst. Zed Books, 2010.
- Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin White Masks*. Translated by Charles Lam Markmann, Pluto Press, 1986.
- Farshid, Sima. “Foucauldian Archaeology of Slavery in Morrison’s *Beloved*”. *The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences: Annual Review*. vol. 5, no. 4, 2010, pp. 303-310, doi:10.18848/1833-1882/CGP/v05i04/51656. Accessed 12 June 2022.
- . “Reclamation of the Exploited Body in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*.” *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity*, vol. 2, no. 6, IACSIT Press, 2012, pp. 497-500, doi: 10.7763/IJSSH.2012.V2.155. Accessed 20 May 2022.
- Farshid, Sima and Jalal Sokhanvar. “A Foucauldian Reading of Morrison’s Novels.” *International Journal of Arts and Sciences*, vol. 3, no. 10, 2010, pp. 295-311.
- Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality*. Translated by Robert Hurley, Pantheon Books (Random House), 1978.
- Gillespie, Carmen. *Critical Companion to Alice Walker: A Literary Reference to Her Life and Work*. Facts On File, 2011.
- Grosz, Elizabeth. *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*. Indiana University Press, 1994.
- Hood, Elizabeth F. “Black Women, White Women: Separate Paths to Liberation.” *The Black Scholar*, vol. 9, no. 7, Taylor & Francis, Ltd., 1978, pp. 45–56, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41066484>.
- hooks, bell. *Ain’t I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*. Routledge, 2015.
- Hull, Gloria T, et al, editors. *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies*. The Feminist Press, 1982.

- Irigaray, Luce. "Body Against Body: In Relation to the Mother." Women and Madness; Conference on Mental Health, Quebec, Montreal, 5th, May 31, 1980.
- . *The Speculum of the Other Women*. Translated by Gillian C. Gill, Cornell University Press, 1985.
- . *This Sex Which Is Not One*. Translated by Catherine Porter and Carolyn Burke, Cornell University, 1985.
- Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Translated by Leon S. Roudiez. Columbia University Press, 1982.
- Lingis, Alphonso. *Foreign Bodies*. Routledge, 1994.
- Lorde, Audre. *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Crossing Press, 1984.
- M. A. Jaimes*Guerrero. "'Patriarchal Colonialism' and Indigenism: Implications for Native Feminist Spirituality and Native Womanism." *Hypatia*, vol. 18, no. 2, 2003, pp. 58–69. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3811011>. Accessed 8 Sep. 2022.
- Marriott, David. "The Racialized Bodies". *The Cambridge Companion to The Body in Literature*. Edited by David Hillman and Ulrika Maude. Cambridge University Press, 2015.
- McNay, Lois. "The Foucauldian Body and the Exclusion of Experience." *Hypatia*, vol. 6, no. 3, 1991, pp. 125–139. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/3809843. Accessed 13 Sept. 2021.
- Moore, Geneva Cobb. "Archetypal Symbolism in Alice Walker's 'Possessing the Secret of Joy.'" *The Southern Literary Journal*, vol. 33, no. 1, 2000, pp. 111–21. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20078285>. Accessed 21 Jul. 2022.
- Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*. Vintage, 1987.
- . Interview with Toni Morrison. *The Salon Interview - Toni Morrison*. Zia Jaffrey, 1988.
- . *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and Literary Imagination*. Vintage Books, 1993.
- . *What Moves at the Margins*, edited by Carolyn C. Denard, University Press of Mississippi, 2008.
- Ömür, Gizem Serdar. "Black Hole or Living Hall: Reconstructing Female Sexuality, Deconstructing Male Anxiety." MA Thesis, İstanbul Kültür University, 2022.
- Pal, Sunanda. "From Periphery to Centre: Toni Morrison's Self Affirming Fiction." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 29, no. 37, 1994, pp. 2439–2443. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/4401756. Accessed 12 Sept. 2021.

Plato. *Phaedrus*. Translated by Robin Waterfield, Oxford University Press, 2002.

———. *Timaeus*. Translated by Benjamin Jowett. <https://cdn.fulltextarchive.com/wp-content/uploads/wp-advanced-pdf/1/timaeus.pdf>.

Pickett, Brent L. "Foucault and the Politics of Resistance." *Polity*, vol. 28, no. 4, 1996, pp. 445–66. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3235341>. Accessed 23 May 2022.

Putnam, Amanda. "Mothering Violence: Ferocious Female Resistance in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, *Beloved*, and *A Mercy*." *Black Women, Gender + Families*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2011, pp. 25–43, <https://doi.org/10.5406/blacwomegendfam.5.2.0025>. Accessed 14 May 2022.

Qasim, Khamsa. "Morrison's Black Slave Female Characters and Their Quest for Subjectivity." *International Journal of English and Education*, vol. 2, issue 1, 2013, pp. 211–222, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328130796_Morrison's_Black_Slave_Female_Characters_and_Their_Quest_for_Subjectivity.

Rabinow, Paul, editor. *The Foucault Reader*. Pantheon Books, 1984.

Ramin, Zohreh, Farshid Nowrouzi Roshnavand. "African Woman Rising From the Ashes: Alice Walker's Mimicry of Classical Ethnography in *Possessing the Secret of Joy*." *Anafora*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2017, pp. 73–97.

Rashid, Amina, Masud Rana. "Racial Inequality and Sexist Oppression in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*." *Language Literacy: Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Language Teaching*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2021, pp. 136–144, <https://doi.org/10.30743/ll.v5i1.3727>.

Sampson, Anthony. "Freud on the State, Violence, and War." *Diacritics*, vol. 35, no. 3, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005, pp. 78–91, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4621043>.

Seunghyun, Song. "Bridging Epidermalization of Black Inferiority and the Racial Epidermal Schema: Internalizing Oppression to the Level of Possibilities." *DiGeSt. Journal of Diversity and Gender Studies*, vol. 4, no. 1, Leuven University Press, 2017, pp. 49–61, <https://doi.org/10.11116/digest.4.1.3>.

Schiller, Naomi. "A Short History of Black Feminist Scholars." *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, no. 29, JBHE Foundation, Inc, 2000, pp. 119–25, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2678863>.

Singh, Amardeep. Toni Morrison's "Playing in the Dark" (2007): Overview <https://scalar.lehigh.edu/toni-morrison/toni-morrisons-playing-in-the-dark-a-detailed-overview> accessed 8 Oct. 2021.

- Smith, Barbara. "Toward a Black Feminist Criticism." *The Radical Teacher*, no. 7, University of Illinois Press, 1978, pp. 20–27, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20709102>.
- Spillers, Hortense J. "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book." *Diacritics*, vol. 17, no. 2, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987, pp. 65–81, <https://doi.org/10.2307/464747>.
- Threadcraft, Shatema. *Intimate Justice: The Black Female Body and the Body Politic*. Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Truth, Sojourner. "Ain't I a Woman?" https://thehermitage.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Sojourner-Truth_Aint-I-a-Woman_1851.pdf.
- "The Combahee River Collective Statement". https://americanstudies.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/Keyword%20Coalition_Readings.pdf. Accessed 8 Mar 2022.
- Venkatesan, Sathyaraj. *Review of What Moves at the Margin: Selected Nonfiction*. MELUS: Multi-Ethnic Literature of U.S., vol. 34 no.1, 2009, p.239-241.
- Walker, Alice. *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*. W&N, 2005.
- . *Possessing the Secret of Joy*. Vintage, 1993.
- Watson, Reginald. "Derogatory Images of Sex: The Black Woman and Her Plight in Toni Morrison's 'Beloved.'" *CLA Journal*, vol. 49, no. 3, 2006, pp. 313–35. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44325322>. Accessed 31 May 2022.
- Young, Robert J.C. *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2003.
- "Intersectionality". Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, 2022, *Oxford Learner's Dictionaries*. <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/intersectionality?q=intersectionality>. Accessed 5 Feb 2022.