

T. C.
ISTANBUL AYDIN UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

**THE REPRESENTATIONS OF DOMESTICITY, MOTHERHOOD AND
VIOLENCE IN TONI MORRISON'S *BELOVED* AND ALICE WALKER'S *THE
COLOR PURPLE***

THESIS
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Department of English Language and Literature
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Thesis Advisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ferma LEKESIZALIN

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FOREWORD

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TONI MORRISON'UN BELOVED VE ALICE WALKER THE COLOR PURPLE İÇİNDE EVCİMENLİK, ANNELİK VE ŞİDDET TEMSİLLERİ

ÖZET

Dünyada kadınların cinsiyet ayrımcılığına karşı mücadele evreleme ve onların çeşitli toplumlarda erkeklerle eşit haklar için çağırırız bir dönemde, siyah Amerikalı kadınlar da seslerini duyurmak için çalıştı. Tarih onu tutan erkekler için ancak diğer ırklardan kadın onları sadece aşağı yapılan kölelik, şekillendirdiği, çünkü özellikle batıda diğer kadınlara aksine, onların hikayesi farklıdır. böylece toplumda karar verme konularında onları çizgi dışına, kadınlara tahsis temizlik ve annelik rolleri ile birleştğinde, Afro-Amerikan kadın da esnasında ve kölelik sonra beyaz toplumdan küçümseme, şiddet ve ayrımcılık ile uğraşmak zorunda kaldı. diğer siyah yazarların bir ev sahibi gibi bu konuda Tony Morrison ve Alice Walker, genellikle göz ardı edildi ya da mükemmel erkek ya da beyaz yazarlar tarafından söylendi edilemeyen hikayeler anlatmak için kendileri aldı. Beloved roman ve Color Purple benzer karakterler Sethe ve Celie sayesinde, Morrison ve Alice çok çeşitli şekillerde Afrikalı Amerikalı kadın yaşamlarını etkiledi annelik, evcimenlik ve şiddet temaları ortaya çıkarır. kölelik ve ayrışma en çok uygulanan edildi Amerika Birleşik Devletleri Güney Set, romanlar beyaz toplum ve siyah toplum tarafından hem kötü muamele ve küme düşme ve siyah kadınların tasvir. Gerçi Morrison Sevgili kölelik sırasında ayarlanır ve Walker'ın The Color Purple karakterleri hala annelik, evcimenlik ve şiddete maruz yollarla benzerlikler, siyah ve beyaz insanları ayrılmış Jim Crow Yasaları sırasında ayarlayın. Morrison ve Walker ortaya çıkarır ve siyah feminizm ve radikalizmin kavramlarını zenginleştiren Afro-Amerikan siyasetinin açık bir feminist kavramsallaştırma sunuyoruz. Beloved olarak, Morrison zaman birçok yazar dikkate başarısız olduğunu annelik olumsuz tarafını gösteriyor. Aşırı acı bir süre onu anne rolünü egzersiz deneyerek, SethE kimliğini kaybeder ve bu süreçte de kızı Denver o bastırır. Bu onun bireyleşmeyi engel ve onun kendini geliştirme önlemek çocuklarına SethE bağlantı anne bağlarla occasioned edilir. SethE onun varlık feda eder. Nitekim, biz onun tüm çabaları kızı gibi onun kayıpları kefareti yöneliktir roman boyunca bakın toplumun kavramlaştırmalara dayalı iyi bir siyah anne olarak kendini yeniden kurmak. Mor zaman ve bu rollerin kadınlar sessiz kalmayı ve duygularını yanı sıra görüşler bastırmak için, hiçbir sesleri vardı anlamına geliyordu aslında sırasında kadınların evcilleştirme ve annelik rollerini ortaya çıkarır. Celie toplumunda kadınların evcilleştirme iyi bir örnek, bir asi bir kadındı ama sessizce kişinin kocası ve ev işleri için kulluk sosyal normlara razı zorunda kalır Sophia. Toplumda acı kadınların annelik rolünü içermek neden Morrison'ın argüman benzer şekilde, Sophia son derece onun yük altında olan çocuklar ile ayrılır. Benim tez Toni

Morrison ve Alice Walker kendi romanlarında sırasında ve kölelik gün sonra, Beloved ve Mor de domesticity, annelik ve şiddet konusunu tasvir nasıl araştırır. Tez zamanda karakterler kurtuluşu yol olanaklarını sağlayacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Annelik, Evcimenlik, Irkçılık, Siyah Feminizm, Afrikalı-Amerikan*

Edebiyatı, Şiddet, Kölelik, ataerkillik.



**THE REPRESENTATIONS OF DOMESTICITY, MOTHERHOOD AND
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ALICE WALKER'S *THE COLOR PURPLE*

Abstract

At a time when women around the world were staging a fight against gender discrimination and calling for equal rights with men in their various societies, black American women also tried to make their voices heard. As history holds it, unlike other women especially in the west, their story is different because it was shaped by slavery, which made them not only inferior to men but to women of other races. Coupled with the roles of housekeeping and motherhood assigned to women, thus sidelining them from decision making issues in the society, the African American woman also had to deal with the belittlement, violence and segregation from the white society during and after slavery. In this regard, Tony Morrison and Alice Walker like a host of other black writers, took it upon themselves to tell the stories that were often ignored or could not be perfectly told by men or white writers. Through similar characters Sethe and Celie in the novels *Beloved* and *The Color Purple*, Morrison and Alice very much brings out the themes of motherhood, domesticity and violence which affected the lives of the African American woman in various ways. Set in the South of the United States of America where slavery and segregation were most practiced, the novels depict the maltreatment and relegation and of black women both by the white society and the black society. Though Morrison's *Beloved* is set during slavery and Walker's *The Color Purple* set during the Jim Crow Laws that separated black and white people, the characters still share similarities in the ways they experience motherhood, domesticity and violence. Morrison and Walker offer an explicit feminist conceptualization of African American politics that exposes and enriches concepts of black feminism and radicalism. In *Beloved*, Morrison depicts the adverse side of motherhood that many writers of the time failed to consider. By attempting to exercise her motherly role in a period of extreme suffering, Sethe loses her identity and in the process also suppresses that of Denver her daughter. This is occasioned by the maternal ties that link Sethe to her children that preclude her individuation and thwart her self-development. Sethe sacrifices her being. Indeed, we see throughout the novel that all her efforts are directed at atoning for her losses as a daughter and re-establish herself as a good black mother based on the society's conceptualizations. *The Color Purple* brings out the domestication and motherhood roles of women during the time and the fact that these roles meant that women had no voices, they were to remain silent and suppress their feelings as well as

opinions. A good example of domestication of women in Celie's society is Sophia who was a rebellious woman but is forced to silently acquiesce to the social norms of servitude to one's husband and household chores. Similar to Morrison's argument that the suffering in the society caused women to resent the role of motherhood, Sophia is extremely detached with the children that are under her charge. My thesis investigates how Toni Morrison and Alice Walker portray the issue of domesticity, motherhood and violence in their novels *Beloved* and *The Color Purple*, during and after the days of slavery. The thesis also will provide the possibilities that lead to the characters' emancipation.

Keywords: *Motherhood, Domesticity, Racism, Black Feminism, African-American Literature, Violence, Slavery, patriarchy*



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau wrote that “man is born free but everywhere in chains”. This statement tells the story of the characters in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* and Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple*, though in this case the focus is on women and not “man”. These books detail the experiences of black women during slavery and the years of segregation in the South of the United States which has over the years shaped the identity of the black woman in America. The novels were written in the 1980s when women were increasingly demanding for their rights and pushing for equality inspiring these two black female writers to paint a picture of the African American woman. Though the settings of the books are during a period when black men and women alike suffered discrimination and persecution, the authors try to show the double standards that women had, having had to go through torture, rape, racism and nursing, protecting and preserving life in their children. As Simon de Beauvoir writes in her 1949 book *The Second Sex*, “the most sympathetic of men never fully comprehend women’s concrete situation” (Wyatt 1993, Pg 475), so too do these authors try to paint a deeper picture of the black woman’s pain through their lead characters Celie in *The Color Purple* and Sethe in *Beloved*. These characters as well as other female characters in the texts suffer lots of violence and emotional agony but still display unconditional love towards their children and their fellow women. The bond formed by these women during these two periods can be seen to have evolved into what many today call “the strong black woman”, that is, a woman that is over protective of her child and standing against all odds in the “man’s world”. The authors portray this womanly love through Sethe, Beloved and Denver in *Beloved* and Celie, Nettie, Shug and Sophia in *The Color Purple*. The women bond together to support each other and live on through their ordeals thus echoing the feminist tone in the novels coming from domesticity, motherhood and violence which I am going to discuss below.

For long periods of time, black women faced marginalization both from the white “oppressors” and their own men who used patriarchal ideologies to subjugate them to inferiority. As a result, black women have struggled through the centuries to discover their self-identity and disengage themselves from the roles ascribed upon them by the patriarchal society. Alice Walker in *The Color Purple* is more concerned with the fact that even though both men and women underwent the same persecution from the “Whiteman”, men in the black community in turn treated women in their community as inferiors, leaving them with roles that had nothing much to do with the society than their homes. Walker like many other black female authors have tried to exhibit through their literary works the restrictive nature of the socially ascribed roles of women and their effects on the black women in America. “Who you think you is? You can curse nobody. Look at you. Your black, you're poor, you're ugly, you're a woman, you're nothing at all!” says Mr (Albert), one of the male characters in Walker’s *The Color Purple*, talking to his wife Celie. This quote alone explains the view Black men had on their women. Insisting that “you are black and a woman” give a clear picture that being black and a woman was close to being nothing. Walker as Morrison laments on the failure of black women to lead their lives independently from men and the inequality between men and women. Alice Walker in *In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens*, posited that African American women are described in the legends that appropriately determine the status of an individual in the society

Until the 1960s when women began fighting for equality, motherhood, like sexuality, has always been used by the patriarchal society as a way of subjugating women or suppressing their identity (Struglińska, 2015, p. 209). Motherhood, especially in the years of slavery up till the third quarter of the 20th century, was wielded as a political tool against black women, relegating them as inferior, based on the society’s construction of the role of women and the image of an ideal mother. This view of motherhood is closely linked to domesticity, where the place of the black woman is automatically within her home, where she can practice motherhood as prescribed by the society (Garg, 2014, p. 57). Black women were only seen as maids and mothers and no major role in the family or society ascribed to them. As a result, the society failed to conceptualize the restrictive nature of this view especially during the slavery period,

where black women, in addition to finding their identity, had to shield their children against numerous messages that categorized them as being less human.

Morrison and Walker wrote their books at a period characterized by a growing need to break down the pervasive domestic ideology which determined the separate spheres of influence for both sexes, with women being relegated to the private sphere of home to execute the roles of a wife and mother. Women were even used as sex “objects” during slavery by the white master who seem to have passed their roles to the black men in the aftermath of servitude. Same as slaves had no identity rather than that of their masters, marriage in the early 1900s when *The Color purple* is set revolved around patriarchy and basically black women had no identity other than that of their husbands. Divorce in this time was uncommon, frowned upon by the society, and in instances where it was granted, black women had no rights to child custody or even property.

The novels set during the slavery era and era of the Jim Crow laws (segregation laws against black people in the South of the United States), attempt to present an insight into the manner in which slavery impacted motherhood and the maternal familiarity of children during these periods. Using two nearly identical protagonists, both Morrison and Walker demonstrate that the slave system alongside the patriarchal society was disruptive and succeeded in denying the mothers an opportunity to give affection to their children. In Morrison’s *Beloved*, we see a suffering mother; Sethe who is ready to do anything to prevent her children from enduring her fate. She is constantly brutalized and violated by her new masters but she vows to keep her children safe by sending them to her mother-in-law, Baby Suggs, before she makes her escape. Similarly, Celie in *The Color Purple*, already has two kids at 14 from the continual rape by her step-father. She is later given into an abusive and unhappy marriage where she is tormented both physically and emotional by Mr. (her husband whom she only identifies as Mr.). Like Sethe who loses her children, one to death and the others escaping, Celie’s children are also stolen and she is left only with one and a broken heart. Sethe, has to live through extreme hardship to find and rediscover meaning in her life and value her role as a black mother and a black woman. Evidently, from the story, being a black mother during the slave era posed insurmountable challenges for black women (Ghasemi and Hajizadeh, 2012, p. 62). As a result of this restricted opportunity, relationships between mothers and

daughters were destroyed. *Beloved* also brings out a new form of motherly love that is informed by the suffering Sethe undergoes in her environment. Sethe after escaping from slavery decides to kill her child in order to shield her from the reality of slavery. She says after she kills her daughter Beloved: "It ain't my job to know what's worse. It's my job to know what is and to keep them away from what I know is terrible. I did that" (pg, 194). While this is a painful act, she feels she has no choice particularly since she herself was denied the opportunity to bond with her mother. This scene repeats itself when Beloved endeavors to also kill her mother in an attempt to avenge her death. The guilt carried by Sethe affects her other daughter Denver, whom she prohibits from interacting with the Black community. Consequently, Denver leads a fragmented life and eventually dies before reaching womanhood.

In the *Color Purple*, Walker adopts a similar approach with that of Morrison in treating the subject matters. However, Walker puts forth a description of the effect of the patriarchal ideology on black women. In the narrative, the main protagonist, Celie, experiences abuse at the hands of the men in her life, beginning with her own stepfather and then her husband. She has even lost the ability to fight back and thinks that fighting back will do no good because it is her place to take the torments as a woman. Responding to the more aggressive or 'masculine' female characters in the novel Sofia and Shug who urge Celie to retaliate her husband's abuses, Celie replies that "but I don't know how to fight. All I know how to do is stay alive" (pg. 18). This shows how subdued she has been. Due to her apathetic attitude towards herself, Celie accepted her negligible place in the domestic sphere, and submitted to the physical abuse by her husband. Celie is a representation of the black woman in the early post slavery years. Through Celie, Walker is trying to give meaning to the Black women's fight for equality between men and women. She uses profound imagery to capture the hopelessness in women at that time. An examples is when Walker describes Celie's despair as close to death when Celie says "He my husband... This life soon be over, I say Heaven last all ways." (Pg. 48). This shows the desperation of women in those years and how most of them had given up on life.

Furthermore, *The Color Purple* brings out the domestication and motherhood roles of black women by stressing on the fact that they had no voices and were to remain silent

and suppress their feelings as well as opinions (Sharma, 2012, p. 1). A good example of domestication of women in Celie's society is Sofia, who is Celie's stepson's wife, who is rebellious but is forced to silently acquiesce to the social norms of servitude to another man's household chores-the mayor. Akin to Walker's explanation that the suffering in the society caused women to resent the role of motherhood, Sophia is extremely detached from the children that are under her charge. She only gets her freedom from the mayor, who sentenced her to 12 years of servitude at his home, when two of her kids are already married.

Both novels *Beloved* and *The Color purple* can be considered as seminal works that adequately capture the condition of black women during and after the slavery period. The two books clearly explain the impact of one's environment and circumstances on their characterization as well as execution of socially ascribed roles. The two novels describe instances where motherhood fails to achieve the desired objective due to an oppressive patriarchal society. The saddest part is that this effect is transmitted to the next generations and the cycle continues.

My thesis investigates how Toni Morrison and Alice Walker portray the issues of domesticity, motherhood and violence in their novels *Beloved* and the *Color Purple*, during the days of slavery and how these authors want the black women to be understood. I will divide the work into three sections. In the first two chapters, I will look at these three issues in each book separately. The first chapter will deal exclusively with Morrison's *Beloved* and the second with Walker's *The Color Purple*. Then in the third I look at instances that give the female characters the possibility to overcome this suppression and then conclude. But first I'll start with the slavery background that built up to black feminism.

1.2 Historical Background of Slavery and Black Feminism

Black feminism criticizes the generalization of female issues and the general characterization of women. Christian Barbara defines stereotype as a product of continued racism that endeavors to break the spirit of a human being (Barbara, 1997, p. 3). In this light, it is necessary to comprehend the predicament of black women in the context of slavery and racism. Long after the end of slavery, black women continued to

endure the marginalization of society, which forced them to face racial and sexual mistreatment (Poovey, 1998, p. 57). Distorted images of black females produced by a prevailing white culture and a dominant patriarchal society as aids, forced an inferior identity on these women and left them with lesser social status. During slavery, African Americans were considered less than human and subjected to all sorts of abuse. Their women were continually portrayed as house helps, baby-sitters and beyond that shown as physically unattractive which their identity became in subsequent years. Poovey (1998) writes that “ clichéd images of black females, the narratives and books of the slavery period produced images of African Americans that became accepted as the norm”. Thus for years, black women had no right to any other responsibilities even as wives because slavery separated families at random. Nevertheless, in the years after slavery (in which Walker’s *The Color Purple* is set), the black community continued to offer women these same roles and subjecting them to the same brutality they endured under slavery. Poovey (1998) exemplifies these images that built up from slavery with a story of a black woman who demanded little for her work and literally would do anything for that price. This woman was typically plump and was sometimes presented as physically unattractive because her sole responsibility was nurturing her children and those of her employers. Such false representations led to the natural assumption that devoid of any sense of self-esteem and worth, the black female found motherhood as the only justification for existence. In this sense, black women accepted motherhood as an honorable duty that served as their ultimate fulfillment in life which as a result stayed on as their identity.

African American women served in the capacity of legendary mother figures with idealistic values that were incomparable to the men in their society or women from other races. The ‘superhuman mom’ representation of the black woman was developed to exploit and use women as can be seen in the characters of Sethe and Celie in *Beloved* and *The Color Purple* respectively. Sethe’s unflinching love for her children brings out the superhuman mom in her. As Morrison presents it to us, Sethe kills her daughter Beloved to protect her from the horrors of slavery. One of the characters in the novel, Paul D even tells Sethe that her “love is too thick”, implying her love for her daughter Beloved. Here, Morrison gives the image of ‘mother hen’ which is bent on protecting

every of her numerous chicks from the hovering hawks, hence highlighting how important motherhood was to the black women in those years. In a similar way, Bloom (2007) writes that black men in later years romanticized the black woman to create a dominating female figure that had the immense capability to love, endure and care. To him, the role of this character was “embedded in the values of self-sacrifice and self-denial in an attempt to take care of the man and child in society”. It is worth noting that females in the African American community observed themselves as mothers. However, like all mothers, they carried out the role of motherhood with the dignity and responsibility instead of embodying the undignified and mortifying role placed upon them (Bloom 2007).

Unfortunately, black authors such as Ralph Ellison, Richard Wright and Langston Hughes that delved primarily into issues of racism and prejudice only worked to reinforce the myth of matriarchy. Such writers upheld black females as symbols of motherhood that were superior in all domestic matters; for example Richard Wright’s *Black Boy* celebrate the strength of a single black mom who is able to stand the odds and raise her children. However, the emergence of authoritative and distinct female writers such as Zora Neale Hurston and Nella Larsen begun the era of exposing the black woman’s experience that had been previously suppressed. Female authors started the process of writing about black mothers and begun facing up to and rejecting established stereotypes through various works (Bloom, 2009, p. 168). In the process, these writers exposed the cultural paradigms that had been set up to demarcate them.

The overall theme of African American motherhood is covered extensively in Toni Morrison’s literary works. Unlike say Nella Larsen who celebrates the beauty of being black, Morrison like Walker targets motherhood from the angle of pain. They combine love and pain give a clearer picture of the black woman’s plight. Their intension is to bring to light the often ignored mother who didn’t have a chance to fully love their children because of the way society was structured. In particular, *Beloved* explores the journey of black women who had to exist in trying circumstances in racist and violent environments. In the narrative, Black women tolerate exploitation, in a society that commoditized the concept of motherhood and in some cases suppressed it when slave

owners prevented black mothers from nurturing their offspring owing to slave trade. Female characters that offer insight into the representations of motherhood, domesticity and violence include Sethe, who perceived freedom as the only way she could adequately nurture her children. There also emerged Sethe's mother whose anger towards the slave owners caused her to react aggressively to white children; therefore defying general representation of her role as a black mother. (Part 1, chapter 6) Even though Morrison published *Beloved* in 1987, she still efficiently managed to represent the fears and journeys of various mother figures in African American literature. Her role in the black feminist movement is apparent. Morrison presents her characters in a manner that allows them to resist socially upheld notions of black motherhood. She also manages to re-define the models of motherhood, which were traditionally perceived as the most glorified of all female duty.

2. MOTHERHOOD, DOMESTICITY AND VIOLENCE IN TONI MORRISON'S *BELOVED*

Motherhood is a universally acknowledged theme. Scholars recognize it to be a mother-offspring relationship that involves a strong bond of attachment between two or more human beings. In the contemporary society, men have produced the majority of the world's literature. Some of the literature created by these authors include central issues affecting women and children. In reality, only women themselves can truly be aware of their emotional and social situations although some male writers may appear sympathetic to female issues. We learn from the works of some prominent Victorian writers like Charles Dickens and Charlotte Bronte that women were mainly restricted to household activities which characterized them as docile, delicate and passive beings as Bloom (2009) puts it. Though all women, the case of the African American woman was different because it was shaped by slavery. As slaves, they were 'secondary beings' to the white women they served. Sofia in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* for instance, describes the mayor's wife as "backward" because she doesn't know how to drive. However she has to be a servant because she is black. As such, the characterization of African American females has been presented in regards to their parental responsibilities, a responsibility that has been imposed on women as the sole source of their identity.

While Morrison observes and acknowledges motherhood as a significant experience for women, the author also does not limit women's role in the community expressly on motherhood nor motherhood to biological maternity. Indeed, Morrison observed mothers solely as human beings that have diverse characteristics and as people that could discern between motherhood and individuality, especially when favorable conditions are present. She presents the women with an added character that if given normal condition

will be very helpful to the society, not just as mothers. Baby Suggs preaches to the women in her community trying to help them to recover from their past and love themselves. Denver has the ability to rally the community when Beloved overpowers her mom. Ella on the one hand is presented as a strong woman who organizes underground passages for run-away slaves to freedom. Hence, Morrison in *Beloved* is not only trying to glorify the often ignored part of women's lives in motherhood but trying to add something to the black women which makes them useful to the society.

Culture and history have mythologized and typecast African American maternity because it serves as a way of dealing with a dilemma that the community is unable to solve. The mythologized images present mothers as matriarchal beings in the society that are strong, caring and altruistic creatures whose identities are completely inseparable from their nurturing capacities (Bloom, 2009, p. 12). However, Morrison subvert these misrepresentations of black women by presenting female characters that are independent, aggressive and determined. In her narrative, Morrison addresses the common prejudices adopted by slave masters. Among these prejudices includes the malevolence of slave owners towards black slaves. Therefore, her representation of motherhood is in divergence with already existing conceptions that are predisposed to romanticizing motherhood. She questions the entire social construct of motherhood, which rejects to perceive a woman's identity and individuality (Bloom, 2009, p. 104). Black women were only seen from one angle which is conceiving, bringing forth children and nurturing them. They were only seen from the perspective of mother and child and wife, ignoring their individuality and the contributions they could give to mankind beyond motherhood. Paul D for years sees Sethe as the mother of her children and a potential wife and doesn't look beyond. When he arrives 124 notwithstanding Sethe's struggles, he still wants her to bear his child which Sethe rejects.

2.1. Motherhood in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*

The pressure that African American women encounter in the novel results in humiliation and a loss of autonomy. Ultimately, the task of being a good mother is disrupted by the humiliation of slavery, the rape, the rejection and the loss. As Morrison makes it evident

in *beloved*, slavery, more than any historical event had the capacity to influence black motherhood. In the novel, mothers exhibit both wild and good characteristics; however, the pressures of slavery reveals the brutal reality of existing during this era. Morrison writes of Sethe that: “Anybody white could take your whole self for anything that came to mind. Not just work, kill, or maim you, but dirty you. Dirty you so bad you couldn't like yourself anymore. And though she and others lived through and got over it, she could never let it happen to her own. The best things she was, was her children. Whites might dirty *her* all right, but not her best thing, her beautiful, magical best thing -- the part of her that was clean.” (Chapter 26, pg. 251). This tells the story of a woman who is bent on protecting her kids from the hell of slavery. This leads to Sethe taking her own daughter's life to ‘keep her safe’. To understand black motherhood during this period, it is pertinent to comprehend the dire conditions that were brought about by slavery. Black females were charged with the responsibility of taking care of domestic concerns such as household matters and raising children. The community reduced the mother to a state of nothingness where her freedom to escape was simply non-existent. The woman became subject to the tradition of family and motherhood which entirely controlled the life of a woman.

In Morrison's *Beloved*, black women throw away colored children born as a result of rape. These mothers reassess and formulate a new definition of motherhood that is devoid of established patterns of mothering. Thus, black parents successfully resist the oppression and reject the labels given to them by their owners. The relationship between mothers and their offspring is not perfect, but it is flowered in unconditional love that the women sometimes express in provocative ways (Bloom, 2009, p. 168). Morrison's *Beloved* is filled with scenarios where mothers are tested continually in their responsibility as providers and nurturers, as well as in the way society questions their actions and judgments. For instance, Sethe has to undergo suffering that ultimately affects her job of motherhood. She has to experience terrible events as is evident in the following extract from the text: “After I left you, those boys came in there and took my milk. That's what they came in there for. Held me down and took it. I told Mrs. Garner on em. She had that lump and couldn't speak, but her eyes rolled out tears. The boys found out I told on em'”. (pg. 16-17). Not only does Sethe lose her child's milk she also

suffers the consequences of reporting her new masters to Mrs Garner whose brother now manages the farms and the slaves. Though she is pregnant, she is raped and tortured because according to the code under slavery, she had to stay silent because she had not right. Reporting to Mrs Garner calls for more pain from schoolteacher.

Sethe's strength and resilience is evident when she survives a brutal beating while pregnant. The horrors of slavery are quite clear to her, which causes her to develop a resolve to escape to an environment where her children do not have to suffer. While Sethe receives the beating, the definite lack of a male presence to protect her is disheartening. According to Christian Barbara (1997, pg 67) the duty of nurturing children lay exclusively with the mother, because of societal expectations, as well as the absence of male presence in the community. During this period, the men in the community were often involved in the fields and were rarely able to communicate or aid their women. Slave owners pressured women to procreate to increase the numbers of slaves in the commune. To worsen the situation, mothers left their children for long hours to handle the needs of their owner's children. It is quite understandable how Sethe desperately wanted to remove her children from the terrible conditions of slavery. Sethe recalls the story of her mother who was lynched by white men for being standing up to them. She tells us that her mother despised her master's children which she had to look after. Also Halle watches as Sethe is violated and did nothing to save her. This could be because he felt powerless as a slave and knew the consequences if he did, though this later made him run mad. This shows how vulnerable black women were with nobody to look up to.

In most circumstances, black women entered into motherhood with tormented spirits and broken hearts that crushed opinion of the self. "The picture is still there and what's more, if you go there -- you who never was there -- if you go there and stand in the place where it was, it will happen again; it will be there for you, waiting for you. So, Denver, you can't never go there. Never. Because even though it's all over -- over and done with - - it's going to always be there waiting for you." (Chapter 3, pg. 36). Sethe not only had to endure the difficulties around her, but she also had to raise her daughters in the knowledge that they too would one day face the same injustices as she and her mother

had. Although Sethe displays a high level of courage and strength, slavery immobilizes her. African American parents were held responsible for being decision makers, providers, and matriarchs of the family. Nonetheless, the power that seems apparent was non-existence because it reduced and became limited by the bonds of sexism, racial prejudice, and poverty. Sethe is forced to steal food from the restaurant she works in to provide for her family. Without the father of her children or any male provider, she is determined to see her children grow. She even sacrifices all for Beloved who grows fat while Sethe grows thin and sick.

Morrison reveals the complexity of motherhood, which sometimes forced women to commit heinous acts as a means of survival. Although Sethe attempted to provide for her family regularly, she decided to kill her child as a way of freeing her from the world of slavery. Although her evil act was paved with good intentions, the community that had so often dejected her eventually ostracized her because of her decision to end her child's life. From the reader's point of view, it is easy to make judgments about Sethe. Indeed, the act of killing one's child is immoral and unacceptable. However, Sethe's love for her children is undisputed. She says: "My love was too thick. What he know about it?...I have felt what it felt like and nobody walking or stretched out is going to make you feel it too. Not you, not none of mine, and when I tell you mine, I also mean I'm yours. I wouldn't draw breath without my children" (Pg.203). The emphasis that she will not breathe shows the motherly connection she has with her kids. However, as the saying goes: "if you love something so much, let it go", so does she decide to kill her child to save her from slavery. To Sethe, her action is like saving herself because as she says "when I tell you mine, I also mean I'm yours". So her children is her and she is her children. Looking at the murder from the mother's perspective, one can say that Sethe endured the humiliation of being ostracized and cast out by her community as a way of saving her child from future embarrassment. It can be said that Sethe acted in the best interest of her child. Sure, the decision was awful and outside convention, but Morrison makes it clear that motherhood is multifaceted and intricate.

A narrow view of the concept of motherhood, especially during this period was futile. One cannot begin to understand it simply by observing and making judgments. It is

pertinent for one to observe the situation and the circumstance under which Sethe made the choice to kill her baby. Moreover, an African American mother that behaves outside the norms of society is questioned and efficiently labeled by her community. Even though Sethe had the power to spare or kill her child, in the real sense, what many see as power is powerlessness in her circumstance. The power relations existing between mother and child are evidence of the struggles of living in a patriarchal community. Although Sethe cares for her children to the best of her ability, her frustration and bitterness reflect in her role as a mother, which was defined by a sexist, patriarchal community. The norms established by men make her feel trapped both in her domestic responsibility and as a mother and as a woman. Because she remains trapped, her ability to control events in her life expose her levels of powerlessness. According to Porter (2005, p. 45), the women's children worsen the state of helplessness among black mothers. Women seem ready to place their lives in danger for their children. They have no subjectivity, which causes them to adjust the way they raise their children. In such a case, the women are not only slaves of the white man, but to motherhood as well, which is evident when Beloved re-appears to Sethe as a ghost. Even though she killed the baby herself, she allows the ghost that is clearly an apparition to control her life, even in death. Beloved's appearance creates the opportunity for Beloved to Kill Sethe in the same way that Sethe killed Beloved. On the contrary, where it would seem that black mothers have power over their offspring, it is clear that children have the upper hand. Beloved in her monologue says "I am Beloved, and she is mine" (pg. 210). She, referring to Sethe her mother which Morrison describes as now behaving like a child and Beloved as the mother. The monologue expresses the lack of flexibility in the relationship between mother and child in this society.

2.2 Domesticity in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*

In *Beloved*, the homestead carries memories of many violent acts. Interestingly, the spirit of Beloved's ghost highlights the activities- domestic activities- that take place in a historic southern home. The horrors created by slavery have the immense power to affect domesticity for years. Morrison attempts to expose the dread that was characteristic of this period by highlighting the external and internal forces that affect

major characters in the novel. Morrison represents the concept of domesticity as fluid and as a pointer to the private worlds of the characters and as an appraisal of their acceptance in their communities. The type of domesticity revealed in the novel also has deep roots in the struggle against the effects of slavery, as well as the fight against domestic labor in regards to the residences of white slave owners. As a theme, Morrison uses domesticity as a means to expose larger social, cultural issues instead of focusing on traditional activities associated with domesticity such as activities in the natural home and kitchen. Morrison says that “Denver hated the stories her mother told that did not concern herself, which is why Amy was all she ever asked about. The rest was a gleaming, powerful world made more so by Denver's absence from it. Not being in it, she hated it and wanted Beloved to hate it too, although there was no chance of that at all.” (Chapter 6, pg. 62). Here, Morrison shows a home divided by interest of what stories should be told in the house. Because of slavery all Sethe ever recounts are stories from Sweet Home which are horrifying. Beloved enjoys these stories and want to hear more because she wants know why her mother killed her while her sister who doesn't understand why these stories are told wants her to hate the story too. While these stories draw beloved closer to Sethe, they seem to push Denver further form her mom causing friction.

In *Beloved*, the author narrates and affirms the importance of community in passing on traumatic experiences that occur in a domestic household. Rather than having an internal situation that fosters growth in its characters, domesticity is viewed as a system, through which the horrors of slavery are perpetuated (Beaulieu, 2003, p. 102). Victims of slavery, particularly the central characters, Sethe and her mother pass on personal issues of turmoil on to their offspring. The survivors of the slave trade, rape, abuse and poverty very clearly struggle with the side effects of unhealed psychosomatic disorders. As Sethe's children grow up, they learn to model their parents as a way to create their identities. When they model their traumatized mother, the cycle is carried forward to their children and the next generation. In this regard, the home, and the domestic area becomes places in which the characters endure individual suffering, as well as a location where suffering is perpetuated (Beaulieu, 2003, p. 102). In reality, the paternal community during this period already instituted the rule of law; that a woman's place is

in the home; even when the home confines and abuses (Spargo, 2002, p. 113). Many of the traumas, inherited or acquired, between both southern men and women, occur within the limits of the home. African American women especially had to endure their lack of power to protect their children from such as oppressive system. It is no wonder that Sethe eventually murders her child to prevent the traumatic cycle from occurring.

In Morrison's narrative, Sethe, after killing her youngest daughter and having her two sons leave the home, moves in with her daughter Denver, in the house that Beloved haunts. The situation is transformed however when Paul D, a freed slave from Sethe's plantation arrives and Beloved reveals herself in an apparition of a teenager (Beaulieu, 2003, p. 136). Because she commits the horrendous act of murdering her child, Sethe's domestic situation is altered entirely. The community that she once identifies with labels her a social pariah. Besides, the same community also stops interacting with Denver for fear of being ostracized. In such a situation, it would be expected that a community that was living in slavery, having experienced the toll of the abuse and pain of slavery, would pool together and offer support to a family undergoing turmoil. Morrison says of Paul D that "She should have known that he would behave like everybody else in town once he knew." (Pg.204). Even the man who claims to love Sethe immediately abandons her the moment he hears about her murder. This only adds to the gloom which has been in the house since the death of Baby Suggs as Morrison says: "Those twenty-eight happy days were followed by eighteen years of disapproval and solitary life." (pg.204). Twenty-eight days referring to the days Sethe arrived 124. However, the level of rejection that Sethe's family faces forces them to retreat into their home causing them to live in an enduring state of stasis in which the characters cannot escape. The domestic situation becomes a barrier that protects them from the judgment and rejection they receive from the community (Beaulieu, 2003, p. 101).

The constant struggle experienced in the domestic space becomes more apparent in Denver, especially as the narrative carries on. After Beloved returns from the dead, Sethe begins paying too much attention to the ghost, which leaves Denver alone and dejected. As such, Denver must find a way to overcome her phobia of rejection and instead of seeking refuge in a home that has gone haywire; she must leave her household

to find comfort. Here, again, Morrison reveals domesticity as a struggle between private and public spheres. On one hand, domesticity shields the characters from communal judgment while on the other; it heightens the conflict within the characters (Beaulieu, 2003, p. 44, 173). Domesticity in this sense is not traditional; rather it is unbalanced, revealing the issue of a deranged, prescribed household (Spargo, 2002, p. 112). African American women frequently find the events of their lives extremely fractured that the inner turmoil they encounter becomes reflected in their domestic practice. Eventually, Denver learns to deal with her mother's past and leaves it behind symbolically and literally, and as she leaves her home, she claims her individual spot in the community, free of association with her mother's actions (Beaulieu, 2003, p. 43). Denver defines her personal view of domesticity instead of allowing herself to remain stuck in a situation that hurts instead of nurturing her. She says: "All the time, I'm afraid the thing that happened that made it all right for my mother to kill my sister could happen again. I don't know what it is, I don't know who it is, but maybe there is something else terrible enough to make her do it again. I need to know what that thing might be, but I don't want to. Whatever it is, it comes from outside this house, outside the yard, and it can come right on in the yard if it wants to. So I never leave this house and I watch over the yard, so it can't happen again and my mother won't have to kill me too." (Chapter 21, pg. 205). Morrison's point of view regarding the domestic space focuses on how African American women struggle to endure the traumas associated with slavery and the manner in which they live to tell the tale or perish in their struggles. Like Denver demonstrates in the text.

2.3 Violence in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*

Violence is an application of force that results in injury or abuse. It entails causing physical, sexual, mental, emotional and material damage on sufferers. In the African American community, violence is invariably actions of interracial victimization and oppression that manifest themselves in whipping, brutality, killing and branding. Violence against black women is an apparent concern for Toni Morrison. The roots of the violence experienced in the South are traceable to the unjustified treatment of black African Americans by their slave owners. In this sense, it would appear that black

females bore the brunt of the suffering as they doubly had to endure not only torture as the men but also rape by the white slave masters. Additionally, black children struggle with abuse in their domestic households as well as from their community. Consequently, characters in Morrison's *Beloved* are forced to find ways to survive the violence that surrounds them to come out of their marginalized spheres. Sweet Home to Sethe is like a 'hell hole'. Cincinnati on the other hand signifies freedom from the brutality in Sweet Home and Sethe is determined to get out of this hell hole even with the danger that stands on her way. After she is raped by Schoolteacher's nephew, Sethe reports the incident to Mrs Garner whom she said "shades a tear", Schoolteacher brutally beats her up for violating his authority. She also tells the story of her mother who was lynched after she was tortured. Morrison here is telling the story of the slave women who did not only have to suffer child bearing and nurturing but also undergo serious violence.

The theme of violence can best be understood through Sethe. The idea of violence and the brutal assaults that arise from slavery lead to a death of an absolute magnitude- the end of a person's humanity (Beaulieu, 2003, p. 203). After Mr. Graner's death, Mrs. Garner asks schoolteacher her brother to take over the management of Sweet Home plantation. The schoolteacher's oppressive nature makes living on the estate more unbearable, which causes the slaves to devise an escape plan. In one scene, the violence experienced by slaves in these plantations becomes evident. After anticipating the slave's escape, the schoolteacher together with his nephews capture and kill Sixo, while brutally punishing Paul D. before returning him to Sweet Home. To worsen the situation, the schoolteacher, and his cronies violates Sethe in the barn, and steals her baby's milk. The schoolteacher punishes Sethe later on through whipping, despite being aware of her pregnancy. In the novel, Schoolteacher represents the prime agent of the structure of white supremacists and the era of slavery. In many instances, Sethe mentions the violent act of taking her baby's milk. She states: "Nobody will ever get my milk no more except my own children. I never had to give it to nobody else—and the one time I did it was took from me—they held me down and took it". (p.236). The event primarily takes Sethe's humanity away from her and transforms her into an animal as she later kills here daughter to prove her word that nobody will take her children or her children's milk from her ever. The perversity of the institution of slavery is so dangerous

that it manages to sever the bonds between parents and offspring. Morrison here shows that the consequence of slavery not only exerts physical pain on Sethe who represents the women at the time, but it also infringes her feelings towards her children.

When Sethe commits the most violent act of killing her child, it signifies a major twist in the character's disposition so much so that Sethe completely loses ties with her individuality or self and become devoid of her vitality. Based on the mistreatment she undergoes and tolerates at the hands of her slave owners, Sethe becomes undone, physically and spiritually to the point of exhaustion, and at some point, madness. "...what he (schoolteacher) did broke three more Sweet Home men and punched the glittering iron out of Sethe's eyes, leaving two open wells that did not reflect firelight" (Morrison, 1991, p. 11). The act of killing Beloved is not understandable in the beginning, however, the conditions in which Sethe had to survive in and the brutality she experienced drove her to commit infanticide. Her fear of the violence becomes so bad that she would rather kill her child than subject her to live in the same terrible conditions. From an analytic perspective, not madness or exhaustion caused Sethe to kill her infant, but the actuality of slavery (Holden-Kirwan 445). Besides dealing with the pain of killing her child, Sethe also struggles with inner turmoil from her past when she recalls her mother's hanging. Such violent events in history signify how routinely violence and death is passed on from generation to generation.

Inspired by the black feminist movement that began in the 1960s, Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved* reflects the general illustrations of women of color. Morrison intends to expose the reader to the effects of institutionalized slavery on African Americans. Her point of view delves deeply into the issues that African American women encounter in this period. Her representations of motherhood, domesticity, and violence in *Beloved*, paint a perfect picture of repression and disillusionment. While Morrison understands and acknowledges motherhood as an extraordinary experience for women, she does not limit the women's role simply to motherhood. Her writings in this regard have transformed how readers analyze and understand stereotypical representations of black women. By narrating Sethe's story, Morrison focuses on the dehumanizing consequences of slavery, particularly on black motherhood. The effect of the violence and brutality is

psychological exhaustion that drives the main character to the brink of a mental disorder. Consequently, slavery threatens the mental and spiritual world of the characters, causing a series of dreadful and terrible consequences.

The theme of violence is manifested throughout the novels, and the reader cannot find it easy to ignore. The recovery of the stolen milk signifies the sustenance of a child's needs. When Sethe's milk is stolen, she tends to feel like she cannot provide for her child which brings her even lower than the fact that she was raped in the first place. Both novels, *Beloved* and *The Color Purple* seem to be hell bent on exposing the problems that the black women went through in the 18th and 19th centuries. Violence has not been used to demonize men. On the contrary, the violence is seen to manifest itself in both males and females alike. For example, Sethe is a mother who loves her child dearly, and she would go to any length to make sure she is okay. However, when schoolteacher becomes the master, the slaves attempt to escape whereby some of them die in the process. Sethe is stopped after she slices the throat of her daughter Beloved who bleeds out and dies. As much as she loved her child, she would rather have her dead than watch her become a slave. This act of violence is triggered by the brutality that was presented by slavery. Sethe remembered the cruel things did to her and knew that she would not let a child of hers go through the same treatment that was handed to her. She says that 'I got a tree on my back and a haunt in my house, and nothing in between but this daughter I am holding in my arms' (Morrison, 2004, p. 18). Additionally, the violent crime committed is followed up by the presence of the dead child as a ghost. Although this is a scary bit for the readers, the novel manages to capture the highlights such as when the ghost puts its prints on the cake that does not make the ghost seem too violent for digestion. The theme of motherhood also blossoms as the reader is made to share in the grief and the regret of a mother who has slain her own.

3. MOTHERHOOD, DOMESTICITY AND VIOLENCE IN ALICE WALKER'S *THE COLOR PURPLE*

3.1 Motherhood in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*

Motherhood refers to the state or experience of raising or having infants. When a woman gives birth to a child, it is right to conclude that she is experiencing motherhood. Motherhood is viewed differently in various cultures with some cultures appreciating it while others undermine it, particularly the roles played by a mother in the society. For a long time, black feminists have opposed the belief that a woman's place is in the home and as a result, motherhood has been equated to parenthood in general. Walker like Morrison, though they set their novels in different historical periods, tries explain void in motherhood that existed at the time. Unlike the characters in *Beloved* who somehow play the motherhood role before they lose their children, most of the characters in *The Color Purple* through which Walker tells the story are not given a chance to motherhood. The motherhood here is mostly directed towards other people's children which represents how the society was designed. This is shown through Celie, Sofia and the missionary family. Goodman (2013, p. 145) writes that "being a mother should not limit a woman from getting involved in economic, social, religious, or professional activities". To him, true womanhood or motherhood dictates that a woman should overcome the critical economic deprivations and go against the idea of the Western world that a woman should stay at home. The roles of mothers in the modern society should be equated to those of fathers, and through this, mothers will be capable of taking care of their families without necessarily depending on men. In this light, Walker demonstrates in *The Color Purple* how men shift the responsibility of nurturing and child care towards the woman which highlights the theme of motherhood in the novel.

Mr, Celie's husband marries her mainly to nurse his kids which his dead wife leaves behind.

Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* gives illustrations of the black feminist perspective of motherhood. Although the novel focuses on the nuclear type of family that is common in the Western culture, it undermines the principality surrounding the family structures as outlined in the Western culture. In the novel, motherhood is illustrated by key characters, such as Celie, Sofia, Nettie, and others who play significant roles in their families. The theme of motherhood in the novel is evident when the woman perceived to be Celie's mother gives birth to another child and has to recover before engaging in sexual contact with her husband. In this case, it is evident that the role of a mother is to give birth and satisfy the sexual needs and demands of the father (Chornokur, 2012, p 39). In the novel, when the father realizes that he is unable to force the mother to sexual intercourse while still nursing her birth injuries, he seeks sexual satisfaction from Celie, who is his stepdaughter. Celie's father intimidates her and warns her against telling anyone about the sexual abuse. However, Celie is relieved when she later realizes that the man she had sexual intercourse with was not her father, although she cannot forget the extreme pain she underwent when being sexually abused by her stepfather. The most traumatizing part for her is that at age 14 she starts bearing kids for this abuser, who in turn steals the children from her causing more pain in her. She is not able to take care of her children and is left thinking that her children are dead. This underlines the pain of not being able to take care of their kids as Celie and her mother who are deprived by natural causes or man. "Dear God, I am fourteen years old. I have always been a good girl. Maybe you can give me a sign letting me know what is happening to me" says Celie who can barely take care of herself but already has two kids. Celie's trauma is shown when she follows a woman with kids into a shop thinking that the kids belong to her. This is to say though she thinks that her kids were killed in the woods, she still yarns to hold them. Morrison shows how separation affected motherhood and the scars it left on black women all their lives.

The novel also illustrates the theme of motherhood when Celie had to act as a mother to the children of the man she was forcibly married to. She was forced into the marriage by

her stepfather whom she referred to as 'Mr.' because she did not know what his real name was. In the marriage, Celie's primary role is to nurture and take care of the children, a perspective that is strongly opposed by proponents of black feminism. Having lost their biological mother, Celie's step children are unwelcoming, hostile, and extremely defiant towards her. This is underscored by the statement in the novel that Celie spent her wedding day running from the eldest to the youngest child although they did not want to hear anything about or from their stepmother having lost their biological mother. The situation is worsened when one of the children picked up a rock and hit Celie's head causing a serious injury. Instead of the child's father punishing him for his ill behavior, he only warned him against doing that in the future. This shows that in the black culture, a mother has no authority or command in the family (Chornokur, 2012, p. 40). Lack of authority for motherhood in the black culture is also evident when Celie tries to shave her step children's hair and faces strong resistance from them. The children accuse her of committing murder; behaviors that are not experienced in other cultures, such as the Western culture. As a mother, Celie also has the responsibility of cooking dinner despite having children and a husband to help her. This is seen as the primary role of a mother in the black culture. In the novel, it is stated that: "...So after I bandage my head best, I can and cook dinner..." (Walker, 1982, p.13). Walker here shows how motherhood in the African American community is transferrable. As a stepmother, Celie is expected to act as the mother of her step kids without any hesitation. Though the children are mean to her, she has to carry on nicely.

Celie's motherhood struggles come to an end when she manages to establish a good rapport and relationship with Mr.'s children. She experiences a happy motherhood when Mr's children have confidence in her. The novel articulates that one of the children, Harpo, has confidence in her and seeks advice from her whenever he is in trouble with Sofia, who is his wife. The fact that Harpo seeks advice from Celie underscores the role of a mother, particularly in the black culture. As a stepmother, Celie is seen to accept the lover of Mr., who was previously believed to be her father's. Mr.'s lover is known as Shug, and Celie accepts her at a time that she is rejected by everyone in the community because of her illness ("women's sickness"). The relationship between Celie and Shug advances and they become intimate. Through this, Shug successfully develops as a self-

sufficient and independent woman. By taking care of Shug and accepting her at a time she was rejected by everybody in the community, Celie illustrated great roles of a mother appreciated in the black culture. In other words, one can say Celie substituted the yearning to love her kids with Shug whom she loves and takes care of as if she was her own.

Moreover, the theme of motherhood in Walker's "The Color Purple" is illustrated when the family of a Christian missionary adopts the children of Celie who are alienated from their real or biological mother. The major reason for the Christian missionary family's adoption is the inability to have babies, which is considered one of the major roles of a mother in the black culture (Chornokur, 2012, p. 42). Apart from Celie's stepchildren, the Christian missionary family adopts Nettie, who is Celie's biological sister. Nettie is adopted because of the motherhood challenges that she faces, such as sexual harassment and hostility that led to her being chased out of the house by her sister's husband. Nettie's struggles underline the struggles faced by mothers in the black culture when carrying out their day-to-day duties and responsibilities in their families. Motherhood is also brought out in Sofia's case where she is forced to take care of the mayor's kids abandoning her own kids. She is even ashamed to face her kids when her servitude at the mayor's residence comes to an end after eleven and a half years. She feels that she has not been a good mother and confesses that she hates the mayor's kids that racism made her take care of over her own kids. Sofia's case highlights the image of black women portrayed by the racist era of the post slavery years. The mayor's wife is not able to take care of her own kids but leaves them in the hands of her black maid.

Furthermore, Walker also uses coincidence to illustrate the theme of motherhood in the novel through Nettie, who is also taken in by the Christian family that adopted her sister's kids. Celie as the elder sister took care of Nettie like her own child after their mother's death. She even in one of her letters to God asks Him to protect her when she escapes from their home. Walker further illustrates her love for and concern for Nettie with an irony "... I lay there thinking bout Nettie while he [Mr. _____] on top of me, wonder if she safe" (letter 9). Even in the middle of love making which supposedly has to bring joy to Celie,

she is thinking about her sister's safety. Also she begins to lose faith in God when she doesn't hear from her sister. To confirm the familiar saying that a mother's love for her kids is stronger than any, Nettie is united with her sister's kids in Samuel's home. In Africa people mistake her for the kid's mother which brings them closer and closer. No matter how Samuel's wife tries to separate them, Nettie feel more inclined to the kids and Walker tells us towards the end of the novel that Nettie takes care of Adam and Tashi (Celie's child and the friend), and acts like a real mother to them despite the fact that she is not their biological mother. Notably, in the novel, Celie, Nettie, and the Christian missionary family clearly illustrate the theme of motherhood, and this is because they hold the responsibilities of taking care of and cooking for the children, roles that are preserved for motherhood, particularly in the black culture.

3.2 Domesticity in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*

Essentially, domesticity refers to when an individual is tied to or devoted to home life such that he or she is not aware or have no knowledge of other perspectives in the surrounding environment or life. Domesticity is illustrated in the novel when one of the key characters gets a hand on the letters sent to her by Nettie and confesses that she does not know where England and Africa are located. This is an illustration that unlike the white woman who has knowledge of various perspectives in her surroundings, the black woman is has been left ignorant because her place is only the home and what happens there. In the novel, when Celie gets access to the letter sent to her by Nettie, she desperately wants to know where Nettie is. When Shug hands over the letters to Celie, the latter says "Little fat queen of England stamps on it, plus stamps that got peanut, coconut, rubber trees and say Africa. I do not know where England at. I do not know where Africa at either. So I still do not know where Nettie at" (Walker, 1982, p. 109). These words articulated by Celie indicate that she was more focused on domestic work than other perspectives, and thus, she was not aware of other things that were available or happening around her. From the statement, it can be argued that Celie only understood things that were associated with or affiliated to her personal experiences. Essentially, this underlines the fact that the black woman is ignorant of everything that happens around her except for her family life and domestic chores.

Moreover, domesticity in the novel is illustrated when Nettie makes a trip to Africa. During the trip, Nettie comes across individuals who later form part of her extended family, and her devotion to the new family members underlines the theme of domesticity that is illustrated in the novel. On the trip to Africa that gives the description of "incredible", the novel says that Nettie comes across a white missionary known as Doris, who has a black grandson. The novel further says that the black grandson prefers talking to Adam and Olive, rather than talking to his white grandmother (Lister, 2010, p. 135). The theme of domesticity is illustrated by the fact that the differences between white and black are still in existence. Besides, the fact that Doris who is white seems to work out of her interest rather than for the welfare of the blacks is an illustration of domesticity in the novel. Seemingly, Doris views the white culture as superior to the black culture, underlining her devotion to the white culture, and this clearly illustrates domesticity in Alice Walker's novel (LaGrone, 1995, p. 120). Doris' black grandson feels at home with the black family because her grandmother's view on white superiority alienates him from his own family. He goes to where he feels at home.

It can also not be ignored that Nettie's letters, to a large extent, incorporate information on missionary, and through this, Alice Walker clearly illustrates the domestics of the black culture. Sofia illustrates domesticity when her role in the Mayor's family turns into a black maid. The Mayor's family is white, and they expect Sofia to carry out domestic duties that are meant for the black woman. This is against Sofia's expectation who worked in the field when she was back at home, and her husband Harpo took care of the children (Lister, 2010, p. 136). Though the mayor has a wife who does not work they prefer to get a maid to take care of their home. Black women in this period were seen as home keepers while the white wives sat around idle. Sofia in the novel is portrayed as a neat and classy. However, to the white man she can only make a good home keeper. "She (the mayor's wife) look at the prizefighter car. She eye Sofia wristwatch. She say to Sofia, All your children so clean, she say, would you like to work for me, be my maid?" Of course Sofia does not see herself in this way and responds with a "hell no" which lands her twelve years of servitude. Walker in Sofia's case portrays the difference between black and white domesticities. White women only act as wives while black women act as mothers and housekeepers in their homes.

3.3 Violence in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*

One of the clearly illustrated themes in Alice Walker's novel *The Color Purple* is violence. Various characters are seen to behave violently and even harm other characters physically (Humann, 2014, p. 61). Celie clearly illustrates the physical, economic, emotional, and social violence that the black woman faces in the society. In the novel, Celie is intimidated and sexually abused by her step-father, and at times, she is beaten if she does not give in to his sexual demands. Celie says that her step-father oppressed her sexually when her mother did not respond to his sexual advances, and he would choke her if she shouted or cried while insisting that she would better get used to his behavior. The stepfather would continue having sexual intercourse with her despite the injuries that she sustained in the process, and this depicts sexual violence. Celie tells of her stepfather that "He start to choke me, saying You better shut up and git used to it. But I don't never git used to it. And now I feels sick every time I be the one to cook." (Part 1, pg. 11). On the other hand, Celie is forcefully married to a man who also harasses and oppresses her physically. This is after her step-father takes her two children away and forces her into the violent marriage. Without a doubt, Celie is seen to endure sexual violence and brutality from her stepfather and husband, and this makes her feel as though her body is fragmented and possessed by victimizers. She faces many challenges and feels she has no right to make her own decisions, and choices in life. "Well how you spect to make her mind? Wives is like children. You have to let 'em know who got the upper hand. Nothing can do that better than a good sound beating" (Part 1, pg. 42). To Celie violence does not pay but submission does which she has chosen to be her own way of life.

Despite her young age, Celie, who is one of the novel's key characters, lacks control over her body as well as her physical environment, and this illustrates the acts of violence that the black woman face in the society. The incessant physical and sexual violence that Celie faces makes her lose her sense of individuality and identity, which are vital for the black woman. Although Celie's marriage marks the end to the sexual and physical violence perpetrated by her stepfather, it ushers her to new violence perpetrated by her husband whom she refers to as Mr. because she does not know his name. Celie is

afraid of the brutality of the men. In the black culture, the man is given the go-ahead to use the black woman in whatever manner he wants and is allowed to beat the black woman whenever he wishes. In the novel, it is seen that Mr. beats Celie whenever and in any way he wants because she is his wife (Walker, 1982, p. 30). After realizing her incapability to overcome the ill-treatment, Celie becomes submissive, and this clearly illustrates the submissiveness of the black woman when facing physical and sexual violence in patriarchal societies. Celie simply take all the names, abuses, insults, and judgments directed to her by her stepfather and husband. This is better emphasized when she tells Shug that she thinks about Nettie dead because she fought and ran away. Since Celie cannot fight, she figures that if she stays where she is told, then she will continue living (Walker, 1985, p. 21).

Celie's endurance amidst the violence jeopardizes her emotional life, and this depicts the life of the black woman, particularly in a patriarchal society. A black woman feels helpless and under control of a man because of the challenges she faces. As a result of the physical and sexual violence that Celie faces, she no longer has any feeling for her husband, stepfather, and other members of her family. When patting Harpo on the back, Celie argues that patting Harpo's back is like patting a piece of wood that will forever remain lifeless. From Celie's comparisons, it can be argued that she feels dehumanized; she has retreated from feeling, and feels aloof from her surroundings. The incessant physical and sexual violence have resulted in Celie's lack of self-esteem and self-worth. The novel also illustrates psychological evidence, and this is seen when Celie's husband welcomes a new lover known as Shug Avery, a move that causes a great deal of psychological violence against Celie. Violence in the novel is also evident when one of her stepchildren hit her with a stone on the head, and she bled uncontrollably. It is unfortunate that instead of the child's father punishing him for his ill behavior, he only warned him against doing it in the future. This underlines the violence that the black woman faces in the society.

Furthermore, Sofia faces racial violence when at the Mayor's family. When Sofia refuses to serve the role of a mammy at the Mayor's place, she faces racial discrimination, which is also known as racial violence (Priya, 2014, p. 53). The novel says that Sofia's refusal

to serve as a maid at the Mayor's makes her experience slavery and violent treatment by the Mayor and his family members who were from the white culture. She is also treated violently and taken to jail for refusing to perform chores that the whites believe are meant for the black woman. Celie gives a picture of the physical torture on Sofia when she says: "When I see Sofia I don't know why she still alive. They crack her skull, they crack her ribs. They tear her nose loose on one side. They blind her in one eye. She swole from head to foot. Her tongue the size of my arm, it stick out tween her teef like a piece of rubber. She can't talk. And she just about the color of a eggplant." (Part 2, pg. 87). This depicts the inhumane treatment meted on her because she refused to accept the role society had carved out for black women. Sofia faces racial violence to an extent that she is forbidden from sitting in the car's front seat while teaching the wife of the mayor how to drive and giving her directions. Before moving to the mayor's house, Sofia faces physical violence while living with her husband, Harpo. The novel notes that Harpo resorted to physically assaulting Sofia after his father's implication that Sofia's resistance was making Harpo a less authoritative man, and this is contrary to the demands of the patriarchal society. The patriarchal society believes that the black woman must be beaten by the man for the man to earn her respect and that of the society (Priya, 2014, p. 54). "You told Harpo to beat me!" Sofia confronts Celie who jointly with Mr. advised Sofia's husband to beat her. She goes further to say: "All my life I had to fight. I had to fight my daddy. I had to fight my uncles. I had to fight my brothers. A girl child ain't safe in a family of men, but I ain't never thought I'd have to fight in my own house!" (Letter 21, pg 13). This statement fully explain the life of a black woman in the South of the United States in those days, from girlhood till she's all grown. A life filled with violence and struggles.

Violence in the novel is illustrated in Nettie's letters to Celie, in which she says that the African continent has been situated geographically as a place of violence. In her letters, Nettie opines that most of the lands in Africa were taken and controlled by the whites without any payment of compensation. Nettie articulates that after violently taking the land, Africans were forced to work on the land. (Priya, 2014) Nettie says that "Children of eight and over are workers in the fields. In order to pay rent for the barracks, taxes on the land and to bring water, food, and wood, everyone must work" (Walker, 1982, p.

250). This explains the same relegation and treatment of black people as second class in America. While Nettie is escaping from harassment and violence in America, she goes over to Africa to see black people subjected to the same treatment. The mention of these happenings in Nettie's letters, highlights the treatment Sofia gets from the mayor, thereby bringing out the theme of racism related to violence and subjugation.

The theme of violence in the novel is once more depicted when Tashi, the African kid who befriends Celie's children Olivia and Adam, has to experience cultural violence when trying to identify with the African culture and roots. Tashi is forcefully introduced to ceremonial rites that had in the past resulted in the cruel and shocking death of her sister. Tashi is forcefully introduced to female circumcision and the practice of facial scarring that are meant for the black woman in her tribe Olinka. Female circumcision is highly discouraged because it causes the suffering of most black women (Priya, 2014, p. 19). Tashi experienced cultural violence when she was being introduced to this initiation rites and later feels ashamed of doing it because the pain is too much for her. By bringing in the circumcision perspective, walker aims to address another aspect that she thinks violates women and that presents them as low lives. Female circumcision is a practice carried out in certain parts of Africa which usually causes pain in the women. Hence, Tashi's experience highlights violence in the novel.

4. LIBERATION

4.1. Possibilities for Liberation for Black Women in Tony Morrison's *Beloved* and Alice Walker's *the Color Purple*

The history of the Black Women is riddled with desperation, strife and the longing for a better and brighter future. For many years, women have stood up and fought for their identity ready to rid themselves of the stereotypical roles that have been imposed on them by both the white people and the black men. Traditionally, the woman was seen as the mother, cook, nurse, cleaner and maid of the family who would so often be forced to the demands of the white household. In Toni Morrison's 'Beloved' and Alice Walker's 'The Color Purple', the powerful role of the Black Woman and how it comes to manifest itself is a breathtaking journey of experiences and emotions.

It is critical to first note that the presentation of the Black Women is not the primary focus of both novels, but a vital issue in both. It is a message that needs to be carried on and passed on to future women who would like to live on their feet and not their knees. Celie, in *The Color Purple* is being pressured into following traditional responsibilities such as caring for her family upon the death of her mother. This meant that she would become responsible for her siblings as well as her stepfather and the time spent being a mother to them would mean that she would have to sacrifice school. Moreover, this would mean that she has to live her life with very little education as it is seen when she is making her diary entries. Celie's sentences contain poor punctuation and spellings and more often contain incorrect information. Although her uneducated language is a prominent attraction at the beginning of the novel, it improves considerably with age and knowledge as she seeks to explore reason and emotion in the entries she makes later as well as the letter she sends to her sister.

Toni Morrison's *Beloved* is a breathtaking novel that produces extraordinary imagery for the reader in a bid to capture and retain the reader's attention. The vivid imagery is most important because the book seeks to tell Beloved's tale and the description of the place where she was kept is the cradle, foundation and the very peak of the novel. Beloved describes the location of the place she was kept as a crowded space that was surrounded by both the dying and the dead. This particular part is a chapter that is uncomfortable for the reader as it causes glimpses through the vivid descriptions and the reader is allowed to create his or her imagination of the darkness. From the sequence of descriptions, the reader is brought into a cruel world where death is commonplace.

Nearing the end of the 20th century, women were not perceived to be in need of education since their duties lay mostly around the homestead and not in places where it was required. For example, Celie is ordered to take care of the home as well as the children of Albert. In 'Beloved', Sethe had not come across the fortune of knowing about education. She was born into slavery and was taught the art of working in the field and caring for the family. She was not even able to look up to her mother for teachings and guidance. Celie's diary entries were directed towards God, but from the fact that the Author decided to invade her privacy, it seems that even women's most intimate secrets are not meant to be secrets after all. The reader is also allowed to listen to the prayers and make a judgment of the difficult times that were being experienced by women.

As it turns out, Celie has nobody to turn to as is common with the rest of the women. Additionally, they are left to fend for themselves while being expected to conduct their duties faithfully and without question. As a result of the difficult times experienced by Celie and the lack of education, she finds herself describing God as an old, tall gray and big white man, which further supports the fact that women were so domesticated that they could not even have thoughts of their own besides those forced onto them. The opinions of the Black Woman were not necessary as long as she served her husband and maintained the home. On the other hand, in *Beloved*, Grandma Suggs decides to take it upon herself to become the preacher for the black community. She demands that the blacks love themselves because nobody else would, and especially not the 'white folks.' This is a rare scene in both novels whereby a woman speaks out to other women asking

them to come together and do something good. However, Suggs is a woman who has advanced in age, and her main responsibility is taking care of run-away children, thus bringing to light the role of motherhood. Crossing over to *The Color Purple*, Sofia stands out as a character that does not accept the societal roles that have been imposed on women. She does not believe that she is supposed to endure the cleaning and cooking and following every demand that her husband would make. She refuses to bow before her husband and also refuses to depend on him. Her sole focus is to create her identity and improve by any standard her status in life. Her character was unique to this era because very few women had the confidence and zeal she had.

Violence in both novels is brutal and demeaning to the women. However, from all the chaos and all the tears, women have the capability to hope and struggle to live the next day because it is a step closer to their freedom. For example, Celie is beaten by Albert for no reason just because he feels the need to express his superiority and make her see that her position in the household is small to say the least. Sofia, on the other hand, despite being a strong willed woman was arrested for harassing the major's wife where she is later forced into service as a maid. This position is most likely to break even the strongest of the women when they are forced back into slavery. Sofia was denied visitation from her children and would work hours than she had been accustomed. Shug is another female character of interest in *The Color Purple*. She is not afraid of showing off, speaking her mind and flaunting her body that fascinates and intrigues Celie mainly because she is in control of her life (Walker, 1996, p. 52). She is the complete opposite of Celie, and she is envied for the grace, the freedom, and the power that oozes from her. The men had become fond of her because of her lighter skin as compared to the rest of the women. During those times, lighter skinned women had just about the same chances as the men (52). Being around Shugs and romantically involved with her raises Celie's spirit and changes the way she sees life. Even though Celie has had children, Walker tells us that her virginity is only taken away when she experiences "real sex" with Shugs. This frees her emotionally and she no longer cares about her husband choosing to go with Shugs to Memphis with her 'new love'. Her relationship reawakens the person in her and she stands up to her abusive husband which changes her life forever. After she and Shugs discover Nettie's letters that Mr has be hiding, Celie during dinner lunging

towards Albert with a knife says: "I curse you. Until you do right by me everything you think about is going to crumble!"(Part 3, pg 134). This show her emancipation inspired by Shugs. The novel seems to have been written at a time when Alice Walker was growing through a rough time in her life. She, therefore, created the character as an embodiment of the woman she wished she would have been; a carefree woman who loves living life in spite of all the challenges and hurdles that she might have had to face.

The concept of domesticity is better explained by the fact that sex was used as a means of domesticating women throughout the nineteenth century. Both novels seem to reference to the topic quite often, and the graphic references used to evoke certain emotions that mostly end up in tears. For example, the opening of the novel is a clear account of some of the events that happened to the characters that the reader has not even met yet. For Celie, however, sex is not a pleasurable moment for her because of the repeated abuse and rape that she has undergone. This makes her end up being afraid of it. Celie was raped and abused by her stepfather when she was 14 (Walker, 1996, p. 50). Being a victim of rape diminishes her position in society and she further succumbs to maltreatment from the people she mingles with. The issue of violence and rape is further described as not a racial problem but an all-around problem. Both Celie and her father were black which means that in that society, the women and girls were oppressed, and they were helpless about it. This also brings to light the problem of incest in the family. Celie was raped by her stepfather, a man who lived in the same house as her and was married to the mother. The environment they were in had already become traumatic to Celie at 14. Crossing over to *Beloved*, Sethe had to fight for anything that she got in life especially a position in the society. However, after the entire struggle, the position she found herself in was emotionally distressing. Being a woman, the white men thought that they would do with her what they pleased and so one day she was raped and had her milk stolen.

Morrison sets her novel at a time when women were beginning to fight for equal rights and the subsequent creation of many unions fighting for the violence against women. It was from these battles that a strong willed woman like Sarah Grimke would rise as an influential activist and demand women to pull themselves from the gutter that men had

put them in and commence thinking and acting for themselves. She became a prominent figure of the 18th century, and she preached her gospel until her death in the late 18th century. Although both novels portray the hard times that women had to endure over and over again, there are still instances of determination, unity and love among the women to their husbands or children or both. For example, Sethe's community seems to stand side by side during the exorcism of her returned deceased child. The women put away their differences and work hard to save her. *The Color Purple* is also sprinkled with instances of women displaying acts of courage to overcome their predicament. For example, Celie was angry because her husband was hiding letters sent to her by her sister and from the rage inside her for her resentment of her husband; she gained the courage to threaten him with her departure. She had made up her mind about leaving for Memphis in the company of Shug Avery. This is the first instance that Celie gathers herself and faces her husband. The reader does not help but feel proud of the feeble steps of courage that she takes. They could be weak and small, but overall, they are steps in the right direction. Celie had given in to Albert's abuses but with the encouragement and love she gets from Shugs she finally is able to free herself and start a new life. She take the decision to leave Albert and move to Memphis where she learns how to make pants which she later turns into a business employing Sofia and others to work in her shop. Walker twists the usual narrative that has always seen black women as second place and the reader slowly see the once naïve Celie turn into the breadwinner of the family bringing together all the people that once despised and under looked her under her roof.

The issue of domestic violence in both novels depicts just how far the black women have come to fight for rights that are naturally theirs. In *The Color Purple*, Celie is often beaten to the point where she believed that domestic violence was nature's way of reminding the wife to obey her husband. Celie discloses to the reader that in her days as a married woman, she never learned how to defend herself, and instead, she learned how to survive. Additionally, Sofia, Johnson's wife hits back her husband when he tries to batter her. The fact that she hits back her husband with greater force than he did only motivates her to fight harder for equality. Sofia does not shy away from telling Celie that she had to fight for everything she had. On the other hand, Morrison in *Beloved* uses violent scenes to show the capability of women while at the same time revealing just

how much the black women have sacrificed in the wake of fighting for equal rights. 'Beloved' also seeks to bring to light just how much progress women can achieve if some power can be granted to them. Both *The Color Purple* and *Beloved* tend to surprise their readers when they reveal the will of the women to fight back and take up their place in the society. As mentioned earlier, Celie finally finds the courage to move away from her abusive husband after years of brutality and inhumane treatment. The reader cannot help but smile and feel proud of the coy woman who at some point seemed like a slave.

The black women in both novels represent the injustices that has been meted out to the women of this race for decades by society including their men. In both novels, the domestication of women is clearly a matter of sexual dominance and physical strength in the society. Tony Morrison's and Alice Walker in their novels try to portray the suffering women have gone through because of their sexuality. They come against what has been seen as the norm in the USA for years using characters like Sethe and Celie to communicate the plight of the black woman for years. However, there are a few other women who emanate grace, power, and just the same amount if not more of the brutality that men seem to enjoy. The idea of domestication of women is evident in the fact that Nettie, in *The Color Purple* screams and strikes her husband before she runs away because she does not want to engage in sex with Johnson. In *Beloved*, the female slaves are subjected to constant rape and inhuman treatment during their transportation from Africa and at the plantation respectively. Sethe refuses to continue with the life of a slave and decides to run away to meet Baby Suggs at 124. These strong women stop at nothing to discover their potential and escape the slavery that has been imposed on them by the white men and their husbands alike.

Celie evolves gradually in *The Color Purple* to the extent that she becomes proud of herself because she was introduced to another way of living. Shug and Sofia are the strong women who welcome Celie after she leaves her husband where she ends up being a happy and successful woman. After her liberation from her husband, she opens and runs her business and it seems like she feels younger every day she is free of her husband. Looking to Africa, the men in Olinka village have total and absolute power over their wives and they have to undergo a scarring ritual whereby all women have to

participate. This leaves their faces permanently marked. It becomes evident that the author intended to show that Celie's case was not unique, but a global problem for all women.

Mothers in *The Color Purple* and *Beloved* are not depicted as perfect, but they show an undying devotion and love to their children, sometimes in provocative ways. Morrison gives a perspective on the lives of slaves and the challenges that they have to overcome to gain their children's freedom as well as their own. However, to understand the roles and challenges of the women in both novels, it is important first to grasp the concept of slavery and the effect it had to the women who had to endure brutality from both black and white men. The severity of slavery traumatized the women who were fighting to stay alive and keep the black generation going. A paternalistic society was responsible for the roles assigned to people of different gender at the time *Beloved* and *The Color Purple* were written. For example, in most cases, men were picked to work in the field or perform other duties requiring either physical or mental strength while the women were stuck at home taking care of the household.

Celie is viewed by the reader as a timid and insecure character who has been told that she is ugly for so long such that she tends to believe that it is true. Her resolve is to survive the storm without an end in sight by being invisible and doing whatever her husband demands of her. This means that she is to become submissive to both her stepfather and husband, give birth and raise children for her husband, and not to question his authority in the household. She seems to have accepted her role as a silent wife and a good mother earlier on before she comes into contact with some of the influential women in the society. It is not until she meets them that she realizes that there is more to life than being a slave to an egomaniacal rapist. Women in both novels discover that speaking out about their problems amongst themselves boosts their confidence in tackling the problems in their lives. Celie opens up to Shug about her problems and after a heart-to-heart conversation, she realizes that she has the right to be treated better and also has the right to bring up a family in better conditions with a man who loves and appreciates her. Morrison, on the other hand, explores the world where the woman is

held in low regard mainly because it was written at a time when slavery was the most profitable trade.

Motherhood during slavery was difficult since mothers were not allowed to raise their children. This, in turn, leads to the damaging of family ties and loss of the vital mother-child relationship. From the relationship between Baby Suggs and her children, coupled with the relationship between Sethe and her mother, it becomes clear as day that motherhood was a difficult task. Sethe, for example, does not seem to know her mother at first, but when she meets her, she is asked to identify her mother by the branding under her breast. The loss of a parent is traumatizing and for Sethe, the fact that she barely knew her mother, and that she died by hanging is trauma enough to strain her in her future motherly duties. The troubles faced by the women in both novels seem to have their roots tied to slavery and the policies implemented during those times.

In *The Color Purple*, nearly all women are drawn away from their children in one way or another, and they have to end up being mothers to other children while remaining dedicated to getting back to their children. In *Beloved*, mothers are less reluctant about raising their children mainly because they were conceived as a result of rape.

Motherhood in both novels is a sensitive issue given that in *The Color Purple*, women yearn to be with their children but in *Beloved*, mothers try to live life on their terms. For example, Morrison explains that Sethe's mother threw away the children, (except Sethe) she conceived on the journey from Africa as she and other slaves were repeatedly raped. Sethe was not thrown away like other siblings, but as it turned out, her mother was trying to run away when she got caught and subsequently killed (Morrison 74). It is as a result of her mother's hanging that she took it upon herself as a woman to keep her children away from slavery or the horrors that it came with. For this reason, she was willing to kill her children so that they cannot suffer under the white man.

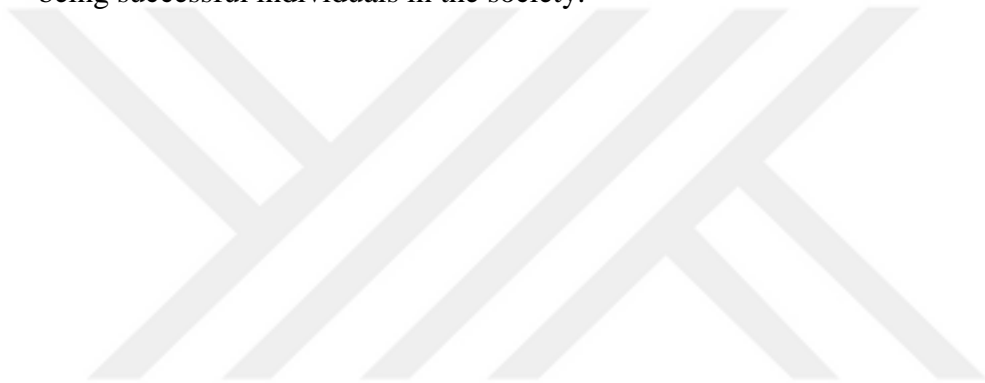
Domestication is an important theme in both novels as the women in both novels strive to find their place regardless of the stereotypical expectations of the society. Alice Walker chose to paint the picture of the times when women were taken for granted and their contributions went unnoticed by telling the story of how women suffer in silence.

Both novels strive to tell the story in a way that the reader can understand the times when the difference between blacks and whites was not only through the race but also through domestics. Christianity teaches individuals to love one another and so the inclusion of missionaries like Doris only furthers the idea that domesticity was indeed an important part of the society. Doris is a white missionary who has a black grandson who is more comfortable around the black Olinka than his family.

The domestic sphere is the most likely location where most atrocities are committed ranging from battering to murder. The domestication of women is not a thing of recent years but an unspoken agreement between ancient men and women who decided that the man's duty was to fight wars and provide for the family while the woman took care of the entire household. However, many of the atrocities committed to women in both novels happen within the domestic setting whereby they are placed there for the convenience of their male counterparts. They endure rape and beatings from their masters and husbands who are both demeaning and inhuman. The domestication of women was aimed at massaging the male ego to prove that masculinity is superior to femininity. For this reason, women had to endure selling of their children since the society had made them too weak even to protect their children. Naturally, women were meant to be the caregivers in the society, and it is the place of a woman to tighten up where things seem loose. However, the courage of heart and determination of a wounded lion is not commonplace among women.

People perceive trauma differently, and that is a psychological fact. Statistically, men handle traumatic events better than females. In both novels, it is these events that make the women either strong or weak depending on their perspective of the traumatic events. For instance, Celie is always abused and beaten by her stepfather whereby she eventually accepts her position as a sex toy to be used whenever her husband pleases. Although she finds the courage to walk away from a dysfunctional marriage, it is clear that were it not for the powerful women in her life, she would have remained timid. Sethe's bond to her mother is weak if any, but the idea that she threw away her siblings is traumatizing but it eventually builds her into a strong woman capable of being independent and self-conscious. Also, motherhood and sisterhood bonds formed among

women are their worst enemies because of the stereotypical notion that women cannot make tough choices. However, domestication of women becomes an important theme especially for black feminist novels because most of the authors show women in a bad light when they are in a position of power. Black women are commonly said to have short tempers but are outspoken. Moreover, they make some of the finest mothers raising their children with unconditional love. Domestication is finally defeated when the women in Toni Morrison's and Alice Walker's 'Beloved' and *The Color Purple* respectively overcome their fears of being inferior to men, going out into the world and being successful individuals in the society.



5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, for hundreds of generations, human beings have been in a constant state of struggle, either for space, power or survival. For this reason, historians have been able to document the trying times that have faced mankind even when they were facing extinction. Various events have taken place in the span of millions of years that have forged the present times that we live in today. For religious fun facts, concepts like slavery have been well documented in religious books like the Bible whereby even those who were considered righteous in the eyes of God were allowed to have slaves in their households. Therefore, the issue of a master-slave relationship is not all too new to the history of mankind. *The Color Purple* and *Beloved* by Alice Walker and Toni Morrison respectively seek to tackle the idea of slavery while at the same time shedding light to the fact that women got the short stick in the business of slavery.

It is not until the recent past that women have had a voice and have been able to make progress with their lives as far as fundamental human rights are put into question. It would, however, be mediocre to play the victim card when slavery is involved because both men and children also faced the same fate regarding brutality and racism and segregation (Levy, 1991, p. 27). The women in the society have had to endure countless instances of abuse from their husbands and the white men as well. As discussed, Toni Morrison's novel seeks to reflect on the stereotypical representations granted to women of color, and at the same time offering a feministic view of the African American politics (Bloom 2009). These politics are aimed at enriching some concepts of radicalism and black feminism while at the same time exploring the themes of domesticity, motherhood, and violence. The society has managed to marginalize women for many years by the use of patriarchal ideologies to subjugate them for their perceived inferiority (Walker, 1982, p. 3). In retaliation to this, women have come together for

centuries to try and fight for their self-identity, separate from that of their husbands or masters. Women have also been fierce warriors when it comes to fighting for their piece of pie and their rightful place in society. Female authors like Morrison and Walker have been part of the arsenal of the women's movement.

The role of the woman in the society has been reduced to that of motherhood and this greatly suppresses their identity (Struglińska, 2015, p. 209). Motherhood has also been used as a political tool used against women because the society perceives the female gender as inferior and unable to step up like their male counterparts. The female gender in the society has been unable to get ahead primarily because the ideal image of a mother makes it difficult for a woman to survive in an ever increasing competitive job market dominated by men. Since the books were authored at a time when slavery was the biggest tragedy of millions of people from Africa, it becomes possible to deduce facts about how slavery impacted motherhood and the relationships formed after that. From a critical look at both novels, the reader gets to understand the challenges faced by families after they are dragged hundreds of miles from their homes to become slaves. It also becomes crystal clear that slave system was disruptive and destructive to the family system that was designed by nature. Mothers and wives were left to suffer the loss of their husbands and children to slave traders and in all cases; their opinion was left out of the decision-making process. From all that history has taught us, women have had it rough over the years even during the post-slavery era even after being denied the opportunity to provide affection for their children. However, the similarity between Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker is that they both chose to use protagonists who face the extreme wrath of the society when they chose to keep quiet and do nothing.

Celie is a victim of multiple cases of abuse by men in her life starting with her step-father who beats and rapes her because he cannot forcefully have sex with his wife as she was recovering from childbirth wounds. Life for the Black Woman seemingly becomes harder upon her marriage. This was no different from Celie's case as she was also abused by her husband whom she refers to as 'Mr.' adding an insult to injury, Celie's children are adopted by white Christian missionaries alongside her sister Nettie

without her consent. Besides, she is forced to look after her husband's children and she is expected to act like their mother without fail.

In Morrison's and Walker's world, domestication of women was not protested as much as it is done today but the point of focus is that the novels can be used as a road map to the current situation women face today. For example, Walker cites Celie's situation of being beaten to the point that she believes that it is the man's duty to beat his wife for her to obey her. From the consistency of the battering, Celie never learns to defend herself which means that she lies there helpless with nobody to help until a fellow woman comes along and opens her eyes. Sofia, Johnson's wife, is the definition of a strong woman in the society. This is manifested when she hits back her husband just because she feels threatened and uncomfortable with his advances.

From the analysis of both novels, it is crystal clear that the black woman has been ignored for far too long, but over the past few decades, women have been at the forefront of fighting their battles and suffering along the way. Countless women have contributed in the struggle for gender equality but at the same time, they have sacrificed a lot to get to the place they currently are. Morrison uses violence to show just how much women can do if granted a portion of the power they crave. *Beloved* shows a society that is deprived of the moral fiber that tends to define the woman as an equal member of the society just like the men. However, both novels reveal that when it comes to freedom, women fight for their own, and it is not until they are willing that they choose to pitch in and provide assistance to other women. For instance, Celie and the rest of the women in her position accept their fate and are willing to wait out until the slavery card is all played out. However, it is the strong women in the society who swoop in and save the day. This shows that women live on both extremes of societal perceptions where motherhood, domesticity, and violence are the order of the day.

In a world where forced labor, rape, and general inhuman treatment was accepted, Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* provide an account in the lives of the slave women and what they had to endure. Pointing fingers and assigning blame to evade consequences is not the objective of the women's fight for social justice, but an important ingredient that makes up the arsenal used to fight for equality and a seat

at the table where power is distributed like bread crumbs to doves. Progress has been achieved on the freedom front, and this is not taken for granted since it is the very people who oppressed that are trying to meet them halfway. Men had to sacrifice their egomaniacal desires to give women a chance even at leadership because the present world we live in is not the same as the world that existed two hundred years ago. *The Color Purple* and *Beloved* are both novels that act as an indicator that humanity is capable of overcoming just about anything if there is coordination, peace, and mutual understanding (Struglińska, 2015, p. 209). To the wise women, both novels should serve to inspire rather than foster bitterness. In the 21st century, life has transformed for the better; since slavery is only read in history books and the girl child is mightily empowered to face the world and whatever challenges it might offer. Alice Walker and Toni Morrison are thus some of the influential women that have helped in the shaping of the modern world. The 21st century is the much awaited new dawn regarding freedoms and human rights and the Black women of today have stood boldly on several occasions to show the world that change is inevitable and human rights are meant for everyone.

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