

T.C.
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SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
BATI DİLLERİ VE EDEBİYATLARI ANABİLİM DALI
İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI BİLİM DALI

**FROM BLACK FEMINISM TO WOMANISM: ALICE
WALKER'S SELECTED SHORT FICTION**

YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ

DANIŞMAN
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ELAZIĞ-2014

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ÖZET

Yüksek Lisans Tezi

Alice Walker’ın Seçilmiş Öykülerinde Siyah Feminizm’den *Kadıncılığa*

Nilay ERDEM

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Özgürlükle elde edilen mutluluğun yeri olduğu düşünülen Amerika Birleşik Devletleri çeşitli ırk, köken ve kültürden milyonlarca insana ev sahipliği yapmıştır. Amerikan tarihinin görünen yüzünün arkasında Afro-Amerikalıların, özellikle de zenci¹ kadınların, özgürlük savaşımı bulunmaktadır. Bu çalışma, Siyah Feminizm’in gelişimi ve en önemli Siyah Feministlerden biri olan Alice Walker (1944-)’ın *Kadıncı* kuramının yanı sıra, 16. yüzyıldan bugüne dek zenci kadınların savaşımalarını anlatmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Afro-Amerikan tarihi, kölelikten başlanılarak, ırkçı ve cinsiyetçi Amerika’da zenci kadınların hak ve daha fazla özgürlük edinmek için verdikleri bir dizi savaşıma tanıklık etmiştir. Bu süreçte, Siyah Feminizm, zenci kadınların ırksal ve cinsel kimliklerine kattıkları bir tür temel haline gelmiştir. Walker, 1983’ten beri, Siyah Feminizm’e bazı yeni görüşlerle katkıda bulunarak *Kadıncılığı* oluşturmuştur. Walker, toplumsal cinsiyet ve ırkı birine kenetlenmiş yapılar olarak algılar ve zenci kadının

¹“Amerika’da ‘zenci’ (negro/black) terimi bir stereotipi (kalıp imge), yani ayrımcılığı gösteren bir terim ise de, Türkiye’de bu sözcüğü aşağılama anlamında kullanmadığımızdan, Türk toplumunun değer yargılarını esas alarak” biz de tezimizde ‘zenci’ sözcüğünü kullanmakta bir sakınca görmedik. (Bkz. E. Lâle Demirtürk *Çağdaş Amerikalı Zenci Romancılar*. Ankara: Gündoğan Yayınları, 1997. s.4.)

sorunlarının bu iki yapıdan kaynaklandığını vurgular. Çalışma, Walker'ı önce Siyah Feminist olarak, sonra ise tüm kadınlar için yeni, güçlü bir bilinç ve bakış açısı oluşturan *Kadıncılık* yaşayan bir figürü ve destekçisi olarak tanımlamaktır. Alice Walker, 1960'lı yılların Siyah Özgürlük ve Kadın Özgürlük Hareketlerinden hem destek alarak hem de onlara tepki olarak 1973'te Barbara Smith tarafından oluşturulan, Siyah Feminizm'i geliştirerek, her ırktan kadını kucaklayan bir kavram olarak '*Kadıncı*' kimliği tüm kadınların benimsemesi gerektiğini vurgulamaktadır. *Kadıncı* olmasının yanı sıra, Walker; Afro-Amerikan toplumu üzerinde büyük etkisi olan çağdaş Afro-Amerikan kadın yazarlar arasında önde gelen seslerden biri olarak da durmaktadır.

Çalışmada; Siyah Feminizm'in ve, beyaz ve zenci ataerkil baskısı altındaki zenci kadınların yaşamının huzuru ile ilgilenen Walker'ın *Kadıncılık* teorisinin az ve öz bir çerçevesi sunulmaktadır. Walker'ın *In Love and Trouble* (1973) ve *You Can't Keep A Good Woman Down* (1981) adlı öykü kitapları onun zenci kadın sorunsalıyla ilgili olarak evrilen düşüncelerini yansıttıkları için seçilmiştir. İlk kitabındaki edilgen, sorunlarını tam olarak algılamayan ve savaşım bilincine sahip olmayan kadın karakterler yerlerini, yazımı *Kadıncı* teorisini geliştirdiği yıllara denk gelen ikinci kitabında eğitilmiş ve bilinçli kadınlara bırakmıştır. Bu da Alice Walker'ın düşüncelerini zaman içerisinde geliştirdiğinin göstergesidir. *Kadıncılık* ve Walker'ın bu bağlamda savunduğu düşünceleri, seçilen öykülerin temel taşı oluşturur. Bu düşüncelerin yansımaları seçilen öykülerde incelenecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Afro-Amerikan kadınlar, zenci kadınların savaşimleri, Alice Walker, Siyah Feminizm, *Kadıncılık*.

ABSTRACT**Master Thesis****From Black Feminism to Womanism: Alice Walker's Selected Short Fiction****Nilay ERDEM****Firat University****Institute of Social Sciences****Department of Western Languages and Literatures****Program of English Language and Literature****Elazig-2014; Page: VIII + 118**

The United States of America imagined as a place for happiness through freedom has been home to millions of people of various races, origins and cultures. Behind the apparent face of the American history exists the struggle years of Afro-American people, especially of the black women. This study aims to present the struggles of black women from the 16th century until today, besides the development of Black Feminism and one of the most significant Black Feminists, Alice Walker's (1944-) '*Womanist*' theory.

Beginning with slavery, Afro-American history has witnessed a variety of black women's struggles to gain rights and more freedom in the racist and sexist America. During this process, Black Feminism has become a kind of foundation which black women have added to their racial and sexual identities. Walker created *Womanism* by having contributed to Black Feminism with some new standpoints since 1983. She considers gender and race as interlocked structures and emphasizes that black women's problems result from them. The study describes Walker, firstly as a Black Feminist and then a living figure and supporter of *Womanism*, which forms a new, thriving consciousness and standpoint for all women of color. Alice Walker improves Black Feminism formed by Barbara Smith in 1973 both by getting support from Black Liberation and Women Liberation Movements of the 1960s and as a reaction to them, she highlights that all women should adopt '*Womanist*' identity as a concept embracing

all women of color. Besides being a *Womanist*, Walker also stands out as one of the leading voices among modern Afro-American female authors having great influence on Afro-American community.

This study provides a concise framework of Black Feminism and Walker's theory of *Womanism* concerning peace of black women's life which is under white and black patriarchal dominancy. Walker's short story collections entitled *In Love and Trouble* (1973) and *You Can't Keep A Good Woman Down* (1981) were selected as they reflect her changing attitudes about black woman phenomenon. Women characters in the first collection who are passive, incapable of understanding their problems exactly and lack consciousness of struggle are replaced by educated and conscious women in the second collection, the publication of which refers to the period when she developed her *Womanist* theory. This indicates that she changed her thoughts in time. *Womanism* and Walker's opinions in this term form the keystone of the selected short stories. The reflections of these thoughts on the selected short stories will be studied.

Key Words: African American women, struggles of black women, Alice Walker, Black Feminism, *Womanism*.

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PART 1

1. INTRODUCTION

Alice Walker (1944-) is one of the milestones in Black Feminist Movement. She has provided a new dimension for American Feminism with her theory of *Womanism*. Grown up as a black girl of a poor Southern family, Walker was influenced by her experiences and what she heard about the things her relatives and the people around herself lived in the racist and sexist America. These accumulated ingredients composed content of her fiction. As a sensitive girl, Walker formed a rebellious identity for herself and turned out to be the voice of her race and black women. However, her inclusion of struggle extended to all people around the world and her purpose became to reach universality. With her theory of *Womanism*, which she coined in 1979 for the first time, she drew her perspective to all humankind, regardless of race, color, gender or any ethnical differences. The evolution in her thoughts is observed in her short fiction. The study aims to expose the reflections of the changes in her perspective upon her some selected short fiction from her two collections were chosen.

The study includes three main parts, including this one. The following part is divided into four subtitles as “Black Women’s History From Slavery Onwards”, “Black Feminism”, “The Role of Black Women Writers in African American Literature” and “Alice Walker as a Black Feminist/*Womanist*” The first one aims to supply a general point of view related to black women’s lives since they were brought to America. A concise framework is presented to get the hardships of the conditions they have lived in from slavery onwards. The purpose is to draw attention to how they were forced to strive for their own rights. It is mentioned that they made efforts to live in better conditions in the racist and sexist society. Under the second subtitle, it is indicated that black women could not express themselves and fight for their own rights in the existing movements in America. Neither Black Liberation Movement (1960s) nor Women Liberation Movement (1960s) supported them. They were in the secondary status in both of them. The former one was sexist, the latter one was racist. Mentioning about the start of Feminism in America in the late 18th century, the part highlights that Feminist Movement were away fighting for black women until Black Feminism were formed by Barbara Smith in 1973. Under the following subtitle, black women writers’ roles in

expressing themselves and breaking black women stereotypes constructed by white and black male writers. Especially since The Abolition of Slavery of 1865, they have been the authority of their experiences and thoughts. Under the last subtitle of this part, Alice Walker is introduced with her identity of Black Feminist and *Womanist*. Explaining the events affecting her formation of these identities, an overview about her is presented. The revolutionary writer, Walker introduces her own theory; *Womanism*, the definition and tenets of which are explained in detail in this part. *Womanism* provides some solutions to Black Feminist issues. Its purpose is to get all humankind under a single umbrella. Intending to get universality in the world with her theory, Walker has contributed to American Feminism.

The target of the study is to indicate the evolution in Walker's approach to black women's problems. For this purpose, her two short story collections written in interval of eight years were chosen: *In Love and Trouble* (1973) and *You Can't Keep A Good Woman Down* (1981). Then, some selected short stories were analyzed to point out the change in Walker's approach to the issues, regarding black women and in fact all people. The stories of each collection are dealt with separately. The purpose is to mention about Black Feminist issues within the short fiction selected from the first collection *In Love and Trouble* (1973) and then practice Walker's *Womanist* theory within the short fiction selected from the second collection *You Can't Keep A Good Woman Down* (1981) by highlighting the tenets of the theory.

Part 3 starts with comparison and contrasts of these two collections. It is stated that although both collections include black women protagonists and their problems, character images and Walker's approach to the problems are different in each collection. The protagonists in *In Love and Trouble* (1973) are either passive and submissive or aggressive and incapable of combating against injustices and oppressions consciously, therefore, they fail. On the other hand, the protagonists in *You Can't Keep A Good Woman Down* (1981) are mostly educated and aware or becomes aware of the ways of struggle consciously. They face with their problems and look for their solutions. Not all protagonists are ideal characters. Although they also fail, Walker tries to lead the reader to the good way by demonstrating the bad one. The part also underlines another difference between two collections and exposes that the second one includes some significant issues such as incest, pornography and rape. As different from the first collection, which deals with racism executed against black race, especially

black women in white-dominated institutions, the second one draws it in sexual dimension as pornography and rape. This part aims to indicate that the date when the second collection was written coincidence with the period Walker stabilized her political stance and improved her theory of *Womanism* by determining her tenets. With *Womanism*, she has opened a new window to save all humankind from the servitude of racism and sexism, which are ideologically constructed and destroy marginalized people's lives. Thus, this evolution reflects on her protagonists and their approaches to their problems in the second collection.

Part 3 is divided into two main parts; "Black Feminist Issues in *In Love and Trouble* (1973)" and "In *You Can't Keep A Good Woman Down* (1981), A Womanist Response to Black Feminist Issues". Under the first title, nine short stories selected from the first collection are analyzed in terms of such Black Feminist issues as racism, sexuality, confinement of black women within patriarchy and matrilineage. In correspondence to these issues, another nine short stories selected from the second collection are analyzed under the second title, because Walker presents solutions to Black Feminist issues depicted by exemplifying in the first collection. Therefore, in accordance with the tenets of *Womanism*, she indicates how to cope with problems; by maintaining the lineage to the past, reading earlier works of black women writers and constructing a strong bond among women, especially between mother and daughter.

The first title "Black Feminist Issues in *In Love and Trouble* (1973)" is divided into four categories and each Black Feminist issue is examined in separate selected stories. "Strong Horse Tea" (1973), "The Revenge of Hannah Kemduff" (1973), "The Welcome Table" (1973) and "The Diary of An African Nun" (1973) are analyzed in terms of racism in white-dominated institutions. "The Child Who Favored Daughter" (1973) is dealt with in terms of sexuality. "Her Sweet Jerome" (1973), "Really, Doesn't Crime Pay?" (1973) and "Roselily" (1973) are scrutinized in terms of 'confinement and/or resistance' issue. Walker's most popular story, "Everyday Use" (1973) is analyzed in terms of motherhood, matrilineage and ancestral lineage on which she puts much emphasis.

The second title "In *You Can't Keep A Good Woman Down* (1981), A Womanist Response to Black Feminist Issues" is divided into three categories. Each category corresponds to each of the other ones under the first title. However, the first two categories studying such issues as racism in white institutions and sexuality are

confined to sexuality under the second title, because the second collection does not deal with racism against black women in white-dominated institutions, instead, there are some stories dealing with the issue in sexual dimension within rape and pornography. Thus, “How Did I Get Away With Killing One of the Biggest Lawyers? It Was Very Easy.” (1981) and “Advancing Luna and Ida B. Wells” (1981) are studied in terms of rape, while “Porn” (1981) and “Coming Apart” (1981) are scrutinized in terms of pornography. Furthermore, “Laurel” (1981) and “The Lover” (1981) are dealt as a *Womanist* response to the second category under the first title as confinement and/or freedom. Finally, “A Sudden Trip Home in Spring” (1981) is studied in terms of motherhood, matrilineage and ancestral lineage by presenting a *Womanist* approach to the story examined within the same category under the first title.

In the last section of Part 3, “Elethia” (1981) and “The Abortion” (1981) in which Walker presents two sample *Womanist* protagonists, who breaks the rules, taboos, stereotypes and all borders drawn for black women, as they make radical decisions and stand up to apply them in their lives. Therefore, the title chosen for these stories is “Towards Self Realization”.

In conclusion, the study aims to indicate the evolution in Walker’s thoughts and approach to the issues related to black women. This evolution creates differences between *In Love and Trouble* (1973) and *You Can’t Keep A Good Woman Down* (1981), which are her selected two short story collections. Black women protagonists and their responses to their problems display differences in her thoughts. Her theory of *Womanism* makes her second collection different from the first one by including supplying solutions to Black Feminist issues by means of significantly different protagonists. Therefore, the target of the study is to evaluate the effect of her expanding perspective over Black Feminism towards *Womanism* on her some selected short fiction.

PART 2

2.1. Black Women's History from Slavery onwards

Racism is defined as “the power to control and manipulate the major societal forces, and the ability to define for the “other” the requirements for participation.” “[...] racism is a belief system that places a supremacy focus upon one group over the other” (Gordon, 1991: 16). Placed somewhere between apes and men on white man's hierarchical race ranking, black people have been depicted as lacking all the psychological, social, cultural, moral and biological attributes necessary to be accounted as white man's equal. In this context, slavery took its force from racism. As a system of social stratification in American society, slavery shaped the social relations. The social hierarchy created a system of discrimination that placed white men at the top and slaves and minorities at the bottom of the social system. African slaves were at the very bottom and were considered as property without legal rights. This caste system of racial inequality, which placed Africans to inferior positions, was implemented and reinforced by institutional discrimination and became a central way of life especially in the antebellum South. Slavery, as a social system, shaped the experience of all its women. Black females and males, as their experiences were two sides of the same coin, influenced each other. “However, standing on the nexus of American race and sex ideologies, Black women were doubly discredited” (Mgadmi, 2009: 40). Therefore, in order to really understand the life of black women, it is important to understand the roles and expectations required by slave women.

In the 16th century, slave hunters began to take African people to America and the number of the slaves brought to America reached its peak towards the end of the 17th century. American society was divided into four parts as white/male, white/female, black/male and black/female, and these groups were determined by the race/gender issue. It is an inevitable fact that to be female is difficult in many societies all over the world. Therefore, no matter a female is colored or white; she suffers from gender-based oppressions in all fields of her life. Thus, as claimed by the Feminist theorist Simone De Beauvoir (1908-1986) “one is not born, but becomes a woman” (1989: 267). In other words, females turn out to be women by means of societal codes of patriarchal ideology

which, in some societies, support a racist and heterosexist life in order to facilitate the control over them. For “Actual female persons engendered by, and engendering, social and discursive practices” (Robinson, 1991: 8), women are impossible to be thought separated from social constraints imposed by patriarchy:

Female experience never exists in isolation from discursive and social constraints, but, rather, unfolds precisely through women’s engagement in discourse and social systems—many of which, in patriarchal cultures, seek to devalue and silence women’s words. Experience, like gender, is a process, not a product. It can be most fruitfully conceptualized as the processes by which individual subjects are constituted in their situational specificity. (Robinson, 1991: 13)

Accordingly, experience is the process by which a female becomes a woman. Black and white women both have suffered from a common experience of oppression deriving from gender differentiation. However, there is a difference between the natures of oppression for white and colored women. In the world, the dichotomy between white and black, and male and female results in the division as superiority and inferiority among people. Black women have a double minority status. “African American female is born into a trilogy of oppression from which there are very limited opportunities for escape” (Gordon, 1991: 17). Black women have always been the victims of racism, sexism and economic exploitation for ages.

The roles of African men and women slaves depended on the slave economy and the labor of black women was not different from the one of black men. Therefore, it can be claimed that their suffering from economic oppression dates back to slavery. Defined as “subjugation and exploitation of the ‘other’ through differential opportunities maintained through discrimination seated in racism” economic oppression was one of the exploitation methods, especially in slavery (Gordon, 1991: 17). The labor of black slave women included multiple and complicated roles. These multiple roles and expectations of black women —mothers, field hands, breeders, nannies, servants, wives and concubines — make the complexity of their lives understandable. The nature of slavery demanded that women fully participate in work, including farming, cleaning, cooking, and all of the other domestic tasks, and reproduction was a necessary part of

life for a slave woman. An African American slave tells in an interview: “Master had four overseers on the place, and they drove us from sun up ‘till sunset. Some of the women plowed barefooted most of the time, and had to carry that row and keep up with men, and then do their cooking at night” (Hine and Thompson, 1998: 78). It is widely known that in the Cotton Belt slave women worked most of their time both in the fieldwork as dealing with masculine duties and at home doing domestic works such as childcare, and making service of their masters and husbands. A slave reports that “The hands are required to be in the cotton fields as soon as it is light in the morning [. . .]. [T]hey are not permitted to be a moment idle until it is too dark to see (Lerner, 1972: 16). These expressions exemplify the significance of black women in slavery economy.

The slave women not only had to “resist the forces of oppression that they must eventually encounter in a society which is based on race and class exploitation...” but also confronted sexist oppression (Staples, 1987: 168). Sexism is:

the use by males of the power of gender through both legal and non-legal means to dominate through pejorative treatment people of the opposite gender (females). Such power is most often the result of superiority attitudes manifested through the rules of society that are both determined and enforced by the control group men. (Gordon, 1991: 17)

The definition indicates that sexism is mostly use of heterosexual male power over the other. It feeds on gender differentiation created as the contrast of ‘men’ and ‘women’. “Gender, thus, can be conceived as a system of meaning, rather than a quality “owned” by individuals” (Robinson, 1991: 1). Taking the word ‘woman’ as synonymous with white woman, “for women of other races are always perceived as Others, as de-humanized beings who do not fall under the heading woman” (hooks, 1982: 138-139), it can be claimed that sexist discrimination against black women is affected by racist discrimination. Economic and sexual exploitation of black women under slavery was justified by a racist ideology as well as a gender ideology which worked in convoluted ways to designate black women as deviants from traditional gender roles.

[G]ender is always equally marked by racial definitions and vice versa. To take the USA as an example, although early Abolitionist struggles against slavery preceded the fight for women's rights, later suffrage campaigns led by white women polarised around an 'expedient' choice between granting the vote to black men or white women. (Watkins, 2001: 165)

The notion constructed in the nineteenth century is a significant example of sexism. Between 1820 and 1860, a new period started for women in American history. It is the 'cult of true womanhood' that represented white women as pious, pure, submissive, and domestic. The cult had an intense demoralizing effect on enslaved black women. It was a gender ideology, which re-defined what white womanhood is and how it ought to be. It was a product of elite, white, male order that served to relegate white women to their domestic sphere, to legitimize black women's sexual and economic oppression and usurpation.

According to this new concept of womanhood, the prime objective of a woman's life was to obtain a husband and then to keep him pleased. White American patriarchal ideology idealized and defined white womanhood by marking "the cardinal tenets of white womanhood as virtue, piety, domesticity, chastity, and purity" (Welter, 1966: 152). White women were encouraged to embrace these traits and take their rightful place at home. This new way of thinking about women's roles brought about a change in American society from a family-based social system to a market-based social system that ultimately undermined the rights and position of white women in society. Before industrialization, women were an essential part of the family economy and their labor inside and outside of the home was respected. After industrialization, women's labor in the household was defined as inferior to wage labor and women's position in American society was thus diminished. The cult of domesticity represented societal attitudes concerning women's roles and their proper place in society. Motherhood and caring for the home were seen as the rightful roles of a 'true woman'.

In general perspective, the concept of 'true womanhood' showed differences depending on being white or black women, because, "from a white supremacist perspective, Black women were seen as unladylike, unfit and immoral" (Richardson, 2003: 79). So, they were excluded from the concept of 'true' womanhood. For instance,

while motherhood for white women was celebrated as producing heirs and leaders, black women were thought to be giving birth to property.

“The bipolar conceptualization of Black and White womanhood assigned Black women all the negative traits of disgrace whereas White women were attributed all the idealized aspects of ‘true womanhood’, such as piety, deference, domesticity, passionlessness, chastity, cleanness and fragility” (Mgadmi, 2009: 42).

On the other hand, black women were marked some negative traits such as primitive, lustful, seductive, physically strong, domineering, unwomanly and dirty. Therefore, ever since slavery, black women have persistently been thought of as having failed the test of true womanhood. The image of black women is still generally reflected badly as the fallen woman, the whore, the slut, the prostitute. The reason of this evil attitude towards the black women can be connected to the sexual exploitation of black women during slavery that has not changed completely for hundred years.

Thus, the representation of true womanhood as defined by the cult of domesticity excluded black women and placed them in an inferior position as slaves, not “true” women. The purpose of their existence in America was based on two economic reasons: to work and give birth to workers. Therefore, womanhood and the experience of motherhood for black women were completely connected to the socio-economic system and could not be perceived in the same way as motherhood for white women. In fact, Hazel V. Carby (1948-) argues that “two very different but interdependent codes of sexuality operated in the antebellum South, producing opposite definitions of motherhood and womanhood for white and black women which coalesce in the figures of the slave and the mistress” (1987: 20). Unlike white women, who could identify motherhood with privilege and social status, motherhood for slave women was connected and rooted in a social system of bondage. This distinction is clearly expressed by Sojourner Truth’s speech entitled “Ain’t I A Woman?”:

That man over there says women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud-puddles,

or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed, and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman! I could work as much and eat as much as a man--when I could get it--and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen them most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman? (Truth, 1995: 36)

Motherhood was not thought to be separate from slavery. The slave holders provoked black women to give birth to child in order to make much more money to sell them as new and young slaves. Even they did not stay away from raping the black woman slaves for this purpose. Black women were important both for their service as slave and their reproductive ability that carries importance for slave economy. However, when their children grew up, they were separated from them and sold in a good price. A slave tells:

On the estate I am speaking of, those women who had sucking children suffered much from their breasts becoming full of milk, the infants being left at home. They therefore could not keep up with the other hands: I have seen the overseer beat them with raw hide, so that the blood and milk flew mingled from their breasts. (Davis, 1983: 9)

One narrative from the Federal Writers Project tells how a North Carolina slave woman, the mother of fifteen children, used to carry her youngest with her to the field each day and “when it get hungry, she just slip it around in front and feed it and go right on picking or hoeing...,” symbolizing in one deft motion the equal significance of the productive and reproductive functions to her owner (Jones, 1989: 198). Even their pregnancy was not a hinder for the slave owners beating them. A slave reports:

The whipping of pregnant and nursing mothers-- ‘so that blood and milk flew mingled from their breasts’--revealed the myriad impulses that conjoined to make women especially susceptible to physical abuse. [. . .] One particular method of whipping pregnant slaves was used

throughout the South: 'they were made to lie face down in a specially dug depression in the ground,' a practice that provided simultaneously for the protection of the fetus and the abuse of its mother. Slave women's roles as workers and as childbearers came together in these trenches, these graves for the living, in southern cotton fields. The uniformity of the procedure suggests that the terrorizing of pregnant women was not uncommon. (Jones, 1989: 20)

It may be considered that motherhood was a must for survival of black women. No matter how they had to perform hard works, they also nurtured their children and took care of them as mothers, even though they knew they would be separated from their children, one day. They were faced with the reality that their children could be sold or violated. Black women were not in a position to physically protect their children from slavery. A slave confirms this by telling these:

I remember well my mother often hid us all in the woods, to prevent master selling us. When we wanted water, she sought for it in any hole or puddle, formed by falling trees or otherwise. After a time, the master would send word to her to come in, promising he would not sell us. But at length, persons came, who agreed to give the prices he set on us...My mother, frantic with grief, resisted taking her child away; she was beaten and held down. She fainted, and when she came to herself, her boy was gone. She made much outcry, for which the master tied her up to a peach tree in the yard, and flogged her. (Finkelman, 237; quoted in Littlefield, 2007: 57)

These expressions indicate that slave women were, in fact, very protective of their children despite the harsh reality of slavery. Black women were often forced to become mothers and wives, and this represented a key aspect of their survival. However there were the one who desired to terminate these unbearable conditions by committing suicide:

SUICIDE BY DROWNING AND SLAVE TRADING- A negro woman belonging to Dmpsey Weaver, Esq., jumped into the river, night before last, with a child in each arm, and all three were drowned. Owing to her misconduct, her master threatened to sell her, and she determined not to be sold. It is said that her husband had promised to end his existence in the same way at the same time, but he did not do so. (Frederick Douglass' Paper, 1853)

This newspaper excerpt indicates one of the ways black women who failed to rebel against a system threatening them. Some also attempted to escape from the cruel hands of the slave owner to form a new life for themselves by finding a job in the West or North:

Only an infinitesimal number of black women had managed to escape from the fields, from the kitchen or from the washroom. According to the 1890 census, there were 2.7 million black girls and women over the age of ten. More than a million of them worked for wages: 38.7 percent in agriculture; 30.8 percent in household domestic service; 15.6 in laundry work; and a negligible 2.8 percent in manufacturing. The few who found jobs in industry usually performed the dirtiest and lowest-paid work. (Davis, 1983: 87-8)

Even after abolishment in 1865, black women continued to work as indentured servants. They were not slaves any longer, but they remained white people's servants at home and plantation. They were as free as being bond to a contract prescribing their servitude about for 4-6 years in return for little wage. This new life seems not much better than the first one. A black woman sheltering a white family, caring for their child tells about her working conditions:

I frequently work from fourteen to sixteen hours a day. [. . .] I not only have to nurse a little white child, now eleven months old, but I have to act as playmate [. . .] to three other children in the home [. . .] If the baby falls to sleep during the day [. . .] I am not permitted to rest.

It's 'Mammy, do this,' or 'Mammy, do that' [. . .] from my mistress all the time. [. . .] I live a treadmill life and I see my own children only when they happen to see me on the streets when I am out with the children, or when my children come to the "yard" to see me [. . .] I am the slave, body and soul, of this family. And what do I get for this work [. . .] The pitiful sum of ten dollars a month! (Lerner, 1972: 227-8)

In these hard conditions, while black women were trying to stand upon their feet in a white-dominated world, they recognized personally the difference between the attitude towards white women and black ones. "There are two kinds of females in this country -- colored women and white ladies. Colored women are maids, cooks, taxi drivers, crossing guards, schoolteachers, welfare recipients, bar maids, and the only time they become ladies is when they are cleaning ladies" (Lerner, 1972: 217). A Southern woman's words quoted anonymously reflect the lamentations about this situation:

I am a colored woman, wife and mother. [. . .] A colored woman, however respectable, is lower than the white prostitute. [. . .] Southern railway stations have three waiting rooms, and the very conspicuous signs tell the ignorant that this room is for 'ladies' and this is for 'gents,' and that for the colored people. We are neither 'ladies' nor 'gents', but 'colored'. (Lerner, 1972: 66-67)

All these inequalities fueled many black women who were courageous in resisting slavery, even though their acts, at first sight, could not diminish the effect of being born into limitations and forced to reproduce and supply the slave workforce. For instance, a Southern black woman called Annie Adams tells how she begins to react against the oppression she faces:

When I first went into the mill we had segregated water fountains... Same thing about the toilets. I had to clean the toilets for the inspection room and then, when I got ready to go to the bathroom, I had to go all the way to the bottom of the stairs to the cellar. So I asked

my boss man, "what's the difference? If I can go in there and clean them toilets, why can't I use them?" Finally, I started to use that toilet. I decided I wasn't going to walk a mile to go to the bathroom. (Byerly, 1986: 134)

Black women also chose to resist against oppression by teaching their children values and promoting education in the hope that one day, their children would live in a slave-free society. Motherhood was the most consistent part of the life of a slave woman, though it may have been temporary, and the values, lessons, and tradition passed on by mothers shaped black family life until children were sold if they were decided to be sold.

Even a self-sacrificing sample of motherhood did not help black women get out of unfavorable labels imposed on them. “There was a breadth of stereotypical perceptions of Black women, which placed them outside the enclave of delicacy, femininity, respectability and virtue” (Mgadmi, 2009: 42). It was an undeniable fact that black women were on the foreground with seductiveness.

There were many reasons for this perception of black women. The image construction of black women dates back to the slavery of black women beginning from the 16th century towards the 19th century. One of the most common beliefs related to their subverted image is that Black women during slavery were thought to draw on their sexual relationships with their white masters to gain freedom for themselves and for their children in addition to other privileges inaccessible to themselves. Therefore, many white women believed that black women tried to seduce white men, especially the slave holders and were therefore preparing sexual attack for themselves. Even plantation mistresses often viewed slave women paternalistically as did White men, referring to them as “ ‘poor creatures’, ‘wretched creatures’, ‘the suffering females of their kind’. In times of anger and revenge, those same White women referred to Black slave women as ‘wenches’, ‘libidinous whores’, or ‘apt breeders’ ” (Gordon, 1991: 23). Considering the results, they were silent or were silenced. Furthermore, increasing promiscuity, sexual diseases, moral decline and crime led to the degradation of the black race. Another reason was related to dressing of the black women because of their poverty and hard work in the fields. They were not wholly dressed. So, they were considered to be immoral and seductive enough to expose their bodies to seduce their masters.

“ [. . .] forty of the largest and strongest women I ever saw together; they were all in a simple uniform dress of a bluish check stuff; their legs and feet were bare; they carried themselves loftily, each having a hoe over the shoulder, and walking with a free, powerful swing like chasseurs on the march” (Davis, 1983: 11).

Moreover, their bodies were also publicly displayed when they were being whipped by their masters or bought and sold by slave traders. Thus, “since slavery rested on the procreative capacities of Black female slaves, their bodies, their fecundity and their sexuality were subject of public discussion” (Mgadmi, 2009: 47). Furthermore, rape “meant by definition, rape of white women, for no such crime as rape of a black woman existed at law. Even when a black man sexually attacked a black woman, he could only be punished by his master; no way existed to bring him to trial or to convict him if so brought” (Genovese, 1976: 441). Black women was characterized “as unfeminine, promiscuous, as a woman who cannot be raped because she herself is indiscriminately sexually voracious; this is set against the view of black women as the rapist incarnate” (Whelehan, 1995: 117). All these misperceptions were strengthened by white men’s codes. Thus, in terms of the concept of ‘true womanhood’ determined in accordance with white patriarchal norms, black women were left in a negative light. However, black women broke their silence and made efforts to fight against these stereotypes and negative images insulting them. Because their life conditions forced them so much that black women “had to develop strength rather than glory and fragility, and had to be active and assertive rather than passive and submissive” (Landry, 2000: 89).

Towards the end of the 19th century, most black women added the role of active agents for their salvation, in addition to their plurality of roles such as wife, mother and slave. In challenging against the dominant stereotypes of black womanhood, they “created a new definition of black womanhood. This new definition allowed to reject the system of American domination, the idea of the inferiority of African Americans, and the traditional idea of womanhood; retain a sense of self-worth; and exercise self-efficacy” (Littlefield, 2007: 59). The increase of self-respect for their race and gender

became their fundamental purpose. They acted with the inspiration they got in the churches and schools when they came together. bell hooks² states:

Our segregated church and schools were places where we were affirmed I was continually told that I was “special” in those settings that I would be “somebody” someday and do important work to “uplift” the race. I felt loved and cared about in the segregated black community of my growing up. It gave me the grounding in a positive experience of “blackness” that sustained me when I felt that community to enter racially integrated settings, where racism informed most social interactions. (1992: 44)

Black women started the process of building black womanhood by adapting themselves to the canons of respectability based on bourgeois values of thrift, sexual restraint, cleanliness and hard work. For instance, they took courses related to domestic service at training schools. The most popular one among them was National Training School where many black women would go to improve their standards of cleanliness and orderliness. It is noted that Black women’s magazines advertised fashionable and respectable clothes. Female ideologues and activists published articles in African American periodicals and delivered lectures nationwide preaching female respectability. Urban League, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the National Association of Colored Women (NACW), the Second Baptist Church and the Detroit Study Club were actively instrumental in these reformist advancements in black women’s lives.

On the other hand, for most of African American intellectuals, this way of countering stereotypes of Black Americans by adapting themselves to the canons of respectability was, in fact, a way of internalization and a kind of acceptance of these prejudices concerning not only black men but also black women. In fact, the underlying aim was to instill self-respect while challenging African Americans’ negative images drawn by white patriarchal norms. Being interested in presenting positive images of

² bell hooks uses consciously the initials of her name and surname in minuscules to state her ideological stance.

African Americans, African American male intellectuals felt themselves inadequate, because they were the patriarchs of black society.

Furthermore, the perception of self-respectability was understood differently by different classes of black women, because the norms of dismantling subverted, negative images of black women were adjusted in accordance with white middle class values of domesticity, chastity and sexual restraints. For instance, due to discrepancies in cultural, political and social approaches, black working class women had different perception of respectability from black middle-class women. Therefore, for many black women, especially the ones who were underclass, “the dream of racial equality was intimately linked with fantasy that once the struggle was over, black women would be able to assume conventional sexist gender roles” (hooks, 1992: 53). In spite of these differences in approaches, advancements in black women’s position in American life proved that the route and efforts of black intellectuals were supported by all black women of both classes. The sole way of getting rid of double enslavement both as black and woman in American society was to be struggled.

African American history witnessed that many African American women were highly active in the Woman Suffrage Movement (1848-1920). In the antebellum period, most black women became active abolitionists and supporters of women’s rights. For example, Sojourner Truth (1797-1883), a former slave, became famous as both an abolitionist and an advocate of woman suffrage being one of the First Wave Feminists. In 1851, she created a tremendous impression with her famous speech, “Ain’t I A Woman,” she gave at a convention in Akron, Ohio. The number of the black women suffragists gradually increased including some household names such as Margaretta Forten (1806-1875), Harriet Forten Purvis (1810-1875), and Mary Ann Shadd Cary (1823-1893). These women struggled to get black women’s own suffrage right which was denied.

When I have considered the enormity of the white man’s crimes against humanity. Against women. Against every living person of color. Against the poor. Against my mother and my father. Against me...
When I consider that at this very moment he wishes to take away what little freedom I have died to achieve, through denial of my right to vote.
(Walker, 1982: 264)

Furthermore, it must be noted that following the foundation of organizations in 1869 such as the American Equal Rights Association, the National Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) and the American Woman Suffrage Association (AWSA), more and more black women participated in the woman movement.

Inspired from these active organizations, black women began to found their own woman's clubs in the 1880s and 1890s. In 1896, many of these clubs came together to form the National Association of Colored Women (NACW), under the presidency of Mary Church Terrell (1863-1954) who worked for women's rights and racial justice all her life. The NACW included a department that worked for the advancement of woman suffrage. The National Baptist Woman's Convention and the Alpha Suffrage Club of Chicago, founded by Ida B. Wells (1862-1931) in 1913 were also among significant organs in supporting black woman suffrage. Women gained the right to vote in 1920, but Jim Crow racial segregation and disenfranchisement, which was enforced by extreme violence, hampered Black women's suffrage. African Americans were still systematically denied the right to vote during the Jim Crow era. They continually encountered oppression. For instance, although some black clubwomen participated actively in the NAWSA, the NAWSA did not always welcome them with open arms. In the 20th century, the NAWSA leadership sometimes discouraged black women's clubs from attempting to affiliate with the NAWSA. Some Southern members of NAWSA also argued for the enfranchisement of white women only. In addition, in 1913, black women marched against government in a suffrage parade which was organized by Congressional Union.

Thus, black women went on challenging the oppressions in many ways. Black women's militant activism and leadership helped to create the Civil Rights Movement of the 20th century. The Civil Rights Movement that began in 1955 with the courage of a black woman, Rosa Parks, who refused to give up her seat at the front of a city bus, was the locomotive force for Women's rights movement. It is known that such African Americans as Martin Luther King Jr. (1929-1968) and Malcolm X (1925-1965) became icons of the 1950s and 1960s with their speeches and many other efforts in supporting black woman's suffrage. Furthermore, Septima Clark (1898-1987), Ella Baker (1903-1986), Rosa Parks (1913-2005) and Fannie Lou Hamer (1917-1977) were among the ambitious activists who took the movement forward and inspired many young activists.

Regardless of risking their lives, African-American women did their bests in civil and human rights activism.

These breathless efforts survive even today in the experiences and examples of women activists and leaders like Eleanor Holmes Norton (1937-), Maxine Waters (1938-), Marian Wright Edelman (1939-), Angela Davis (1944-) and Alice Walker (1944-). The fiction of black women “focusing on the construction of self and identity breaks new ground in that it clearly names the ways structures of domination, racism, sexism, and class exploitation, oppress...” (hooks, 1992: 50).

When looked at the life conditions of today’s America, it can be observed that black women are still under these three—prolonged attacks of racism, sexism and economic exploitation. Statistics show that black women are at the most disadvantageous position in comparison to white men, white women and black men. For example; “It is depressing to observe that white males with eight years of elementary school education are likely to earn more than Black males with four years of high school education” (Alridge, 1991: 44). This dramatic gap enlarges between black men and women. “A 1969 Ford Foundation survey revealed that 94.5 percent of 1,096 Blacks who had attained doctorates (excluding medical degrees) were men and 5.5 percent were women” (Giddings, 1985: 332). It is clear that black women have the least opportunities in comparison to white people and black men.

Besides the huge gap between working conditions of blacks and whites, the employed blacks often tend to be in less prestigious, insecure jobs:

It has always been easier for Black women, often more educated and work-experienced than white women, to enter the lower-paying women’s professions. Historically, when Black women were allowed — or needed — in occupations like nursing, teaching, and government work they moved into them in disproportionate numbers. In 1965, for example, in the Department of Labor, 70 percent of Black employees, compared to 40 percent of Whites, were women. (Giddings, 1985: 330)

The degree of economic exploitation varies drastically for black and white women, as well. Women’s liberation is understood within the capitalist point of view and supports the aims of sexist white males. However, black women are victims of the

third degree because of their race and gender. Black women are victims of capitalism and sexism. White, wealthy males occupy the highest status in American society even today. Having a black and poor family, a woman suffers from socio-economic disadvantages. And she has to combat with these disadvantages all her life. “White women in the workforce have higher status and most often are in positions of superior power to Black women who have historically been in the workforce in greater numbers and over longer time periods.” (Gordon, 1991: 26). According to the 1960 census “7 percent of Black lawyers, compared to 3 percent of White lawyers, were women. The same trend was apparent in a whole range of occupations” (Giddings, 1985: 332).

Accordingly, “Less than 20 percent of the Black women said that they were inclined to feel that they were failures and only a few stated that they sometimes wished they could have more respect for themselves” (Myers, 1991: 62). They lack of enough respect not only from white people but also black men. “There is a profound distrust, if not hatred, between black men and black women that has been nursed along largely by white racism but also by an almost deliberate ignorance on the part of blacks about the sexual politics of their experience in this country” (Powell, 1983: 283). Therefore, they are face-to-face with crucial issues as rape, domestic violence, sexual abuse, homophobia and so on. It is a fact that “For people of color, in general – for Black women, in particular – the interwoven pathology of racism, sexism, heterosexism/homophobia, and class oppression calls for the recreation of survival strategies” (Teish, 1983: 324). These conditions for black women make them stronger and stronger as years pass by; they understand that there is nobody to help them accept themselves.

2.2. Black Feminism

Black Feminist thought emphasizes how gender, race, and economic oppressions make life miserable for black women in America. In the whole African American history, the social hierarchy developed during slavery places white men at the top, white women next, followed by Black men, and finally, at the bottom, black women. Faced with the sexism of black men and the racism of white women, black women had two alternatives: either they would remain silent against these discriminations or they would form their own movement addressing to their own problems. They chose the second one

and formed their own movement to combat with all these oppressions. “The theoretical resistance of slave women against the oppression of the whites, which dates back to the era of slavery, is later named by the 20th century scholars as black feminism” (Davidson, 1995: 123). It is significant for Black Feminists to address the ways racism, sexism, classism and heterosexism have all worked to maintain each other. Therefore, the Black Feminist Movement is interested in such topics as:

[R]eproductive rights, sterilization abuse, equal access to abortion, health care, child care, the rights of the disabled, violence against women, rape, battering, sexual harassment, welfare rights, lesbian and gay rights, aging, police brutality, labor organizing, anti-imperialist struggles, anti-racist organizing, nuclear disarmament, and preserving the environment... (Guy – Sheftall, 1995: 263)

As seen, they pursue rights in every aspect of social, physical, intellectual and economic fields. Before the Black Liberation Movement (the 1960s) came into being, there had already been various movements constructed to struggle for black liberation. The Civil Rights Movement, Black Nationalism, the Black Panthers, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee were the foremost ones. However, then, they were all considered under the title Black Liberation Movement. The movement intended the liberation of the black race, but in fact it was interested in the liberation of the black men rather than black women. When the dominant male members talked about the rights of black people, they generally meant the rights of black males. Black male activists and abolitionists always equated black liberation with the liberation of black men both in the 19th century abolitionist movement and the 20th century Civil Rights Movement. Freedom was equated with masculinity. Therefore, many black men in the movement tried to control black women’s sexuality. “Men usually held the top spots, but the charge that women were shut out from decision – making or leadership positions didn’t really hold up” (Giddings, 1985: 302). For instance, To Imamu Amiri Baraka, who was from of the Black Liberation Movement, African American men are the teachers of African American women; they determine what women are allowed to pass on to their children. In his view, they cannot be equals but are complements. Thus, she is supposed to remain man’s helpmate to build a black nation, wherein the African

American woman is one – half and the African American man the other. However, the man is the more important half of the two (Baraka, 1970: 7-11).

Instead of elevating black women's degraded value, the black men in the movement degraded it much more by accusing them of insulting their race:

Some Black intellectuals of the time were not content merely to relegate Black women the political -or biological- back seat of the movement. Sociologists, psychiatrists, and the male literati accused Black women of castrating not only their men but their sons; of having low self – esteem; of faring badly when compared to the virtues of White women. Black women were unfeminine, they said; how could they expect the unflagging loyalty and protection of Black men? (Giddings, 1985: 319)

Black men's sexist statements were used to be accepted without criticism. "To speak against the grain was to risk punishment. One's speech might be interrupted or one might be subjected to humiliating verbal abuse" (hooks, 1992: 45). Sexual discrimination against women in the movement turned out to be a part of daily life. Here are some of the rules executed within the movement mentioned by Elaine Brown who was told when she entered the movement: "Sisters... did not challenge Brothers. Sisters... stood behind their black men, supported their men, and respected them. In essence, it was not only 'unsisterly' of us to want to eat with our Brothers, it was a sacrilege for which blood could be shed" (Brown, 1992: 109). Even the educational director of Southern Christian Leadership Conference's (SCLC) staff, Dorothy Cotton (1930-) had a symbolic position away from decision-making mechanism in the movement:

"I'm conscious of the fact that I did have a decision – making role, but I'm also very conscious of the male chauvinism which existed within the movement. . . Historically, where there was a female sitting, she was always asked to go get the coffee and to take notes. And interestingly enough, it was a male member of our staff who finally protested that, because I was the educational director, I needed to be part of the deliberations." (Giddings, 1985: 311-2)

Moreover, Ella Baker, by virtue of her role in the creation of SCLC, would have had a decision – making role. However, her observations in the movement showed the opposite of her expectations:

“There would never be any role for me in a leadership capacity with SCLC. Why? First, I’m a woman. Also, I’m not a minister, and second. . . I knew that my penchant for speaking honestly. . . would not be well tolerated. The combination of the basic attitude of men, and especially ministers, as to what the role of women in their church setups is – that of taking orders, not providing leadership — and the. . . ago problems involved in having to feel that here is someone who. . . had more information about a lot of things than they possessed at that time. . . This would never have lent itself to my being a leader in the movement there.” (Giddings, 1985: 312)

When they made choices going against the prevailing societal conception of a black woman should be and do, they were labeled as ‘crazy’. hooks claims: “Fear of being seen as insane may be a major factor keeping black women from expressing their most radical selves. Just recently when I spoke against the organizers told folks I was ‘crazy’ ” (1992: 54). It is clear in these words that many black men in the movement insisted on inequality of black man and black woman. That’s why the black women in the movement felt sexually discriminated.

They thought that the only way for them to seek for their rights was a feminist movement. Although it was in 1912 when radical young women first used the term ‘feminist’ in America, its history dates back to the late 1800s, following three main steps until today. These are First Wave Feminism (1840-1920), Second Wave Feminism (1920-1980) and Third Wave Feminism (1980-). The birth of feminist activism in America dates back to the late 1800s when women fought for their rights to be heard and allowed to vote. Before that, actually, “On the Equality of the Sexes” (1790) by Judith Sargent Murray (1751-1820) and *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) by Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797), English philosopher are regarded as the first sparks starting suffrage movements.

Following the end of the American Civil War (1831-1835), women got together to seek for their right to vote. Feminists such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902) and Susan Bronwell Anthony (1820-1906) began to campaign for women's suffrage. Stanton and Anthony led the National Woman Suffrage Association (the NWSA) when it was established in 1869 when the American Woman Suffrage Association (the AWSA) also came to being. The AWSA was led by Lucy Stone (1818-1893), Henry Blackwell (1825-1909) and Julia Ward Howe (1819-1919) and it was less radical and effective than the NWSA. However, these two factions of the suffrage movement came together under the leadership of Alice Stone Blackwell (1857-1950) and Harriet Stanton Blatch (1856-1940) as the National American Woman Suffrage Association (the NAWSA) in 1890. The suffrage movement became part of a larger movement of women's clubs and organizations. NAWSA directed its efforts on the state level, but in spite of numerous campaigns, not a single state gave women the right to vote between 1896 and 1910.

Women's life expectations also diversified in parallel to the changing face of America Following the World Wars. Women desired to raise their voices for the sake of equality in economical and social status. Fuelled especially by Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929), Simone De Beauvoir (1908-1986)'s *Second Sex* (1949) and Betty Friedan (1921-2006)'s *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), women desired to get out of the boundaries of the patriarchy imprisoning them to their home. They sought other personal and professional roles in the society that was male-dominated. Thus, they got involved more and more in other parts of life. Furthermore, working class women utilized the enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and pressured the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC – established in 1965) to act to end discrimination in employment and pay. Moreover, National Organization for Women (NOW), formed in 1966 concerned with public life, job opportunities, equal pay and professional development of women.

Civil Rights era witnessed new developments for women and different feminism(s) emerged such as Radical feminism, Marxist, Liberal feminism and Lesbian feminism, except the Black Women's Liberation. However, the main focus was on the rights of white and middle-class women. Therefore, within all these efforts, black women were ignored, even, excluded. Before the emergence of the Black Feminism, black women had always been absent from Feminist theory, just like lesbians. In the

1960s, the Women's Liberation Movement was an organization seemingly dedicating itself to struggle for the rights of women from all over the world. However, unseen face of the movement was different for poor white women and black women, who often encountered with racism. The White Feminist group represented "the interests of a select group of women who have the leisure to develop organizational efforts primarily in their own behalf" and "have not communicated with poor white women who see the movement as unrelated to their needs" (Gordon, 1991: 49).

"The movement lacks a clear focus upon the complexity of the oppressed condition of Black women." (Gordon, 1991: 45) White women in the movement, who accepted their own experiences as universal, while ignoring black ones' experiences, were unwilling to allow black women to participate actively in the movement. As "woman" always meant white woman in the United States, they behaved as if black women had been absentees in women's history. The issues of black women were not seen as the issues of the whole Feminist Movement and because they only related to black women. For instance, they were not invited to conference panels, which were not specifically about black women. Black women were automatically excluded when mentioned about feminism, because only white middle-class women were remembered. Women of color, women from different classes, women of different sexualities, women belonging to different nations complained that white, middle-class women often ended up speaking feminism or for all women even though they tended to represent only their interests. Talking about the matters of black women participating in these movements, hooks states:

It was so evident that we did not all share a common understanding of being black and female even though some of our experiences were similar. We did share the understanding that it is difficult for black women to construct radical subjectivity within white supremacist capitalist patriarchy that our struggle to be "subject" though similar, also differs from that of black men, and that the politics of gender create that difference. (1992: 46)

The movement excluding black women "fails state clearly that the system is wrong: what it does communicate is that white women want to be a part of the system.

They seek power, not change.” (Gordon, 1991: 45) However, Smith states that “feminism is the political theory and practice that struggles to free all women”, in other words; “women of colour, working-class women, poor women, disabled women, lesbians, old women” as well as the “white economically privileged, heterosexual women”. Smith implies that any form of thought less than this vision of complete freedom and emancipation is not feminism, “but merely female self aggrandizement” (1982: 49). In this case, the Woman’s Liberation Movement was away from the practices related to these points.

From the first wave feminists not only excluded but also took part in oppressing the black women. A Feminist Movement “which constructed an agenda around the white heterosexual middle-class ‘norm’ was an incomplete and often inadequate model of female experience” (Whelehan, 1995: 121). It was not easy to become radical in a white woman – dominated movement. Black women had to educate themselves “for critical consciousness, reading, studying, engaging in critical pedagogy, transgressing boundaries to acquire the knowledge...” they needed (hooks, 1992: 57). However, as black women were regarded as the ones who are “[l]ess human than their rulers and, therefore, are less capable of articulating their own standpoint”, they were seen while reading a theory book, they were humiliated by white members in the movement (Collins, 1990: 299). For instance, hooks says that she was often criticized for studying Feminist theory especially by white women.

These struggles went on throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, because black women had to face white women’s racism both in 19th century first wave feminism and the 20th century second wave feminism. Both waves of feminism were marked by the racist ideology because White Feminist activists’ struggle for social and political equality was intended not for all women but for white middle-class women. In both movements, white women disregarded the reality of racist oppression in the lives of black women. In other words, white women were unable to go beyond their gender interests to comprehend that black women were oppressed by racism as well as the patriarchal ideology.

Thus, it can be claimed that ‘black’ was equated with black men in Black Liberation Movement and ‘woman’ was equated with white women in the Women’s Liberation Movement. That is to say, although the Black Liberation Movement aimed for black liberation and the Women’s Liberation Movement for racial equality, they

were away from their targets. On the contrary, while the first one enforced indirectly white society's control over black people, the latter one enhanced the place of white women over black women in the society. The Women's Liberation Movement was racist, while the Black Liberation Movement was sexist. As a result, black women were an invisible group whose existence and needs were ignored. That's why, black women felt they were being racially oppressed in the Women's Liberation Movement and sexually oppressed in the Black Liberation Movement. Many women felt as the Black Feminist scholar Linda La Rue did:

"It is time definitions be made clear. Blacks are oppressed, and that means unreasonably burdened, unjustly, severely, rigorously, cruelly, and harshly fettered by white authority. White women, on the other hand, are only suppressed, and that means checked, restrained, excluded from conscious and overt activity. And there is a difference."
(Rue, 1995: 166)

Therefore, they came together to form the Black Feminist Movement which purposed to develop a theory which could adequately address black women and to take action to eradicate racist, sexist, and classist discrimination against them by fighting against inequalities. It was Barbara Smith who named Black Feminist criticism and gave it a direction with her thoughts. Since then, Black Feminism has become a way for black females to seek their place in white-dominated society. The concept of Black Feminism was brought forth to address the issues that the Feminist Movements and Black Movements refused to, the issues pertinent to the everyday lives of Black women and women of color. It entails the political awareness of how race, class, and gender work together as interlocking oppressive forces. "Black Feminism is not White Feminism in Black Face." (Lorde, 1984: 60)

Whereas Black Feminism is taken as the junction between the Black Liberation and the Women's Liberation Movements; this movement grew out of in response to both of them. Black women who participated in the Black Liberation Movement and the Women's Movement were often discriminated sexually and racially. These movements were unable to meet the needs of black women and prompted the formation of the Black

Feminist Movement, whose birth was marked with the foundation of the National Black Feminist Organization in New York in 1973.

There is a kind of disagreement upon who can be called as a 'Black Feminist'. For instance, according to some critics such as Patricia Bell Scot (1982-), all African American women are Black Feminists while others such as Beverly Guy - Sheftall (1946-) claim that the term 'Black Feminist' can be used to refer to selected African Americans, primarily women, who have Feminist consciousness. For that reason, even if they are males, Frederick Douglass (1818-1895), Booker T. Washington (1856-1915), W.E.B. Du Bois (1868-1963) and Houston A. Baker, Jr. (1943-) are, for example, included in the category of "Black Feminists". They struggled for improving black women's life standards. For them, the main way for women to lead is literacy. Douglass emphasizes its importance in his statement that learning to read leads to freedom forever. Washington states: "My friends, I like to encourage our young educated men and women to have faith in their own race and in their own racial responsibility" (1979: 315). As a black activist, he does not exclude black women, contrarily, supports their rights and believes that their education is a must for welfare, and future and respectability of black race. Similarly, Du Bois also strives for the overthrow of hegemonic gender roles prescribed for black women so that they can uplift their life conditions. He states: "No other woman on earth could have emerged from the hell of force and temptation which once engulfed and still surrounds black women in America with half the modesty and womanliness that they retain" (1920: 108). For him, the reconstruction and rehumanization of Black women - by means of assertion of their dignity, strength and wholesomeness - are necessary, because they have been subjugated, oppressed, exploited, and dehumanized for ages. According to him, regarded as sexual objects by white men, black women should educate themselves, become economically independent and be a supportive of black men whose masculinities have been also minimized. He thinks that this is the only way for black women to uplift black race. It is obvious that even though one is male, he can be called as a 'Black Feminist'.

On the other hand, another perspective upon it argues that the term refers not only to the African American women, but also to the selected ones who have Feminist consciousness. As stated by Collins, "Biologically deterministic criteria for the term black and the accompanying that being of African descent somehow produces a certain

consciousness or perspective are inherent in these definitions” (1990: 20). In brief, the ways to determine who Black Feminists are, are various; one group claims that it can be determined according to being a woman, another group claims that it depends on being both black and woman; however the others claim that it does not matter whether one is black or woman, Black Feminist is the one who supports the rights of black women, even though s/he can be a white or black person. Collins also exemplifies complex argumentative issues coming with the definition of Black Feminist thought which also brings with itself complex arguments, such as, “biological classification, the social construction of race and gender as categories of analysis, the material conditions accompanying these changing social constructions, and Black women's consciousness about these themes” (1990: 22). The arguments the critics deal with can be ranked in this way:

- (1) Black people as a race need to be liberated from racism
- (2) feminism creates negative completion between the Black female for economic security
- (3) White women are the recipients of the benefits of this struggle from Black women; and
- (4) feminism facilitates increased tension in the already strained interpersonal atmosphere where Black men and Black women interact. (Alridge, 1991: 35)

It is clear that Black Feminist thought consisting of specialized knowledge formulated by African American women has a standpoint for the Black Feminist. Therefore, whatever the single definition of ‘Black Feminist’ is, it depends on a strong standpoint that reveals black women’s legacy of struggle as the common ground. “[A]s a result of colonialism, imperialism, slavery, apartheid, and other systems of racial domination, Blacks share a common experience of oppression” (Collins, 1990: 307). It is the struggle to survive in two contradictory worlds simultaneously: one of them is white, privileged, and oppressive, whereas the other one is black, exploited /exploitative, and oppressed/oppressive, indicating black men.

Although some black women tried to internalize the oppressions they came across in their lives, the effort of fighting against them brought strong women together. Therefore, regardless of the differences due to social class, age and ethnicity, the struggle against racism and sexism had always been a common bond among African

American women. Black Feminist thought was committed to the liberation of Black women and women of color from the oppressors of race, class, and gender, encompassing both political cognizance and the action needed to achieve this liberation. Furthermore, it was natural that black women had diverse experiences due to their ethnicity, age and social class. That is why it was more reasonable to discuss black women's standpoint rather than a black woman's standpoint. Although black women's common work and family experiences in traditional African-American culture suggested that they came from the same background as a group, their standpoint differed from time to time in accordance with their class, age and ethnicity. Thus, a common Black Feminist consciousness shared by oppressed black women came into being. In addition, strong black women began to stand in American culture with this consciousness which is both Afrocentric and Feminist. Afrocentric worldview is taken as opposed to Eurocentric worldview. It is the fundamental factor in African American women's struggle against racial oppression. This point is explained as "Being Black encompasses both experiencing white domination and individual and group valuation of an independent, long-standing Afrocentric consciousness" (Collins, 1990: 27).

Feminist worldview is not biologically determined. All women cannot be regarded as Feminist. To have self-defined Black Feminist consciousness, a woman must also reject patriarchal perceptions of women and value black women's ideas and rights. Moreover, the reason why more black women than men declare themselves as Black Feminists is related to their negative experiences resulting from the oppressions they face in American life. "African slave women were the initiators of feminism in America. It was their struggle for the humanity of womanhood [...]" that made them so strong (Gordon, 1991: 25). To be an oppressed black woman brings with itself the fighting spirit. Therefore, Collins states that the struggle for an Afrocentric Feminist consciousness requires "embracing both an Afrocentric worldview and a Feminist sensibility and using both to forge a self-defined standpoint" (1990: 28).

[...] collective black female experience has been about the struggle to survive in diaspora. It is the intensity of that struggle, the fear of failure (...) that has led many black women thinkers, especially within feminist movement, to wrongly assume that strength in unity can only exist if

difference is suppressed and shared experience is highlighted. (hooks, 1992: 51)

During this process of struggle, especially black women intellectuals such as Anna J. Cooper, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Ida B. Wells, and Mary Church Terrell became leading figures enlightening the way of activism for Black Feminists in the 19th century. They formed Black Women's Club Movement that was both activist and an intellectual effort. Carby mentions about these black women intellectuals in this way: "...they and their counterparts formed an educated, intellectual elite, but an elite that tried to develop a cultural and historical perspective that was organic to the wider condition of black womanhood" (1987: 115). Black women's unique experiences in the United States, as the victims of racist and sexist oppressions, have always been echoed in the writings, speeches and activism of Black Feminists which date back to the 19th century abolitionist movement.

Until the end of the 20th century, many significant organizations were formed and many important events efficient in the history of Black Feminism took place. For instance, the National Black Feminist Organization (NBFO) in New York and the Black Women Organized for Action (BWAO) in San Francisco were founded in 1973. These two organizations included black women from all class levels; well-educated, middle-class women worked together with poorly-educated women on welfare to address issues that pertained to all of them, because all of the women were affected by sexism as well as racism in their various fields of employment; these issues were specifically addressed by these organizations. The Combahee River Collective which was a Black Feminist Lesbian organization was established in Boston in 1974. *Azalea*, a literary magazine for Third World lesbians was first published in 1977. Varied Voices of Black Women concert tour was organized in 1978. The following year, 1979 witnessed the Combahee River Collective protest of the murders of twelve black women in Boston. The first national conference on third world women and violence was organized in Washington, DC in 1980. Then during the 1980s, Black women's studies started to be studied in colleges and universities, and the creation of a critical mass of African-American women writers such as Toni Morrison (1931-), Alice Walker (1944-), and Gloria Naylor (1950-), has created new opportunities in institutional locations where black women intellectuals can produce specialized thought. The black women have been fueled with

the energy they take from collective consciousness they felt in all the organizations mentioned above. Even if going against the grain is extremely difficult for them, they find the energy to fight all the oppressions imposed upon them. For instance, a Black Feminist woman claims:

The definition of a “Black matriarchy” appears to be a nightmare of our oppressors - not of us, the oppressed. The ability to cope with the stereotypical perceptions about being the heads of families, in addition to adversity in general, means accepting what is real rather than “retreating into fantasy.” And that is what we are doing! We are coping!!! (Myers, 1991: 64)

In the light of these developments in the process of the struggle for black women’s ideas and values, it is obvious that Black Feminist thought illuminates black women’s way to the better, livable American world for them.

Black women are interested in feminism and will continue to be interested because it “speaks the unspoken” about their lives: it offers hope of desperate situations which others - white and Black - would tell us to simply accept. It provides a political understanding for situations that others would dismiss as only personal. And, importantly, Black feminist politics as only can help sweep aside overly - romanticized illusions of unity and begin to build a strong movement of men and women who can fight together for a better world. (Powell, 1983: 292)

Powell emphasizes the fact that black women should be courageous to “speak the unspoken” to guarantee the future of all women. Therefore, it leads women to think more broadly the matters that are pursuit as personal; perhaps they are political. For instance, poverty should be evaluated to stem from not personal but political problems. According to Powell, Black Feminism does not only prescribe the romantic unity among black women; it includes all men and women together for a better world.

2.3. The Role of Black Women Writers in African American Literature

The emergence of Black Feminism, Black Women's Studies, and Black Feminist literature facilitated recovering African American women's experiences in the racist, sexist America because as in every field of their lives, black women encountered discrimination and humiliation in the writings of white writers and black male writers, because they were always misrepresented in their writings. Therefore, one of the ways to eradicate the stereotypes related to black women was to write about their experiences themselves. There were lots of obstacles against them. The black women writers of course noticed these difficulties. Even in the twentieth century, black women writers had to resist against hard conditions of writing in a white-dominated society.

[I]f we are unaware of Black women in nineteenth century America, it is not because they were not here; if we know nothing of their literature and culture, it is not because they left no records. It is because their lives and their work have been profoundly ignored. (Yellin, 1982: 221)

For instance, Alice Walker (1944-) in her collection of essays *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* (1983) recounts one incident she experienced. She was asked by one of the audience what she considered the major difference between literature by black and by white Americans. Walker mentioned two books; *The Awakening* (1899) by Kate Chopin (1850-1904) and *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) by Zora Neale Hurston (1891-1960). She went on saying that when she mentioned these two books to her audience, she "was not surprised to learn that only one person, a young black poet in the first row, had ever heard of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*". She told that the book was unknown to her audience primarily because "it was written by a black woman, whose experience -in love and life- was apparently assumed to be unimportant to the students (and the teachers) of a predominantly White school" (Walker, 1983: 6). Furthermore, she also includes within her narration the issue that black women writers were considered to be incapable of writing and were not allowed to write about their experiences:

"He claims women shouldn't write about themselves. I asked him Why not? and he said that white male writers, like Faulkner and Hawthorne and Mark Twain,

never wrote about themselves, and that they were masters at it. And I asked him whether this didn't come out of a tradition of being a writer but needing to keep quiet about the slaving and gunrunning and Indian killing in your family tree. In other words, I said, if white men wrote truthfully about themselves, how could they continue to fool the rest of us?" (Walker, 2001: 178)

Walker emphasizes that male writers, especially white male writers did not write realistically either about themselves or black women. Black women's experiences, even their existence in the society were excluded from the literary tradition. There are two reasons why the black female writers were so ignored and not taken into consideration as their male counterpart. First, they were women and their works were not considered effective enough for the critics to discuss and analyze. They were not willing to live under the male control and always criticized the black male's patriarchy; as a result, they were either ignored or criticized in a cruel manner.

Secondly, they were black. Therefore, they were ultimately ignored by white critics who were regarded as the leading voices of literary criticism. Their writings were not admired in the 1950s and 1960s. White women writers also resist against some obstacles even though they are not colored. When compared with men, they could not express themselves verbally or in their writings. For instance, most of them could not even publish their books in the 18th and 19th centuries; they either used pseudonyms or male names instead of their original names, so that they could easily print their works. Later on, as the time passed, women gradually achieved to break their silence and started to gain some rights in society. However, in comparison with white women and black men, black woman writers started their writing careers as defeated two times, because of being black and woman. Therefore, their writings have been, of course, different in context from white woman writers'; they come from different socio-cultural surroundings. "The experience of Afro-American women has left them simultaneously alienated from and bound to the dominant models in ways that sharply differentiate their experience from that of white women." (Benstock, 1987: 168) They suffer from exploitation and many other types of discrimination. Thus, their literary output is not similar to the white women authors'.

The most significant factor fuelling black women to write was their desire to eradicate the stereotypes and misconceptions about them. Even, until the 1970s, they

were not only misrepresented in the texts of white writers but also dismissed in the literary histories written by black men. They were depicted as “...fat and doting mammies or as seductive temptresses and jezebels, seducing and conquering with sex...” (Fox - Genovese, 1988: 79). Other stereotypical images of black women include the submissive, unattractive, cooking-and-cleaning female characters. The only way for black women to subvert these images was to write their own stories about their lives. Getting rid of these distorted images based on stereotypical, prejudiced representations and ideologies is troublesome because American society, in general, bases its interactions with black men and women on those false stereotypical images. Another factor was that white writers or black male writers used to write about the experiences of black women, as if they were the ones who experienced the oppression. Therefore, the oppressors were seen as subjects and the oppressed ones, as objects. The oppressors behaved as if they had the right to write about the object, who was the oppressed. Thus, black women decided to be the subject of their experiences in their writings.

Subjectivity, like gender, is a “doing” rather than a being. Subjects are constituted, differentially, across complex and mobile discursive practices in historically specific ways that involve relations of subjectivity to sociality, to power and to knowledge. The woman writing within patriarchal culture is subject to the discursive and social practices that require her silence and repression, but also, and undeniably, subject of her own cultural productions. (Robinson, 1991: 12)

Black people, especially black women were white people’s objects not only in social life but also in their writings. Oppressed in white people’s works, black people tried to raise their voices against the hegemony over themselves by means of their writings. They attempted to become the subject of their own experiences. “Oppressed people resist by identifying themselves as subjects, by defining their reality, shaping their new identity, naming their history, telling their story” (hooks, 1989: 43). Black Feminist literature, in its various forms, has been one of the most effective tools to combat against all these misrepresentations and to dismantle the silences surrounding black women’s experiences. Thus, they attempted to write their own histories, rather

than allowing black male or white writers to write about them with full of stereotypes. They depicted the ideas, feelings and behaviors of African women toward the white society. They dealt with the absence, the silence or misrepresentation in literary texts written by both black male and white authors. Therefore, many black women writers provided writings to demonstrate the real sufferings and pains of black women. As a result, black women critics tried hard to erase the prejudice towards the black women writers. It resulted in Black Feminist critics' redefining and re-arranging the literary tradition to include the Black women's writings.

Long before the black women critics in the 20th century, black women realized the fact that they had to write their own stories in slavery. Despite hard conditions restricting all the writing of slave women, they determined to write their own stories themselves. Being determined, 'speaking voice' of all black slave women, they can be regarded as the first Black Feminists. The everlasting voice of the Black Feminism as the first black woman and the second woman in the United States to get her work published at the end of the 18th century when there was no chance of formal education for blacks is Phillis Wheatley (1753-1784). She became both the second African-American poet and the first African-American woman with her published work *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* (1773) that brought her fame both in England and America.

In fact, many first writings of black women appeared in the second half of the 19th century, as a part of a general renaissance of black literature in the 1850s. They were mostly *slave narratives* written by slaves who were written by former slaves and then became free, or by other male writers who were dictated by former slave women telling about their experiences. The experiences in these writings could not reflect the reality, because they were either diverted or lack the real reflection of experiences. These writings were mostly written to help the abolition and to create conscience for the black oppression. But, they were written implicitly not to draw the reaction of anti-abolitionist whites. Most slave narratives were published for the benefit of black people, as well as commercial purposes. Henry Louis Gates Jr. thinks of slave narratives to have played a "central role not only in the birth and shape of Afro-American fictional narrative forms, but also in the subsequent developments of black autobiography" (1990: xiv). Slave narratives were followed by many works most of which were short stories and autobiographies. They included short stories by Frances Ellen Watkins

Harper (1825-1911), as well as Harriet E. Wilson's (1825-1900) autobiographical novel *Our Nig; Sketches from the Life of a Free Black* (1859), which is considered to be the first novel published by an African-American woman on the North American continent. Furthermore, in 1861, Harriet Jacobs (1813-1897)'s *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* became another significant slave narrative of the period. She "used the material circumstances of her life to criticize conventional standards of female behavior and to question their relevance and applicability to the experience of black woman" (Carby, 1987: 47). The novel describes the sexual exploitation and the terrible oppression of slavery in the life of black women.

Since the antebellum period of African American history, black women writers have mostly preferred producing autobiographical writings in which they can express themselves much more effectively. They have been concerned about the ignored aspects of black experiences, especially black women's struggles against difficult conditions of their life. The writings of black women writers aim to "give meaning and history, and to validate and make coherent the striving and yearning of those American who embrace feminism because it explains certain lived experiences" (Hogue, 1986: 62). Thus, the need to challenge and reinvent the images of black people and other people of color, and particularly women of color, has led to the establishment of autobiography as an important primary way of creating new images. This traditional autobiography continued in the Civil War era witnessing memorable writings of black women, such as the diaries of Charlotte Forten (1837-1914). The former slave Elizabeth Keckley (1818-1907) published *Behind the Scenes; or Thirty Years a Slave and Four Years in the White House* in 1868, while Frances Ellen Watkins Harper wrote *Sketches of Southern Life* (1872), which is a volume of poetry based on her travel accounts she took in the Reconstruction-era-South. In addition, Anna Julia Cooper (1858-1964) published her essays in a book, *A Voice from the South* (1892), which reminds that black women are important to uplift the Afro-American people. According to her, to achieve this, equal education must be guaranteed to women. Cooper can be accepted as one of the earliest Black Feminists. Her book deals with the historic facts concerning race and gender problems in the United States. She is one of the significant names who emphasize that "the cause of freedom should not be limited to a particular sex, race, class, party or a sect, freedom is the right of everyone" (Cooper, 1990: 120-1).

As time passed, the changing socio-cultural variation provided blacks to express their ideas more freely. With the abolishment in 1865, black people got more and more freedom in the all fields of life. This brought much more freedom for black women to get education by attending colleges, to work at various places outside and to write many more works. All these conditions took them out of the strict oppressions of the white people and the patriarchal system, even if the rate of black women getting out of domesticity is limited. “This freedom along with the materials and perspectives produced by the sixties social movements, allowed Afro-American writers to write new kind of texts” (Hogue, 1986: 55). In the first two decades of the 20th century, continuing racial injustices and widespread reports of violence led to a literature of protest, including short stories, novels and commentary. Thus, the style of black women turned out to be argumentative. The 1920s referring to the period of Harlem Renaissance in African American literature, of course, saw the most prominent women voices such as Nella Larsen (1891-1964) and Zora Neale Hurston (1891-1960). Moreover, the hardship of the Depression and the World Wars led African American literature to social criticism. It can be evidenced by the work of Ann Petry (1908-1997) whose novel *The Street* (1946) included the struggles of working class black women in Harlem. In 1949, Gwendolyn Brooks (1917-2000) whose work dealt with daily life in black urban communities became the first African American poet to win the Pulitzer Prize. Like Brooks who wrote “The Last Quatrain of the Ballad of Emmett Till” (1960) for a black man murdered in Mississippi in 1955, black women writers played an active role in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s. Poetry including social criticism was a central form of expression for the Black Arts Movement. Besides poetry, autobiography continued to be written. Alex Haley (1921-1992) published the autobiography of the murdered black activist Malcolm X (1925-1965).

The origin of Black women’s activism can be traced back to three major political movements of the 20th century. The first one is the struggle for the Black Liberation; the second is the Women’s Liberation Movement, which fostered the growth of Black and women’s studies, and finally the Black Feminist Movement. All these movements are distinct yet interconnected. The Black Movements of the 1950s, ‘60s and ‘70s gave rise to new social and political change, not only in the lives of black people, but for all Americans. Black Feminist Movement on the other hand, aims at reviving the former studies, correcting the errors and offering new identities and prospects for black women.

“This simple act of penning one’s own stories is a way for Black women to create their own identities, rather than those formerly created and promoted by white authors, filmmakers, television producers and other whites with access to the media” (Gray, 1989: 329). Black women have been going on reforming their own image by telling and writing about themselves in all kinds of texts since slavery. The more freedom they got, the more they could write.

The freedom obtained by the 60s’ social movements helped black women to write new kinds of texts. The writing of black women began to assert itself, after the advent of rights movement and later, by the Second Wave Feminism of the early 1970s. This growth of the woman’s movement and its influence on the consciousness of African American women helped the ‘black women’s literature of the 1970s’ develop especially with Toni Morrison (1931-) and Alice Walker (1944-).

African American women writers could eventually attain recognition and equal status within the canon of African American literature. Their craft began to draw attention and their works were taken as masterpieces of that literature. Their writing “highlights gender politics, specifically black male sexism, poverty, black female labor, and the struggle for creativity” (hooks, 1992: 46). For instance, Hurston succeeded in turning upside down many of the myths and stereotypes about the Afro-Americans with her most famous work *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. “If we read the essays of Zora Neale Hurston almost fifty years later, we can discern that she too was quite aware of the pressures by ruling literary institutions to prohibit certain Afro-American images and texts” (Hogue, 1994: 333). She portrays the experiences of black women vividly by using different ways of expressions and conventions. She has been regarded as a significant black female author who has created an environment leading black women writers to produce independently.

African American female novelists developed their personal and national identities again and within the distinctive pattern of values, orientations to life, and shared ancestral memoirs they acquired from African American culture, because they believed that “[M]oving from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonized, the exploited, and those who stand and struggle side by side a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life and new growth possible” (hooks, 1989: 9). Women writers such as Toni Morrison (1931-), Toni Cade Bambara (1939-1995), Alice Walker (1944-), Paula Marshall (1964-) and Gloria Naylor (1950-) wrote novels and short stories portraying

all aspects of African American life that remained untouched by many male African American writers. Black women's works are different from black men writers' writings in their attitude to deal with the issues that were not taken into consideration by black male writers. They focused on black women's struggles against difficult conditions of their lives. Therefore, the products of those writers are unavoidably taken as Feminist works. "[I]n the early seventies, feminist or black women produced representations of the historical past that show the historical oppression of black women and show that black women, underneath one-dimensional stereotypes, are complex human beings" (Hogue, 1986: 61). Thus, they produced writings to demonstrate the real sufferings and pains of black women resisting against racism and sexism. For instance, Morrison and Walker, as black and women are aware of the fact that their sex and color is the primary reason of discrimination in the United States. With the help of their portrayals about black experiences, just like the female protagonist Celie in Walker's novel *The Color Purple* (1982), one can envision the struggle of black women clearly. Therefore, female protagonists of these writers are subject to humiliation at the hands of both white and black male characters.

While the tradition of novelist John A. Williams, Richard Wright, James Baldwin, and Ralph Ellison became the standard by which critics evaluated African American letters prior to the 1970s, strong women writers emerged to demonstrate the broad scope of black literature. The rediscovery of Zora Neale Hurston by literary critics underscored the maturity of the new awakening in African American literature. The formation of a critical literary canon continued with the publication of Susan Willis's specifying: *Black Women Writing the American Experience*. (Blackshine - Belay, 1992: 5)

Audre Lorde (1934-1992), Barbara Christian (1943-2000), Barbara Smith (1946-) and Alice Walker (1944-) emphasize the important subjects of Black Feminism, such as negative stereotypes of black women, rape, economic and social oppression, racism, matrilineage, obstacles in education. They reanimate the works that are not canonical and discover methods that are more appropriate for analyzing these works. More importantly, all these critics expand Black literature to all social arts and African

spirituality and question the traditional literary criticism and literary history. It has been the gift of the works by these authors that led the way from a theoretical framework to the fostering of Black women's activism and thus to the theory known as Black Feminism. In short, facing with both racism and sexism, black women have always needed to create their own identities and movements to display and protest against black women's sufferings throughout history. From slavery to the present, black women have spoken out against their oppression, and when possible, written their version of history.

[T]heir narratives have fared less well in the hands of publishers and the reading public than those written by black women. Only very recently and with the growing interest in writers like Toni Morrison, Paule Marshall, and Walker herself, have black women enjoyed better access to recognized channels of communication outside those of home and church. (Willis, 1989: 85)

Thus, writing history of African American women starts in the 18th century with narratives depicting slavery, moves through and beyond the Harlem Renaissance and then the explosion of significant works in the 20th century.

2.4. Alice Walker as a Black Feminist / *Womanist*

Born in 1944, Alice Walker grew up in a sharecropper family in Eatonton, Georgia. Therefore, she had first-hand experiences in the Southern atmosphere of African American history. As a black woman, she also had the disadvantage of being woman in the both racist and sexist society; thus, she had a double minority status. One of the significant events forming her point of view towards life was that she got shot in her one eye by one of her brothers playing with his BB gun accidentally. She relates the scar on her face to 'patriarchal wound' affecting her life in deep. "For a long time I felt completely devalued. Unseen. Worthless." (Walker, 1993: 17) Following this incident, she became blind and a timid and introvert child. This loneliness led her to see people, things and relationships from a broad angle. "[A]nother traumatic experience occurs when Walker finds her involuntarily pregnant... She feels suicidal and undergoes an illegal abortion, but this second scarring produces the same creative impulse as the

first...” (Lauret, 2000: 6). While mentioning about it, she says: “I also began to understand how alone woman is, because of her body” (O’Brien, 1973: 189). Her inner feelings and thoughts made her to read stories and begin to write poems. Thus, stories and poems became her closest friends in her life. At the meantime, she grew a revolutionary woman. The more she grew up, the more rebellious she became. She claims:

“I would like to call myself revolutionary, for I am always changing, and growing, it is hoped for the good of more black people. I do call myself black when it seems necessary to call myself anything, especially since I believe one’s work rather than one’s appearance adequately labels one.” (Walker, 1983: 133)

She goes on her life along with her conception of revolution which she describes in her poem *Revolutionary Petunias and Other Poems* (1973) well: “Be nobody’s darling / Be an outcast. / Take the contradictions / Of your life / And wrap around / You like a shawl, / To parry stones / To keep you warm.” Her rebellious identity showed itself in her period in college for the first time. When she mentions about Spelman College she went in Atlanta, she says:

“a school that I considered opposed to change, to freedom, and to understanding that by the time most girls enter college they are already women and should be treated as women. At Sarah Lawrence I found all that I was looking for at the time – freedom to come and go, to read leisurely, to go on my own way, dress my own way, and conduct my personal life as I saw fit. It was here that I wrote my first published short story and my first book, here that I learned to feel what I thought had some meaning, here that I felt no teacher or administrator breathing down my neck.” (Walker, 1983: 130-131)

Within two years (1961-1963) she spent for her higher education at Spelman College in Atlanta, she got involved more and more in intellectual and social issues. In 1963 she maintained her education in Sarah Lawrence College in New York where she was only

one of the six black students. In college, Walker's expression of her wish to become a poet was met by "a white Northerner's" suggestion "that a farmer's daughter might not be the stuff of which poets are made" (Walker, 1983: 18). She was scorned by her friend at college in this way. She got much more involved in the Civil Rights Movements. She embodied the current mainstream hopes and dreams of the 1960s. In those decades, the Civil Rights Movement was calling for equal rights for black people. She discerned that black servitude in the Black Liberation was not equal for black women and men. Thus she began to raise her voice about the issues of race and gender which preoccupied her own generation of black women. At that time, she worked at the New York City Welfare Department. That is why "Only in Walker, a writer of the Southern black experience, do we come to understand how important Civil Right was. Not that it solved anything, but it definitely marks the moment after which nothing can ever be the same" (Willis, 1989: 87). Living in the brutally racist, completely segregated state of Georgia, Walker had several such painful experiences of being discriminated. She describes: "I could neither eat at a public restaurant nor use a public library or rest room without the certainty of being arrested by a white male agent of the state who would undoubtedly physically or verbally abuse me" (Walker, 1997: 200). Therefore, her depicting of harsh life reflects her reaction to persecutions against blacks since they landed in America. She says "growing up in the south I have a very keen sense of injustice a very prompt response to it" (Brewer, 1981: 14). So, it can be claimed that her fiction expresses the outrage that she feels about the injustices in the American society.

During this confusing period, all these experiences were enough for her to start shaping her works. She published her poems under the title of *Once: Poems* in 1968. On March 17, 1969 she married Melvyn Rosenman Leventhal, a white civil rights lawyer and moved to Jackson, Mississippi with him, although it is noted that an interracial marriage is still against Mississippi State laws even then. She states:

"It was a punishable crime for a black person and a white person of opposite sex to inhabit the same house. But I felt then -as I do now- that in order to be able to live at all in America I must be unafraid to live anywhere in it, and I must be able to live in the fashion and with whom I choose." (O'Brien, 1973: 209)

She started working in the Head Start program there and became a writer-in-residence at Jackson State College (1968-1969) and Tougaloo College (1970-1971). During the 1970s, she got closer to the peak of her career as a writer by producing many short stories, poems, novels and essays that revolve generally around racism and sexism, the role of the artist, the relation between art and life, the process towards spiritual health and self-realization of the characters and environmental issues.

In 1970, Walker published her first novel, *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*. With it, she became a part of 'The Second Black Renaissance' in which black women authors like Maya Angelou (1928-2014), Paule Marshall (1929-) and Toni Morrison play a leading role. Her course on black women writers she gave at Wellesley College in 1972-1973, is among the firsts of its kind and she focused previously on neglected authors such as Phillis Wheatley, Jessie Fauset, Zora Neale Hurston, Nella Larsen, Gwendolyn Brooks and Paule Marshall. *In Love and Trouble: Stories of Black Women* (1973), *Revolutionary Petunias and Other Poems* (1973), *Meridian* (1976), *Good Night, Willie Lee, I'll See You In The Morning* (1979) are among her striking works dating back to the 1970s.

After becoming associate professor at Yale University in 1977 and in 1978 moving to San Francisco with Robert Allen after her divorce from Melvyn, she published another collection of short stories *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down* in 1981 and *The Color Purple* in 1982. The novel is claimed to unite all the themes Walker treated in her previous works. Due to her success in this novel, she could win both the Pulitzer Prize and the American Book Award in 1983. In 1983 *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*, a collection of essays Walker wrote the past decades was published. In it she writes:

[O]f her parents, brothers and sisters and of her glamorous aunts, who came to visit from the North and whom she saw as role models: independent, sexy, sassy women of whom she refused to believe that they earned their living by cleaning other people's (white women's) houses. (Lauret, 2000: 4)

This book is regarded as a reaction to the realization that "Feminism" does not consist of the perspectives of black women, because those years refer to the period of

significant changes in her approach to issues related to black women. She thought that neither The Woman Liberation Movement nor Black Feminism were not enough for all women to stand upon their feet in the sexist society. Thinking that Second-Wave Feminism historically failed to incorporate the voices of many young, queer, and non-white women, many feminist figures such as Rebecca Walker (1969-). During the 1980s to 1990s, also to a crucial differentiation of second-wave feminism itself, initiated by women of color and third-world women. Third wave feminism sprang from the emergence of a new postcolonial and postsocialist world order, in the context of information society and neoliberal, global politics. Since the mid-1980s, the categories for which women struggled have been broadened. They have dealt with various issues from national health care, child care, sexuality, sexual self-esteem, intergenerational problems, balancing family and work to gender justice. Some of the bigger issues that modern feminists choose to address are that of gender violence, reproductive rights, derogatory language, sexual harassment. Third-wave theory usually incorporates elements of queer theory; anti-racism and women-of-color consciousness; womanism; girl power; post-colonial theory; postmodernism; transnationalism; cyberfeminism; ecofeminism; individualist feminism; new feminist theory, transgender politics, and a rejection of the gender binary. Called with such various terms as 'lipstick feminism', 'girlie feminism', 'riot grrl feminism', 'cybergrrl feminism', 'transfeminism', or just 'grrl feminism', third wave feminism is alive and kicking. Elaine Showalter (1941-), Camille Paglia (1947-), Judith Butler (1956-), Naomi Wolf (1962-), Rebecca Walker (1969-), who is the daughter of Alice Walker, and Ruth Shalit (1971-) are among significant Third-Wave Feminists. With her later changing stance among feminist theory, from Black Feminism to a universalist perspective, Walker is also included in this category, as a Third Wave Feminist. Within her work, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens* (1983), she coined the term 'Womanism' by affirming her reputation as a Womanist on theoretical grounds. In the 20th and 21st century, Walker returns to her personal social and political stance in her works such as *The Temple of My Familiar* (1989), *Possessing the Secret of Joy* (1992), *Warrior Marks: Female Genital Mutilation and the Sexual Blinding of Women* (1993), *Anything We Love Can Be Saved: A Writer's Activism* (1997). In *By the Light of My Father's Smile* (1998) she deals with female sexuality and in her another collection of stories under the title *The Way Forward Is with a Broken Heart* (2000) and *Now Is the Time to Open Your Heart* (2004) in which

she examines the black female novelist are among her important works published in the nineties and the first decades of the twentieth century.

Defined as “prolific, albeit a young writer she is already by many to be one of America’s finest novelists having captured both the American book award and the coveted Pulitzer in 1983”, Walker has written half a dozen novels, two collections of short stories, numerous volumes of poetry, and books of essays, has the owner of fame and recognition in many countries (Christian, 1989: 39). She often makes use of autobiographical elements in her work and portrays the political, social and moral conditions of the South in it. She grounds her fiction and poetry primarily in the experiences of the South and blacks. “Her three volumes of poetry, three novels and two collections of stories all depend upon what black life is, has been and can be in a specified landscape that becomes emblematic of American life” (Davis, 1989: 25). In her literary works, she stresses her own history and by extension the cultural history of Southern blacks and American blacks. Therefore, they can be regarded as “the song of the people” celebrating and preserving each generation (Davis, 1989: 26). The main motif of her works is black women’s struggle. She insists on her own identity as a storyteller:

“[T]hrough years of listening to my mother’s stories of her life, I have absorbed not only the stories themselves, but something of the manner in which she spoke, something of the urgency that involves the knowledge that her stories like her life must be recorded.” (Walker, 1983: 240)

She states: “I am preoccupied with the spiritual survival, the survival whole of my people. But beyond that I am committed to exploring the oppressions, the insanities, the loyalties and the triumphs of black women” (O’Brien, 1973:192). As a writer she has duty to see the injustices done to her race and raise her voice against them in her writings. She is constantly inspired by the black grandmothers and mothers who “were not saints, but Artists; driven to a numb and bleeding madness by the springs of creativity in them for which there was no release” (Walker, 1983: 233).

Walker desires to transfer the strength she took from her ancestors’ to young black women. “Walker dedicates her works to men and women, young and old,

Africans European Americans alike, as an expression of her loving inclusion of all human beings in her concern for wholeness/survival whole” (Thielman, 1999: 72). She writes about the unwillingness of many black women to acknowledge or address the problems of sexism that affect them because they feel they must protect black men. To this she asserts:

[I]f black women turn away from the women’s movement, they turn away from women moving all over the world, not just in America. They betray their own tradition, which includes women such as Sojourner Truth and Ida B. Well, and abandon their responsibility to their own people as well as to women everywhere. (Christian, 1989: 49-50)

Walker’s position in African American literature is marked with her contribution to Black Feminist Movement by coining the term ‘*Womanist*’ that provided a new dimension for Black Feminism. According to her, ‘*Womanist*’ is defined as follows:

“1. From womanish. (Opp. of “girlish,” i.e. frivolous, irresponsible, not serious.) A black feminist or feminist of color. From the black folk expression of mothers to female children, “you acting womanish,” i.e., like a woman. Usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous or willful behavior. Wanting to know more and in greater depth than is considered “good” for one. Interested in grown up doings. Acting grown up. Being grown up. Interchangeable with another black folk expression: “You trying to be grown.” Responsible. In charge. Serious.
2. Also: A woman who loves other women, sexually and/or nonsexually. Appreciates and prefers women’s culture, women’s emotional flexibility (values tears as natural counterbalance of laughter), and women’s strength. Sometimes loves individual men, sexually and/or nonsexually. Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. Not a separatist, except periodically, for health. Traditionally a universalist, as in: “Mama, why are we brown, pink, and yellow, and our cousins are white, beige and black?”
Ans. “Well, you know the colored race is just like a flower garden, with

every color flower represented." Traditionally capable, as in: "Mama, I'm walking to Canada and I'm taking you and a bunch of other slaves with me." Reply: "It wouldn't be the first time."³ Loves music. Loves dance. Loves the moon. Loves the Spirit. Loves love and food and roundness. Loves struggle. Loves the Folk. Loves herself. Regardless. 4. Womanist is to feminist as purple is to lavender." (Walker, 1983: xi-xii)

Alice Walker introduced the word 'Womanist' into Feminist literature in her book *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose* published in 1983. She cited the phrase 'acting womanish,' which was said to a child who acted serious, courageous and grown-up rather than girlish. The adoption of 'Womanist' signified an inclusion of race and class issues in feminism. Walker also used 'Womanist' to refer to a woman who loves other women, whether platonically or sexually. Walker first used the term "womanist" in her story *Coming Apart* she wrote in 1979. The narrator of the story tells: "The wife has never considered herself a Feminist— though she is, of course, a 'womanist'. A 'womanist' is a feminist, only more common" (Walker, 2006: 7). This emphasis on the "common" aspect suggests the womanist perspective as one that results from the suppression of African American women's self-definition in traditional sites of knowledge, which relegated the expression of Black women's consciousness to such "alternative sites as music, literature, daily conversation, and everyday behavior" (Collins, 1990: 202). To get the concept of 'Womanism' better in Walker's works, there are significant keys related to the concept of 'Womanism'. The keys are apparent in her writings as heritage, motherhood, acknowledgement of both black and white writers. A *Womanist* can reach universality in the world by following them and eradicating controversial effects of gender and race. The most important factor in her success is that she has not lost her sense of rootedness in the South and her personal consciousness as a black and a woman. "It is environment that is not without a history of pain but it nonetheless connects generations of black to one another to a wholeness of self and to the old unalterable roots" (Davis, 1989: 31).

Her heritage and history provide her understanding the modern world in which her characters live and they feed her creativity. She acknowledges even her great-great-great-great-grandmother May Poole, an American slave, for fostering her belief in

activism because May Poole's "attitude and courage [...] made it possible for her to attend the funerals of almost everyone who'd ever owned her" (Lauret, 2000: 194). She gets inspired from her ancestors who have enough courage to face her past bitterness. Her activist spirit grows with the strength of this inspiration.

Her giving importance to motherhood forms the basis of her theory of *Womanism*. Having a daughter called Rebecca, Walker believes that her motherhood - surely literal but also metaphorical - will help overcome her oppression and she generalizes this relief for all generations: "We are together, my child and I. Mother and child, yes, but *sisters* really, against whatever denies us all that we are" (Walker, 1983: 362). Admiring strong tie among mothers and daughters, Walker takes this bond, which is endurable against time, as the fuel of activism for all women in all female generations. "Her conflation of the female generations, while describing the necessary political and cultural alliance of black women across generations, also confuses motherhood with sisterhood and idealizes the mother-daughter bond" (Sadoff, 1990: 205). Motherhood, sisterhood and all other kinds of spirituality among women provide them with enough motivation that is necessary to combat with oppressions.

"Though her dominant themes (spiritual survival and individual identity as well as freedom, power and community) link her to the literary heritages of both Southern and black writers her structures and forms address most" (Davis, 1989: 25). Her lineage to her ancestors links her as far back as to the slave narratives. She is inspired by their courage, endurance and patience throughout history, because, her conception of the black writer and herself is linked to survival. "...the focus on the struggle of black people especially black woman to claim their own lives and the contention that this struggle emanates from a deepening of self-knowledge and love are characteristics of Walker's work yet (Christian, 1989: 40). She seems to be inspired from her ancestors' struggle of survival. She claims: "Guided by my heritage of a love of beauty and respect for strength of my mother's garden I found my own" (Walker, 1983: 675). Walker refers to her mother's gardens as her "art", her ability to hold on. Therefore,

"[...] 'garden' is her recurrent metaphor for both art and beauty endurance and survival it is essentially too, Walker's articulations of the process by which individuals find selfhood through examining the experiences of others who have preceded them." (Davis, 1989: 32)

Her ancestors' slave narratives foster her belief in escaping for badly needed freedom for the soul, because this old slave generation "forbidden by law to read or write, kept alive the creative spirit among their people and passed on to their daughters that 'living creativity', the 'notion of song'" (Sadoff, 1990: 201). Although they were denied by literacy, they sought to maintain their spiritual notions, cultures and creativity for the next generations, firstly by singing their ritual songs, lullabies, telling their traditional narratives, then slave narratives when they got together. "The strength of Alice Walker's writing derives from the author's inexorable recognition of her place in history; the sensitivity of her work, from her profound sense of community; its beauty, from her commitment to the future" (Willis, 1989: 81). Only with the sense of community inherited from the old generations, can a black revolutionary artist find the strength of producing qualified writings representing her heritage. To get that sense requires keeping old generations alive in reading and writing. For instance, "...anecdotes are the basic narrative units in Walker's fiction. They reveal how Walker has managed to keep the storytelling tradition among black people alive in the era of the written narrative" (Willis, 1989: 84). So, by sympathizing with her ancestors, she acknowledges that she is a part of a black tradition of art particularly of that strain stemming from Southern slave narrators, folk tellers of tales and literary artists. According to her, literacy is the one that supplied her ancestors' freedom. Literacy has great importance for her, because, when she thinks back through her Southern black mother and her Native American grandmother, she finds a long and continuous line of non-writers, illiterate women burdened with domestic and wage-labor. The world of literature was either unknown or barely conceivable to them.

Bound to the land and their husbands (or fathers), worn by toil in the fields and the demands of childbearing, these women are the underclass of the underclass. This is why literacy and education are so crucial to the way Walker depicts the process of liberation. (Willis, 1989: 94)

Criticizing white critics who exclude black writers' writings, she mentions significant black writers to be read such as Langston Hughes (1902-1967), Arna Bontemps (1902-1973), Margaret Walker (1915-1998) and Gwendolyn Brooks (1917-2000). For instance, *Cane* (1923) by Jean Toomer (1894-1967) and *Mules and Men*

(1935) by Zora Neale Hurston (1891-1960) were the books she found on the dirty shelves in the library of Lincoln University and xeroxed them in order to read again and again. She follows Hurston in her art. She regards herself as responsible for maintaining Hurston's artistic line. Besides, she does not reject white writer's writings. She says:

“The white women writers that I admire: [Kate] Chopin, the Bröntes, Simone De Beauvoir, and Doris Lessing, are well aware of their own oppression and search incessantly for a kind of salvation. Their characters can always envision a solution, an evolution to higher consciousness on the part of society, even when society itself cannot. Even when society is in the process of killing them for their vision.”
(O'Brien, 1973: 193)

Therefore, the impact of white writers' works on Walker is undeniable. They offer her patterns for salvation and survival in an indifferent society. Among them, Virginia Woolf has a great part. For instance, she admires Woolf and her work titled “A Room of One's Own” (1929) which she calls “a book that made me happy to be a writer, and bolstered and brightened my consciousness about the role other women, often silenced or even long dead, can have in changing the world” (Walker, 1983: 37). Even this passage from ‘A Room of One's Own’ seems enough for Walker's inspiration in her *In Search of Mothers' Gardens*:

they [women] had no tradition behind them, or one so short and partial that it was of little help. For we think back through our mothers if we are women. It is useless to go to the great men writers for help, however much one may go to them for pleasure. (Woolf, 1989: 76)

The parallelism between Woolf's and Walker's notions is solidarity and ‘sisterhood’ with women all over the world. “[B]lack writers and white writers seem to me to be writing one immense story – the same story, for the most part – with different parts of this immense story coming from a multitude of different perspectives” (Walker, 1983: 5). Walker also emphasizes the fact that women are not the same and they have different backgrounds and different problems.

Alice Walker defines ‘*Womanist*’ as “a black feminist or feminist of color”. Both Feminism and *Womanism* are similar terms and have little difference between them; because of this, many African American women define Feminism and *Womanism* from different points of view. Walker’s ‘*Womanism*’ can be considered as Feminism’s continuing identity crisis” (Allan, 1995: 118). Black Feminism is sometimes referred to as ‘*Womanism*’ because both are concerned with struggles against sexism and racism by black women who are in the black community. Therefore, although a womanist is sometimes taken as a feminist, there are some differences between them. When Walker coined the term ‘*Womanism*’, feminist separatists of the 1970s were equating heterosexuality and feminism, because, for them ‘to love men’ meant to ‘sleep with the enemy’. Walker refuses such separatism as an ideology but still leaves the door open for being careful with men. A white woman can also be a *Womanist*, according to Walker, because she thinks that white is also a color.

Walker can be read as “targeting the naivety of white women’s self-styled ‘revolutionary’ demand to be released from patriarchal bondage. The womanist is committed to both her gender and her race on preferential and historical grounds rather than those of biology, and she values the culture that history has given her.” (Lauret, 2000: 20)

Thus, ‘*Womanism*’ breaks the separatist point of view towards black men and white women who also struggle to have a position in the society. It is lately accepted referring to African American women’s struggle to obtain a position in the society. In this sense, it can be observed that *Womanism* differs from feminism on the ground that *Womanism* concerns with racism more than feminism, but later on, it has become a symbol for all other women of color who have been suppressed by a sexist and racist system. Walker’s “brand of spiritual universalism embraces all who are aware of their hybrid natures – including white women” (Lauret, 2000: 21). *Womanism* believes in the equality of different races, for this reason, this differentiation of perspective to Feminism and *Womanism* can be explained in this example:

Morrison’s first ‘we’, of course, refers to African American writers. Reading Woolf with Walker and Hurston along parallel lines

defamiliarises the 'we' and 'us' of a white feminism that can no longer assume itself to be the implied reader of 'women's' writing. Conversely, reading Walker with Woolf shows how 'books continue each other' in a literary tradition that is neither entirely male and Eurocentric nor exclusively female or African American. (Lauret, 2000: 28-29)

It can be claimed that the term '*Womanism*' is both an alternative to and an expansion of the term "Feminist." Moreover, it is obvious that Walker emphasizes the solidarity of humanity. Especially by redefining all people as 'people of color', she universalizes what are typically seen as individual struggles while allowing space for autonomous movements of self-determination. Therefore, '*Womanism*' does not need to be prefaced by the word "black".

PART 3

3.1. Walker's Two Short Story Collections: *In Love and Trouble* (1973) and *You Can't Keep A Good Woman Down* (1981)

Walker who states “[f]or me, black women are the most fascinating creations in the world” expresses her notion of value about black women in her words (O’Brien, 1973: 192). She acts the surviving struggling of African American woman in sexist and racist America. This situation is observed in all her works, especially her two collections of short stories; *In Love and Trouble* and *You Can't Keep A Good Woman Down*.

Her female protagonists get their freedom to pursue their selfhood within the constraints of sexist and racist America. However, the consciousness of struggle displays difference in these two collections: “While the protagonists of *In Love and Trouble* wage their struggle in spite of themselves, the heroines of *You Can't Keep A Good Woman Down* consciously insist upon their right to challenge any societal chains that bind them (Christian, 1989: 50). That is, as indicated in the title of the first collection, for the black women protagonists in *In Love and Trouble*, being in love is synonymous with being in trouble. They have to strain against the restrictions placed upon them by white people, black men, and even other black women. Their love of black and white man who (ab)use them turns their lives into nightmare. Racism is also one of the threats in their lives in its various individual and institutional forms. In the stories in the first collection, located primarily in the South, the protagonists struggle in spite of their conditions, but by not considering the outcomes of their deeds. However, they enjoy the feeling of having struggled for themselves. As they do not go against the grain consciously, most of them fail in hopelessness, because not understanding their own contrariness brings them bewilderment, anguish, and even death. They are inexperienced and very much loyal to their men, they are more akin to traditional prototype of women; and these features lead them to fail in love. They bring about hopelessness. Walker states:

“In my new book *In Love and Trouble: Stories of Black Women*, 13 women-mad, raging, loving, resentful, hateful, strong, ugly, weak, pitiful, and magnificent, try to live with the loyalty to black men that characterizes all of their lives.” (O’Brien, 1973: 192)

On the other hand, their loyalty to black men does not bring them freedom. Walker means by loyalty a kind of servitude to black men. Thus, “The 13 women who come to life on the pages of her first collection of her short stories, *In Love and Trouble* (1973), unfortunately are not yet able to save themselves. [...] not all her female characters proved to be the dragonslayers they might have longed to be” (Winchell, 1992: 29). The fragile characters understand love honestly and sincerely, but they disregard reason. Here, Walker wants to emphasize that women in love should regard reason, as well. They should not risk their social, economic and intellectual freedoms.

Walker’s tone changes in her second collection, *You Can’t Keep A Good Woman Down*. The change in tone is indicated in the titles of these two collections. While the first one emphasizes trouble, the second one focuses on the triumph of self-conscious black women. It starts with an epithet from Hermann Hesse: “It is harder to kill something that is spiritually alive than it is to bring the dead back to life”. This epithet indicates Walker’s celebration of women’s insistence on living. The title is also inspired by the name of a famous blues song, *You Can't Keep a Good Man Down* by Perry Bradford (1893-1970) who was an important black composer and singer favoring black men in his song. As a parody of the song, *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down* celebrates the triumphant assertiveness of the black woman beautifully.

Whereas “You Can't Keep A Good Man Down” acknowledges the power and determination of “good men,” Walker's collection celebrates the strength and resilience of “good women” who resist and persist in the face of abuse. (Johnson, 1996: 223)

The stories address a range of subjects from art to sex to love to family and friendship, as well as more politically charged issues like abortion, rape, and pornography.

The women of *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down* join her in fighting for their spiritual and emotional lives. [...] That this collection is Walker's celebration of women's fighting spirit, in contrast to *In Love and Trouble's* portrayal of their vulnerability, is reflected in its title. (Winchell, 1992: 73)

The protagonists in the stories, who also challenge the restrictions, imposed upon them, are much more in control of their own actions and conscious of their right to oppose all attacks on their selfhood than the ones in the first collection. The stories "have a more conscious theoretical thrust than the earlier in *In Love and Trouble*, as by using the short story, letter or diary as narrative frameworks, Walker begins to clarify her political stance" (Birch, 1994: 217), because, many of them are process rather than product. This kind of change is related to the fact that Feminist thinkers of the 1970s asserted a link between process (the unraveling of thought and feeling) and the way women have perceived the world.

In keeping with this theory, Walker often gives us the story as it comes into being, rather than delivering the product, classic and clean. The author then not only breaks the rules by writing about "womanist" issues (Walker defines a womanist as a "black feminist"), she also employs a womanist process. For many of these stories reflect the present, when the process of confusion, resistance to the established order, and the discovery of a freeing order is, especially for women, a prerequisite for growth. (Christian, 1989: 50-51)

Walker draws attention to black women's process of developing themselves and the more they struggle, the more consciously they grow. They can stand better on their feet after a long-lasting striving period. That is why "Unlike the ladies of *In Love & Trouble*, who seem always to be struggling, to be growing, those of *You Can't Keep* have all advanced to a higher plane, personally and socially" (Petry, 1989: 14). Therefore, the change in Walker's approach with her theory of *Womanism* shows itself in her two different collections she wrote with seven - year interval.

3.2. Black Feminist Issues in *In Love and Trouble* (1973)

Black Feminism deals with issues that problematize black women's lives. These issues are basically racism, sexism and class oppression. The black woman protagonists in Walker's short stories in her first collection, *Love and Trouble* (1973) are in trouble, derived from these issues. The women who are either submissive or incapable of struggle in a reasonable way are depicted in the stories. They confront racism in white-dominated institutions and they are subject to sexual abuse both by white men and black men. They are also faced with the conflict of confinement and freedom in their marriage. Walker also discusses the subject of young generations' linkage to their past and ancestors. The solution to these issues lies in Walker's theory of *Womanism* which will be presented in the next part within the framework of some selected short stories from her second collection, *You Can't Keep A Good Woman Down*.

3.2.1. Racism in White-Dominated Institutions: "Strong Horse Tea" (1973), "The Revenge of Hannah Kemduff" (1973), "The Welcome Table" (1973) and "The Diary of An African Nun" (1973)

Racism against black people is common issue problematized in most works written by black writers. Some stories in the first collection *In Love and Trouble* (1973) emphasize the racist attitude of institutions governed by white people. Black women undergo a kind of conflict between their own traditional learning and the directives of white institutions. The selected stories exemplify these situations. Among them, "Strong Horse Tea" criticizes white medicine service, "The Revenge of Hannah Kemhuff", "The Welcome Table" and "The Diary of An African Nun" draw attention to racial discrimination the black female protagonists experience in their relation to the white-dominated church.

The story entitled as "Strong Horse Tea" is about the failure of black community beliefs in health care and also the white medical service. In the story, a single mother Rannie Toomer of her dying illegitimate child does her best for his treatment. The story revolves around a black woman's efforts to save her child who is about to die because of his illness. She trusts in the medical drugs produced by white people to cure her illegitimate child called 'Snooks' who "made a small grave-like mound in the bed" (89). She hopes "a real doctor" (92) to come to her home far away from center. She scorns

traditional way of healing illnesses, believes that her child will be better with the modern medicine and will get over double pneumonia and whooping cough. She says: “I don’t believe in none of that swamp magic came about. All the old home remedies I took when I was a child just short of killing me” (88). She does not want to apply the traditional method prescribed by the root-doctor of the black community. Sarah described as an old neighboring lady who had magic leaves round her neck sewed up in possum skin next to a dried lizard’s foot. She knew “how magic came about, and could do magic herself, people said” (88). She says the only cure for the child is horse urine. However, she rejects this prescription by claiming: “We don’t need none of your witch’s remedies” (89). She does not allow her to touch Snooks.

Racial discrimination is not only implied by a non-coming white medicine service, but also embodied the white mailman whom the hopeless mother calls to help her with her ill child. He disgusts Rannie’s home and her dirty hands. The prejudice of the white towards black people is apparent in his observations:

“Black people as black as Rannie Mae always made him uneasy, especially when they didn’t smell good, and when you could tell they didn’t right away. Rannie Mae, leaning in over him out of the rain, smelt like a wet goat. Her dark dirty eyes clinging to his face with such hungry desperation made him nervous.” (91-92)

He is in too much hurry to do anything more, eager to dissociate himself from the wet-goat smell of Rannie Mae and the disgusting touch of her hands on his shoulder. He represents the white people. The narrator implies that he does not have any problems, sits in his warm car, wears new clothes and is healthy and strong because he has enough to eat. His role is very ironic, because he is the connection between two absolutely different worlds: he delivers the circulars with nice products for rich people but Rannie can neither understand the circulars nor afford the products. The mailman deals with Rannie in a very superficial way, does not listen to or care for her problems. In the end, he almost escapes from her problems and does not want to be bothered any longer. He feels repelled by her and dirty because of the contact with her and her tears. In the narration, the point of view associates him with the behavior and attitude of the whole white society. In fact, although he is disgusted with the dirt, he does what his

conscience requires of him. He directs the root worker Aunt Sarah to Rannie's home. Helplessness forces her to apply Sarah's prescription. She accepts to do whatever to cure her child better: "She thought of the time she had wasted waiting for the real doctor" (95):

She rose, trembling and crying, holding the shoe, spilling none over the top but realizing a leak, tiny crack at her shoe's front. Quickly she struck her mouth there, over the crack, and ankle deep in the slippery mud of the pasture and freezing in her shabby wet coat, she ran home to give the stil warm horse tea to her baby Snooks. (97-98)

Outside it is raining and the ground turns into mud, which signifies that Rannie/the blacks cannot get out of their situation. Her useless attempts along with this traditional belief is implied with the hole in the overshoe in which she tries to fill with horse urine in an effort of keeping it.

There is a pathos and irony in the final scene as the young mother, in a thunderstorm, chases a galloping mare to catch the liquid in a plastic overshoe that has a hole in it, unaware that death has already come to her child. (Birch, 1994: 204)

The story illustrates how the poor mother and child become victims of racial discrimination, as they are denied to access to the white medical care. Furthermore, it portrays a hopeless woman victimized by most probably a black man who leaves her with a little son.

Written for the memory of Zora Neale Hurston, "The Revenge of Hannah Kemhuff" is another example of institutional failure. It is about the government's food stamp program that fails to help the starving people during the Great Depression (1920-1930) via the church. The black Kemhuffs are so poor that their children are on the brink of death. Mrs. Kemhuff is so honorable that even though her father is used to be one of the biggest colored peanut growers, she never asks for his help and others'. Her children wear her niece's clothes. Mrs. Kemhuff who cannot stand seeing her three children starving any more, decides to go to the church that gives some food in return

for a few stamps given by the government. They go to “ask for what was theirs, not to beg” (65). Mrs. Holley, the white woman in the church described as “little slip of a woman, all big blue eyes and yellow” (65) takes the stamps and gives them to an old gambler in line behind them by claiming: “You don’t need nothing to eat from the way you all dressed up, Hannah Lou” (65). So, Mrs. Kemhuff who struggled for her children loses her faith in God’s justice as He favors Mrs. Holley. This is not the single disappointment for her. The second one is created by her husband who goes away with a whore. Hard times wait for Mrs. Kemhuff, she claims “I worked in a whorehouse just to make some money, just like my husband’s woman” (67). One of her children gets sick and dies. The old gambler in the queue comes to their house and helps her. She believes that God sends him: “The Lord called him to have pity on us and she knew us and knew my husband had deserted me he said he were right glad to help out” (66). Even after years, Mrs. Kemhuff cannot forget her experiences. She says “God cannot be let to make her happy all these years and me miserable. What kind of justice would be that? It would be monstrous!” (67). Therefore she desires to get her revenge and wants the help of Tante Rosie who is a black root worker and has magical power given to her by “the Great One Herself” (68). Tante Rosie and her apprentice (the narrator) follow Mrs. Holley and get her some nail parings, some hair, some water, some feces and a bit of clothing she wears in the last year. Tante Rosie prays about Mrs. Holley:

I pray that disease and death shall be forever with them and that their worldly multiply and that their cows, their sheep, and their hogs and all their living beasts shall die of starvation and thirst. I pray that their house shall be unroofed and that the rain, the thunder and lightning shall find the innermost recesses of their home. (71)

They observe the changes in Mrs. Holley who is now rich and enjoys her time “shopping for antiques, gossiping with colored women, discussing her husband’s health and her children’s babies, and making spoon bread” (73). Several months later than Mrs. Kemhuff, Mrs. Holley also dies after long-lasting pain and heartache. Her friends tell about her last days: “She collected stray hairs from her head and comb with the greatest attention and consistency, not to say desperation. She ate her fingernails. But the most bizarre of all was her response to Mrs. Kemhuff’s petition for a specimen of

feces and water” (79). Although they could not help Mrs. Kemhuff and her children; they punish her enemy, Mrs. Holley. Black women in the story take their revenges by using their own traditional methods.

In these two stories hopeless women are denied to access of help by the white-dominated institutions and they are forced to find the cure in their traditional teachings like voodoo powers of root workers. Another victim of racial discrimination of white institutions appears in “The Welcome Table” which is about the questioning of faith. “The title of the story is from a negro spiritual which invites all creatures to feast together in the sight of God” (Birch, 1994: 207). Just like that negro, an unnamed old black woman invites all people to witness her being expelled by white churchgoers in the sight of God and Jesus Christ. “The white church as an institution established and maintained by men (or, more significantly, by women in this case) fails the old black woman; her faith does not” (Winchell, 1992: 39). Although she is taken out of the church by white churchgoers, she does not lose her faith in God.

The story covers the single and last day of this old woman. It is not obvious why she walks miles away from her home to the white-dominated church that she has not entered before. It is also not obvious what the usher says to her to make her leave the church. Walker just tells about her “singing in her head” (84). It is clear that the woman is unconscious. Nobody in the church can make sense of her. The white churchgoers in the church are afraid of this elderly woman who looks strange and tries to go over social codes, although she is not allowed to enter the church as she is black. The presence of this black old woman is a threat for the peace of white people. “They gazed nakedly upon their own fear transferred; a fear of the black and the old, a terror of the unknown as well as of the deeply known” (81). The old woman is likened to a worn-out working animal: “an old collie turned out to die” (82), and the imagery used here to describe her emphasizes her Southern roots, even her skin is like “the color of poor gray Georgia earth” (82) and is like “the bark of old pines” (82). The woman turns out to be representative of all blacks: “On her face centuries were folded into the circles around the eye, while around the other, etched and mapped as if for print, ages more threatened again to live” (82). Everybody sees some parts of black people on her face. What they see on her face is shaped by their vision of black people. The negative images about all blacks come to white people’s mind when they see her as the identification of the whole race.

Some...saw cooks, chauffeurs, maids, mistresses, children denied or smothered in the deferential way she held her cheek to the side, toward the ground. Many of them saw jungle orgies in an evil place, while others were reminded of riotous anarchists looting and raping in the streets. Those who knew the hesitant creeping up on them of the law, saw the desecration of Holy Church, and saw an invasion of privacy, which they struggled to believe they still kept. (82)

The image of black people in their minds comes to life with the old woman's appearance at the church door. "The young usher, never having turned anyone out of his church before, but not even considering this job as *that* (after all, she had no right to be there, certainly), went up to her and whispered that she should leave" (83) and then he orders her to go away. The woman is thrown out the church toward which she walks with her intimate faith in God. However, she sees Jesus on the top of the steps, going down the road and walks behind him down the road on his command of "Follow me!" (85). Jesus looks like the one in the picture she has stolen from the Bible of a white woman she has worked for. She follows him and falls down beside him, talks to Jesus, singing and then she is found dead on the road. Perhaps she tells him how His church doors are closed to her and how she suffers from that. She talks to Jesus who is very real to her:

She started telling him about how many years she had cooked for them, cleaned for them, nursed them. He looked at her kindly but in silence. She told him indignantly about how she grabbed her when she was singing in her head and not looking, and how they tossed her out of the church. (85-86)

She regards all white people as unfaithful to all her services. Now she is in peace due to "walking along the highway with Jesus" (86). "They walked on, looking straight over the treetops into the sky, and the smiles that played over her dry wind-cracked face were like first clean ripples across a stagnant pond. On they walked without stopping" (86). When she is found dead on the highway, people say they have seen her alone, singing, clapping her hands and sometimes looking up to the sky.

In the story, “the world of white religion is closed to an old, unnamed black woman who eventually finds her salvation outside the white church whose doors are closed to her” (Winchell, 1992: 39). In fact, the opening of the story hints about the old woman who does not lose her faith in God in spite of harsh manners of the white churchgoers towards her: “I’m going to sit at the Welcome Table / Shout my troubles over / Walk and talk with Jesus / Tell God how you treat me / One of these days!” (81). Thus, Walker “attacks the hypocrisy of a church which practices racism, and so throws mocking doubt upon the validity of the institution, through not the basic faith in God” (Birch, 1994: 207). The church institution is invalid because it practices racial discrimination and behaves hypocritically.

Unlike “The Welcome Table” portraying the old black woman who is expelled out of the church, nonetheless, does not lose her faith in Christianity, “The Diary of An African Nun” revolves around an African nun called Uganda who cannot find the peace she is looking for in the church. She desires to feel the intimate faith in her traditional African beliefs. “The story features a character in search of a faith that will not force her to deny her own perceptions of self and self-fulfillment” (Winchell, 1992: 40). She has an inner struggle which is witnessed in her diary.

She is born in a village “ ‘civilized’ by American missionaries” (114) and converted from her tribal religion to Catholicism. The usage of quotation marks around the word implies her doubt about what constitutes civilization. It is suggested in the story that the Christian Church has been used as a tool to tighten imperialistic power over African people: “In this way will the wife of a loveless, barren, hopeless marriage broadcast the joys of an enlightened religion to an imitative people” (118). At her young age in school, she would like to be like priests and nuns. However, until she becomes a nun, she does not know that she is not allowed to have a child. Claiming “What have I or my mountains to do with a childless marriage...” (117), Uganda calls herself “the wife of a loveless, barren, hopeless Western marriage” (118). At the age of 20, she wears the white-dominated church dress which symbolizes her marriage to Christ. She writes about people’s amazement towards her:

“I am unalterably rooted in native ground, they consider me a work of primitive art, housed in a magical color; the incarnations of civilization,

anti-heathenism, and the fruit of a triumphing idea...The French find me charmant and would like to paint a picture..." (113)

The white people find a black nun interesting, remembering that her ancestors are 'cannibals'. However, she begins to feel herself as a tool of missionary duty. This awareness leads her to question her Christian belief. On the other hand, she does not have enough courage to stop being a nun: " 'Sweet? Sister,' they will say. 'Have we not yet made a convert of you? Will you yet be a cannibal and eat up the life that is Christ because it eases your palate?' What must I answer my husband?" (117). Although white Christians do not believe her intimacy and sincerity in her Christian belief, she acts as a nun and cannot break her ties with Christianity. She is anxious about her responsibility to Christ. 'The speculative crystal eyes of bright historical blue' (113) allude to the European colonialists who wonder about the identity of the nun, because Christianity in the eyes of colonialist is for the white race. For colonialists, even religion is under their own monopoly. In fact she is responding to the stress of situations not of her own making, just like Walker's other married woman characters:

Certainly marriage offers these women nothing, and neither does religion, be it Christianity, the Black Muslim faith, or voodoo. That these traditional twin sources of comfort and stability cause nothing but "trouble" for Walker's characters might lead one to expect a decidedly depressing volume of short stories. (Petry, 1989: 13)

Although she is not married to a man, she feels devoted herself to Christianity, which is also the source of authority and patriarchy. However, she cannot find enough peace and spiritual comfort for herself. She is in the dilemma of being a Christian or a member of an African paganism. At night, alone in her room, when she hears the sound of pagan African drums, she has a clash between her Catholic faith and her tribal religion based on nature: "Through the window I can hear the drums, smell the roasting goat's meat, feel the rhythm of the festive chants" (115). She addresses to Christ, her husband to try to make him understand that there is much more promise in nature than in the artificial spring of resurrection. She "contrasts the sterility of her marriage to Christ with the vital dancing of the black 'pagans'" (Birch, 1994: 207). When she

compares her tribal religion with Christianity, she finds her ancestral faith more natural, intimate, fertile and vivid. She attempts to resist the temptation to experience the reality which the drums imply in their sounds. She says: "Dearly Beloved, let me tell you about the mountains and the spring" (117). She is in conflict with her roots and her later adopted religion Catholicism. She begins to lose her faith in the sterility, intimacy of the church, although she claims herself to be "a wife of Christ, a wife of Catholic Church" (114). She addresses to Christ in her diary: "...*I belong to you. Will you not come down and take me! Or are you even less passionate than your father who took but could not show his face?*" (115). It is evident that Walker reveals her own thoughts about religion by means of her character, Uganda. The dichotomy appears in her opinions:

Although I am constantly involved, internally, with religious questions and I seem to have spent all of my life rebelling against the church and other peoples' interpretations of what religion is the truth is probably that I don't believe there is a God, although I would like to believe it. Certainly I don't believe there is a God beyond nature. The world is God. Man is God. So is a leaf or a snake. (O'Brien, 1973: 205)

Associating her faith with nature, Walker speaks from the mouth of an African nun who cannot find peace she is looking for in Catholicism. Uganda's last words indicate her eventual surrender to hopelessness and betrayal:

"Or perhaps I might say, 'Leave me alone; I will do your work'; or, what is more likely, I will say nothing of my melancholia at your lack of faith in the spring...For what is my faith in the spring and the eternal melting of snows (you will ask) but your belief in the Resurrection? Could I convince one so wise that my belief bears more fruit? How to teach a barren world to dance? It is a contradiction that divides the world." (118)

She questions her presence in the white-dominated church which she prefers to her ancestral religion embracing the nature. She is within the conflict of the white-dominated church where she cannot find enough peace and her traditional religion

stemming from her roots she misses. She cannot feel belonging either to Christianity or to African belief. So, the story emphasizes that racism causes division of identity in terms of religion. Moreover, Walker hints that racism governs even religion.

3.2.2. Sexuality (Incest): “The Child Who Favored Daughter” (1973)

The pain of being a woman affects black women twice; because they are subordinate both to white men and black men. Walker exemplifies this situation with her father character in her story “The Child Who Favored Daughter”. She is victimized by her racist and sexist father.

The story revolves around a father cutting off the breasts of his teenager daughter who falls in love with a white boy just like her aunt having a relationship with a married white landowner for whom the girl’s father is working. His sister returns home after an escape with that white man destroyed mentally and physically. After that day, he does not love any women. He turns out to be a misogynist. His racist stance is strengthened with sexist thoughts. The poison contaminates all of his future relationships with women: “The women in his life faced a sullen barrier of distrust and hateful mockery. He could not seem to help hating even the ones who loved him, and laughed loudest at the ones who cared for him, as if they were fools” (40). He beats his wife, and she escapes him by killing herself. He goes on his life with his daughter who is nameless in the story.

An incestuous relationship between the father and his dead sister, and then with his daughter is implied in the story. He has an ambivalent feeling toward all women. He oscillates between love and violence towards women. The father cannot stand thinking his daughter with any other men. The story begins with these lines: “That my daughter should / fancy herself in love / with any man! / How can this be! – Anonymous” (35). As he addresses his dead sister as “Daughter”, the lines may imply her own daughter and her dead sister. He also mentions about his sister ‘Daughter’ as his “first love” (44). He recalls how in her sister’s madness she would sing and scream and tell them she was on fire, but she plays up “to him in her cunning way, exploiting again his love” (39). Thus, an incestuous relationship between them seems possible. He is depressed by the idea that white men only think of sleeping with black girls and never marriage. He also feels disgusted by the idea that white men again take revenge by abusing black women

sexually. Therefore, as he cannot forget his sister making mistake against him and his family by eloping with his white boss, his daughter's loving a white boy makes him crazy. Walker's "fictional use of rage, however, is more often than not contained within a family environment and directed toward self or kin rather than towards outsiders" (Davis, 1989: 27). Since his sister is abused by a white man, he feels humiliated by the whole white race. Therefore, all women's bodies in his life both enchant and irritate and disturb him.

The girl is beaten by her father and left on the dirty floor of a shed overnight. Nevertheless she is determined to take her letter to her lover next morning, full of her hatred to her father. As he waits on the front porch with his shotgun within easy reach and his daughter's letter to her lover in her hand, she walks from the school to the house. "He flashes back to recall the sister she so resembles, the sister whom he so dearly loved but who also gave her love to a white man" (Winchell, 1992: 36). He is full of the same rage to her daughter as he felt to her sister. When they confront, he feels what he felt for his sister. He flashes back fragmented bits of himself. These lines reflect the thoughts in his mind: "Memories of years / Unknowable women-sisters, spouses, illusions of soul" (38). He remembers his sister whom he used to love and was keen on. "She would give him anything she had... When he begged her not to go out, to stay with him, she laughed at him and went her way, sleeping here, sleeping there" (38). He cried many nights on his bed when she runs away; "for she had chosen to give her love to the very man in whose cruel, hot, and lonely fields he, her brother, worked. Not treated as a man, scarcely as well as a poor man treats his beast" (38). After returning home, his sister was beaten, behaved cruelly, punished by the family:

Tied on the bed as she was at the mercy of everyone in the house. They threw her betrayal at her like sharp stones, until they satisfied themselves that she could no longer feel their ostracism on her own pain. Gradually, as it became apparent she was not going to die, they took to flinging her food to her as if she were an animal and at night when she howled at the shadows thrown over her bed by the moon his father rose up and lashed her into silence with his belt. (39)

Black man can behave cruelly towards his own race, because of his hatred against the white race but also his humiliation by them. One day, she begs her brother to set her free. However, “his love for her had turned into a dull ache of constant loathing” (39). Now he lives in “a world where innocence and guilt became further complicated by questions of color and race” (40). His experiences about women in his life direct him to think more broadly about his existence as a black man in his racist society.

Now, he looks at the rain-soaked letter in his daughter’s hand. He can “make out ‘I love you’ written in a firm hand across the blue face of the letter” (42). He begs her to deny the letter, but the girl confesses: “No, with simplicity, a shrug, finality” (44). When the rain-soaked blouse falls from her shoulders, leaving her breasts bare, he gathers their fullness in his hands and “is suddenly burning with unnamable desire” (45). By taking out his knife, he cuts them off and throws them to the waiting-dogs. At the end of the story, he is waiting in the same place for the same yellow bus, but his non-coming daughter. Walker tells about this story:

“ ([...] ‘The Child Who Favored Daughter’ in *In Love And Trouble*, the father cuts off the breasts of his daughter because she falls in love with a white boy; why this, unless there is sexual jealousy?), and I wanted to learn, myself how it happens that the hatred a child can have for a parent becomes inflexible. And I wanted to explore the relationship between men and women, and why women are always condemned for doing what men do as an expression of their masculinity. Why are women so easily “tramps” and “traitors” when men are heroes for engaging in the same activity? Why do women stand for this?” (O’Brien, 1973: 197)

These questions have no answers not only for black society but also for all races. In fact the answer lies in patriarchal order. The old black men and their violent, aggressive behaviors have a great part in Walker’s works. Racist behaviors they experience in their youth shape their attitudes in their familial lives. They are “portrayals of Walker’s truth telling from a particular perspective that is conscious of their weaknesses that they distort into violence against other blacks especially women and children” (Davis, 1989: 30-31). Thus, the weakness of the father against racism

combined with his incestuous relationship with her sister and daughter forces him to violence toward all women in his life.

That the characters in the story do not have names indicates that these kinds of experiences are common in black people's life. Walker generalizes the racist approaches among black and white people and also incestuous relationships between father and daughter and brother and sister. Furthermore, Walker draws attention to black women's love with white men, which is humiliating for all black people who are behaved badly by the white race for ages.

3.2.3. Confinement and/or Resistance?: “Her Sweet Jerome” (1973), “Really, Doesn’t Crime Pay?” (1973) and “Roselily” (1973)

What if a woman closes herself intellectually and becomes a slave of patriarchy? On the other hand, what if a woman does not fight courageously in her efforts to seek the way of freedom through art precluded by patriarchy? Walker delineates these types of women with Mrs. Jerome in “Her Sweet Jerome” and Myrna in “Really, Doesn’t Crime Pay?” and title character in “Roselily”. The stories indicate the failures of three women who are submissive and cannot combat against oppression of black men, thus prepare their own ends by resigning to patriarchy, either because of their love or social and economical relief, supplied by men. They leave themselves to the confinement imposed by men upon them.

In “Her Sweet Jerome”, the protagonist called ‘Mrs. Jerome Franklin Washington III’ is a passive, submissive woman figure, jealous of her husband. She is identified by no other name than her husband's telling. He ignores her, does not find her beautiful, not worth of any effort to be like a modern black woman should be. He even disgusts her and stays at home only if Mrs. Jerome promises not to touch or talk to him. She is depicted as an ugly woman:

She was a big awkward woman, with big bones and hard rubbery flesh. Her short arms ended in ham hands, and her neck was a squat roll of fat that protruded behind her head as a big bump. Her skin was rough and puffy, with plump mole like freckles down her cheeks. Her eyes glowered from under the mountain of her brow and were circled with expensive mauve shadow. (25)

According to her husband, she is intellectually shallow, and physically repulsive. She manages to stand on her feet financially, however feels herself in need of a husband who dominates over her: "She made pretty good herself, though she didn't like standing on her feet so much, and her father let anybody know she wasn't getting any of his money while he was alive" (25). She falls in love with Mr. Jerome Franklin Washington III who is a schoolteacher and ten years younger than her, while he is going past her shop: "What popped into her mind was that if he was hers the first thing she would get him was a sweet little red car to drive. She works and goes into debt and gets it for him, too- after she gets him..." (26), and as he does not like it, she tries to save up to be able to buy "a brand-new white Buick deluxe, with automatic drive and whitewall tires" (26). For she was grown up with the codes of patriarchy, she instinctively thinks that she is obliged to hold her husband. Moreover, she again thinks that her beauty is not enough for her husband. Therefore, she seeks to manage it by means of her money's power.

On the other hand, the life Mr. Jerome leads with his white friends and his comrades is beyond her comprehension. She does not have any idea about her husband's political endeavors. He is fighting for black people's revolution. It is ironic for him to struggle for black people's equality, while ignoring his wife. "Jerome is hardly the noble revolutionary. In his intellectual fight against oppression in general, he feels no remorse for his cruel and literal oppression of his wife" (Winchell, 1992: 35). According to him, there is a huge gap between his female friends in the revolution and his wife, Mrs. Jerome. While they wear "short kinky hair and large hoop earrings" representing their ancestral roots, Mrs. Jerome spends her days in her beauty parlor processing hair to make it look like the white ideal of feminine beauty. "She prides herself on her pastel taffetas, umbrella hats, and elbow-length red satin gloves" (27). While the revolutionary women reject Christianity and never go to the church, Jerome laughs at her each Sunday morning as she minces off to church on her high heels. While they talk about slave trade and violence towards black people, she brags about how she doesn't miss her 'eddicashion' as much as some did who had no learning and no money both together (26). Thus, as Mr. Jerome thinks that she is ugly and ignorant, not an intellectual woman, Mr. Jerome finds himself justified in ignoring her and taking her money. Mr. Jerome uses her money for political purposes. Whenever she asks the inheritance her father left to them, he mentions about insurance of fire, theft, burglary

and cyclones, but when the money is gone, he tells about he has bought “something very big, like a tank” (31). She does not care about money as long as she is sure that he does not spend on women. For she has internalized patriarchal codes and the idea that she lacks sexual appeal, she has no self-respect and self-reliance. Neither her father nor her husband has tried to make her feel valuable and comfortable among others. De Beauvoir claims: *“To catch a husband is an art; to hold him is a job”* (1989: 468). Accordingly, grown up by the patriarchal codes, Mrs. Jerome manages to catch her ten-year younger husband and does her best to hold him. Now, her only interest is to make him bond to herself. She attempts to do it by material and aesthetical forces. She buys gifts for him and undergoes many beauty processes for him. On the other hand, he accepts wearing the clothes she has bought for him only if she promises “not to touch him anywhere at all while he was getting dressed” (25). Despite the fact that he is not a faithful husband, he is not shown as an abuser of his wife but rather “as a person who falls victim to drinking out of frustration caused by the limitations put on him because of his color” (Thielman, 1999: 72). He reflects to his wife his hatred he had as a result of racism against his color. Like the father figure in “The Child Who Favored Daughter” and the husband in “Coming Apart”, Mr. Jerome also shows his anger resulting from his being humiliated by white people to the ones closest to him.

When she hears that her husband betrays him, her jealousy drives her into the streets armed with axes, pistols, and knives in search of the other women. She stops operating her beauty shop and turns the whole town upside down, “looking at white girls, black women, brown beauties, ugly hags of all shades” (29). When one of her customers says to her: “Your cute little man is sticking his finger into somebody else’s pie” (28), she abandons all of her earlier efforts to make herself look pretty, if only in her own eyes: “Her firm bulk became flabby. Her eyes were bloodshot and wild, her hair full of lint, nappy at the roots and greasy on the ends. She smelled bad from mouth and underarms and elsewhere” (29). She breaks into his office to catch him with his lover, but she interrupts his meeting as if she enters to start an evolution, but she does not make any sense of their political conversation, they also ignore her. So, she leaves there “heavily, with her head down, bewildered, astonished, and perplexed” (32). She searches the whole house for any clues of her husband’s lover. However, she can only find old dusty paperbacks about blacks and revolution.

When she realizes that she does not know even the word *revolution* itself, she sets out to kill her paperback rivals, “stacking them on Jerome’s pillow and slashing them with her knives, then dousing them with kerosene and setting the marriage bed on fire. As the room burns, she backs into a corner “not near the open door” (33-34) and screams as the fire starts to consume her flesh. She commits suicide by burning the paperbacks in her bedroom. As she could not develop value judgments for herself and being apart from marriage and husband, she sticks blindly to them. When she sees that they are gone and meaningless, she goes out of mind. Walker here wants to say that a woman’s goals in life should be versatile and marriage is only one of them.

Although she can stand on her feet in economical terms, she needs to the embracement of a husband. She cannot live without the shadows of the patriarchy she internalizes. This passive woman figure obeys patriarchy blindly. Therefore, she does not improve herself intellectually and is away from mentality of saving herself from its effects and kills herself literally and literarily. Although Myrna is thirsty for intellectuality, with her desire to be a great writer in “Really, Doesn’t Crime Pay?”, she is also victimized by the confinement of men and she cannot embrace intellectual freedom.

Myrna’s desire to write is an indictment of her attempt for self-fulfillment. However, her middle-class husband, Ruel scorns her efforts: “No wife of mine is going to embarrass me with a lot of foolish, vulgar stuff” (15). He wants a mindless beauty with sweet smells. If she has time, she is supposed to go shopping, to the hairdresser’s and to have a baby. She stocks up needless cosmetics such as cold cream, lip gloss, wigs and perfumes, but she is not happy. “He married me because although my skin is brown he thinks I look like a Frenchwoman. Sometimes he tells me I look Oriental: Korean or Japanese. I console myself with this thought” (13). As a typical black woman, she has a feeling of inferiority because of her blackness. She thinks she is ugly and likes to be complimented by the thought of her resemblance to a French, a Korean or a Japanese woman. She is aware of the fact that Ruel is interested in her beauty and does not want her to deal with art, because, most probably, he is afraid that her growing intellectuality threatens his control over her. On the other hand, she wants to be a serious writer, because she knows that her fulfillment comes to her through her art. However, her concern about her darkening body indicates her fear of losing her husband, because, she thinks that Ruel may not appreciate her if she gets dark. She is afraid that “One day he

may wake up in bed with a complete stranger” (13), as her family darkens when they get older. Although she is an intellectual woman, she cannot help thinking about the danger of losing her husband.

However, “Myrna proves to be one of Walker’s women whose loyalties are misdirected and destructive; she errs in her choice of both husband and lover” (Winchell, 1992: 32). She has a love affair with a writer Mordecai Rich who is interested in her and especially in her writings. She enjoys his flattery. Mordecai deceives her in a cunning way. He claims Ruel is too old to be her husband. He touches her left nipple and her hair. However, she confesses that she does not want to stop him, especially after the day he finds out she wants to be a writer herself. While Mordecia is reading her story, she promises herself to go to bed with him, if he praises her. The black environment is also decayed; black male writers try to get the opportunity of having sex with black women, pursuing intellectual aims. While having sex with him, she says “Under Mordecia’s fingers my body opened like a flower and carefully blossomed. And it was strange as well as wonderful. For I don’t think love had anything to do with this at all” (17). It is clear that she has not loved or made sex with a man other than Rule before and she enjoys the feeling of being flattered by a man. So, she finds in Mordecai what she would like Ruel to be or do. On the other hand, she does not want to go to bed with Rule eagerly. She washes the prints of his hands off her body after he falls asleep. He wants to have a child and begs her for this. She seems to be submissive in response to his desires. Ruel is interested in materiality in life, rather than spirituality, for instance, when Myrna tells him that Mordecai wants to use their house as setting for one of his Southern country stories. He refuses not to do as he is jealous of his wife, but as he is ashamed of their house, although Myrna is not. He has always wanted to have “a new house, he says, of brick, with a Japanese bath” (15).

Myrna is victimized by two men. One of them is Ruel who hinders her intellectual life and evaluates her as a sexual object. The other one is Mordecia, who uses her both sexually and intellectually. He betrays her not only by deserting her, but also stealing one of her stories, publishing it in a magazine under his own name. At the doctor’s office where she goes for baby control, while reading a magazine, she notices the story she wrote and gave to Mordecai. Upset by this situation, she tries to murder Ruel with one of his chain saws. “I plugged in one of his chain saws and tried to slice off his head” (21). She attempts to take the revenge of her desired interest and her stolen

art from him whom she thinks the real cause of everything terrible in her life. Later she wants to commit suicide: “I must think of something better to do than kill myself” (20). But she leaves off this idea. She stays at hospital for some time.

The end of the story tells her return to their new house, which Ruel has always wanted to buy. He offers her forgetting the past by leading her to the glorious house. In the end, she is illustrated with her sweetened body “to such an extent that even he (especially he) may no longer touch it. I do not want to forget the past; but I say “Yes,” like a parrot” (12). She becomes just like how her husband Ruel wants her to be. She has now “sweet-smelling, small, and soft” hands (10). Her disturbance is clear in her mentioning about the sweet smell of her body to be “more than I could bear” (11). She is now a woman obeying her husband rather than a dominant one trying to be a serious writer. He succeeds in remaking her in accordance with his image of what the wife of a successful businessman should be, but, ironically, Ruel is not happy with the result, because he knows that she does it reluctantly. So, his product brings no satisfaction to himself:

“I wait, beautiful and perfect in every limb, cooking supper as if my life depended on it. Lying unresisting on his bed like a drowned body washed to shore. But he is not happy. For he knows now that I intend to do nothing but says yes until he is completely exhausted.” (22, 23)

Ruel becomes aware that there is nothing to do by force. Myrna uses manipulative power of the word “yes” and gets a small success over her husband, achieving from her position of weakness. The story is open-ended hinting that she may go away by leaving Ruel and her nonsense life:

When he quite, quite tired of me I will tell him how long I’ve relied on the security of the pill. When I am quite, quite tired of the sweet, sweet smell of my body and softness of these Helena Rubenstein hands I will leave him and his house. Leave them forever without once looking back. (23)

In the story, man and marriage are responsible for Myrna's thwarting her career. It indicates marriage as a site of female imprisonment. The story explores the compatibility between women's demands for wider opportunities in education and careers and the demands of marriage and motherhood. Two husband figures do not use physical forces, but manipulate their wives into their own molds and into the women's unhappiness. Thus, Myrna and Mrs. Jerome are devoid of psychological freedom and wholeness. However, when two stories are evaluated together, it may be concluded that whether a female is intellectual or not, she is a sexual object seen as second class-citizen by men. Women fail if they are not sufficient intellectually, just like Mrs. Jerome confining her directly within the framework of patriarchy. They fail again, if they have intellectual capacity, however, lacking enough courage and energy against the male oppression, just like Myrna who resigns herself to men exploiting her. The characters in these two stories also have internalized racism as character defect. They are ashamed of their dark/darkening skin and are not able to face the physical reality of their race.

The title character in "Roselily" is the other protagonist who cannot save herself the internalized patriarchal confinement. Roselily resigns her freedom to the confining effects of marriage. She needs a man for socially and economically secure life for herself and her children. She marries the unnamed Black Muslim from Chicago in part to give her three illegitimate children a better chance in life, and in part to obtain for herself some measure of social and economic security; but it is not really a relationship she chooses to enter freely, as is conveyed by her barely listening to her wedding ceremony—a service which triggers images not of romance but of bondage. While the preacher is making his speech in front of them, she is dreaming about herself, her future, her four children, her past and her mother whom she loved very much.

She will not work and will live with her husband in the North, in Chicago, by leaving Mississippi. The last one of her children is with her ex-husband who had some money, but she is worried about him, as well. The marriage is, in fact, her chance to get rid of harsh conditions of life an alone woman has to face, because it is implied that she is disturbed by married men. She also has to work for her children.

"The search for psychological wholeness is at the heart of "Roselily," the opening story of *In Love and Trouble*" (Winchell, 1992: 30). Roselily's inner monologue indicates her mental conflict created by two different motives: the first one is to select security with a Muslim, the other one is to resist the absolute submission

which is inevitable in such a marriage by disregarding her personal fulfillment. For instance, she is aware of the fact that he will present her and her children a better life. Because, she knows “he blames Mississippi for the respectful way the men turn their heads up in the yard, the women stand waiting and knowledgeable, their children held from mischief by teachings from the wrong God” (3). On the other hand, she is worried about the way she will lead in Chicago. She is unwilling to become Muslim or a Muslim’s wife, and she is unwilling to lead a restricted life. “She thinks of rapes, chains, handcuffs, his religion. His place of worship. Where she will be required to sit apart with covered head” (4). She seems uneasy with her changing religion. The marriage veil will merge with the veil (*purdah*) she will have to wear as the wife of a Muslim. This is taken as an outward sign that in her womanhood she is inferior and that marriage is a binding, not a freeing phenomenon. “The term *purdah* is significantly applied to both to the veil and to the Muslim segregation of women it symbolizes” (Winchell, 1992: 31).

She is also worried about the fact that she will lose her roots. “She wonders how to make new roots. It is beyond her. She wonders what one does with memories in a brand-new life. This had seemed easy, until she thought of it [...] She thinks of cemeteries and the long sleep of grandparents mingling in the dirt” (6). She will “not to have to go to a job. Not to work in a sewing plant. Her place will be in the home, he has said, repeatedly, promising her rest she had prayed for. But now she wonders. When she is rested, what will she do?” (6-7). Her thinking her hands full of babies makes her uneasy: “Her hands will be full. Full of what? Babies. She is not comforted” (7). Thus she thinks that even though she is rested from her labor, she will have many more babies. This thought does not console her. On the other hand, she wants to get rid of her past, responsibilities, all the things clinging to her:

Impatient to be done with sewing. With doing everything for three children, alone. Impatient to leave the girls, she had known since childhood, their children growing up, their husbands hanging around her, already old, seedy... (7)

Despite all these expectations, she is doubtful about the new life and new values waiting for her in a new place and about her husband’s promises: “She does not even

know if she loves him...She loves his pride...She thinks she loves the effort he will make to redo her into what he truly wants” (8). Thus, it is implied that she thinks that Chicago and her husband will give security, but not personal fulfillment, because, she feels that she will be remade into her husband’s image of black womanhood, into another religion and values. Doubting her ability to love him forever, she feels a rising panic described as “a rat trapped, cornered, scurrying do and fro in her head, peering through the window of her eyes...”It seems to her, barring he [the preacher] has always been standing in front of her, barring her way” (8). She feels both literary and literally oppressed. “Her husband’s hand is like the claps of an iron gate” (8). However, she does not do anything to stop her uneasiness. She accepts all the things presented to her. “She presses her worried fingers into her palm” (9). She leads a doubtful way to an unknown world, because she gets married out of material obligations. Walker portrays two facets of marriage by means of Roselily. She gets married to escape hard conditions of her life which she has to lead with her three illegitimate children by herself. However, she is uncomfortable with the questions about and before marriage which will bring her other handicaps and uncertainties. Walker hints that such a step to marriage will result in failure and unhappiness, because making concessions from one’s existence ruins life.

3.2.4. Motherhood, Matrilineage and Ancestral Lineage: “Everyday Use” (1973)

The values such as motherhood, matrilineage and, in general, ancestral heritage have great significance for *Womanism* thought. For Walker, a woman who breaks away from her ancestors cannot stand upon her feet in a racist and sexist society. In “Everyday Use” (1973), Walker problematizes the issue of breaking bonds to the past for young generation through the protagonist called ‘Dee’, who breaks away from their roots and loses their loyalty to their ancestors.

Walker’s most popular story, “Everyday Use” is about two sisters; the homebound Maggie and the activist Dee. Walker reminds significance of matrilineage by drawing attention to the relationship between the mother figure called Mrs. Johnson and her daughters, who have many differences in their characters. The change in Dee, one of the daughter’s approach to her roots creates a gap with the mother and herself in terms of matrilineage.

Mrs. / Ms. Johnson is described as a hard working and loving mother never showing favoritism towards either of her daughters. Walker characterizes the mother / narrator as an uneducated, but wise peasant. She is a middle aged African-American woman who has single handedly struggled to raise her two daughters while taking care of the household chores. She has suffered much from racism: “[in] 1927 colored asked fewer questions than they do now” (50), but she is open-minded, man-like and clear-minded woman:

In real life, I am a large, big-boned woman with rough, man-working hands. In the winter I wear flannel nightgowns to bed and overalls during the day. I can kill and clean a hog as mercilessly as a man. My fat keeps me hot in zero weather. I can work outside all day, breaking ice to get water for washing... (48)

She seems to manage quite well without a man and seems more at peace with herself. She daydreams of being a more glamorous mother for Dee, who is well educated and sophisticated young lady leaving home to obtain additional education. Dee wants her to be “a hundred pounds lighter”, her skin to be “like an uncooked barley pancake”, her hair to shine “in the hot bright lights” (48). The narrator mentions how Mrs. Johnson herself would like to be more feminine and lady-like, but instead she is forced to maintain all chores / in the house and in the outside and describes herself as ‘a large, big-boned woman with rough, man-working hands’. It is not obvious whether Mr. Johnson lives or has left them. She is left alone to kill pigs, milk cows and raise her two girls. Women without husbands are often obliged to play the role of the mother and the father; in this case the narrator played both roles. She is content with her rural Southern lifestyle and does not expect much more out of life. There are women who always want better, but are forced to accept their current situations and make the best out of them, and that is what Mrs. Johnson has done.

Dee and Maggie are two sisters who are different in nature. Maggie who is very shy and a traditionally skilled daughter is portrayed as standing on the corner, “homely and ashamed of the burn scars down her arms and legs, eying her sister with a mixture of envy and awe” (47). On the other hand, Dee has a rebellious spirit, because, ““no” is

a word the world never learned to say to her (Dee)” (47). Moreover, “Hesitation was no part of her nature” (49). She has vanity and senseless self-confidence.

Mrs. Johnson mentions how beautiful Dee’s feet are and how “God himself had shaped them with a certain style” (52) and later refers to Maggie’s walk as that of a lame animal. Dee is the child that receives everything that she wants and does not understand the meaning of ‘no’ and there is Maggie who is used to never winning. However, her thoughts change when Dee visits them in their new home with a Muslim boy who is probably her boyfriend.

When Dee arrives, before greeting and hugging her mother and sister, she hurries to get her camera to take the photos of her house. She wants to take a picture of the house, does to be in the picture. She prefers frame that world by excluding herself from it. While her mother and sister are longing for her return, Dee does not return to fill a place held for her in her absence. She excludes herself from the environment she grows up. She no longer wants to see the link between herself and the place she came from and she no longer bears her African name “Dee”. When the mother calls her ‘Dee’, she says: “She is dead. I couldn’t bear it any longer, being named after the people who oppress me” (53). However, she has been named after her aunt, her mother’s sister, Dicie who was called as ‘Big Dee’ and Big Dee was named after her mother’s Grandma Dee who was also named after her mother. The mother thinks that she “could have carried it back beyond the Civil War through the branches” (54).

Dee makes the mistake of believing that one’s heritage is something that one puts on display if and when such a display is fashionable. The very name that she prefers, Wangero Leewanika Kemanjo, is one ‘put on’ to replace the one passed down to her through generations of Johnson women. (Winchell, 1992: 81)

The strong matrilineage sense is apparent in their cyclical name adoption, and Dee seems to be broken away from this bond. Another significant sign of breaking her bond with her ancestors is that she considers the quilts of her heritage as a “thing” which is not other than an aesthetic commodity. She removes all the items of everyday use. She wants her mother to give her the churn and the dasher. When Maggie reminds her that “Aunt Dee’s first husband whittled the dash” (55), Dee makes fun of her by

saying: “Maggie’s brain is like an elephant’s” (56). She wants to use the churn top “as a centerpiece for the alcove table” (56) and thinks of “something artistic to do with the dasher” (56). However, Mrs. Johnson values the quilts because they represent the African-American culture and heritage:

The quilts had been pieced by Grandma Dee and then Big Dee and me had hung them on the quilt frames on the front porch and quilted them. One was in the Lone Star pattern. The other was Walk Around the Mountain. In both of them were scraps of dresses Grandma Dee had woven fifty more years ago. Bits and pieces of Grandpa Jattell's Paisley shirts. And one teeny faded blue piece, about the size of a penny matchbox, that was from Great Grandpa Ezra's uniform that he wore in the Civil War. (56)

From the quotation it becomes apparent that black women pay much dearness. However, Dee is a snob reducing memories to objects of show off. Ignoring their importance for matrilineage, she approaches them as artificial and precious artworks and wants to use them as wall-hangings. The value she gives to the quilts is aesthetic not matrilineal value. However, the “quilt is an emblem of American women’s culture itself. The quilt is passed down like mother’s wisdom from generation to generation” (Guerin, 1999: 230). Dee also despises Maggie’s habit of putting them to everyday use: “ ‘Maggie can’t appreciate these quilts!... She’d probably be backward enough to put them to everyday use’ ” (57). The mother evaluates Dee’s approach as “her moving away from, rather than towards, her community- thrusts the quilts towards Maggie” (Birch, 1994: 204). For Maggie, heritage is more than art. By means of Maggie, Walker may give the message of remaining loyal to the matrilineage. The mother claims that she has promised to give them to Maggie when she gets married. On the other hand, she also remembers that Dee wanted to give some of the quilts to her when she was going to the college, but Dee refused to take them as they were old-fashioned. Now she says that “they’re priceless!... Maggie would put them on the bed and in five years they’d be in rags...” (57). Dee says she will hang them as if “that was the only thing you *could* do with quilts” (58), Mrs. Johnson thinks. These thoughts make Mrs. Johnson angry, because, although Dee finds her mother and sister backward and ignorant, the

knowledge of the outside world Dee tries to impose on them is the knowledge they probably do not need. Simple pleasures such as a dip of snuff, a cooling breeze across a clean swept yard, church songs, soothing movements of milk cows are enough for them to live peacefully. As Patricia Mainardi notes, “The women who made quilts knew and valued what they were doing: frequently quilts were signed and dated by the maker, listed in her will with specific instructions as to who should inherit them, and treated with all the care that a fine piece of art deserves” (Showalter, 1994: 200- 01).

Dee’s character represents the woman of the 20th century when women have been restricted opportunities and were slowly gaining more rights. Her character would not allow her obstacles of being a female and an African-American to oppress her. Women of the 20th century have also gained additional rights but are still living in a male - dominated society and like Dee, they refuse to be oppressed. However, she remains blind to the falsity and shallowness of the life she lives as a modern young black woman. She leads a fashionable life by rejecting the primitive one of her family. On the other hand, Maggie’s character represents all women who have been hurt either physically or mentally and have decided to take a passive approach on life. Walker implies that Dee is/will be always in search of an identity, as she loses her ties to her ancestors. On the hand, Maggie lives/ will live peacefully in her traditional life, based on matrilineage and nature. Walker pays much value to past as constructive element for one’s identity. Therefore, for her, if one breaks her/his bonds with past, s/he will suffer from identity crisis.

3.3. In *You Can’t Keep A Good Woman Down* (1981), A Womanist Response to Black Feminist Issues

Such issues as racism, sexism and class oppression with which Black Feminists deal continue to trouble black women’s lives. However, Black Feminism remains incapable of helping black women come over them. Walker provides some solutions to these problems by means of her theory of *Womanism*. According to her, the main ways of surviving in a racist and sexist society are to keep in touch with the past, to read the old works written by black women and to have strong lineage among women, especially between mother and daughter. That Walker determines her political stance and ascertains the tenets of her theory of *Womanism* towards 1980s appears in terms of differences of the protagonists in her second collection, *You Can’t Keep A Good*

Woman Down (1981). She provides some solutions to Black Feminist issues by creating mostly educated women who know how to struggle. She also depicts some protagonists who are economically and intellectually free, however is away the concepts of faithfulness or family. By means of negative samples, she underlines her messages to be led. Therefore, some selected short stories from *You Can't Keep A Good Woman Down* draw attention to the solutions provided by Walker's *Womanism*.

3.3.1. Sexuality:

Walker discusses some subjects, about which she avoids to mention in her first collection. These are especially rape and pornography. Gender issue appears within the framework of sexuality in it. The body of the black women is problematized and her being sexually abused both black men and white men is stressed. In the selected stories, Walker provides a solution to black women to come over this problem. It is to read the works of black women writers and philosophers.

3.3.1.1. Rape: "How Did I Get Away With Killing One of the Biggest Lawyers? It Was Very Easy." (1981) and "Advancing Luna and Ida B. Wells" (1981)

According to Walker, "Rape, whatever the color of the raped or rapist is, is violation" (Birch, 1994: 218). "Advancing Luna and Ida B. Wells" and "How Did I Get Away with Killing One of the Biggest Lawyers in the State? It Was Easy." in *You Can't Keep A Good Woman Down* exemplifies her attack against rape issue. While a white woman is raped by a black man in the first story, a black woman is raped by a white man in the second one.

"How Did I Get Away with Killing One of the Biggest Lawyers in the State? It Was Easy." illustrates the portrayal of a black girl fighting against racism, white sexual exploitation of herself. She is a poor black teenager who does not know her father and whose mother works as a maid. "She is not a born fighter; her first response to violence or injustice is not to fight, but to acquiesce." (Winchell, 1992: 78). She is raped at the age of 12, but keeps it as secret. At the age of 14, she is intrigued by a white lawyer her mother works for, who takes her to his office and rapes her. She does not tell this to

anyone, as well. Then she gets on his car willingly and has sexual affair with him, as he gives her money and gifts she cannot even daydream. She goes on having sex with him even after her mother gets aware of it. Then her mother says to her that the lawyer's father " 'goes on the tv every night and says folks like us ain't even human.' It was his daddy who stood in the schoolhouse door saying it would be over his dead body before any black children would come into a white school" (24). However, she does not care about it, because she is only 16 and is not informed about the concepts of 'equal rights' and 'integration' that the mother talks about (24). She does not know what her antecedents lived. The only thing she needs is to hear good words, compliments and expensive gifts. Their relationship lasts for two years.

Her mother is a strong figure who fights for her daughter. They live in a place where "children were always screaming and men were always cussing and women were always yelling about something..." (23). They live in a poor and shabby place. There is nothing told about the girl's father who most probably leaves them. The girl tells about her mother: " 'I work in private homes' she would say, and that sounded nicer, she thought, than saying 'I'm a maid'...By the time she paid the rent and bought milk and bananas there wasn't anything left" (22) from the money she makes a day. Her mother is also a whore: "... sometimes she would go out at night, or bring men home – but they never thought of marrying her...they came to my Mama, who fell for them every time. And I think she may have had a couple abortions, ..." (22). "Walker relies upon sexual violence and physical abuse to portray breaches in black generations. Typically she brings to her work a terrible observance of black self hatred and destruction" (Davis, 1989: 26). Walker draws attention to the miscegenation of black race, because black race has been breached for centuries; due to obliged migrations and dissolution of families, family members do not know one another, so after years, they meet without knowing that they are close relatives, and this is a kind of genocide against black race. This resulted in their losing self-respect. When she learns that her daughter is abused by her boss, she wants to dissuade her daughter not to go to him. She beats her to death with the cord from the electric iron in the street. She beats her until "she couldn't raise her arm" (24). The girl tells the lawyer how her mother beats her and despises him. On her 17th birthday, the lawyer, Bubba insists her to take her mother to an insane asylum. Then the mother tries to take legal action against this white seducer. In the court Bubba tells he does not touch his hand on the girl and then her mother really becomes insane

there. When she realizes it, she wants the lawyer to help her to release her mother, but he refuses it. He says her mother is an obstacle that “he felt he had removed” (25). Until her mother’s death, she continues going to him “out of habit” (26). She resigns herself to sexual exploitation. Upon her mother’s death, she takes her revenge and kills the lawyer remorselessly with his gun in his office drawer and takes his money and behaves as if she did not do anything sitting on his wife’s bed, eating fried chicken Julie, his wife has cooked, as babysitting for their children on the funeral day. Her courageous murder indicates Walker’s desire for revenge, as well. She herself has confessed: “It’s true that I fantasize revenge for injustices big and small I imagine how wonderful it must feel to kill the white man who oppresses you” (Steniem, 1982: 93). Then she reads in the newspaper that he is written to be killed by ‘burglars’. With the money she steals, she educates herself by going to college.

“The victim has become the agent in a tale which challenges the stereotype of black woman as a permanently non-resistant focus for the white men’s lust” (Birch, 1994: 219). While she initially seems to be passive towards white men’s sexual abusing her sexually, she turns out to be rebellious by breaking her silence. She takes revenge of not only herself and her mother, but also all black women sexually abused by white men.

Just a reverse, “Advancing Luna and Ida B. Wells” revolves around a white woman raped by a black man and keeping her silence. It examines the rape of a white civil rights worker by a black civil rights worker from the point of view of the black woman who is the victim’s best friend. The story focuses on the impact of an apparent rape on the friendship of two women: an “I,” the nameless narrator whose personal history - a black Georgia native, an engaged writer, civil rights activist, and general advocate for liberal causes - generally parallels Walker’s political involvements and commitments, and Luna, a young white woman. “We believed we could change America because we were young and bright and held ourselves *responsible* for changing it. We did not believe we would fail” (86).

Their sense of activism seems strong. The text’s strong identification with women’s experience is relentlessly complicated by an insistent racial problematic. Racial ideology is reinforced by the narrator’s mentioning about the violence directed against blacks during the 1960s. Evocations of the assassinations of King, Malcolm X, and the Kennedys represent the suppression of black hopes during that period. Overall,

the story foregrounds the conflict inherent in a politics that would merge race and gender.

I cannot detect fear on any of our faces, though we were all afraid. After all, 1965 was only a year after 1964 when three civil rights workers had been taken deep into a Mississippi forest by local officials and sadistically tortured and murdered. (89-90)

The black activist narrator seems to have strong-identified racist thoughts:

I thought black people superior to white people, because even without thinking about it much, I assumed almost everyone was superior to them.... Only white people, after all, would blow up a Sunday-school class and grin for television over their "victory," i.e., the death of four small black girls. Any atrocity, any time, was expected from them. On the other hand, it never occurred to me that black people could treat Luna and me with anything but warmth and concern. (88)

However, her thoughts are escalated with Luna's confession. She tells her that while engaged in the civil rights work in the South during the 1960s she was raped by Freddie Pye, a black fellow civil rights worker. When Luna tells her secret to the narrator, she feels that "there was a cooling off of our affection for each other" (95). She gets angry and repulsed:

This was the time before Eldridge Cleaver wrote of being a rapist/revolutionary; "practicing" on black women before moving on to whites. It was also ... before LeRoi Jones wrote the advice to young black insurrectionaries.... 'Rape the white girls. Rape their fathers....' It was clear that he meant this literally and also as: to rape a white girl is to rape her father. It was the misogynous cruelty of this latter meaning that was habitually lost on black men (on men in general, actually) but nearly always perceived and rejected by women of any color. (92)

She cannot believe in this thought of rape, as the rape of a white woman by a black man is extraordinary, whereas the rape of a black woman by a white man is common in American history. She questions the beliefs she assumes to be true, because, she lightly assumes that black people are superior. This generalization, however, is tested when Luna, a white friend of hers, tells her that during the Movement she was raped by a black man they both know. The narrator naturally is opposed to rape; yet she cannot believe black men actually rape white women. She knows what happens if a black man is even accused of such an act. Her earlier sense of clarity and lightness is shattered; now, doubts and questions push her to unravel her own feelings:

Who knows what the black woman thinks of rape? Who has asked her? Who cares? Who has even properly acknowledged that she and not the white woman in this story is the most likely victim of rape? Whenever interracial rape is mentioned, a black woman's first thought is to protect the lives of her brothers, her father, her sons, her lover. A history of lynching has bred this reflex in her" (93) [...] I began to think that perhaps – whether Luna had been raped or not – it had always been so; that her power over my life was exactly the power her word on rape had over the lives of black men, over all black men, whether they were guilty or not, and therefore over my whole people. (95)

The title indicates the relatedness of the theme with Ida B. Wells who spent her life protecting black men from accusations of rape and lynching. It is clear that Ida B. Wells is taken as reference in the narrator's approach to rape issue. Two historical moments are evoked and "read" within the context of their ideological implications: the moment of the Black Power Movement and the anti-lynching efforts of Ida B. Wells. She prays Wells in her writings:

I cannot write contrary to what life reveals to me. I wish to malign no one. But I must struggle to understand at least my own tangled emotions about interracial rape. I know, Ida B. Wells, you spent your whole life protecting, and trying to protect, black men accused of raping white women, who were lynched by white mobs, or threatened with it.

You know, better than I ever will, what it means for a whole people to live under the terror of lynching. Under the slander that their men, where white women are concerned, are creatures of uncontrollable sexual lust. You made it so clear that black men accused of rape in the past were innocent victims of white criminals that I grew up believing black men literally did not rape white women... (93-94)

Wells' warning the narrator in "vision" implies Walker's doubts about the approach such a critical issue as a white woman's being raped by a black man:

Write Nothing. Nothing at all. It will be used against black men and therefore against all of us. Eldridge Cleaver and LeRoi Jones don't know who they're dealing with. But you remember. You are dealing with people who brought their children to witness the murder of black human beings, falsely accused of rape... (94)

The writer implies that whatever a black woman react in such a situation, she is misunderstood, as representing her race. Several years later, upon awakening in an apartment that she shares with Luna, the black woman observes Freddie Pye leaving Luna's bedroom. Although she thinks that she was expected to be an enemy toward his presence in Luna's bedroom, she does not comment about it. Years later, the narrator is told by an artist in Havana that Freddie may have been hired to rape the white women in the movement: "But assuming Freddie Pye was paid to disrupt – by raping a white woman – the black struggle in the South, he may have wised up enough later to comprehend the significance of Luna's decision not to scream" (104).

These two incidents constitute textually dominant and determining focus of the narrative and the ideological issues it foregrounds, tensions and fragmentations experienced by black women, attempting to reconcile the politics of race and that of gender. The story is an example of a process, rather than a product, because the young narrator's "development is reflected through her growing understanding of the complexity of interracial rape" (Christian, 1982: 197). The question she posed is not fully resolved in the end. The relationship between race and sex in America is so convoluted and pervasive that the story cannot conclude; instead, it is open-ended,

insisting on the complexity of the issue and the characters. Luna may try to evoke questions in the narrator's mind about her reliance upon her own race and black men. This is a way of devaluing one's respect towards his own race. Walker indicates successfully "how the black woman has to go on paying for the inequities of sexual exploitation suffered in slavery" (Birch, 1994: 203). Drawing attention to black women's continuous victimhood, Walker also gives the message that no matter what a woman's color is, rape is rape. She also implies that women – whatever their race is – must not be silent, when they are raped. She also presents a way of dealing with the problem. She illustrates that inspiring from black women's old works, black women can find enough courage to struggle.

3.3.1.2. Pornography: "Porn" (1981) and "Coming Apart" (1981)

Sexism comes out in pornography as degrading black women by displaying them as sexual objects, even on the animal level. Walker attacks this kind of items that reduce the value of black women. "Walker's women refuse to have her sexual identity defined by a man's sexist or racist fantasies" (Winchell, 1992: 76). For instance, "Porn" and "Coming Apart" in *You Can't Keep A Good Woman Down* explore the threat pornography poses to marital relationships between black man and black woman. The former one illustrates a good relationship destroyed by pornography, while the latter one shows a woman fighting against the dehumanizing effects of pornography. Therefore, these stories advocate the thought that "Walker identifies pornography and racism as having the same root: both are a violent expression of assumed power" (Birch, 1994: 218).

The wife in "Porn" has extreme sexual feelings for her husband: "Still, her primary interest in him was sexual...She was aflame with desire for him.... She would run water in the tub with lots of bubbles. In the bath they would lick and suck each other, in blissful delight" (78). The turning point for the couple comes with their decision to make effort for simultaneous orgasm with the effect of pornographic magazines the husband reads. They cannot delete the images of the magazine in front of their eyes, while having sex. "The long-term accommodation that protects marriage and other such relationships is, she knows, forgetfulness. She will forget what turns him on" (81). She feels that she is trying to feel herself just the ladies in the pornographic magazines her husband reads. However her failure in her attempts drags her into

uneasiness, unhappiness, the feeling of indeficiency. On the other hand, the husband feels himself obligatory to fantasize in order to make her happy while having sex. However, their attempts to copy the ones in the magazines fail.

He watches her face as he makes expert love to her. He knows his technique is virtually flawless, but he thinks perhaps it can be improved...He thinks frantically of what she might be thinking of him...As if she reads his mind, she moans encouragingly. But it is a distracted moan – that offends him (83).

These unspoken, but understandable reciprocal feelings bring the end of not only their sexual life, but also their marriage. In “Coming Apart”, the process and result are different, although it deals with the same issue. Now the protagonist finds enough courage to fight against misguided views of her husband who reads pornographic magazines. She feels that her husband does not really make love to her, but his fantasized version from his pornographic magazines he usually reads. When she discovers her husband’s pornographic magazine titled *Jiveboy*, she feels invisible and rejected. She is jealous of the nude blonde and brunettes women in it. She claims she has to “grow up, adjust, swim with the tide” (43). However, when he brings home a black magazine called *Jivers*, she gets angry with its portrayal of black women as less than human. She examines her own black body in front of a mirror.

She looks in a mirror at her plump brown and black body, crinkly hair and black eyes and decides, foolishly, that she is not beautiful...Her husband would not consider her mother sexy, she thinks. Since she herself is aging, this thought frightens her. But, surprisingly, while watching herself become her mother in the mirror, she discovers that she considers her mother – who carefully braids her average – length, average – grade, graying hair every night before going to bed; the braids her father still manages to fray during the night – very sexy (45).

Then she decides not to “grow up or adjust” but to fight to change her husband’s limiting perception of black women. When she finds out black women images dehumanized in the magazines, she determines to make him aware that black women

are exploited and degraded not only as sexual objects, but also an animalized creature. She considers “herself a feminist – though she is, of course, a ‘womanist’” (48). The protagonist begins to read Audre Lorde (1934-1992)’s books which analyze the relationship of sex and race in the history of black women and men. She “is busy pasting Audre Lorde’s words on the cabinet over the kitchen sink. When they make love she tries to look him in the eye, but he refuses to return her gaze” (47). The man imagines the women in the pornographic magazine, while having sex with his wife. So, he does not want to face with her. “ “Coming Apart” was originally written as an introduction to a chapter of a book on pornography called *Take Back the Night* edited by Laura Lederer...Her “Introduction” appeared in Ms. As “A Fable” before *Take Back the Night* was published” (Winchell, 1992: 77). This fable is about a woman’s efforts to reform her husband’s misguided thinking. It is a loose vehicle used to present Audre Lorde, Luisah Teish, and Tracey A. Gardner’s views on pornography. She tries to make her husband see about himself as a help provider for white abusing men with the help of Lorde, Teish and Gardner. She reads him quotations from the book:

For centuries the black woman has served as the primary pornographic “outlet” for white men in Europe and America. We need only think of the black women used as breeders, raped for the pleasure and profit of their owners. We need only think of the license the “master” of the slave woman enjoyed (42).

The writings are closely related to the idea that pornography depicting black women as sexual creatures is clearly one of the white people’s efforts to corrupt black people by creating many more negative opinions about them. The wife claims: “In other words, white men think they have to be on top. Other men have been known to savor life from other positions” (49). While elevating their positions among all people, white men degrades black people’s state.

“American slavery relied on the denial of the humanity of Black folks, and the undermining of our sense of nationhood and family, on the stripping away of the Black man’s role as protector and provider, and on the structuring of Black women into the American system of white

male domination...” (49) “If a Black man had sex with a consenting white woman, it was rape... If he insulted a white woman by looking at her, it was attempting rape” (50-51).

Hearing about these insulting manipulations performed upon black people shakes him. “Quotes from the three become the ammunition in the battle for respect that the wife wages against her husband. When she quotes to him from Lorde on the use and abuse of feelings, he knows that their relationship has changed” (Winchell, 1992. 77). He discerns he was actively involved in neither the Civil Rights Movement nor the Black Movement.

Walker argues that the black man must free himself from the cultural corruption of the white pornography which reinforces the exploitative nature of racism. The reduction of black woman to animal in pornographic representation is equated with the depiction of the black man who is “defined solely by the size, readiness and unselectivity of his cock” (53). (Birch, 1994: 218).

He feels he has progressed beyond her into a white world that has always, in its thinking about black women, associated sex with violence, by accepting pornography used against black women. “[H]e has detached himself from his own blackness in attempting to identify black women only by their sex” (48). He questions himself seriously.

He realized he can never have her again sexually the way he has had her since their second year of marriage, as though her body belonged to someone else. He sees, down the road, the dissolution of the marriage, a constant search for more perfect bodies, or dumber wives (46).

The couple decides that they need to get apart for some time. When he is alone, the man turns to his magazines once again and then to his wife’s books. Whatever he reads strengthens his will to support all black people, especially black women by defending them from the sexual exploitative efforts of the white people.

[H]e feels ashamed and senses his wife's wounded embarrassment, for him and for herself. For their history together....He cannot imagine a woman being lynched. He has never even considered the possibility. Perhaps this is why the image of a black woman chained and bruised excites rather than horrifies him? (50).

He feels he is unable to protect the women of his own color, he cannot defend them. Instead, he helps the white pornography industry to exploit black women. In pornography, while white women are depicted as objects, black women are depicted as animals. White women are at least beings while black ones are shit. Thus, he realizes that "For years he has been fucking himself.... when she returns, it is sixty percent her body that he moves against in the sun, her own black skin affirmed in the brightness of his eyes" (53). Then, their relationship survives after this coming apart for a short time. He no longer reads pornographic texts, only enjoys having sex with his wife.

In short, it can be claimed that this story is about process, not the product. It illustrates how the relationship between the black woman and man is critically changed by their discussion of issues, or rather the wife's insistence on reading to her husband excerpts from essays by three black feminists, which function to "sum up for the wife her own growing insight into her husband's use of pornography" (Christian, 1982: 197). She manages to make him conscious of the fact that he should protect his race and the women of his race.

Unlike "Coming Apart", in "Porn" the couple breaks up the relationship. The protagonist of Porn fails to save her marriage. She cannot get rid of the negative impacts of pornography on their sexual relationship. However, in "Coming Apart", the protagonist behave like a 'womanist' and strives to come over the problem by reading Audre Lorde, Luisah Teish and Tracey A. Gardner's writings about pornography. Putting "Coming Apart" after "Porn" in the book, Walker tries to indicate a way of saving relationships from demolishing effects of pornography. She shows that black woman must behave consciously to make her husband aware of the destructive effects of pornography and its humiliating black women. For her, getting upset and breaking up the relationship are not solution for black couples. Walker sees black men in general ignorant about what the difference between marriage and sex is and gives duty to black women to order life. Meanwhile, Walker also provides them with a solution to deal with

this situation. She hints that black people, both men and women should read enlightening books written by black women to become conscious and explore their own values such family and marriage which are precious things not to be dissolved by pornography.

3.3.2. Confinement and/or Freedom?: “Laurel” (1981), “The Lover” (1981)

It is love, as the soap operatic title of *In Love and Trouble* suggests, which is most operative in that early volume. It assumes various forms. It may be the love between a parent and child or a man and a woman which are surely the most consistently positive types of love in Walker’s fiction. Moreover, the protagonists in the first collection are confined in the limiting borders of patriarchy. On the contrary, she creates some protagonists that go over the borders of patriarchy. They are educated and can stand on their feet in social and economic terms. Their concepts of freedom go past the one Walker suggests, because according to her, economical, social and intellectual freedom do not bring independence in sexual relations for women. There is lust in extramarital relationships in *You Can’t Keep A Good Woman Down*. Now the unfaithful one is not man, but a married woman who follows passion she cannot find in her marriage. “Laurel” and “The Lover” exemplify this type of women.

In “Laurel”, the narrator, Annie meets Laurel in Atlanta where they go for the meeting of a radical, racially mixed newspaper whose title is *First Rebel* referring to the first slaves rebelling in the South. The meeting they attend indicates their activist spirit. “[...] we became involved in planning a newspaper that was committed to combating racism and other violence in the South” (106). She falls in love with Laurel whom she thinks to be “no more than twenty-two”, two years older than her, but “he seemed older” (106). “It occurred to me that I could not look at Laurel without wanting to make love with him. He was the same” (107). However, she is, in fact engaged to a young man in the Peace Corps which is a volunteer program run by the United States government. Its mission includes three goals:

[P]roviding technical assistance; helping people outside the United States to understand American culture; and helping Americans to understand the cultures of other countries. The work is generally related to social and economic development. Each program participant, a Peace

Corps Volunteer, is an American citizen, typically with a college degree, who works abroad for a period of 24 months after three months of training (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peace_Corps)

However, she never tells Laurel that she is engaged. So, she does not care about her engagement. She justifies herself by claiming that she is still quite young. Another justification is that she remembers that his fiancé's confess about raping little African girls. She thinks "Laurel would never take advantage of a ten-year-old child" (111). Thus, her engagement is not a restriction for her to flirt with another man. In fact, it is lust, rather than pure love that she feels about Laurel, she neither loves her fiancé. She is aware of the fact that any intercourse with another man is unsuitable, but she tries to justify herself by making up excuses:

([N]obody wanted us to go to bed with each other, except us, and they had made laws to that effect. And of course whether we slept together or not was nobody's business, except ours.) The more it became impossible to be with Laurel, to make love fully and naturally, the more I wanted nothing but that. (108)

It is also a forbidden love for the Southern ethics: "...while we kissed and said Everything Else Be Damned! The South was rising again. Was murdering people. Was imprisoning our colleagues and friends." (109) During their last night at the hotel, they dance and she focuses on the rhythm of the music and touching his body: "...touching alone was our reason for being on the floor" (109). Laurel tells to Annie that his wife is uninterested to him. Laurel's wife "was away from home for the summer, studying for an advanced degree. He seemed perplexed by this need of hers to continue her education instead of settling down to have his children, but lonely rather than bitter" (109-110). He seems to be restrictive about woman's careerism. He wants her to behave in a traditional woman format, although he works for a newspaper whose aim is to uplift black people. Like Ruel in "Really, Doesn't Crime Pay?", Laurel also wants his wife to be a traditional and submissive woman, not an intellectual one.

Even after returning back home, Laurel continues to be "the principle other actor" (110) in all her fantasies. Annie gets a letter from him about work and at the

bottom a note that he misses her. They begin to write to each other, even after she marries. Six months after she and Laurel meet in Atlanta, she receives a letter from his wife. She writes her that Laurel has an accident while driving and has been in coma for four months. She says she has found her letter in Laurel's pocket and maybe she wants to see him, as he is on the brink of death. She goes to see him, but he is unconscious in the mode of dying. Two years later, Laurel writes her to see again, as now he is out of coma, but, now she is married in the South. Her husband advises her to tell him she is married. Although she writes it, Laurel insists on calling her. He learns that she is married to a Jew. They keep on writing to each other. She writes to him to dissuade him from his wills. One day Laurel comes to visit Annie. Annie's husband allows it. After seeing him off in the bus station, her husband returns home and they talk about Laurel: "*It lasted a week!*" I said. "Long before I met you!" "I know," he said. "Sha, sha, baby," he comforted me. I had crept into his arms, trembling from head to foot" (115). One day while they are talking about Laurel again, she tells him: "I would run off with him anyway, because of the pity – *and for the adventure.*" It was the word "adventure" and the different meaning it had for each of us that finally separated us" (116). It is not a real love, but lust that brings them together and separates them, as they are aware of the fact that their relationship is not reasonable. " "I wanted to ask you to let me go away with him, for just a couple of months," I said. "To let me go...".....He sighed. "It would have been tough for me," he said. "Tough for our daughter. Tough for you. Thought of all for Laurel." (117). Laurel keeps on writing to her, even after he offers to adopt her daughter after he receives a divorce from his wife. Here Walker criticizes the characters Laurel and Annie pursuing only their lust, even they are married to other people. They maintain their love affair and they find themselves in dead end. Walker emphasizes that relationships should feed on true love, rather passion.

"The Lover" is another story treating a married woman who is in love with her uncomprehending lover, Ellis whom she defines as a "a professional lover of mainly older women artists who came to the Colony every year to work and play" (36). The unnamed protagonist resembles Ellis to a wolf that plays tricks for his sacrifices. He has not had a long-lasting relationship with women. He "did not have time for intense relationships, that's why he had finally accepted a divorce from his wife" (37). The protagonist meets him, a fellow writer, at a New England artists' colony when she is enjoying two months of freedom, away from home. Ellis is not a better known writer

than her “because he could not find a publisher for his two novels (still, by the way, unpublished – in case she knew publishers) or for his poetry, which an acquaintance of his had compared to something or other by Montaigne” (34). Therefore, his flirting with a more successful writer “made it possible for him to be included in the proper tennis sets and swimming parties at the Colony” (36). This situation makes the protagonist seem like a fool who enjoys her lust. However, she is not aware of the fact that she is abused by an unsuccessful man who gets benefit from her.

Like, Annie in “Laurel”, she is also in a spirit of adventure, rather than out of any sense of need: “When she had first seen him she had thought... ‘my lover,’ and had liked, deep down inside, the illicit sound of it. She had never had a lover; he would be her first. Afterwards, she would be truly a woman of her time” (34). Therefore, rather than the man himself, the woman is actually in love with sensation of being in love. She is impressed with the first question Ellis asks while approaching her: “‘Have you been waiting long?’ he asked. And it suddenly occurred to her that indeed she had” (33). She realizes the fact that she has been waiting for the sense of being in love.

She does not care about her business: “It was as if she worked only for herself, for her own enjoyment (salvation) and was – whether working or simply thinking of working – calm about it” (35). She neither cares about her child she gives birth “as a gift” (31) for her loyal husband nor her husband she marries in reasonable way, not out of love. She also seems not to care about her writing career and even her lover Ellis, “since what mattered was the fact of having a lover” (37). She has a fraudulent and passionless marriage with her husband. She escapes from an unfulfilling marriage. “She had never been particularly passionate with him, not even during the early years of their marriage; ... After the birth of the child she simply never thought of him sexually at all” (31). She thinks that her husband is a kind man. He is a teacher at a university who “cared about his students – which endeared him to her” (31). After giving birth, she does not get the responsibility of her marriage and motherhood. She regards the child as a temporary distraction in her life. She is waiting for the day when the child will go off to a boarding school, leaving her free. Passion is consuming for women; it is first sweet and dizzying and worth of destroying any other choices in life, then it turns out to be exhausting and brings unhappiness for women.

She feels physical love for Ellis. For instance, she wonders if Ellis’ lips would be as sensitive on her skin as they look:

My lover, she thought, noticing for the first time his head of blue-black curls, his eyes as Brown as the Mississippi, his skin that was not as successfully tanned as it might have been but which would definitely do. He was thin and tall, with practically no hips in the beige twill jeans he wore. (33)

All she thinks is about his physical appearance and his attractiveness. “She liked snuggling up to him, liked kissing him along the sides of his face...” (37). She does not have sex with her own husband in the same spirit of adventure. Moreover, it is implied that she will have other lovers:

At night, after a rousing but unsatisfactory evening with Ellis, she dreamed of her husband making love to her on the kitchen floor at home, where the sunlight collected in a pool beneath the window, and lay in bed next day dreaming of all the faraway countries, daring adventures, passionate lovers still to be found. (39)

In short, despite its title, “The Lover” has nothing to do with love. The story’s liberated character, having left her faithful husband and child for a work travel and enjoys her illicit affair with the lupine Ellis. Walker shows that it is not always men who are disloyal; women who are not happy with their marriage turn out to be disloyal to their husbands. While Mrs. Jerome destroys her life by attaching herself to her husband blindly, Myrna who does not have a love-based marriage is in search of physical love. Roselily also resigns patriarchy just for the sake of social and economical comfort for herself and her illegitimate children. They are not happy in their relationships. Through Annie in “Laurel” and the unnamed protagonist in “The Lover”, Walker warns women against passion-based love and marriage that bring them unhappiness and unfulfillment. Walker implies a moderate way for woman between intellectual pursuits and passion. She also draws attention to the concept of family that is accepted as holy in *Womanism* by reminding women the place where they should stop in the way of freedom.

3.3.3. Motherhood, Matrilineage and Ancestral Lineage: “A Sudden Trip Home in Spring” (1981)

Maintaining the lineage among women is one of the most significant points emphasized by Walker in her theory. Thus, *Womanism* draws attention to the importance of matriarchy in combat with patriarchy. Matrilineage is taken as way of passing on struggle consciousness to the next generations. With her story “A Sudden Trip Home in the Spring”, she highlights the significance of motherhood, matrilineage and ancestral lineage as a way of striving in racist and sexist society.

The story can be taken as a response to “Everyday Use” (1973), because the unnamed protagonist in “A Sudden Trip Home in the Spring” is different from Dee who continues avoiding from her responsibility for her race. Dee loses her bonds to her own family, race and antecedents. However, the Southern girl in this story, Sarah remembers her responsibilities at her father’s funeral and feels she must not avoid the reality of being black and must feel dignified about it, not shameful. The daughter’s grief at her father’s death is contrasted with her anger caused by her father’s sufferings by his blackness, which she avoids to confront. For instance, in her boarding school in New York, she paints human figures. However, she is unable to paint portraits of black men because she cannot stand witnessing the sense of the defeat in their faces, “the defeat of black forever defined by white” (135).

She found black men impossible draw or to paint; she could not bear to trace defeat onto blank pages. Her women figures were matronly, massive of arm, with a weary victory showing in their eyes. Surrounded by Sarah’s drawings was a red SNCC poster of a man holding a small girl whose face nestled in his shoulder. Sarah often felt she was the little girl whose face no one could see (126).

As a teenager, she becomes aware that her race is mostly drawn by whites as tired and somber. Her roommate called Pam is a white American. Pam’s father is one of the richest men in the world, having a private ship, plane and train. “Sarah could not comprehend such wealth, and was always annoyed because Pam didn’t look more like a billionaire’s daughter. A billionaire’s daughter Sarah thought, should really be less horsey and brush her teeth more often” (127). She mentions about her father’s

transportations at only crisis times to help people. For instance, she offers her that her father can take her fly down to the South by his own plane, when she is called for her father's funeral. She admires her body just like her other friends: Sarah is so beautiful that "her friends teased Sarah about her beauty; they loved dragging her out of her room so that their boyfriends, naive and worldly young men from Princeton and Yale, could see her" (125). However, Sarah's thoughts about it show her dismissive behavior about her roots:

In Georgia she knew that even to Pam she would be just another ordinarily attractive colored girl. In Georgia there were a million girls better looking. Pam wouldn't know that, of course; she'd never been to Georgia; she'd never even seen a black person to speak to, that is, before she met Sarah. One of her first poetic observations about Sarah was that she was "a poppy in a field of winter roses." She had found it weird that Sarah did not own more than one coat (127).

Furthermore, she feels she does not want to return to Georgia by leaving New York, although she remembers her grandfather telling the South is the best place to live on earth and swearing he expects to die no more than a few miles away from where he was born. It seems that her unwillingness derives from her loss of her mother. Perhaps just like the daughter in "The Child Who Favored Daughter" (1973) she may also blame her father for the death of her mother. Although she does not want to go back to her hometown even for her father's funeral, she feels she must do it as her responsibility. This is deduced from her telling Pam about the Southern black author Richard Wright who is left with Wright's mother by his father, who has a relationship with another woman and never helps him and her suffering from starvation. Years later, Wright who marries a white woman and becomes a popular artist, visited his father now starving. He feels he has to pay his debt to his father as his son. Therefore, there is a parallelism between this story and Sarah's situation. She also must pay her debt to her father, by attending his funeral and fight for her future and her race just like her ancestors. Now she is alone with her father's dead body in her room:

She was alone with her father, as she had rarely been when she was alive. When he was alive she had avoided him. “Where’s that girl at?” her father would ask. “Done closed herself up in her room again,” he would answer himself. For Sarah’s mother had died in her sleep one night. Just gone to bed tired and never got up. And Sarah had blamed her father (130-131).

The deep lack of communication between her father and her is now clearly understood. She begins to relate herself to her roots:

Here she was, Sarah Davis, immersed in Camusian philosophy, versed in many languages, a poppy, of all things among winter roses. But before she became a poppy she was a native Georgian sunflower, but still had not spoken the language they both knew. Not to him (131).

Her conversation with her grandmother also shows the change in the conservative background of the Southern values. For instance, her grandmother asks her whether she is pregnant or not. She tells her: “I guess they teach you how to really handle the world...You don’t specially have to be married, you know. That’s why I felt free to ask” (133).

She sits near her grandfather and leans “her cheeks against his shoulder and felt like a child again” (134). Only she and her grandfather do not cry at the funeral. They know they have to be strong. “...Sarah watched her grandfather from the corner of her eye. He did not seem to bend under the grief of burying a son” (134). “*It is strange, Sarah thought, that I never thought to paint him like this, simply as he stands; without anonymous meaningless people hovering beyond his profile; his face turned proud and brownly against the light*” (135). The defeat she has been afraid to see in his face is absent now. “He stood like a rock, outwardly calm, the comfort and support of the Davis family. The family alone defined him, and he was not about to let them down” (135). At the funeral, the sight of her grandfather’s bearing reminds her of her responsibility for her race; she comes to realize that she owes her presence as the only black at the Northern college to her precedents that struggled for their next generation. “

‘One day I will paint you, Grandpa...Just as you stand here now, with just’ – she moved closer and touched his face with her hand” (135).

To repay her debt to her ancestors, she decides to get over the degrading effects of racism in her college by succeeding in it, rather than abandoning her education. After returning back to college, she thinks: “...*I am a woman in the world. I have buried my father, and shall soon know how to make my grandpa up in a stone*” (137). Thus, the political and personal attempts are hand in hand in the story. The grandfather’s posture with gratitude and endurance to grief and to death of a son inspire her to be strong in life, both as a black and as a woman. She becomes determined to draw the people of her race with the image of strength, rather than with the effect of internalized failure on their faces.

“Return is the developmental imperative in all of Walker’s novels, where the journey over geographic space is a metaphor for personal growth and in a larger sense, historical transformation” (Willis, 1989: 87). This expression is also valid for some of her stories. As seen in these two stories, the return of Dee in “Everyday Use” and Sarah in “A Sudden Trip Home in the Spring” to their hometown has a function in terms of changes in the characters. While Dee’s return indicates her breaking away from her matrilineage and ancestral heritages, Sarah’s return reminds her of her spiritual debt for her ancestors. By presenting two dimensions of the issue, Walker focuses on the importance of one’s maintaining her bonds to her roots. By the concept of matrilineage, Walker embraces all genders for integrated generations.

3.4. Towards Self-Realization: “Elethia” (1981) and “The Abortion” (1981)

Although Walker’s all protagonists are not ideal characters in her second collection, she aims to present a *Womanist* response to some Black Feminist issues in it. She draws attention to the ways of dealing with them in racist and sexist world. For *Womanism*, the way of being able to reach the point of universality goes through applying solutions. Among her protagonists, she depicts two sample ones whom she idealizes. They break the bonds, go over them and decide to follow the path of self-realization by doing the things that cannot be expected from them. These are title character in “Elethia” and Imani in “The Abortion”.

Racism is not seen only in institutions governed by white people. It is a situation threatening black people everywhere in American life. The story “Elethia” revolves

around the title character that raises her voice against racism in Walker's hometown of Eatonton, Georgia. She works in the restaurant called "Old Uncle Albert's" (27) as a salad girl. It is only for white customers, although black people, especially black women work in the kitchen. It features in its window a black man that is "an elderly, kindly, cottony-haired darkie, seated in a rocking chair" (31).

Uncle Albert decorates the window of the restaurant. The dummy, especially with his teeth draws her attention. She discovers that his intense smile with its shining false teeth belies the brutality of the life that he led as a slave: "All them teeth. Hell, all Albert's teeth was knocked out before he was grown" and his pose of willing servitude belies the fact that refused ever to work in the big house, as he "always broke up stuff" (30). Here Elethia is aware that the reality is not as it looks; as a former slave he has missing teeth because he was beaten and he is a rebel, not a submissive slave. The message here seems that the white men are successful in subjugating a rebellious black man, even after the Emancipation. "Uncle Albert had in life been anything but servile. His escaping from his servitude is told to be punished by knocking his teeth out. Elethia discovers that "He was not a dummy; he was stuffed. Like a bird, like a moose's head, like a giant bass. He was stuffed" (28). That it was stuffed means that he was once alive and he was killed and then given an artificial outlook. It was shaped according to how the white man wants to see it.. She learnt about Uncle Albert from old-timers who tell: "The boss man kept them so ignorant of the law, you understand. So he was a mad so an'-so when he found out. They used to beat him severe trying to make him forget the past and grin and act like a nigger" (29-30). Through Elethia, Walker frees the black man with her fictional counterpart of the Uncle Albert dummy which is the figure of Albert Porter who was a black slave, whom only old people can remember. One night, Elethia and her friends steal Uncle Albert and burn him in the garden of their high school. After burning the dummy, they keep his ashes. "And for each of them what they knew and their reaction to what they knew was profound" (29). She goes to college and her friends join the army, where they learn "skills that would get them through more than a plate glass window" (30). Their behavior inspires other black friends to discover other Uncle Alberts: "Everywhere she looked there was an Uncle Albert (and many Aunt Albertas, it goes without saying)..." (30). After going to college, they become aware that learning something useful in life is a must for the survival of blacks. Remembering that Uncle Albert was kept ignorant of the law.

Although this figurative dummy burning act seems unimportant, it is a significant rebellion against racism black people were subjected to. The raising voice belongs to a black girl exploited in her working place by white bosses. However, she breaks not only her own silence, but also Uncle Albert's and all other exploited and discriminated black people. By means of this kind of stories depicting rebellious black people, Walker "aims to rid the world of all false stereotypical images of blacks especially men to recover the past rectify its misrepresentations and preserve the truth for future generations" (Davis, 1989: 28-29). She draws attention to the fact that they suffered and were oppressed in their past to enlighten next generations. She hopes them to break silences in which their ancestors were forced to be drowned.

As a response to the characters' handicaps and questions about marriage in "Her Sweet Jerome", "Really, Doesn't Crime Pay?" and "Roselily" from the first collection, Walker portrays another character who is squeezed within these handicaps, but who makes radical efforts to get rid of them in "The Abortion" in the second collection. The story is entitled as "The Abortion" because its main character called Imani, the protagonist has an abortion in college. Seven years later, she gets married and has a daughter named Clarice. When she finds herself pregnant with her second child, her husband wants her to have an abortion again, as abortion is legal, cheaper and safer. However, "She wanted him to want the baby so much he would try to save its life. On the other hand, she did not permit such presumptuousness. As he praised the child they already had, a daughter of sunny disposition and winning smile, Imani sensed subterfuge, and hardened her heart" (65). By oppressing her will, she says: "Another child would kill me. I can't imagine life with two children. Having a child is a good experience to *have had*, like graduate school" (65). Therefore, obeying him unwillingly, she flies from her small Southern town to New York for abortion, her husband called Clarence who is a legal adviser and lawyer of the new black mayor of the town sees her off at the airport with the mayor. On the way to the airport, when she eavesdrops the conversation between the mayor and Clarence, she realizes that she does not mean anything for her husband. "The mayor was much in their lives because of the difficulties being the first black mayor of a small town assured, and because, Clarence respected and admired him most" (66). Imani is angry with the new mayor who ignores her at her own kitchen table, as she is a woman and she is thought to be uninterested in politics. She is annoyed with his sexist behaviors. However, "she found dinners with Carswell

hard to swallow. But Clarence was dedicated to the mayor..." (66). While they are taking her to the airport, they talk about "municipal funds, racist crops, and the facilities for teaching at the chaotic, newly integrated schools [...]. She had expected *him* to take care of her, and she blamed him for not doing so now" (67). Pregnancy represents a logical exercise of a couple's shared responsibility and Clarence does not take this. Therefore, she resents both herself as she is not again in control of her sensuality and her husband who does not go along with her to take care of her. She thinks the peace of the town is not more important than her health and senses.

When she returns from New York, Clarence takes her from the airport to home. On the way, she tells " 'The anesthesia failed [...] I thought I'd never faint in time to keep from screaming and leaping off the table' " (70). Clarence cannot stand even listening to them, because "[h]e hated the thought of pain, any kind of violence. He could not bear it; it made him physically ill. This was one of the reasons he was a pacifist, another reason she admired him" (70). In that evening, she sits in her rocker with Clarice sleeping on her lap, Clarence resting his head against her knees: "She felt he was asking for nurture when she needed it herself" (71). The one who needs love and interest is herself, as a woman who has just had an abortion. Therefore, "She felt the two of them, Clarence and Clarice, clinging to her, using her. And that the only way she could claim herself, feel herself distinct from them, was by doing something painful, self-defining but self-destructive" (71). She is in need of asserting herself, but she does not know what or how to achieve this. When Clarence tells her about his headache, she advises him to have a painkiller or rest in another room. "Nothing is going to touch me anymore that isn't harmless" (71). She becomes determined not to let anybody or anything harm her. She comes to a realization that there is nobody or nothing that is more important than herself.

The next day is Holly Monroe's memorial service in the church. She is a young girl killed in civil disturbance five years before. She associates herself with that girl by thinking: "And even deeper truth was that Holly Monroe was herself. Herself shot down, aborted on the eve of becoming herself (73). While Holly Monroe is shot down as she is black, "From that moment in the heat at the church door, [...] She had known the moment she left the marriage, the exact second" (75-76). Clarence remains outside the church for the duration of the service and she hears his talking to the Mayor outside the Church about "board meeting...aldermen...city council" (75). His apparent

disregard for wasted life strengthens her suspicions about her husband that ignores even his wife's sensuality. There is a parallel with this young girl's death and the unwanted baby in her abdomen that was killed. Upon that, "she had uncoupled herself from him, in a separation that made him, expect occasionally, little more than a stranger" (76). After that, she does not want him to touch her, sleep with her for the next two years. She abandons him by making radical decisions for her own honor. By getting rid of sexual intercourse and then leaving her husband completely, she leads her own autonomous life. She is done with her senseless and indifferent husband.

Walker specifies that marriage is not an unserious platform which women can use as a refuge. She also notes that love should not be a vehicle of passion and lust. In her selected stories, she gives the message that both marriage and love should be based on reciprocal faithfulness, reason and pure feelings. As for the reverse, both of them can be exploitative for women. Imani in "The Abortion" is a woman who stops this exploitation. She does what many women cannot do. Thus, by means of Elethia and Imani, Walker demonstrates the possibility of the things seen impossible. They can be taken as sample characters she idealize for women, who are squeezed within the confinements of racist and sexist society.

CONCLUSION

The points illustrated in this study confirm the fact that racism and discrimination have been the ever-lasting challenges in African American life since the 16th century in American history. The study indicates that today's black Americans owe much to their brave ancestors who fought on different battlefronts to bring an end to the injustices suffered by blacks in every field of American life. They fought to make America a place to live.

As for African American women, they have suffered not only from black male dominance but also white oppressions since the era of slavery; because, as being both black and female, the black women's situation and oppression go far beyond that of either black men or white women. Thus, most black women could identify themselves better socially, politically and especially emotionally belonging to nowhere and to no minority groups, other than Black Feminism. They found what they could not find in the Black Liberation Movement and the Women's Liberation Movement in the 1960s; they were sexually discriminated in the first one, while racially discriminated in the latter one. Black Feminism became most black women's voice for the whole equality in all fields of their lives.

It is also signified in the study that black women writers have been the leading figures raising their voices via their writings that supply necessary strength and consciousness to black women, who need to combat with racism and discrimination against them. However, it was not easy to reconstruct a new identity by breaking the fabricated labels stuck upon them. Despite all forces, black women tried to do their best to form an alternative standpoint for black race. They transferred their feelings, thoughts and pasts from generation to generation orally. Then, they were able to write their own experiences from the 18th century onwards, especially in slave narratives and autobiographies. They also attempted to erase and overcome all the invented beliefs and stereotypes and prejudices about themselves. The study draws attention to Walker whose point of view is distinct from the majority of white and black women and Feminist writers because of the experiences she had as a black Southerner during her poor childhood and as a young woman in the Civil Rights activist. Building a significant framework for women of color under the title of '*Womanism*', Walker marks the history of American Feminism. She embraces all people of color under a single umbrella.

Defending universalism with ‘*Womanism*’, Walker dreams to give an end to the racist and sexist world. For her, both women and men from different colors should get together by remembering that they are created equal.

The study deals with the practice of her theory of *Womanism* by exemplifying such significant *Womanist* issues as racism, sexuality, matrilineage, motherhood and ancestral heritage in her two short story collections entitled as *In Love and Trouble* (1973) and *You Can’t Keep A Good Woman Down* (1981). The collections are different in the approach to common issues, which black women experience, because Walker’s political stance was strengthened in the interval of eight years. It was in 1979 when she coined the term ‘*Womanism*’. The date corresponds to her upheaval period in politics. While her protagonists in the first collection are submissive, passive and traditional women who become victims of the patriarchal and racist society, the ones in the second collection are rebellious, courageous and self-confident women who strive for their life and stand upon their feet. Within this difference in motifs, the study deals with some selected stories of both collections under the issues in common to draw attention to the evolution of Walker’s thoughts that is reflected with her *Womanist* theory in her second collection.

In total, eighteen stories are selected; nine stories are excluded from each collection and the stories selected from each collection are examined under two separate main titles. While the ones from the first collections are included under the title “Black Feminist Issues in *In Love and Trouble* (1973)”, while the other ones from the second collection are included under the title “In *You Can’t Keep A Good Woman Down* (1981) A Womanist Response to Black Feminist Issues”. The stories are studied in terms of racism, sexuality, black women’s dilemma between confinement/resistance and confinement/freedom, and motherhood, matrilineage and ancestral heritage.

While “Strong Horse Tea” (1973), “The Welcome Table” (1973), “The Diary of An African Nun” (1973) and “The Revenge of Hannah Kemhuff” (1973) are examined in terms of racism against black women in white-dominated institutions under the title “Black Feminist Issues in *In Love and Trouble* (1973)”, “Coming Apart” (1981) and “Porn” (1981) are dealt in terms of pornography, and “Advancing Luna and Ida B. Wells” (1981) and “How Did I Get Away with Killing One of the Biggest Lawyers in the State? It Was Easy?” (1981) are dealt with in terms of rape, by considering sexual dimension of racism and sexism. Thus, these stories also corresponds to “The Child

Who Favored the Daughter” (1973) studied by taking gender issue and incest under the category of ‘Sexuality’ under the first title. Furthermore, “Her Sweet Jerome” (1973), “Really, Doesn’t Crime Pay?” (1973) and “Roselily” (1973) are scrutinized in terms of black women, confined by patriarchy within the category ‘Confinement and/or Resistance?’ under the first main title, whereas “Laurel” (1981) and “The Lover” (1981) are explored the category ‘Confinement and/or Freedom?’ under the second main title. In ‘Motherhood, Matrilineage and Ancestral Heritage’, the last category, “Everyday Use” (1973) under the first main title and “A Sudden Trip Home in the Spring” (1981) under the second one are analyzed in terms of young girls who are aware/unaware of their responsibilities for their ancestors. Under “Towards Self-Realization”, the last title of the analysis part, “Elethia” (1981) and “The Abortion” (1981) are studied by exhibiting two sample idealized protagonists.

The stories “Strong Horse Tea”, “The Welcome Table”, “The Diary of An African Nun” and “The Revenge of Hannah Kemhuff” make out one of the common problem black people confront: discrimination by white institutions. While the mother in “Strong Horse Tea” is deprived of medical service, another women protagonist in “The Revenge of Hannah Kemhuff” is rejected by governmental help. Therefore, they both try to seek the refuge in their traditional beliefs. Moreover, the old woman in “The Welcome Table” is dismissed out of the church. Her blackness becomes the obstacle for her entrance to the church. Walker portrays the influence of racism on religion in another story, entitled “The Diary of An African Nun”. With an African Nun, the protagonist, she proves that black women cannot adapt themselves to Christianity. They do not find the peace they seek for in Christianity by disregarding their ancestral beliefs. They cannot pull away the diverting effects of racism, either.

Examined within the category of ‘Sexuality (Incest)’, “The Child Who Favored the Daughter” indicates decayed familial relationships between father and daughter/brother and sister. Walker problematizes incestuous relationships in black families. During slavery, they were subjected to bitter sexual treatment from their childhoods onwards; so psychologically some blacks were inclined to hidden and forbidden sexuality. In addition, the members of black families were often separated and they lost their sense of family. The brother or the father who participates in incest cannot keep the balance between love and hatred toward their daughters or sisters, because they cannot stand the feeling of being racially humiliated by white men who

abuse them. They apply their inferiority on their subordinates, who are children and women.

Shifting to the *Womanist* approach to racism in sexual terms, the study delineates through “Coming Apart” and “Porn” that pornography commodifies women body. It is also concluded that while white women are only objectified, black women are objectified and dehumanized / humiliated. Therefore, it is used as a vehicle of racial attack against black race. It not only makes black women internalize their bodies’ humiliation but also leads black men to contribute the devaluation of women of their own race, indirectly of themselves. Walker also emphasizes that marriage should be based on true love; accordingly, sexuality should feed on sincere love, not on pornography. Again in the category of ‘Sexuality’, the stories entitled as “Advancing Luna and Ida B. Wells”, “How Did I Get Away with Killing One of the Biggest Lawyers in the State? It Was Easy?” reveal the fact that black people have confronted with rape for centuries. The rape issue is their common fate. The stories reflect the *Womanist* approach to rape. As a *Womanist*, Walker condemns rape for all races. For her, whatever race(s) the rapist and the raped one come from, or whatever their genders are, rape is rape, and not acceptable. Moreover, she points out in “Coming Apart” and “Advancing Luna and Ida B. Wells” that black women’s earlier works enlighten the ways of all black women in fighting against racism and sexism.

Under the first title, under the category of ‘Confinement and/or Resistance’, in “Her Sweet Jerome”, “Really, Doesn’t Crime Pay?” and “Roselily”, Walker scrutinizes what the end of a submissive and passive woman who cannot go over the patriarchal codes will be. In “Her Sweet Jerome”, Mrs. Jerome tries to find the ways of making her husband interested in her. Obsessed with this idea, she becomes the slave of patriarchy and destroys her own life. Besides their internalized racism, they do not find themselves intellectually adequate. Anxious about her body, the protagonist of “Really, Doesn’t Crime Pay?”, allows her husband to block her ambition of being a great writer. She also allows another man to exploit herself intellectually and sexually for psychological satisfaction and for getting compliment which her husband denies her. In these stories, Walker also draws attention to black men who are not exactly aware of the fact that they must support black women, too, for the welfare of their race. Although they work for some organizations and magazines in benefit for black race, they continue oppressing women and cannot stand their getting out of the mold, which they put them in. They go

on exploiting the women of their race and have restrictive point of view towards them. In “Roselily”, the title character also cannot go past patriarchal codes she has internalized and cannot stand upon her feet without the support of a man in economical and social terms. In correspondence to these stories, “Laurel” and “The Lover” are examined within the same category, but this time as ‘Confinement and/or Freedom?’ under the second title, because, now the protagonists are economically, socially and intellectually free, however, cannot conceive of the limits of the ‘freedom’ concept and they have illicit affairs, although they are married, that is condemned by Walker. By depicting women who are in pursuit of their sexual desires and passion, she draws attention to her sensibility in affairs and marriages. For her, their source is true love, not passion.

Within the last category under each main title, “Motherhood, Matrilineage and Ancestral Heritage” is handled. One of the significant points supporting Walker’s *Womanism* is matrilineage. She gives importance to one’s bond to her/his ancestors and past. The relation between mother/daughter and sisters makes matrilineage survive. For her, this soul of matrilineage creates spiritually and emotionally healthy generations. “Everyday Use”, examined within the first title and depicting a girl who is irresponsible for her ancestors and race, underlines the importance of items left by older generations. Their usage and being left to next generations maintain their cultural values and link among the members. Furthermore, with “A Sudden Trip Home in Spring” dealt within the same category, but under the second title this time, Walker reminds young black people of their responsibilities for their race. For her, they should confront their past and become aware of how their ancestors struggled to leave a better life for them. Thus, they are supposed to transfer this consciousness through all generations.

In the last section of the part, “Towards Self-Realization”, through the title character in “Elethia” representing young generation and Imani in “The Abortion” representing black women trapped within marriage and generally patriarchy, Walker portrays her ideal characters whose samples she desires to see in the world, because the first one goes over the racist, whereas the second one goes over the sexist borders. Elethia is a rebel in spite of her young age, reflecting Walker’s activist spirit. She stands for Walker’s ideal young spirit as a model for young generations with the teenager’s courage. Imani is also a rebel in spite of being married and having a child. She also puts a mirror to Walker’s spirit. Instead of being pacified under the patriarchal oppression

over her, the protagonist gets rid of it by making radical decisions about her life. She stands out a model that should be followed by most suppressed women.

In conclusion, this study presents a clear framework to understand how much black women achieved in fighting against white oppressions and black male oppressions to get a more peaceful and livable world for themselves in the racist and sexist America. It also marks Alice Walker's importance among Feminist authors with her theory of '*Womanism*' and highlights the change in her approach black women problems in racist and sexist society. With *Womanism*, she presents solutions to Black Feminist issues. Her selected stories from her two collections indicate that Walker, with her theory, emphasizes bond to the past, works of black women writers and matrilineage, which she takes leading ways for promising future generations a stable, foreseeing and prudent identity.

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