



PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA  
MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH  
DJILLALI LIABES UNIVERSITY OF SIDI-BEL-ABBES  
FACULTY OF LETTERS, LANGUAGES AND ARTS  
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH



## **Female Survival in Selected Novels of Contemporary Feminist Literature**

**Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Letters, Languages and Arts at Djillali Liabes University of Sidi Bel Abbès, in Partial Fulfilment for the Requirements of the degree of Doctorate in English Literature**

**Submitted by:**

Mrs. HADJ HENNI Imane

**Supervised by**

Pr. BOULENOUAR

Mohammed Yamine

### **Jury Members**

<b>Nom et prénom(s)</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Etablissement d'origine</b>	<b>Qualité</b>
Mr. GUERROUDJ Nouredine	Pr.	Université de Sidi-Bel-Abbès	Président
Mr. BOULENOUAR Mohammed Yamin	Pr.	Université de Sidi-Bel-Abbès	Promoteur
Mr. Dib Mohammed	Pr.	University de Mascara	Examineur
Mr. SENKADI Abdelkader	Pr.	Université de Chlef	Examineur
Mr. BENSEDDIK Belkacem	MCA	Université de Sidi-Bel-Abbès	Examineur
Mr. KHELADI Mohammed	MCA	University de Tlemcen	Examineur

**Academic Year: 2021/2022**

## Dedications

Reaching the end of this thesis makes me look back at what I have learned. It would not have been easy, and it would not have been possible to reach my goals if I did not have the support of all people that are part of who I am. But there are special people who simply seem to be there when everything goes wrong, when it is time to celebrate or when we are just common individuals. My wonderful shelter that makes me feel that I know where I always belong.

To my beloved and wonderful **parents** who backed me up and taught me to seek knowledge. I owe them the greatest respect and grace.

To my loving and caring husband **Mohamed** whose enthusiasm gave me the energy I lacked sometimes.

To my brother **Mohamed** and dear sisters **Asma** and **Hanene** for their endless love.

To my daughter **Camelia** and my son **Imrane** whose presence added beauty and joy to my life. Their innocent smiles were encouraging and gave me the impetus to move ahead and progress.

To my **parents in law**. I owe them all love and respect.

To my **sisters in law** whose encouragement gave me strength

To my dear friends **Graine Lina, Mohdeb Assia, Alshahhen Assil, Mebarki Amina, Rahmouni Souaad, Wassila, Benbouali Sara, Habel Fatiha, Zourgui Malika, Benali Reguigue Nacera, Meharet Sara, Idou Naima, Nabila, Faiza, Amina** who gave me a boost to write this research by their encouragement and love.

## Acknowledgements

The completion of this thesis is the result of the immense contributions of a number of individuals, who deserve every commendation and acknowledgement. High on the list is the Almighty God, whose grace and mercies have led to the successful achievement of this thesis. Praise and thanks be unto His Holy Name.

People who deserve every accolade, as far as the successful completion of this thesis is concerned are:

Prof. **Boulenouar Mohammed Yamin** for supervising this thesis. His critical advice, as well as his support, patience and encouragement during all the stages, are much appreciated.

The board of examiners including Prof. **Senkadi Abdelkader**, Prof. **Guerroudj Noureddine**, Dr. **Dib Mohamed**, Dr. **Benseddik Belkacem**, Dr **Kheladi Mohamed** for accepting to read this humble work. I will be appreciative of their insightful comments that will surely better the work.

I am also sincerely thankful to my dear colleagues at the department of English whose help and encouragement are deeply valued, especially Dr. **Meharet**, Dr. **Mohdeb**, Dr **Mehdi**, Dr. **Iddou Naima**, Dr. **Boukhlef**, and Dr. **Babou. Dr. Naimi Nabila**.

I have to acknowledge with gratitude the assistance of Prof. **Remon Josephine** from university Lumiere Lyon 2, Faculté des langues department d'Anglais who was extremely supportive.

## Abstract

The present thesis explores the theme of women's survival in Toni Morrison's *A Mercy* (2008) and Alice Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971). It looks into women's experiences under the patriarchal oppression and female strategies of survival. This thesis delves into the different forms of victimization and disempowerment women, in the vanguard, the protagonists, undergo in the world of the novels, and then display possibilities for empowerment and survival through female bonds and writing. Along this line, one point of focus in the study is to reveal the protagonist's consciousness of their victimhood status-quo but also their involvement in changing it by moving away from submissiveness to empowerment. The work emphasizes the protagonist's journey to womanhood as enlightenment and discovery quest that heightens their awareness of their status as socialized figures and social agents who require self-empowerment. The practical side of this thesis is devoted to tackle how the escape from patriarchy can be achieved through insurgency, both physically and psychologically, as well as through writing as a means of survival in *The Lives of Girls and Women*, and how women's Sorority and Writing are considered as Means of Female Survival in Toni Morrison's *A Mercy*. Feminist arguments are adopted in examining the female protagonists who depart from being submissive women to rebellious ones through their unconventional behaviors. This study scrutinizes the social-suffocating *milieu* that spurred these female characters. The protagonists' survival strategies have been interpreted. The Feminist theory is used to afford the female writers a contextual foundation for their struggle to liberate women. In other words, the focus on the female element in the novel is a kind of rebuff of the old racist ideology that neglected black women in all areas of society. Furthermore, it is the construction of a new modern and independent identity for women of color. Finally, this thesis confirms that the aforementioned female writers discussed in this paper construct a modern understanding of women's identities by referencing history and tearing down traditional conceptions of females. Thus, our purpose is to demonstrate how these feminist writers synthesize the female identity in the two aforementioned novels: *A Mercy* and the *Lives of Girls and Women*. It reveals the main protagonists' development and transformation from oppressed and marginalized figures into powerful and mature women.

**Key words:** Afro-American Feminist literature, Alice Munro, Canadian Literature, Empowerment, Feminism, Strategies of Survival, Survival, Toni Morrison.

# Table of Contents

---

Dedications.....	I
Acknowledgments .....	II
Abstract .....	III
Table of Contents .....	IV
General Introduction. ....	1
<b>Chapter one: Women: a History and Misconception</b>	
1.1. Introduction .....	16
1.2. The Term “Empowerment” .....	16
1.3. Empowerment and Gender.....	19
1.4. Gender Roles Stereotypes .....	21
1.5. The Gender Equality .....	25
1.6. The Ideology of Patriarchy.....	28
1.7. Women’s Empowerment/Survival .....	31
1.8. Feminist Literary Theory.....	37
1.9. The Origins of the Feminist Literary Theory .....	39
1.10. The Perception of Feminism Today .....	43
1.11. The Power of Motherhood and Sisterhood.....	48
1.12. Conclusion.....	50
<b>Chapter two: Feminism: Theory and concept</b>	
2.1. Introduction. ....	55
2.2. Feminism: Concepts and Definitions .....	55

## Table of Contents

2.2.1. American Feminism: A Critical History .....	56
2.2.2. The First Feminist Wave .....	57
2.2.3. The Second Wave of Feminism .....	59
2.2.4. The Third Wave of Feminism .....	61
2.2.5. The Fourth Wave of Feminism .....	62
2.3. Major Varieties of Feminism .....	66
2.3.1. Liberal Feminism .....	66
2.3.2. Radical Feminism.....	69
2.3.3. Marxist-Socialist Feminism .....	71
2.3.3.1. Marxist feminism .....	71
2.3.3.2. Social Feminism .....	73
2.4. Gender as a Social Construct.....	74
2.5. Gender and Childhood. ....	76
2.6. Socialization of Women and Men. ....	77
2.7. Processes of Gender Socialization. ....	77
2.8. Feminism as anti-sexism .....	81
2.9. Black Feminism.....	83
2.10. The Distinction between Black Feminism and Other Feminisms .....	84
2.10.1. Black Women Exclusion from the Feminist Movement .....	84
2.10.2. Frustration of African-American Women's Evolution.....	89
2.11 The Strong Black Woman Concept.....	87
2.12 True Womanhood's Ideology .....	88

## Table of Contents

2.13. Black Feminist Literary Tradition.....	93
2.14. Male Pseudonyms Used by Female Authors.....	90
2.15. Conclusion.....	91
 <b>Chapter Three: Chapter Three: Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival</b>	
3.1. Introduction	
3.2. North American Feminist Literature / Canadian Feminist Writing. ....	95
3.3. Emerging Feminisms and Suffrage, Late 1800s–1920s.....	98
3.4. The Modern Woman and Modernist Masculinity, 1920s–1950s .....	99
3.5. 20th-Century Canadian Writers.....	100
3.6. The Women’s Movement and Women Writers. ....	105
3.7. Alice Munro: Life and Literary Career. ....	107
3.7.1. Virginia Woolf's Influence on Munro: Between Admirer and Opponent.....	109
3.8. Text in Context.....	111
3.8.1. The life of Del Jordan as a Bildungsroman. ....	112
3.8.2. Feminist issues in the lives of Girls and Women. ....	113
3.8.3. Women Advocators in Positions of Subordinations.....	115
3.8.4. Elsepth and grace: Archetypes of Domesticity .....	115
3.8.5. A Customary Housewife .....	119
3.8.6. Miss Faris and her conviction in men's reliance.....	118
9. Rebellious Characters Fighting Against Repressive Social Norms. ....	118
3.10. Addie: A Proponent of Traditional Feminism.....	121

## Table of Contents

3.11. Del's Survival is Contingent on her Being a Rebellious, Alienated Female .....	124
3.12. Female Body as a Source of Power.....	127
3.13. Writing as a Means of Survival.....	130
3.14. Conclusion.....	135

### Chapter Four: Sorority and Writing as Means of Female Survival

4.1. Introduction .....	143
4.2. African American literature .....	143
4.3. The Biography of Toni Morrison .....	144
4.4. Toni Morrison: A Leading Afro-American Feminist.....	145
4.5. Social Condition of African-American Female Slaves in the 1960s.....	147
4.6." <i>A Mercy</i> ".....	150
4.7. Sisterhood as a Means of Survival. ....	151
4.8. Sisterhood among Lina and Rebekka.....	157
4.9. Sisterhood as a Lifeline for Florans .....	159
4.10. Nature-based survival.....	160
4.11. Obedience as a Necessity of Survival .....	161
4.12. Education and its effect on the Survival of Florens .....	163
4.13. Writing as a Means of Empowerment.....	166
4.14. Female Survival via Motherhood: Motherhood's Strength. ....	169
4.15. Lina as Florens' Mother Figure .....	173
4.16. Sorrow and the Power of Motherhood .....	177
4.17. Conclusion.....	183



## Table of Contents

General Conclusion...	185
Bibliography.....	193
Appendices... ..	214
Glossary.....	218
المخلص	225

## General Introduction

---

Literature is the representation of the plights of man in general. It encompasses banks of knowledge, beliefs, values, ethics, and feelings among other things. The artist raises it up for him to see so that he might contemplate deeply on his worldview and overall existence. Literary critics and readers alike appreciate its multidisciplinary character. Ideology and psychology are also present in literature.

The late nineteenth and early twentieth century can be said to be a turning point not only in human history, but also in literature. During this era, writers committed themselves to the verbalization of issues of identity, culture and race. As a matter of fact, all literary genres including drama, poetry and fiction, articulated such cultural turmoil. On the whole, the voices of the minorities as women and hyphenated groups like Irish-Canadians, American-Canadians, African-American, Chinese-American and the likes have frequently become known in the world of literature. Many writers harness their pens to reflect their hatred and frustration with their societies or cultures, characterized by oppression, violence, domination, and materialism.

As such, voices of resistance and rebellion grew louder calling for change. Here then, it should be stressed that the engagement of writers with voicing such issues was not only related to male writers but also female writers who wanted badly to move from the traditional Victorian domesticity toward a more modern way of life. Such Feminist issues were voiced with the arrival of numerous female gifted writers in the 60s and 70s, including Margaret Atwood, Alice Munro, Margaret Laurence, Toni Morrison, Carole Shield, Maxine Hong Kingston, Zora Neale Hurston and many others. These female writers, at the turn of the twentieth century, started to voice their concerns, and grow awareness in addition to the refutation of their status within the patriarchal dominate societies

## General Introduction

---

With their distinguished skills, the major abovementioned female authors portray the attempts of the female protagonists to overstep the borders center-periphery relations including sexism and racism. One of the major concerns for these female writers is the portrayal of the female figure under patriarchal hegemony. For this reason, female oppression is a recurrent theme throughout their writings. Unquestionably, their female protagonists are spread as outsiders as they endeavor to revolutionize their situations, but what is worthy to note about Munro and Morrison is their portrayal of the protagonists' endless attempts to overcome their marginalization to occupy the center. In their novels, issues as oppression, inequality and silence are voiced and brought to the surface. In view of that, this thesis will undertake a study of the female empowerment and survival through different strategies in *The Lives of Girls and Women* by Alice Munro, and *A Mercy* by Toni Morrison.

Power can be viewed as a compelling force organizing individuals and society in one of two directions: as a constructive agent as long as it answers the collective concerns of the majority, or as a destructive agent if it is exploited to oppress the majority by an elite group or a nation. To cope with their victimhood in a world where power is concentrated on one side of the balance, the powerless strive to gain power by subverting oppressive power systems or by empowering themselves through other ways. Within feminist thinking and theory, feminist authors are concerned with how patriarchy stages women's lives and exerts influence over them. They contribute to the objectification of women by essentialist attitudes and beliefs. As a result, a sizable number of feminist writers not only expose the grounds for women's victimization, but also devise strategies for disrupting the victimhood position to which women are subjected. According to Alice Munro and Toni Morrison, such essentialist concepts that idealize sexism should be reassessed or dismantled.

Importantly enough, Alice Munro and Toni Morrison do not show their female protagonists as weak individuals, seeking suicide or escape due to their miserable lives but as

## General Introduction

---

powerful, conscious and intelligent women. Through deliberate alienation and other strategies, the female protagonists are aware of themselves as part of society. That's why; they do not confine themselves to their conventional roles as mothers and wives on the contrary they participate in the social and artistic life of society. Their female protagonists became strong by refusing to fall preys to the patriarchal state of mind.

Despite the fact that these considerable advancements have improved women's status, their situation has remained reasonably unaffected. Woman and her image are still being renovated, restructured, and realigned by men for men. The role of a woman as a writer has contributed in the dismantling of subjugation clichés and the discovery of strength. Her crucial questions are:

- i. Who am I?
- ii. Where am I, a woman getting to?
- iii. How does society see me, a woman?
- iv. How do I see myself and how should I direct my life and thoughts?

Owing to the hostile environment, rape, superstition, and the patriarchal abuse, the female protagonists in the mentioned novels kept themselves apart from such settings. Yet, in the process of alienation, they overcome the boundaries associated with their lives.

In the vanguard, Alice Munro has suggested that women can succeed in proving and improving their existence even though they are separated and regarded as outsiders. In her novel *The Lives of Girls and Women*, she archives the life of Del Jordan, who achieved selfhood after realizing the difference between herself and others. Del finds that each experience gives her a clear view of herself and a surer insight of her needs and ambitions. By divorcing the social norms, Dell experiences rejection and humiliation but eventually succeeds in fulfilling her personal and professional aims.

## General Introduction

---

Women scholars oppose the silencing supported by a male-dominated literary criticism. In theory, activist feminism maintains that only women can persuasively investigate their experiences, lives, and emotions. These authors seek validation of the woman through in-depth exploration of other exclusionary traditions.

North American, Canadian, literature is the result of the blending of two major English language streams: British and American literature. It developed a distinct personality throughout time, overcoming cultural and racial barriers, and promptly formed its nationality and culture. In the twentieth century, Canada produced a hard to believe volume of literature, and female authors outnumber male authors in the country. Canadian women authors focused on their rights, duties, prospects, and problems, in keeping with the sweeping changes taking place on a worldwide scale in relation to women's self, position, power, and politics.

Toni Morrison portrays the voices of the racially silenced women. She voices the black feminist trouble. In her *A Mercy*, Morrison deconstructs the conventional picture of the black woman. The weak, weather-beaten black female creature becomes powerful as she espouses empowerment and rejects persecution. The protagonist of the novel, Florence, tries to confront society through her relationship with other females. In this context, motherhood and sisterhood in *A Mercy* help the women characters to shape their subjectivities, fight victimization and struggle for empowerment.

In their works successively *Lives of Girls and Women*, and *A Mercy*, the female protagonists go through voluntary alienation to search for their selves and review their roles in society. In this context, alienation stands as a healing force and a way to get a strong hold on the self. Essentially, alienation is a deep feeling of loneliness, and estrangement in which the individual perceives himself as an outsider, an alien to the rest of the world. This concept has acquired wide fame after World War II largely due to rediscovery of the works of Marx and also the social theories of Hegel, as well as the emergence of the existential philosophy.

## General Introduction

---

Alienation is a two-edged arm, oscillating between two extremes. One is positive and the other is negative. The positive realm is commonly represented by Hegel in his social theories and the negative other is represented by the existential philosophers of the twentieth century.

Hegel views alienation as a metaphysical necessity to attain self-recognition and knowledge. In this sense, alienation is a fundamental part in the process of self-realization. Hegel sees alienation as positive when the individual reintegrates himself again in society after experiencing alienation. In existential writing, the concept takes another dimension different from that of Hegel. Alienation is used primarily to refer to a psychological kind of malaise and estrangement and represented as individuals maintain shallow relationships with the group and even with themselves (Sayers 1). Here then, the individual loses connection with those around him and dwells into despair and melancholy. Life becomes meaningless, and even living itself becomes a burden.

In his *Being and Time*, Martin Heidegger, an existential philosopher, sees alienation as an inescapable state of being in this world. In accordance with Heidegger, through the act of falling, the individual is separated from his true self and he is dispersed and lost in a world controlled by society. This fall leads to the loss of what Heidegger calls authenticity. In this sense, the individual loses his freedom, his capacity for choice, his decision making and dives into the realm of inauthenticity (Heidegger 164). As it is clearly shown in Heidegger's views, alienation is an ontological state of being, a characteristic of the human life that can never be conquered. Without a doubt, alienation for the existential writers is something unwanted resulting in man's destructiveness. On the other hand, Hegel considers alienation as a essential step toward self-understanding. Alice Munro and Toni Morrison depiction of alienation in their works align with Hegel's.

Their female protagonists, as mentioned previously, establish selfhood and achieve empowerment after going through voluntary alienation. After experiencing alienation, these

## General Introduction

---

female protagonists break the chains of subordination and gain knowledge of their own power. Alienation helps the protagonists to improve their lives. Here then, alienation can be considered as a way out of enslavement and a crucial means to reach self-understanding and emerging anew. Basically, these female writers draw an image of influential female protagonists that transgress societal and patriarchal chains through strategies other than traditional suicide or madness. Alice Munro and Toni Morrison authorize a large space in their writings to the marginalized, the unvoiced, and the forgotten ones. They use their literary talents to support and express female oppression and deprivation under patriarchal hegemony.

As such, this thesis is an endeavor to undertake a study of the female figures' alienation and ways of survival in two novels Alice Monroe's *The Lives of Girls and Women*, and Toni Morrison's *A Mercy*. The focus of this thesis will be on the main protagonists' development and transformation from oppressed and marginalized figures into powerful and mature women. To reach the purpose, the researcher will rely on some major feminist texts that will benefit the thesis like Simon De Beauvoir's "*The Second Sex*", Margaret Atwood's "*Survival*", Jean Baker Miller's "*Rational Culture Theory*", Elizabeth Harvey's "*Determined Women: Studies in the Construction Of The Female Subject*", Greta Gaard's *Ecofeminism* and Betty Friedan's "*The Feminine Mystique*". In addition to these philosophical works, several analytical sources will be helpful to this thesis.

A book of significant importance entitled "*Canadian Literature: An Overview*" by K. Balachandra, approaches some works of Canadian novelists like Margaret Laurence, Margaret Atwood, and Ondaatje from a feminist point of view. This book includes many essays on some Canadian writers among which the female authors that will be discussed in this thesis as "Problematising culture and history in Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners* and Arindhati Roy's "*The God of Small Things: A Companion*" by K. Chellappan and "*Conflict and Compromise in Atwood's Surfacing*" by Aruna Devi. My thesis will depart from the ideas discussed in

## General Introduction

---

these two essays by studying manners of survival in “*The Lives of Girls and Women*”, and “*A Mercy*”.

Neil Kalman Besner’s *Introducing Alice Munro’s “The Lives of Girls and Women: A Reader’s Guide”* provides a short biography of Munro and a chronology of her life and work. Though the book does not approach directly the theme of survival in Alice Munro’s “*The Lives of Girls and Women*”, it will be of great help in the analysis of the novel. Pauline Das studies the main aspects of women's survival in Margaret Atwood's novels in her dissertation for the award of the Doctor of Philosophy in English entitled *The Politics of Survival in Margaret Atwood's Novels*, highlighting the fact that Atwood's women are different in that they refuse to be victims and actually survive their dilemma. *The Edible Woman*, *Lady Oracle*, *Bodily Harm*, *The Handmaid's Tale*, and *Cat's Eye* are five of Atwood's literary works that Das examines. Despite the fact that this thesis will be exceedingly helpful in my discussion, this research will include other books that were not included in his thesis. More to the point, my study will go further in studying the different manners of survival in “*The Lives of Girls and Women*”, and “*A Mercy*”.

*Modern Critical Views: Alice Munro* by Harold Bloom praises Alice Munro’s narrative style, images and themes. The book discusses her major novels by shedding light on the different themes present in her fiction, such as memory, existence, women and narration. Yet, this study will further extend the studies on Alice Munro’s “*The Live of Girls and Women*” by focusing on the theme of female survival in the novel.

In an essay entitled “What is the Literary Function of the Motherhood Motif in Toni Morrison’s “*A Mercy*,” Steve H. Monk explores the function of “motherhood” motif in “*A Mercy*” by analyzing the main female characters and their relationship to motherhood. Morrison uses, as H. Monk shows, a plethora of perspectives to create a complex idea of what it means to be a mother for each character. Despite the fact that the article looks into the trope



## General Introduction

---

of motherhood, one of the female strategies of empowerment in this present work, this thesis differs in that it looks into motherhood as a means of survival opted for by the female characters in the novella.

In another essay entitled “Unhomeliness: Deconstruction of Western Master Narratives in Toni Morrison’s *A Mercy*,” Leila Baradaran Jamili and Sara Faryam Rad study *A Mercy* in the light of postcolonial ideas of unhomeliness, in-between space, and hybridity, i. e. Cultural Multiplicity between the two world of cultures or cultures of the colonizer and colonized as developed by Homi Bhabha. Though the essay offers a discussion of the major themes in *A Mercy* including, female alienation and subjection, race and periphery relationships, slavery and colonialism, it is not concerned with the study of female strategies of empowerment and survival, which is one aim of this thesis.

In her book Margaret Atwood: *Feminism and Fiction* (2007), Fiona Tolan’s highlights the feminist concerns in Atwood’s literary works. The book confirms that Atwood is a feminist protester, despite the fact that she has rejected the label several times. This book is very helpful for my study as it will make clear the third chapter devoted to the Alice Munro’s the *Lives of Girls and Women*.

It is apparent from this review that Alice Munro’s *The Lives of Girls and Women*, and Morrison’s *A Mercy* have drawn the attention of a great deal of critics who studied them from different perspectives. Yet, it is more surprising that, up to my knowledge, the fusion of self-imposed alienation and survival is not explored in these works. As such, it is my intention in this thesis to look into the way Alice Munro and Toni Morrison have used alienation as means of survival for their female protagonists. By deploying different strategies, successively identified as insurgency, both physical and psychological, as well as writing as means of survival in *The Lives of Girls and Women*, and *Women’s Bound* and *Writing as Means of Female Survival* in Toni Morrison’s *A Mercy*, the female figures in the novels have

## General Introduction

---

broken patriarchal gender boundaries and therefore came to terms with themselves and their identities.

In reality, in the aftermath of the crucial feminism movement, women studies have recently become a popular subject for critical inspection and interpretation. Women's issues have caught readers' attention and established a significant place in literary criticism in the post-modern world of shattered self and broken images. Women in the developing nations have it tougher than women in the rest of the world. They are marginalized and discriminated. Womanism is a current idea that is pertinent to women studies in minority literature since it is an extension of feminism.

The immediate issues of the Black woman are overlooked while feminism emerges from the conference halls of white women academia, and it is to address this that womanism emerges. If women are a second-class citizen, black women are a doubly colonial race, experiencing both patriarchal and racial stigmatization. Womanism provides a forum for disadvantaged black women to declare their identities and break free from patriarchy's restrictions. In Africa, women constitute a unique race with a long history. However, they have received little critical notice while Black American women writers like Alice Walker and Toni Morrison have snatched the spotlight.

- 1) The current thesis aims to answer the following research questions: What approach did the heroine of "*The Lives of Girls and Women*" use to establish herself as a powerful woman?
- 2) When will the female characters in the two stories be accorded the same rights as the male characters?
- 3) Did the female characters in "*A Mercy*" escape the abuse and violence they met, or did they stay passive and victims?

The hypotheses may be set as follows:

## General Introduction

---

- a) While some of the novel's female characters will endure persecution and indoctrination, we believe that Alice Munro's heroine will resist and fight for self-empowerment and survival.
- b) When female characters refuse victimization, they will be allowed the same rights as male characters.
- c) Female characters in "A Mercy" will design a survival strategy since Morrison is renowned for empowering her women protagonists.

The purpose of this thesis is to highlight key features of women's survival in Alice Munro's "*The Lives of Girls and Women*" and Toni Morrison's "*A Mercy*" and to argue that Munro and Morrison's women are exceptional in their refusal to be victims and their ability to endure their circumstances. Additionally, an effort has been made to understand the characters' survival strategies. This thematic research focuses on the two mentioned books. In terms of structure, this thesis will consist of an introduction, four chapters and a conclusion. The general introduction is made to smoothly introduce the reader to the main topic, research questions and the structure of the present study.

The first chapter whose title is *Women: History and Misconception: Texts in Context* is an examination of significant literary concepts related to the study. It defines many concepts like empowerment and survival. It also reveals that man's traditional association with culture has created a position of privilege from which men are encouraged to write, while women have been denied access to language and, therefore, must escape imprisoning conceptions of femininity before they are able to envision themselves as creators of culture. Lastly it explores as well other concepts related to the field of study.

The second chapter bearing the title *Feminism: Theory and Concepts* intends to promote female agency and autonomy. It highlights the different types of feminism. This part

## General Introduction

---

aims to investigate the flexible nature of feminism and African feminism. Women's feelings of inferiority are marked by their dread of patriarchal power and offensiveness against their creation. Writers in Contemporary Feminist Theories that gendered hierarchy society questions the male-centered ways of knowledge. They argue that striving hard assert their identity in their creative writings no matter the means. African female writers have portrayed patriarchy and opened ways for women to fight back.

The third chapter entitled Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as means of survival in “*The Lives of Girls and Women*” studies female oppression as it stems from society and patriarchy. It examines the protagonist's, Del Jordan, physical and psychological growth from girlhood to womanhood and the difficulties she has encountered in the process. It also follows Del Jordan's use of rebellion against society's conventional rules defining women in terms of housekeeping and motherhood. Meanwhile, the chapter also sheds light on the lives of additional female figures who, in a sense, contribute in Del's conception and understanding of the female role within the social milieu.

The fourth chapter, headed “*Sorority and Writing as Means of Female Survival in Toni Morrison's A Mercy*” will discuss the novel with regard to Sisterhood and Motherhood as ways of female survival and empowerment. Through the portrayal of various women bonds, “*A Mercy*” illustrates the importance of relationship between women like sisterhood and motherhood. The relationship between the main character, Florens, and Jane, a white girl from a Presbyterian community is very important for Florens because she helps her to escape. Their sisterhood is possible as they identify with each other's difficulties. The friendship between Lina and Rebekka takes time to develop as they are both not sure how to behave. Almost immediately they are put together to execute chores around the farm and through sisterhood they are able to overcome the difficulties imposed by the wilderness and thus, manage to survive. Morrison used her writing skills to demonstrate how motherhood is not limited to

## General Introduction

---

biological connections as different women characters come to act as mothers and daughters. In “*A Mercy*”, Lina and Florens become mother and daughter, respectively to each other. Together they are able to create an enriching union that helps them to survive and transgress the reality they were living in.

The general conclusion summarizes the major points made and demonstrates how women are socialized and indoctrinated by patriarchal processes. In addition, it reveals how characters found unusual strategies for coping with the different forms of victimization and securing survival. Rather than succumbing to society's captivity, the characters chose to empower themselves through defensible techniques. Accordingly, they not only reject all forms of socialization that attempt to strip them of their natural identity but also turn their back on the traditional belief in helplessness by adopting survival as a choice.

# Chapter One

## Women: a History and Misconception

*“Extinction is the rule. Survival is the exception.”*

– Carl Sagan –

1.1. Introduction.....	16
1.2. The Term “Empowerment”.....	16
1.3. Empowerment and Gender.....	19
1.4. Gender Roles Stereotypes .....	21
1.5. The Gender Equality .....	25
1.6. The Ideology of Patriarchy.....	28
1.7. Women’s Empowerment/Survival .....	31
1.8. Feminist Literary Theory .....	37
1.9. The Origins of the Feminist Literary Theory .....	39
1.10. The Perception of Feminism Today .....	43
1.11. The Power of Motherhood and Sisterhood .....	48
1.12. Conclusion .....	50

*"The thing women have yet to learn is nobody gives you power.*

*You just take it. "Roseanne Barr"*

### 1.1. Introduction

In the last decade, feminist literature has become the interest of readers and critics. Books and articles are published to discuss the value as well as the meaning of this literature in the literary world. Yet, few questions remain unanswered mainly questions related to the nature of this literature, its origins as well as its theoretical background. The aim of this chapter is to define a number of concepts, including empowerment and survival. It reveals that men's traditional association with culture has created a position of privilege from which they are encouraged to write, whereas women have been denied access to language and therefore must break free from imprisoning notions of femininity before they can consider themselves as culture creators.

### 1.2. The Term Empowerment

The word, or the philosophy, of empowerment did not originate in a gender context, but rather through Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educator (1921-1997). He created the "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" (1970) in order to empower the poor, the "oppressed," and to resolve the conflict with the "oppressors," those in power. Freire's method resulted in a influential social and educational movement, as well as a literacy program, to give power to people by means of critical consciousness, or "la conscientizaço" (17). Later, he was called the "Father of Critical Pedagogy," which sees the function of education as developing human rights-based capabilities for individual growth. It is worth mentioning that individual liberation to become a transformational democratic citizen in addition to the collective struggle to create social transformation towards social justice in an egalitarian society are both vital goals of critical



pedagogy. Hence, the "oppressed" become aware of the dynamics of their social oppression and can free themselves from manipulation because of this educational awakening.

The literature expressing empowerment practice is based mostly on the empowerment theory and case examples of empowerment practice. The focus of this literature has been on definitions of empowerment practice and the description of specific methods. Societies, as feminist and other social theorists have confirmed, share a particular set of talents to social categories of persons. Thus, empowerment is more than just decision-making; it also entails the processes that contribute to people's perceptions. They see themselves as competent and worthy of making judgments. As feminists and other social theorists have demonstrated, societies are complex and attribute a certain set of talents to social groups. Negative effects must be undone as part of empowerment. Empowerment is required to take account of the deconstruction of negative social constructions so that people view themselves as having the capacity and right to act and influence decisions. Rawland defines empowerment as having three dimensions:

- a. Personal: developing a feeling of self and individual confidence and capacity, as well as correcting the defects of internalized oppression,
- b. b: Rational: learning to negotiate and affect the nature of a relationship and the decisions made within it,
- c. Collective: This may entail participation in political systems, but it might also refer to cooperative activity rather than competition. (55).

The term "empowerment" is similar to the word power. The original definition of the concept in English is investment with legal power or permission to act for a specified goal or purpose. This new connotation focuses primarily on the development and acquisition of power. People are gaining more control over their lives, either individually or with the

assistance of others. The effort to gain a relative degree of ability to change the world takes the form of empowerment, which is both a process and an outcome (Staples 73).

The word "empowerment" is used in a variety of contexts and by a variety of organizations. Empowerment related literature can be found, for example, in the domains of education, social work, and psychology, in the work of feminist and development organizations, as well as in US radical politics in the 1960s and community development groups in the North and South (Staples 74).

Individual empowerment is a process of human growth within a social framework: a shift from a sense of powerlessness, and a life lived in the shadow of that sense, to an active existence with genuine capacity to act and take initiative in connection to the environment and the future. Community empowerment also involves defining a community as a partial, transitory, and dynamic entity that stems from the human need for a sense of belonging and connection with others.

The idea of power is at the root of the term empowerment. It is the most noticeable feature of it. To avoid philosophical discussion, it may be defined as the ownership over material goods, intellectual resources, and ideology. Empowerment is a concept used to describe the act of challenging existing power structures and gaining more control over power sources. Feminist researchers and activists define this wide concept in the context of their particular locations. Power can be interpreted in a variety of ways, as well as; it is usually explained in two ways:

- i. the power to get what one wants, and
- ii. The ability to persuade others to think, feel, act, and/or believe in ways that benefit one's interests. Personal and social powers are two types of power that reflect this relational concept.

- iii. A third type of power is political power, which is based on who influences whom (Batliwala 15).

Although power is an important aspect of politics, it is also one of the most challenging issues to discuss. People often perceive power as threatening and unmovable. Effective analysis and action can be hampered by such a one-dimensional perspective. Power is both dynamic and complex in real life, changing depending on context, circumstance, and interest. It can take numerous different shapes and expressions, ranging from dominance and opposition to collaboration and transformation. This is great news for activists whose strategies rely on fresh opportunities and openings in power structures and practices. To get a handle on the diverse sources and expressions of power, both positive and negative, the following distinctions about power can be helpful.

- i. Power over: This power entails an either/or dynamic of dominance subordination /subordination. In the end, it is founded on socially sanctioned threats of violence and intimidation, it necessitates constant attention, and it invites both active and passive opposition.
- ii. Power to: This power refers to having decision-making authority, the ability to solve difficulties, and the ability to be innovative and enabling;
- iii. Power with: This power entails people organizing around a single aim or understanding in order to attain a common goal.
- iv. Power within: This power alludes to self-confidence, self-awareness, and assertiveness. It has to do with how individuals may understand how power operates in their lives by examining their own experiences, and how they can get the confidence to act to influence and change this (Williams et al 20).

Within the generative, "power to," and "power with" interpretations of power, empowerment is concerned with the processes by which people become aware of their own interests and how they relate to the interests of others in order to participate in decision-making from a position of greater strength and really affect such decisions. Interpreting 'power over' from a feminist viewpoint means understanding the mechanisms of oppression and internalized oppression. Empowerment is as a result more than just decision-making involvement; it must also embrace the procedures that urge people to believe that they are both capable and entitled to make decisions.

### **1.3. Empowerment and Gender**

Empowerment Gender theory gives another perspective to comprehending different levels and power expressions that apply to both men and women. Political power manifests itself on three interacting levels of a woman's life, according to practitioners and researchers familiar with the issues of women's empowerment. They maintain that change will not occur until political methods examine and address power in the public, private, and intimate spheres. The visible face of power as it influences women and men in their jobs, public life, legal rights, just to name a few, is referred to as the public realm of power.

For that reason, empowerment is a process and is not something that can be given to people. According to Pillai

Empowerment is an active, multidimensional process which enables women to realize their full identity and powers in all spheres of life. Power is not a commodity to be transacted; nor can it be given away as alms. Power has to be acquired and once acquired; it needs to be exercised, sustained and preserved (18).

Three of the earliest writers to carefully relate to the subject have had a significant impact on its development. Barbara Solomon promoted empowerment as a social work strategy for

disadvantaged African-Americans. Empowerment was proposed by Peter Berger and Richard Neuhaus as a technique of strengthening welfare services by mediating social institutions. Julian Rappaport conceptually developed the notion and presented it as a worldview that comprises a social policy and a strategy for resolving societal problems stemming from powerlessness. These writers emphasized the important connection between individuals and community, and encouraged a contextual- ecological approach to the treatment of social situations.

Power must be understood at several levels, including institutional, household, and individual. According to some theorists, power is a zero-sum contest: a gain in power for one group must necessarily result in a loss of power for another (Sen and Grown 72). Consequently, power redistribution is viewed as integrally involve conflict. Women's empowerment, according to this viewpoint, would imply less power for males. Some feminist power theorists have questioned the notion that power entails domination by some and submission or oppression by others. Men would gain from the outcomes of women's empowerment by having the opportunity to live in a more fair society and deal with new roles.

Intellectual resources can consist of knowledge, information, and ideas. Control over ideology denotes the ability to develop, disseminate, perpetuate, and institutionalize certain sets of ideas, principles, values, attitudes, acts, and behaviors that 'virtually' determine how individuals see, think, and operate in a given socioeconomic and political context (Apte 70).

In an essence, empowerment is a process of raising awareness and developing capacity that leads to increased participation, decision-making power and control, and transformative action. Besides, empowerment is both an individual and a community process. It sometimes involves people as groups, who most usually begin to improve their consciousness and ability

to organize in order to take action and effect change. Empowerment is a positive change process that enhances women's fallback position and negotiating power within a patriarchal institution, as well as identifying multiple fundamental paths of change: material, cognitive, perceptual, and relational.

### 1.4. Gender Roles Stereotypes

The online Oxford English Dictionary defines stereotypes as a “*widely held but fixed and oversimplified image or idea of a particular type or thing*”. It is defined by Merriam and Webster’s online dictionary as: to believe falsely that all people or things with a particular characteristic are the same. Popular culture has embraced the notion that men and women are not the same. Self-help books, talk shows, and magazine articles often acknowledge major gender disparities, highlight how these differences impede intimacy, and provide answers for how individuals may overcome these differences in order to build more meaningful romantic relationships.

Gender is a cultural notion that incorporates the distinction between men and women in society in terms of role, behavior, mental, and emotional characteristics. Sex and gender differ owing to sexist biological differences between two groups, male and female, which cannot be changed without surgery (Rismanet.al 733-755).

Gender Role is concerned with how men and women behave in their society. Despite these advances, the truth is that society still has expectations for how men and women should behave. In her book "Gender Role," Wienclaw discusses several gender role determiners such as biology, culture, society, genetics, and environment (33-37).

Gender stereotyping is the practice of assigning to an individual woman or man specific attributes, characteristics, or roles by reason only of her or his membership in the social group

of women or men. A gender stereotype is, at its core, a belief which may cause its holder to make assumptions about members of the subject group, women and/or men. In contrast, gender stereotyping is the practice of applying that stereotypical belief to a person. Stereotypes are cognitive frameworks that influence the processing of social information. It can be known that a stereotype is a belief that include the trait and also impactful towards the process of getting social information. Those traits can be about physical appearance, abilities, and behaviors. All in all, stereotypes can be known as the general preconceptions about something or a phenomenon which are believed by the society as the truth.

Gender stereotypes<sup>1</sup> of men and women have an important control on our culture. Due to recent gains in establishing gender equality, society displays fewer attitudes that encourage discrimination and inequality between men and women. Even if our ideas and attitudes have been freed, many of our actions are still impacted by gender stereotyping and misunderstandings about men and women that have been passed down through generations. Regardless of their professed ideals, a surprising percentage of individuals nowadays interact with one another based on gender stereotypes.

In general, stereotypes are classified into two types: auto stereotypes and heterostereotypes. Auto stereotypes are stereotypes about one's own group, whereas heterostereotypes are stereotypes about other groups. Such stereotypes have the potential to

---

<sup>1</sup>According to Firestone (2), common gender stereotypes of Men:

- Men are tough and powerful.
- Men are unfeeling and insensitive.
- Men are logical, and rational. they are afraid to commit in a relationship and form an attachment. Men are primarily interested in their careers or vocations.
- Men do not have a primary interest in marriage and parenthood.

Common Gender Stereotypes of Women:

Women are helpless and childish.

Women are sensitive and intuitive.

Women are scatterbrained, unstable and irrational.

Women can easily form deep emotional attachments.

Women do not have a primary interest in their careers or vocations. Women are primarily interested in a long term relationship and parenthood. When we look at the way society sees men and then at how it views women, we can see that society actually pits men and women against each other.

influence how people view themselves and their surroundings. Additionally, they might be favorable or negative, accurate or inaccurate, and accepted or rejected by members of the stereotyped group. These impacts are in reality determined by people's willingness to think about them and accept them as true or false, Davis (2008).

People develop prejudiced views at a young age by seeing the stereotyped roles that people in our families assume. As we move through school, our classmates and peers reinforce these attitudes. They are also reinforced by our instructors' hidden prejudices and the design of educational programs. Moreover, the media is also blamed of using gender disparities and promoting gender stereotypes of men and women in order to sell distinct products, which means that stereotypes are formed of a habit that becomes a belief, and because of that, each person, will act and behave based on their life background. Stereotype is the general view or the preconception about the attributes or characteristics that should be possessed by something, or members of a particular social group. It means that stereotype is a naïve idea about attributes or characteristic possessed by something (Firestone 100-107).

A stereotype becomes damaging when it restricts women's or men's ability to develop their own abilities, pursue professional professions, and make decisions about their lives and future goals. Stereotypes, whether hostile/negative or seemingly benign, can be damaging. For example, child-rearing chores frequently fall solely on women, based on the notion that women are more nurturing. When gender stereotyping results in a violation or violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms, it is wrong, (Richardson 63).

The scientific literature, in contrast, reveals that gender inequalities may be smaller than popular culture suggests. Women and men behave similarly over 98 percent of the time, according to meta-analytic reviews that prove average differences between the genders. When differences do emerge, they frequently map onto gender stereotypes, with women behaving



conventionally feminine and males behaving traditionally masculine. These differences, although small, are important because they may emerge more strongly under some conditions and less strongly under others. (Canary et.al 42).

At the central part of the sociological analysis of gender is the distinction between biological sex and gender: sex is a property of an organism's biological traits and gender is socially formed and manufactured. This is a powerful and completely revolutionary concept: we have the potential to change the social interactions in which we live, including the social relations between biologically defined males and women. In the media, one may infrequently hear a discussion in which someone discusses the gender of a dog. Dogs, in the sociological sense of the phrase, do not have gender; only people who live inside socially constructed relationships are gendered (Anderson and Gerdenio 725-733).

A generalized belief or preconception regarding the features or characteristics that members of a certain social group possess or should possess, or the duties that members of a specific social group should perform. What is the difference between a gender stereotype and a gender stereotyping? A gender stereotype is a generalized viewpoint or notion about the features or characteristics that women and men possess or should possess, or the roles that men and women should perform. Gender stereotypes can be positive or negative, such as "women are nurturing" or "women are weak" (Firestone 32)

The residuals of these sexist prejudices in our lives today represent men as dominating, masterful, paternalistic, and uncommunicative, whereas women are portrayed as emotionally receptive and communicative, yet infantile, helpless, and incompetent. These sexism are divisive and prevent us from being connected and caring in our close relationships. These attitudes' social pressure is as harmful to couple relationships as racial prejudice is to relationships between persons of different ethnic backgrounds. Each gender stereotype

perplexes people's perceptions of the distinctions between men and women. These timeworn attitudes exaggerate the qualities that distinguish men and women, and place the two sexes in artificial categories.

According to the ILO, the International Labor Organization, gender equality

(...) refers to the enjoyment of equal rights, opportunities and treatment by men and women and by boys and girls in all spheres of life. It asserts that people's rights, responsibilities, social status and access to resources do not depend on whether they are born male or female. [...]

Gender equality implies that all men and women are free to develop their personal abilities and make life choices without the limitations set by stereotypes or prejudices about gender roles or the characteristics of men and women (91-92).

One especially intriguing conclusion of this literature is that when men and women differ, those differences conform to stereotypical assumptions. Women, for example, are better than men are at transmitting and decoding nonverbal signs are more expressive of certain emotions and are more concerned with sustaining intimacy in close relationships. Men, on the other hand, are better at managing their nonverbal expressions, and are more instrumental or task-oriented. Findings such as these have sparked [significant] interest in identifying the processes that are responsible for gender-typed differences between the sexes and the conditions under which such differences occur (Brody and Hall 429-454).

### **1.5. The Gender Equality**

A general definition is provided by UNESCO's Gender Mainstreaming Implementation Framework as follows:

Gender equality means that women and men have equal conditions for realizing their full human rights and for contributing to, and benefiting from, economic, social, cultural and political development. Gender equality is therefore the equal valuing by society of

the similarities and the differences of men and women, and the roles they play. It is based on women and men being full partners in their home, their community and their society (17).

When it comes to defining gender equality, the feminist interpretation of the term is far from sharing the same perspective. According to Laura Sjoberg and Sandra Via, the feminist idea of gender equality is complex, multidimensional, and flexible, and may thus be interpreted in a variety of ways depending on context, focus, and analysis goals (qtd in Edwardson 2). Different feminisms, such as liberal, cultural, and socialist feminism, give various theoretical perspectives on gender equality.

Most feminists, according to Ruth Wodak, agree on the key principles of gender equality, which are that *“men and women should have equal rights and equal opportunities in life without being valued differently”* (520). These feminisms, on the other hand, have varied perspectives on what these rights and opportunities are, as well as what claims and strategies are required to achieve gender equality. The opinions shown below were chosen to demonstrate the diversity of feminist perceptions of gender equality as a concept.

Liberal feminists think that gender equality refers to men and women having equal status and opportunity. Their primary focus is on women's exclusion from power, which includes international politics and development debate (Owens and Smith 219). Women, according to cultural feminists, differ from males because they have different *“female values.”* Negotiation, care, and kindness are not innate abilities, but rather are rooted in cultural assumptions about gender roles (Pettman 107-124).

Marxist (or socialist) feminism is concerned with understanding why women are oppressed in capitalist and private-property systems. Patriarchy and the capitalist system, according to Marxist feminists, are the primary causes of gender inequality. They argue that

women are systemically disadvantaged by patriarchal authority, and that women's equality can only be reached by a dramatic restructuring of the current capitalist economy (Owens and Smith 225).

Finally, post-colonial feminism emphasizes the contrasts between women from the global South and the global North, as well as the inclusion of other elements such as race, ethnicity, and class in the issue of gender equality. Post-colonial feminists claim that Western liberal feminism's predominance does not serve the equality of women in the South since they experience various obstacles in their lives and have distinct demands and interests to meet (McLaughlin 599).

When it comes to handling gender inequality, it should be recognized that men are not favored to the detriment of women as a group, but rather masculine values are favored over feminine values. It is often assumed that inequalities benefit males in general, yet it would be incorrect to assert that they benefit equally (Connell 8). By the same token, while inequalities affect women in general, they do not disadvantage them evenly.

The disagreement over whether gender equality is about sameness is a major difference between the various perceptions of gender equality (Grosser 68). While the primary principle of sameness is that men and women should be treated equally, the difference approach focuses on the fair treatment of men and women while taking their biological distinctions into account. It is usually understood, however, that neither strategy would necessarily result in social and economic equality due to the intricacies of women's and men's roles and duties in society (Bailyn 66).

As a result, there is a demand for a broader definition that includes both the sameness and difference approaches. The Council of Europe's well-known institutional definition goes beyond the sameness approach, defining gender equality as follows:

[Gender equality is] an equal visibility, empowerment and participation of both sexes in all spheres of public and private life [...]. [Equality] is not synonymous with sameness, with establishing men, their life style and conditions as the norm [...] it means accepting and valuing equally the differences between women and men and the diverse roles they play in society (7-8).

To put it differently, women and men should have equal treatment and chances in life, as well as equal access to assets, without being regarded or valued differently overt masculinity and femininity are socially manufactured qualities that result in deeply ingrained societal presumptions (Connell et.al 87). Differentiating characteristics are not an issue in and of it, but being valued differentially is an impediment. Disparities based on gender exist in all societies and endure in both public and private spheres. This mismatch leads to discrimination against girls and women as well as social and economic marginalization (Kilgour 120).

It is argued that the above-mentioned ideas have something in common when summarizing the various opinions on the roots and causes of gender inequality. They all accept as true that women as a group, as well as feminine values and norms are regarded differently than males as a group; and, vice versa, men and masculine values are built and privileged over feminine values. This disproportionate power structure granted to social relations leads to societal disparities between men and women, as well as inequalities between the categories of men and women (Edwardsson and Kilgour 85).

### **1.6. The Ideology of Patriarchy**

Patriarchy is a social system in which the male is the dominant authority figure important to social order, and fathers have control over women, children, and property. Patriarchy is also defined as the social structures in which adult men make up a majority of power. Patriarchy is a concept that has been highly discussed in the contemporary literature.

Numerous social scientists and writers wrote about it and gave it variable definitions. Engels in his book *“The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State”* mentioned that the earliest system of domination creating that patriarchy is the *“world historical defeat of female sex”* (120-21). The claim of this definition is that patriarchy is viewed as one form of political organization that allotted power in a partial and unjust way between men and women to the detriment of women. These two definitions give a meaning that patriarchy implies the institutions of male rule and privilege, and also produces female subordination. It also says that many patriarchal societies are mostly patrilineal which means that property and title are inherited by the male ancestry or heritage (30).

More neutral, Lerner defines it as *“a historic creation formed by men and women in a process which took nearly 2500 years to its completion.”* (41). He also claims that patriarchy first arose as an ancient state whose primary organizational unit was the patriarchal family, which both proclaimed and continually created its norms and values. The Royal Academy of the Spanish Language Dictionary defines the concept as *“A primitive social organization in which authority is exercised by a male head of the family, extending this power even to distant relatives of the same lineage”* (Facio 66). Thus, the term patriarchy developed prior to the emergence of the feminist movement. It was only in the last two decades that the notion has been addressed in order to shed light on the roots of men's hegemony and women's persecution. The term was frequently used to describe the absolute power of the father, who is regarded as the family's ruler.

It is noticeably obvious that patriarchy and men live together. They will need each other for a very long time to keep the masculine world operating. From this result, it can be deduced that patriarchy will become an ideology, particularly male ideology that will be passed down from generation to generation across gender. Females are the primary victims of this inherited ideology in this case. In the correlation to the patriarchy as an ideology, Pam Morris in her

## **Chapter One: One is not Born a Woman: a History and Misconception**

---

book “Literature and Feminism” has defined ‘ideology’ into two definitions. The first is that ideology can refer to a consciously held system of beliefs which people knowingly choose or reject, such as competitive individualism, communism or any religions. Then the second term is that ideology is used to refer to the way we perceive ‘reality’. Lastly, in this second term that ‘ideology’ is used here in the context of patriarchal ideology (4-5).

Both patriarchy and colonialism involve dominance and suppression, presumed superiority and imposed inferiority, and the dominated is obliged to take on the exploited, dominated victim role. The controlling party establishes the laws for its own profit and advantage, with rewards for conformity and punishment for non-conformity, to be followed by the dominated group. Patriarchy encourages and accentuates the distinction between men and women, much as colonialism does.

After World War I, things began to shift. In several regions, women were granted homesteading privileges equal to males in the 1930s. A growing number of women, both single and married, have begun to work for a living. The Women's Liberation Movement of the 1960s and 1970s revolutionized the lives of Canadian women. Equal pay and work laws were enacted as a result of the Movement. Property rules were amended so that women had practically similar rights to property as males.

Feminist theories began to investigate the implications and origins of patriarchy in the second half of the twentieth century, when social sciences concluded their examination of the notion since they believed it was connected to ancient cultures. However, for feminists, patriarchy is neither a behavior nor a culture that only existed in ancient times. Its scope goes further away from the common definition still given by many dictionaries which is, as the Oxford Dictionary defines it

A system of society or government in which men hold the power and women are largely excluded from it.” (3).According to them, it is a present-day iniquitous system that

subjugates women. Accordingly, Carole Pateman writes that, “the patriarchal construction of the difference between masculinity and femininity is the political difference between freedom and subjection (49)

### 1.7. Women’s Survival

The word "survival" appears to be self-explanatory. The phrase is defined by the dictionary as "outliving" or "coming alive through." It denotes the ability to live or exist open-endedly. A survivalist is someone who believes in equipping oneself and living in the wild to ensure personal survival in the case of a disaster. The term survival, as stated by Northrop Frye, refers to surviving a sequence of crises, each one unforeseen and distinct from the others, each one must be addressed on its own terms. On the other hand, in this work, the phrase refers to spiritual survival rather than just bodily existence. Margaret Laurence expresses it in terms of “an inner freedom” and says that it includes *“the survival of human dignity and in the end the survival of some human warmth and the ability to reach out and touch others”* (98).

Atwood's works have been studied in a variety of settings, including cultural, historical, and social contexts, all of which focus on women's victimhood. Victimization refers to everything that has an impact on a woman's survival, particularly physical, psychological, and economic manipulation. The term "survival" is used in a broad sense. It includes both physical and spiritual *survival "as anything more than a minimally human being"* (Survival 33). In *Survival*, Atwood presents four "Basic Victim Positions," which incorporate “denying victimization, acquiescing in victimization, repudiating victimization, and becoming a creative non-victim” (36-39). When a woman confesses that she is a victim, Atwood's first two "positions" are addressed. When a victim learns to combat victimization, and possibly succeeds well enough to live as a fully useful, "creative non-victim," Atwood's final two "positions" are concerned, (Survival 38).



## Chapter One: One is not Born a Woman: a History and Misconception

---

Terms like 'victimization', 'survival,' and 'struggle' appear to be politically charged, but Atwood deftly demonstrates that they are not. She explains that women are socially oppressed and must fight for psychological and physical survival. For example, Atwood depicts a number of female characters who are mentally harmed by civic life. Although Atwood is harsh in her portrayals of the surrounding environment, the civil decline they face is not always in the form of physical blight. The physical misery is hardly mentioned, since it appears to be a consequence rather than a cause of the social disintegration that Atwood is concerned with. The stress that Atwood's characters are subjected to because of the social and economic adversity in their environment causes them to withdraw or shout at others. These folks have limited options for escaping from their victimized lives in the city.

In her works, Margaret Atwood is concerned with survival. Her characters are on a quest for survival in all of its forms and outlets. They also keep attempting to conquer all barriers in order to ensure their existence. As Atwood notes, *"the fundamental notion is holding on, being alive...to refuse to be victim"* (Atwood, *Surfacing* 119). So, in all of Atwood's stories, the protagonists are already aware of their difficulties, and they insist on solving them by seeking self-knowledge and attempting to actualize their identities. *"Without such understanding, we will not survive,"* she claims in her *Survival* (Survival 27). Many factors may contribute to the core topic of survival. It might be due to masculine subjugation, societal aggression, new technical applications, and their negative consequences for humanity. Lots of Atwood's books deal with important social issues like as alienation, character disintegration, sadness, insanity, suicide, and a variety of other psychological issues. As a result, the characters in these books demonstrate that they simply refuse to be intimidated.

Empowerment, as Jo Rowlands points out, is a bottom-up process that cannot be conferred from the top down. Which means Empowerment is described as a process of assuming or transferring legal power and official authority at its most fundamental level (Websters New

World Dictionary 1994). As assertiveness, empowerment is largely an attitude or state of mind (Riger 1993; Tyne 1994).

Individual empowerment, according to Harp (1994), is defined as having the same level of control over one's own life and the variables that impact it as those who are already empowered in a similar setting. Empowerment, according to West and Parent (1992), is the transfer of power and influence over decisions, choices, and values. Empowerment can be perceived from the perspective of individuals or organizations. *"The outside professional cannot expect to control the outcomes of authentic empowerment being given by one group to other hides an attempt to keep control"* (104). According to the Human Development Report 1995, empowerment is about participation:

Development must be by people, not only for them. People must participate fully in the decisions and processes that shape their lives. (UN, 1995 b: 12) but at the same time promotes a rather instrumentalist view of empowerment; Investing in women is capabilities and empowering them to exercise their choices is not only valuable in itself but is also the surest way to contribute to economic growth and overall development (3)

Although the term is widely used by both public and private actors, to date, a clear and strategic framework of what this concept means is missing. Both the conceptualization of women's empowerment and the measurement thereof are various and depend on the particular goal to be achieved.

The concept of women's empowerment arose in the 1980s and 1990s as a result of the recognition of gender inequalities. Women's empowerment was then viewed as a strategy of bringing about structural change toward greater equality. Initially, empowerment meant transforming inequitable power relations by providing possibilities for those (mainly women) who had previously been deprived of such potential (Kabeer et.al 56). The concept was soon

taken over by development agencies such as governments, corporations to be used as an individualist and instrumental tool for empowering not just women, but the entire society.

Women's empowerment is essentially a method of improving the social, economic, cultural, and political position of women, who are traditionally disadvantaged and disregarded in society. Many studies have found that women are more likely than males to spend a considerable percentage of their household resources on their children's welfare and education. When women are appropriately enabled to earn, accumulate assets, and improve their financial security, they create the capacity for industrial support, promote economic growth by creating new jobs, and widen out the pool of talents and human resources available in a country.

For Oxfam, empowerment can mean a challenge against oppression and inequality: Empowerment is confronting the types of oppression that force millions of individuals to participate in their society on inequitable conditions or in ways that violate their human rights (29). Feminist activists emphasize that woman's empowerment does not imply substituting one form of empowerment for another: *Women's empowerment should lead to men's release from oppressive value systems and ideologies. It should lead to a condition in which each individual, regardless of gender, can develop as a whole being and use their full potential to build a more humane society for all.* (Akhtar qtd in Batliwala 131).

According to feminist writers such as Naila Kabeer, the ability of women to make strategic life choices is the critical aspect of the concept. Kabeer emphasizes two factors, process and agency, that are critical in defining and distinguishing women's empowerment from comparable notions like gender equality). The term *process* alludes to the progression of women's (people's) empowerment as a process of change toward other values such as

equality. The second component, *agency*, refers to women who are active participants of their own empowerment.

Indeed, empirical research specifically looked at women's empowerment using metrics including agency, autonomy, and capacity for action, self-determination, and self-confidence. However, all definitions emphasize that women's empowerment is a complicated notion with various components, and that empowerment is a process that begins with being un-empowered and ends with empowerment. Combining these views, it is proposed that empowerment is a multifaceted process, which involves individual as well as collective awareness, beliefs, and behavior embedded in the social structure of specific cultural contexts.

Another definition of feminism comes from Hooks She explains that “*Feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression*” ( viii-ix). She adds further that feminism is not about being anti-male and this addition explains that it is now clear that the problem is sexism and not being anti-male. Additionally, that clarity helps us remember that all of us, female and male, have been socialized from birth on to accept sexist thought and action. As a consequence, females can be just as sexist as men.

In its true sense, this keyword is explored, from a feminist perspective, as Marilee Karl claims that the word 'Empowerment' captures this notion sense of acquiring control, of participation in decision-making More recently, the term has entered the lexicon of development organizations such as international organizations and the United Nations. With regard to Kate Young, empowerment allows women to “*take control of their own lives, set their own agendas, organize to help one another, and make demands on the state for support and on society itself for change*” (37). In relation to Young, empowerment involves a full transformation of the processes and institutions that are accountable for women's inferior standing in society. It is founded on a ‘transformative potential,’ which refers to the necessity

to transform women's positions in such a way that progress, can be sustained. Finally, she highlights the concept of empowerment from an individual to a broader political perspective, emphasizing the significance of collective action as a definite way to individual empowerment.

Vanessa Griffen (1987) expresses it through a gender lens, what empowerment means to her:

- i. Possessing or acquiring additional control;
- ii. Having a say and being listened to;
- iii. Being able to define and create from a women's perspective;
- iv. being able to influence social choices and decisions affecting the whole society (not just areas of society accepted as women's place);
- v. Being recognized and respected as equal citizens and human beings with a contribution to make.

Beteille discusses it as *"power distribution without having clear power (...) the main point behind empowerment is that it seeks to change society through a rearrangement of power"* (591). But, Dandikar has described empowerment as a multifaceted process, which involves four parallel aspects. These are:

- i. The women's economic/resource base;
- ii. The public/political arena allowed to her by society;
- iii. Her family structure, and the strength and limitations it imposes on her; and
- iv. The psychological / ideological "sense" about women in her society, which in turn shapes her own perception of herself and the options, she allows herself to consider.(26)

### 1.8. Feminist Literary Theory

In view of the fact that men and their patriarchy have been rooted since centuries ago and the discrimination towards women seems never going to end, women themselves create an ideology coming from their own belief to fight the patriarchy as an ideology. Their ideology is then called feminism. Besides helping them to move forward in a feminist movement, feminism also helps them to understand the world that is “new” to them. There are many definitive explanations towards feminism and there is no fixed definition of it. Rebecka West who once stated that *“I myself have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is.”* Instead, she said that *“I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat or a prostitute”* (591).

The word feminism comes from French word “féminisme”. According to the Cambridge online dictionary, feminism is the belief that women should be granted the same rights, authority, and opportunities as men and be regarded in the same way, or the collection of actions designed to attain this state. The term “feminism” refers to a cultural, political, or economic movement that seeks equal rights for men and women. Nonetheless, the terms ‘feminism’ and ‘feminist’ did not receive broad meaning use until the 1970s, when they began to be used more often in popular discourse.

Feminism is a broad concept that encompasses political, cultural, and economic movements. It strives to give women more rights and legal protection. During mid-1850s when the first feminists started to advocate their thoughts about inequality and when the first suffragette movement emerged, since then women have started working on accomplishing their goals to have the same rights and to have the same position in society as men have. Each writer develops his or her own distinct definition based on his or her own experience. According to Estelle Freedman, for example, the emphasis is on the intellectual background:

*"feminism is a social movement that tried to achieve political equality between women and men, with the understanding that gender always intersects with other social hierarchies",* (24).

Rosenblatt stated of books *"Always too, in greater or lesser degree, the author has written out of a scheme of values, a sense of social framework or even, perhaps, of a cosmic pattern"*(26). These cultural and social meanings are subsequently sent to the reader via the transfer that occurs between the reader and the text. Feminist literary theory examines the social and cultural meanings hidden in writings, particularly those concerning women. It is fundamental to critically analyze texts for these actual and indirect statements about stereotypes.

Britain and France were among the first countries to struggle for women's rights, education, and, most importantly, respect. Simone de Beauvoir wrote that Christine de Pizan composed *Epitre au Dieu d'Amour (Epistle to the God of Love)* in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and it was the first time we saw a woman take up her pen in defense of her sex. However, it was not until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century when women began to achieve changes in society, it was Mary Wollstonecraft, author of the commanding *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, who received the substantial share of the spotlight. Wollstonecraft was a woman who, as Arianne Chernock says in her book *Men and the Making of Modern British Feminism*, *"spoke up, quite loudly, for what had been until then a largely silent section of the human race"* (12). Even today, scholars identify Mary Wollstonecraft as a founding mother of British feminism, and her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* is regarded as the first explicit feminist book.

Depending on her situation and political standpoint, Barbara Smith affirms that *"feminism is the political theory and practice to free all women. Anything less than this is not feminism, but merely female self- aggrandizement"*(188). Smith is identified as a feminist, who was so

influential in establishing and sustaining Black Feminism in the United States, an organization that emphasizes the intersectionality of racial, gender, heterosexist, and class oppression in the lives of blacks and other women of color. Feminism in literary criticism focuses on the role of women in literature, both as writers and characters, subjects and objects, perceivers and perceived. In politics, feminism refers to the strategy that seeks equal rights for women and men in all aspects of life. All in all to arrive at a coherent and comprehensive definition of feminism and its manifestations, we have to explore its different aspects, such as the geographical and the historical ones.

### **1.9. The Origins of the Feminist Literary Theory**

Taum agrees with Wellek and Warren who claim that literature expresses and depicts a wide range of life's elements. Their idea promotes literature as mirrors and manifestations of human existence. In a word, this idea holds that literature emerges from real-life societal events. In literature, the author conveys ideas to the reader via many forms of labor. There must be an indication that literature depicts human existence in all of its true values. Values are shaped by the beliefs of human societies in a certain location and historical period. As a result, literary works may be utilized as a tool for analyzing social events, societal ideals, and even human ideas during a specific moment or age. Gender inequality, which is founded on feminist beliefs, is one of the most controversial and outstanding societal problems (94).

The genesis of feminism may be traced back to the Age of Enlightenment, a time marked by exceptional intellectual achievements. At the time, several European political thinkers launched a huge campaign to defend the notion that human beings are equal and that their rights should not be decided by their money, race, or social status. Their ideas were well welcomed by the general public. These ideas set the stage for the 1775 American Revolution and the 1789 French Revolution, when people became fully conscious of their rights and



## **Chapter One: One is not Born a Woman: a History and Misconception**

---

began to defend those rights, which had been usurped by the bourgeoisie. Women's rights, on the other hand, were not taken into account by political philosophers. Instead, women were left in a place where they had to agitate for their rights by themselves.

It is fundamental to understand how feminist literary theory varies from other critical ideas. The literary principles of feminist literary theory are not derived from a single body of key works or a single authority figure (Showalter 85). The term feminism initially arose in France in the 1880s, in the United Kingdom in the 1890s, and in the United States in 1910. However, the biblical narrative that blames Eve for humanity's fall, rather than Adam, may have been the true genesis of gender discrimination. Throughout history, people have been discriminated against. For example, the ancient Greeks believed, as Aristotle argued, that males are superior by nature, the female is inferior, the one rules, and the other is ruled.

In reality, various feminist literary theorists disagree on the number and organization of phases of feminist literary theory. It is used in a number of situations to cover a wide range of literary critiques. Consistent with Kolodny, these include:

Any criticism written by a woman, no matter what the subject; any criticism written by a woman about a man's book which treats that book from a "political" or "feminist" perspective; and any criticism written by a woman about a woman's book or about female authors in general (75).

Both feminist literary theorists and critics are concerned about the lack of a clear and formulated definition. However, it fits this study well for the reason that, while feminist literary theorists and critics may not agree on every aspect of the definition of feminist literary theory, they do share certain beliefs that align with the study: in particular, the transaction between text and reader, and how the reader receives social and cultural messages related to female characters in the literary texts.

## Chapter One: One is not Born a Woman: a History and Misconception

---

In addition, one of the main social reformers of early 19th century was also Florence Nightingale, who was convicted that women had “*all the potential of men but none of the opportunities*”(125), she pioneered the importance of nursing schools and also advocated better education for women. Even so, not only women tried to establish equal opportunities for both sexes, feminist men also helped advance women’s liberation, although there were not many of them. One of them was an English philosopher, political economist and feminist John Stuart Mill, who was inspired by his wife women’s right advocate Harriet Taylor Mill. Mill on one occasion declared that:

[T]he principle which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes—the legal subordination of one sex to the other—is wrong itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; and that it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality, admitting no power or privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other (qtd in Pankhurst 97).

Mill also became the first British Member of Parliament to introduce a bill calling for women to receive the vote. Regarding these common beliefs, Warhol and Herndl stated

Feminist critics generally agree that the oppression of women is a fact of life, that gender leaves its traces in literary texts and on literary history, and that feminist literary criticism plays a worthwhile part in the struggle to end oppression in the world outside texts (x).

Firestone’s “The Dialectic of Sex” has a chapter called “On American Feminism” in which she analyzes second-wave feminism not only as “*the revival of a serious political movement for social equality*” (20) but also as “*the most important revolution in history*” whose aim is to remove “*the oldest, most rigid class/caste system in existence*” (20) that solidified “*the*

*archetypal male and female roles*”. According to Firestone, when the second wave of feminism appeared, the first wave efforts had already been countered and humiliated by “*oppressive power structures*” (20). By the 1970s, the old feminist movement (mostly under the Women’s Rights Movement) had lost its popularity and new feminists came across “contradictions in their roles”. Although they had obtained most of the legal rights and freedoms they had earlier fought for, in empirical life they had no power to realize this power and freedom.

After second wave feminism, feminist literary theory became known in the 1960s during the Civil Rights struggle in the United States and Europe. As feminist literary theory emerged in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, it was assumed that reading might result in an educated, open-minded political or global vision (Dinshaw 65). Feminist literary theorists focus on how women have been portrayed in literature as well as how women have been excluded from the literary canon. These theorists wanted to refute the male-centered perspective of authors who depicted women as objects. Feminist literary theorists rejected the view that the canon reflects the objective judgments of posterity and history; instead, they viewed the canon as a culture-bound political construct, Showalter (1985).

Accordingly, it was important to begin unearthing and rediscovering literature by women that had previously been overlooked. The main writers' and recognized canons' assumptions needed to be reconsidered. Most importantly, Kolodny said probably the most valuable and long-lasting achievement of feminist scholarship and feminist criticism, however, will be their insistence that we give the same kind of critical attention to women writers that we have always accorded our male writers (88).

Western literary history was tremendously male or patriarchal. For that reason, it was assumed that the canon had valued the literature of male authors because it chose male

authored texts as those in the canon. Gilbert stated by “*replacing heroes with heroines, these writers insisted, like Jane Eyre, that women feel just as men feel . . . they suffer from too rigid a constraint . . . precisely as men would suffer*” (35). It is fundamental to state that the canon takes account of literature about women's life as well as the real nature of how women live.

### 1.10. The Perception of Feminism Today

Feminism can be loosely described as a critical standpoint which is considered with the critique of misogyny and the superiority and centrality of men. In spite of that, it has a critical history that started by the critique of the convention of the 'norms'. Beasley, on the other hand, asserts that feminism operates not as a mere description or analysis of what is given, but from the point of view skepticism.

The third wave feminism or sometimes also called the post-feminism begins in the 1990s and continues up to present. In the late twentieth century, feminist literary theory moved to viewing women's writing from a cultural perspective. For Showalter this is the “*Female Stage*” and Gubar “*Engendering*”. Literature was seen as a social institution. The power relations in the culture at large were reflected and encoded in the conventions of men's and women's literary legacy

Post-feminist refers to the perceived failings of the second wave of feminism, and it fights for the same principles as the previous waves. However, the movement's focus has evolved considerably; it is now less concerned with governmental procedures and regulations and more concerned with the individual self. In addition, feminists are becoming more varied; the first and second waves of feminists were for the most part Western, middle-class, white women, but the third wave feminists are women of many races, colors, religions, and social backgrounds.

There is a fascinating line of reasoning in postmodern feminism that supports gender as a social creation, as suggested by Hollander theory encourages us to think of identification as a signifying practice: gender is something we and, like other signifying practices, consider as based on repetition and behaviors that make the topic culturally understandable. Therefore, not only are identity categories such as femininity recognized as diverse and disputed (rather than fixed), but identity subversion becomes believable. Butler has explained that she intends more limited popular notion of performativity which makes clear that gender is constructed, or '*contoured*', through '*repetition and recitation*', is the subversive '*re-signification*' of normative identities, (Butler 112).

Since the 1990s, women have gained more social recognition, not just in the United Kingdom, but also in other nations across the world. Women in the United Kingdom enjoy equal educational possibilities and can work in the same fields as males, and their opinions are recognized and respected. Over decades, the feminist movement has assisted women in standing up for themselves and being recognized. However, feminism now is complex to define, it is not as clear as it was during the first wave, and some women do not want to be connected with it because they still see it as a severe and out-of-date movement.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s<sup>2</sup>, a postcolonial feminist perspective broadened feminist debate beyond gender or literary works (George 2006). During this recent stage of feminist literary theory, theorists began to examine women's own writing, which was centered on breaking free from the cultural assumptions that society had imposed on them. Feminist

---

<sup>2</sup>Nonetheless, in September 2014 United Nations launched a new campaign called HeForShe whose Women Global Goodwill Ambassador became a British actress Emma Watson. Not only is Watson widely known persona but she actively participates in the campaign and her speeches at the conferences have drawn attention of many. The HeForShe campaign aims for gender equality, which "is not only women issue but rather human rights issue."<sup>21</sup> As Watson herself mentioned at one of the HeForShe conferences: "How can we effect change in the world when only half of it is invited or feel welcome to participate in the conversation?" One of the campaign's goals is to urge men and boys to advocate for their own rights, not only women's, which is critical since the campaign wants males to feel comfortable calling themselves feminists as well. Even while the campaign is being criticized for being handled entirely by women, the attention attracted to the feminist problem is gradually returning, which is a positive indication given that there is no place in the world where women are completely equal to men.

critics recognize that women must be portrayed in a variety of ways and have created their own literature; a theory that incorporates ideas on how women's psyche, body, and language may be understood in relation to the social circumstances in which they exist. (Showalter 150) The cultural settings in which women live have an control on how they see their bodies and their reproductive and sexual functions, of various studies on gender, Gilligan said:

The repeated finding of these studies is that the qualities deemed necessary for adulthood—the capacity for autonomous thinking, clear decision-making, and the responsible action—are those associated with masculinity and considered undesirable as attributes of the feminine self (17).

The emphasis on cultural studies encompasses not just cultural practice, but also representations of women in media, cinema, television, and popular music. Gender ideology is reproduced in textual representations. Feminist literary critics are concerned with how the media perpetuates patriarchal ideas and images via stereotypes and misrepresentations of women's lives and societal change. This is especially true of Hollywood films, which are frequently made for male consumption and need women to conform to male wants (Moody 50).

The cultural beliefs depicted in literature may educate females that the characteristics prized by society are masculine and that they should not possess these features as women. It is critical for women to break from these cultural restrictions in order to establish their voice and individuality. When young girls and boys read these novels, they absorb these characteristics and feel that this is how they should be in order to be recognized as a valuable female or man.

Feminist literary critics might spread out their research to include popular culture genre literature. The romance book deserves careful examination since most novels conclude with professions of commitment and love but do not go on from there. What feminist literary

critics find troubling is that women contribute to the patriarchy depicted in these books. Moody claimed

“Within the new narrative structure, not only does the hero have to move beyond the ideological standard of the 19<sup>th</sup> century patriarchy, but more work is required from the heroine, who has to overcome the influence of her mother’s damaging and ‘old-fashioned’ feminism” ((Moody29).

These novels often reflect the changing societal situations; yet, they are organized around the need for romance (Moody37). Modern feminist literary critics began to study Black feminist literary theory, as well as lesbian feminist literary theory. The conflicts within African-American theory and critique are comparable to those within feminist critical theory. Regarding this issue, Showalter asks two questions, “*First, who is qualified to be a critic of black literature?* Second, can black criticism appropriate white or Western theory without sacrificing its hard-won independence and individuality?” (219).

It came to light when looking at African-American criticism that there were many of the same issues with feminist literary theory, in that it was patriarchal, narrow and chauvinistic, “*Black feminist literary theory proceeds from the assumption that Black women experience a unique form of oppression in discursive and non discursive practices alike because they are victims at once of sexism, racism, and by extension classism*” (Showalter 317).

By becoming involved in slavery issues, American women gained experience that they later used in feminist campaigns, and, more importantly, for the first time they had the courage to break the “taboo of decorum,” which had more controlling power over women than any legal, educational, or financial disadvantage. As Millett emphasizes, the early feminists were “*active and dedicated abolitionists*”. She wrote that in America, the new women's movement (of the late 1960s and early 1970s) sympathized with marginalized communities

such as students, blacks, and the poor; their struggle was not simply for a sexual revolution but also for “*freedom from rank or prescriptive role*” (320).

In this sense, the fact that several important issues such as race, class, and gender are mixed together makes this decade differs from the preceding ones for the reason that they were all concerned with fighting discrimination. The rational consequences of this are represented in a key assertion of 1970s feminist propaganda and discourse, which is which is “*the personal is political.*” As Firestone states:

The feminist movement is the first to combine effectively the “personal” with the “political.” It is developing a new way of relating, a new political style, one that will eventually reconcile the personal—always the feminine prerogative—with the public, with the “world outside,” to restore that world to its emotions, and literally to its senses (98).

As a result, the majority of the decade's texts attempt to develop a consciousness of personal experience in order to reveal that what is personal should be carried to the public stage so that it can be challenged and transformed. This is the starting point for the items discussed on the following pages. Female Afro-American authors experienced the same patriarchal system constraints, even though they received great feedback for their works due to their effective presentation of their case of gender, culture, and race. Many of them were accused of threatening political, social, and economic standards, despite the fact that there were female African American writers in the early twentieth century who were excluded from American feminist discussions due to both black and white male domination.

Over time women explore a new way of expression and genre. Bomarito and Hunter declare that women writers today participate fully in both the creative and scholarly process. Feminist literary theory, women's mode of writing and expressing, and women's studies are



now established areas of academic environments, and women are exacting continued and growing control over their own literary and social spheres. Even if many of female writers' work of art had been welcomed by many members of the society, especially the female members, many critics outraged against many female writers for their challenge to discuss such topics in their writings.

Despite this affluence, women's creative efforts were not promoted or encouraged since some female authors were forced to conceal their true identity and publish behind pseudo male ones. In 1976, the American Alice Bradley Sheldon (James Tiptree, Jr.) had her true sex revealed. The Brontë Sisters (Ellis, Acton, and Currer Bell) earned fame after publishing using their true names. Mary Ann Evans, known as George Eliot, only revealed herself after her first writing *Adam Bede* (1856) gave her huge credit. The above-mentioned writers' psychological failure can be seen here, since they were unable to celebrate their true feminine identities and publish their works under their names, despite their exceptional brilliance and innovative creative works. This shows how patriarchal literary culture influenced readers' judgments of women's literary ability and undervalued women's literary skill.

### 1.11. The Power of Motherhood and Sisterhood

In accordance with Sigmund Freud, the mother is the child's primary love object and the parent most responsible for the child's ideal development. He contended that the infant's relationship with his mother was tight in the early years of his existence, but that during the oedipal conflict, the kid repudiated his mother's love in fear of his more powerful father. The girl also moved away from her mother, whom she saw as powerless and 'castrated'.

Freud's ideas of difference between male and female behavior provided a starting point for many theories and studies on motherhood (120). Motherhood is the sole clear-cut feminine characteristic. It provides women with power on three levels: biological, emotive, and social

(Knibiehler 77). The biological power comes in the fact that it ensures the survival of the human race, which explains why women have an unconscious urge to produce children. This urge is completely transformed by culture. Each civilization has incorporated it into its mythologies and popular ceremonies, with women's fecundity being associated with Earth, both representing the source of life. Philosophical arguments have also been used to explain this biological capability. The woman's natural and innate strength resides in her body's ability to give something other than her body (Dermenjian et.al 122).

The affective power is the second. It is found in the family relationships that motherhood creates within a family, particularly the relationship between a mother and her child. Psychoanalysis acknowledged such a force as well. The affective power of motherhood, according to Freud and Winnicott, exists between mother and child even before the former gives birth to her child, independent of the father. Every human being (man or woman) is, from the outset, dependant and affectively attached to a woman since he or she develops in a uterus before his or her birth (23). Then, at the societal level, power merges. Mothers transmit concepts and values learned from their social community through child rearing, resulting in their societal role as lineage keepers or custodians of heritage.

The history of feminist experiences with motherhood and mothers is lengthy and complicated, and the narrative around these encounters is frequently unfavorable (O'Reilly Ch.4). For feminists and feminist theory alike, the topics of mothers and motherhood have offered crucial yet difficult, even challenging challenges. From the second to the fourth waves of feminism, feminist discussions on mothers and motherhood have been varied in emphasis and evolved with time, but they continue to provoke disagreements and conflicts among feminist critics while also producing fresh and fascinating discoveries. However, as Amber E. Kinser states *"the terrain of motherhood [...] is still difficult ground for most women to*

*navigate [...] despite feminist effort and accomplishment, women still are largely thought of first in terms of maternal capacity” (161).*

In relation to analyst Wendy Chavkin, one of the basic reasons for this is the persisting link between mothering and lower socioeconomic rank:

motherhood is one of the most intimate and essential of human connections and therefore of concern to all; and female biological reproductive capacity and social assignment for child caring and the maintenance of domestic life have been centrally connected with women’s subordinate status across many cultures and historic eras(4).

Sisterhood is still highly important in feminist discourse from all waves throughout the history of feminist movements, sisterhood has developed and regressed, but it has always been in the heart of the debate: it has been supported and pushed, as well as mocked and rejected. The two basic traits of sisterhood that have arisen from the feminist discourse are as follows: As indicated by questions like "Who is the sister?" I am concerned about one's own identity. What does it mean to be a sister? This is the starting point for the development of a collective identity a focus on solidarity, which has degenerated into behaviors such as sharing, collaboration and mutual support (Lugones and Rosezelleii).

### 1.12. Conclusion

This chapter provides the readers with the most relevant concepts as well as the history of the emergence of feminism till now. Feminist literature has a long history and its richness results from the singular phases it passed through. This chapter also reveals the settings in which the phrases like empowerment, survival, patriarchy, and stereotypes are deployed. It suggests a great deal about their meaning and how they are used and perceived. It also affords how men's traditional association with culture has placed them in a position of privilege from

## **Chapter One: One is not Born a Woman: a History and Misconception**

---

which they are encouraged to write, whereas women have been denied access to language and must as a result break free from imprisoning notions of femininity before they can imagine themselves as culture creators. Whichever discussion of a feminist text requires gathering information about the theories behind its emergence.

The next chapter will explore feminism as well as the black feminist theory; the name in itself creates discrimination and reveals a lot of what it includes.

# **Chapter Two**

## **Feminism: Theory and Concept**

2.1. Introduction. ....	55
2.2. Feminism: Concepts and Definitions .....	55
2.2.1. American Feminism: A Critical History .....	56
2.2.2. The First Feminist Wave .....	57
2.2.3. The Second Wave of Feminism .....	59
2.2.4. The Third Wave of Feminism .....	61
2.2.5. The Fourth Wave of Feminism .....	62
2.3. Major Varieties of Feminism .....	66
2.3.1. Liberal Feminism. ....	66
2.3.2. Radical Feminism.....	69
2.3.3. Marxist-Socialist Feminism .....	71
2.3.3.1. Marxist feminism .....	71
2.3.3.2. Social Feminism .....	73
2.4. Gender as a Social Construct.....	74
2.5. Gender and Childhood. ....	76
2.6. Socialization of Women and Men.....	77
2.7. Processes of Gender Socialization. ....	77

## Chapter Two: Feminism: Theory and Concept

---

2.8. Feminism as anti-sexism .....	81
2.9. Black Feminism.....	83
2.10. The Distinction between Black Feminism and Other Feminisms .....	84
2.10.1. Black Women Exclusion from the Feminist Movement .....	84
2.10.2. Frustration of African-American Women's Evolution.....	89
2.11 The Strong Black Woman Concept.....	87
2.12 True Womanhood's Ideology .....	88
2.13. Black Feminist Literary Tradition.....	93
2.14. Male Pseudonyms Used by Female Authors.....	90
2.15. Conclusion.....	91

*"I myself have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is:*

*I only know that people call me a feminist whenever*

*I express sentiments that differentiate*

*me from a doormat."*

*Rebecca West*

### **2.1. Introduction**

Prior to delving into the issue of female survival in Alice Munro's "*Lives of Girls and Women*" and Toni Morrison's "*A Mercy*", it is essential to establish the context for such struggling and to define the instruments employed in such fighting. Thus, the current chapter provides a workable definition for many key terms in the subject. Females' pursuit of a suitable image in society, regardless of their status or color, is central to feminist thought. It definitely seeks to offer women academic standing in society. Furthermore, feminism is an extension of the antiracist movement that started throughout the American Slave Trade and has continued into the present period. Women in general and black women in particular, have acted as agents of feminism to express their desire for equality and quest for identity.

### **2.2. Feminism: Concepts and Definitions**

Feminism encompasses a diverse spectrum of ideas and social movements that seek to define and realize women's political, economic, personal, and social equality. It is a combination of intellectual and political engagement and devotion aimed at achieving justice along with the abolition of sexism in all of its manifestations. This movement endeavors to examine women's social status. To put it simply, it is the result of women's historical marginalization and exclusion. In comparison to males, women are seen as inferior human beings, insignificant and weak, and completely disposable as sexual objects.



### 2.2.1 American Feminism: A Critical History

Feminism is widely recognized as a theory in the social and cultural sciences. It may be considered as more than a philosophy from a philosophical perspective. It is a way of life, a philosophy, a political movement, a fight, and an ideology. The definition of feminism is not straightforward; it is flexible and subject to change in response to changing circumstances and epochs. In the West as in the East, feminist language is translated according to context. The Western worldview of feminism is profoundly influenced by cultural context and historical records.

Feminism, on a more fundamental level of awareness, is connected to perception and action in each individual who has lived it (Bhasin 4). Besides, it is predictable that feminist authors disagree in the view; one of the concerns disputed among feminists is the other gender, i.e. the patriarchal system and men's dominance over women. Accordingly Feminists have distinct goals and objectives, particularly in terms of their vision for a world free of oppression and class divisions. Bowles and Klein describe feminism as a movement or even a state of mind based on the belief that women are discriminated against across the globe, as well as a social activity aimed at reinstating the biased state of affairs experienced by men and women alike (8).

From a purely social theory to a broad canon of feminist literary studies and works, feminist theory has gone forward. As a result, both feminist and women's studies "*contest male intellectual hegemony*" (Bowels and Klein 9). Numerous female authors have expressed their feelings about their own gender and purposely portrayed themselves as representatives of the female voice. They dealt with major issues and situations pertaining to women's personal freedom and wealth (Culler 14). The majority of women accept as true their feminist viewpoints that not only stem from a variety of sources but are also influenced by a variety of societal philosophies. Women who are active in the feminist movement articulate

their feminist beliefs via literary works that are dominated by female personality and institutionally applied to women. These ideas are also applied to social functions for example job descriptions, family structure, employment and politics, as well as health and social prosperity.

Defining feminism is a demanding task. However, when all of viewpoints on feminism presented by feminist theorists are sorted, it becomes clear that there is a core set of traits that define feminism's existence. It is therefore a point of view that regards gender as a critical component of the social world's structure and organization. Feminists claim that in the majority of known countries, this structure has resulted in women receiving less status and worth, having less access to important resources, and having less liberty and chance to make life choices than males (Sapiro 441). Inequalities, feminists think, must be removed. As an application, feminism can not only mean doing things better as a person in society, it must also refer to collective activity aimed at altering the social structure. In all, feminism is concerned with any effort intended to revolutionize an unjust condition.

Feminist philosophy advocates for the expansion of women's rights and legal protection, as well as the death of gender hierarchy. This movement is critical to humanity's liberation journey. The majority of women, on the other hand, are unaware of feminist goals, writings, and accomplishments. Without a doubt, women were active participants in the American and French revolutions, the antislavery movement, and the growth of organized labor, despite the fact that they were unaware of their social rank and group identification.

### **2.2.2. The First Feminist Wave: Women's Voting Rights (1830s–early 1900s)**

The United States' First Wave Feminism began with the Seneca Falls Assembly, the first national women's rights convention, held on July 19 and 20, 1848, in the Wesleyan church in Seneca Falls, New York. The convention was conceived in London in 1840, when Elizabeth

Cady Staton and Lucretia Mott were refused the opportunity to speak on the floor or be seated as delegates due to their gender. Staton and Mott without delay started discussing the women's troubles. They discussed convening a convention to discuss and define the woman's new cause, which at the time was still vague. They believed that a national convention was required in which women could take actions to ensure equal rights with men. Staton and Mott convened the long awaited women's rights conference in 1848. Around 300 women and men attended the conference, including Frederick Douglass, a prominent ex-slave, abolitionist, and long-time defender of women's rights. This conference was held especially to discuss the state of American women, who, according to Staton, feel offended, repressed, and defrauded of their most fundamental rights. Staton presented the organizers with "The Declaration of Sentiment and Resolutions" on the first day of the gathering (Goldstein 228).

The latter was modeled after the American Declaration of Independence. All men are created equal, according to the Declaration of Independence, which was first and foremost drafted by Thomas Jefferson. *"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men and women are created equal and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,"*(52). The declaration of sentiment and resolutions said that men had repeatedly injured and usurped women throughout history, including denial of the ability to vote, unjust laws governing separation and divorce, and inequity in religion, education, and work. The Declaration of Sentiments' twelve Resolutions called for the repeal of laws that discriminated against women, the recognition of women as men's equals, the granting of the right to vote, the right of women to speak in churches, and the equal participation of women and men in various trades, professions, and commerce. After considerable debate, the Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions was mostly adopted as written, but the most contentious resolution was the one calling for women's suffrage, sometimes known as Woman Suffrage. Staton maintained her stance in the face of severe

opposition from Frederick Douglas, who declared that "suffrage is the power to choose rulers and make laws, and the right that secures all others."

Douglass remarked in his July 28th, 1884 editorial in the North Star, "A discussion of animal rights would be regarded with far more complacency by many of what are called the wise and good of our land than would a discussion of woman rights." (Douglas 1884). Stanton Mott and B. Antony led the fight for women's rights, including the ability to vote, throughout the following few decades. They founded the American Equal Rights Association in 1866, a group of white and black women and men committed to the aim of universal suffrage. The fourteenth amendment, ratified in 1868, defines the voting population as "male." Women's rights activists were separated into two groups as a result of disagreements over the fourteenth amendment. In response, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Antony founded the more radical National Women's Suffrage Association in New York in 1869 (NWSA). The next year, Congress adopted the fifteenth amendment, which guaranteed African-American males the right to vote. The NWSA declined to push for its ratification, despite the fact that it guaranteed universal suffrage. Thus, American women were not granted the right to vote until 1920, when the nineteenth amendment was enacted.

### 2.2.3. The Second Wave of Feminism

Second Wave Feminism mostly refers to the late 1960s and early 1970s Radical Feminist Women's Liberation Movement (Henceforth, RFWLM). In the United States, Second Wave Feminism began with the first portent of a new feminism and the most well-known event: the demonstrations related to the 1968 and 1969 Miss America Pageants (Free Man 75). Inspired by the more militant wing of liberal feminism, radical second wave feminists also utilized performance to draw attention to what was now referred to as "*woman's oppression*." Significant feminist organizations, such as the Red Stockings and the New York Radical Feminists, participated in the 1969 protests to demonstrate how women were paraded like

cattle in show competitions, highlighting the underlying assumption that how women look is more important than what they do, what they think, or even whether they think at all (Freeman 78).

Marching along the Atlantic City beachfront, feminists performed a variety of theatrical performances, including crowning a sheep Miss America and tossing "*oppressive*" gender artifacts into a garbage can in front of reporters, including bras, girdles, fake eyelashes, high heels, and cosmetics. (Freeman 80). In reality, women made it quite evident that they were victims of a patriarchal, marketed, and repressive beauty culture. The demonstration is one of the first media events to draw national attention to burgeoning women's liberation groups, exposing the public to an early Second-Wave feminist ideology. SSecond Wave Feminism sprang out of leftist movements in postwar Western democracies throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Consider the anti-Vietnam War campaign, as well as the lesbian and gay rights movements. In the United States, the Civil Rights and Black Power movements were significant, focusing on the concepts and interests of disadvantaged groups like working-class black people, as well as women and homosexuals. (Freeman 85).

Introducing the Second Wave Feminism came to represent the women's world at the time, which was almost imprisoned in every aspect, from home life to the workplace. The woman's job was to marry in her early twenties, have an urgent family, and dedicate her life to housework. "*The female does not expect much from life,*" (Coontz 42) as one lady put it at the time. She is here to serve as someone's keeper, whether it is her spouse or her children. Women were subservient to their husbands, who used to exert control over their wages and possessions. Divorce was difficult to achieve if the marriage got worsened. In 1969, about 38% of American women worked in positions such as teachers, nurses, or secretaries. In fact, women were not accepted in professional schools; as one medical school dean put it, "*Hell yes, we have a quota. we keep women out whenever possible because we do not want them*

here and they do not want them anywhere else, whether they admit it or not." (Francis 2). In addition, working women were paid less than males and were denied advancement possibilities.

At the heart of this movement was Betty Friedan's seminal book, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) "*the most important book of the twentieth century is the feminine Mystique. Betty friedan is to women what Martin Luther King, Jr., was to blacks*" (Seaman 3), in which she depicted the despair of a generation of college-educated housewives. Friedan continued by stating that confining women to the house restricted their options and wasted their ability and potential. In all, Friedan's goal was to chronicle sexism in both private and public life and to provide a critique of gendered socialization processes.

### 2.2.4. The Third Wave of Feminism

This period of feminist growth was given the name many times, including "*Lipstick Feminism, Girlie Feminism, Riot Girl Feminism, Trans Feminism, or simply Girl Feminism*", (drake 2) are all terms used to describe this movement. Born with the benefits that First and Second Wave feminists battled for, Third Wave feminists usually saw themselves as competent, powerful, and aggressive social agents: "*The third wave is buoyed by the confidence that they will have more opportunities and less sexism.*" (Richards and Baumgardner 83). As a consequence, young feminists reclaimed the word "girl" in order to appeal to a new generation. They do so by giving birth to a new sort of feminism. A new feminism that is more forceful, fun, and less pretentious, as Karen Mc. Naughton declares: "*And yes, that is G. I. R. L.S, which is, in our case, cyber speak for Great Girls; G. I. R. L. is also a young at heart thing and is not limited to the under 18s.*" (77).

Third wave feminists at the same time denounced sexist language and appropriated pejorative terminology for girls and women, inventing new self celebrating words and modes of communication in their place. By itself, Third Wave feminists have followed in the

footsteps of organisations such as Queer Nation and Niggers with. Rather than criticizing the stereotypes that have been applied to them, they have accentuated them, beginning with the global female (Chideya et al. 89). Third Wave feminists are motivated by the need to build a feminist theory and politics that recognizes and dismantles category thinking. In the same line of thought, Editor Rebecca Walker emphasized the challenge that younger feminists have when compelled to think in terms of "us" and "them" or when obliged to live certain identities as women or feminists. Third Wave Feminism is frequently referred to in the United States as "Girl Feminism," whereas in Europe it is referred to as "New Feminism". While this "New Feminism" is concerned with new threats to women's rights in the wake of the latest global world order, it criticizes earlier feminist waves for reducing universal interests to rather static identity politics.

Third Wave Feminism seeks to break out commonly oppressive inflexible classifications, calling for acceptance of the frenzied world while also embracing ambiguity and forging new partnerships. Therefore, Third Wave Feminism is characterized not by mutual theoretical and political positions, but rather by the rhetorical methods of performance, imitation, and supervision. The Third Wave Feminism is inextricably linked to the consequences of globalization and the complex transfer of power, both of which create obstacles for feminist thought and politics. It reflects the variety of women's interests and viewpoints, as well as the dismantling of master narratives of oppression and liberation.

### **2.2.5. The Fourth Wave of Feminism**

When the World Wide Web was first made available to the general public in 1991, the dynamics of social movements were once and for all altered. One of the results of the internet's change of social movements was a renewal of the feminist movement, which some claim had put an end to the era known as "post-feminism". While post feminists rejected the feminist movement as out of date owing to the achievement of some of its goals, fourth

wavers used the internet and social media to raise attention to what they say is still widespread sexism among women from all areas of life. Women were able to share their stories online because of the interconnectedness provided by cyberspace, which allowed them to be heard or read directly by the online community, which without delay saw a pattern of sexual bad behavior and violence occurring all over the world, causing emotional and physical pain to both men and women. As a result of this discovery, many internet efforts to raise awareness and funds for causes relating to the issue were launched. As early as 2003, the emergence of the fourth wave was predicted. Kaplan (2003) claims that:

The fourth wave will be distinguished by bringing second and third wave feminists together to confront a new and devastating reality that involves us all, if not equally, then at least at once. This new reality ideally cuts across racial, ethnic and national divides (55).

Therefore, the feminist movement's Fourth Wave is a relatively new phenomenon. This wave is still forming; it began to be discussed in relation to social media-mediated women's activism. People of all ages who share feminist beliefs and are prepared to adapt to this style of activity make up the new generation of feminists, which is led by digital native late Millennial and Generation Z. The reasoning and strategy to post-2010 feminist action has changed, but the aims and difficulties remain the same as in the Third Wave. Prudence Chamberlain (2017) sees the fourth wave of feminism is being catalyzed by up to date technological advancements. She claims that the fact that journalists and activists use the phrase fourth-wave feminism, which has yet to be defined by academics, demonstrates the movement's reach of "*multiple disciplinary manifestations of feminism*" ( 3).

The present wave incorporates elements from earlier waves, with a greater emphasis on intersectionality, or the concept that "*various axes of oppression interact, accounting for race,*



*ethnicity, class, and sexuality*" (Munro 2013, 24). It even now inspires women to contribute in politics, as seen by the suffragette memes that overwhelmed social media prior to the 2018 elections, the record number of women running for office in the United States, and the recent formation of the Women's Equality Party in the United Kingdom.

One of the characteristics of fourth-wave feminism has been its online presence, highlighting the internet as an increasingly fundamental space for young women to involve themselves in political activism. In reality, there has been an outpouring in feminist blogging, with the establishment of a number of new online groups and initiatives in recent years. This has definitely created new places for feminist discussion and activity, as well as encouraged the diffusion of feminist ideas and the formation of ties between previously distinct groups of feminists (for example, academics versus activists) and people. Some critics have questioned whether the 'fourth-wave' exists, claiming that increased online engagement alone is not enough to define a new wave. On the other hand, it appears that this has made feminism more available to a younger, more tech-savvy generation, as well as women who are unable to attend meetings.

Another element or outcome of fourth-wave feminism's online existence is what has been termed "call out culture". This means rapidly and easily exposing sexist and misogynist behavior by blogging about it online. This is a crucial aspect of the Everyday Sexism Project, which basically consists of a website and a Twitter group where women may discuss examples of sexism that they see on a daily basis. It is easy to see how this could be empowering for many women who want to document their experiences, see that they are not alone, and receive emotional support from other women in a mysterious and low-risk environment. Surveillance has also had a good effect on the behavior of individuals who may be investigated.

The predominance of intersectionality as a framework for analysis is reflected in fourth-wave feminism. This is the idea that distinct social categories and identities, such as those based on gender, ethnicity, class, sexual identity, and so on, overlap or connect with one another, just as different oppression axes intersect or interlock (e.g. sexism, racism, homophobia, classism, etc.). Of course, intersectionality isn't something that fourth or third-wave feminists 'created'. Black feminists have long emphasized how black women are subjected to both sexism and racist oppression at the same time.

Critics of third and fourth-wave feminism frequently see 'feminism' as an object that belongs to the previous generation and should only be passed down to the rightful 'successor'. Tensions and conflict can emerge for a variety of reasons. It may raise important issues and stimulate a critical examination of core feminist concepts and ideas, ensuring that the movement remains relevant and inclusive. As indicated in the essay, fourth-wave feminists should be commended for (among other things) embracing diversity and intersectional analysis (although other feminists claim that modern versions of feminism have not yet gone far enough in encompassing diverse categories of women).

Many of the problems expressed by the second wave women's movement are mirrored by modern or fourth wave feminist voices, although there are also differences in themes and less clear or rigorous 'feminist' boundaries. This has something to do with the emergence of new cultures surrounding sexuality, work, reproductive technologies, and communication technology, as well as what may be regarded as the ever-changing market-driven commercialization of all things feminine and aimed at women. For those of us who grew up with the ideas of second wave feminism, where every imposition on women had to be faced or investigated, numerous seeming conflicts appear at this juncture of popular culture and feminism. Regardless of the uncertain statement of feminism in popular culture, there appear to be as many grassroots feminist techniques being propagated through new social media now

as there were between the 1970s and 1990s by grassroots women's groups and the larger women's movement. Munro (2013: 3) claims that the new social media-based feminism is narrow-minded of all "isms" while being welcoming of all sexualities and cultures.

### **2.3. Major Varieties of Feminism**

Since the 1960s, several forms of feminism have evolved, each with a unique strategy for confronting patriarchal society. Within the feminist framework, three basic theoretical views are visible. There are three types of feminism: liberal feminism, socialist feminism, and radical feminism.

#### **2.3.1. Liberal Feminism**

Liberal Feminism of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries affirmed women's capacity and right to participate in public life, if not directly via suffrage. This kind of feminism works inside society's framework to integrate women and make it more receptive to individual women's rights. Suffragettes are an example. Liberals assert that liberty is a fundamental principle and that a just state ensures individual liberty. Liberal feminists share this stance and advocate for women's independence, arguing that societal systems often violate their personal autonomy. They wanted to reduce women's legal dependence on their fathers or spouses and to address the reality that women are underrepresented in democratic self-determination processes. Liberal feminists argue that such inadequacies in autonomy are a result of the "gender system" (Okin 89). Additionally, liberal feminists felt that society would gain from women's public participation. Actually, they thought that it is the responsibility of the state to preserve women's rights and autonomy given that the state's society as a whole benefits from women's public engagement.

Liberal feminists such as Mary Astell (1666–1731), Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–99), Harriet Taylor (1807–58), John Stuart Mill (1806–73), Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815–1902),

and Virginia Woolf (1882–1941) made reference to the liberal tradition's value of equality and individual liberty to argue that women's social status and sex at birth are neither sensible nor legal grounds for discrimination.

In accordance with radical feminists, society is essentially patriarchal, with all males dominating and oppressing privilege in all circumstances (Goodman 99). They advocate for the view that biological diversity is accidental and has no bearing on women's roles in society. Furthermore, they claimed that both sexes are born equal and that rights such as education should be available to both to ensure their individual growth and full human potential. Liberal feminism not only advocated for the abolition of gender norms, the abolition of gender discrimination, but also the creation of a distinction between socially created genders and biological sex.

They sought to reform society in the 1960s and 1970s by eradicating male dominance. Notably, liberal feminists thought that the first step toward women's liberation is legal recognition of their property rights, including their own selves. Liberal feminism is convinced that women are not primarily less intelligent or hardworking than men, but are denied opportunities due to their gender. In this regard, Simone De Beauvoir argues in her groundbreaking book *"The Second Sex"* that the body alone cannot characterize a woman and cannot show women's imprisonment. Beauvoir argues that in order to really free all women, a fresh approach to the psychological background is necessary. While a woman's body is an integral part of her, it is insufficient to define her as another. By writing the definition and title "woman": *"We must view biological facts from an ontological, economic, social, and political perspective."* has created a feminine human being. *"Men's interests and ideals serve the greater good of humanity at the cost of women"* (Thompson 60).

Liberal feminist theory is at the heart of lots of anti-discrimination and equal opportunity laws. Consistent with liberal feminism, discrimination against women frequently stems from

stereotypical expectations. Liberal feminism considers the status of women at home as a private matter to be resolved between husband and wife. They after that claim that women's subordination is a result of their confinement to the domestic realm. To resolve this position, women must cease economic dependence on males and contribute totally in the labor market, competing with men for the economic and social benefits associated with paid employment.

To shed light on the sexual division of labor and establish domestic gender equality, women must attain economic independence. As with structural functionalist theory in sociology, liberal feminism views the family as a structure devoted to socializing women as angels of the home tropes. Gender roles are instilled in children and then reinforced by society. As a result, liberal feminists are in favor of providing women with more positive role models and equal educational opportunities. For example, Wollstonecraft maintained in this regard that society builds women to be slaves to their emotions. Without highlighting women's political and economic freedom, Wollstonecraft emphasized the need of education as a necessary right for women to develop their reason and uniqueness. To establish such a right, she stated that although an uneducated woman is likely to fail her household responsibilities, an educated woman would definitely understand and have a high regard for their value.

Generally, these early liberal feminists assumed that the male model of life experience to which they desired access for women was that of a white professional class man, which explains why little attention was devoted to the realities of working black class women. Few radical liberal feminists, on the other hand, such as Maria Stewart (1803–79) and Susan B. Anthony (1820–1906), paid attention to the dilemma of black women and working-class women. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, liberal feminism emphasized rights such as the right to vote, property ownership, education, and work on an equal footing with their male counterparts.

Many have attacked the liberal feminist movement for its excessive ideals. American political philosopher Jean Bethke Elshtain criticized the movement of overgeneralizing gender differences and overemphasizing the nurture component while downplaying the nature component. She contended that parenting is an identity and a virtue in which women should take pride. Nonetheless, she contended that teaching women to embrace male characteristics and seeing them as attractive attributes deprive women of the finest human characteristics such as warmth, sensitivity, caring, and kindness. Liberal feminism has also been accused of defending middle-class white women who are dissatisfied with their monotonous, though secure, housewife existence. Liberal feminists admit this is true, but point to the many minority politicians who have worked in partnership with women's rights organizations. As a result, women of color, and women from other parts of the globe advised western feminists to expand their thinking beyond the confines of white, middle-class, Western experience. (Lorde and Mohanty 84)

### **2.3.2. Radical Feminism**

The word often alludes to the women's movement arising at a period when many types of oppression and authority were being questioned by groups of minorities. This word refers to the feminist movement that formed in the aftermath of the 1967-1968 civil rights and peace campaigns. With women realizing that biology did not define what it meant to be a woman, radical feminists attacked what they viewed as the fundamental oppressor of all women: males, male privilege, dominance, and supremacy, and their patriarchal society. This group is labeled "radical" for the reason that they perceive women's oppression as the most basic kind of oppression and blame sexist culture and sexism for women's subordination. This is a movement committed to social transformation, change on a really revolutionary scale. Formalized Radical feminism developed out of the larger radical current movement. In 1969,

the Red stockings, a radical feminist movement based in New York, produced a manifesto detailing their key agents of oppression:

We identify the agents of our oppression as men, they said, echoing the sentiments of thousands of radical feminists. Male dominance is the earliest kind of supremacy. All other types of exploitation and oppression (racial discrimination, capitalism, imperialism, and so on) are extensions of male supremacy: males control women, and a few men rule the others. Men have dominated all political, economic, and cultural institutions, and have maintained this dominance by physical force. They have abused their position to maintain women's inferiority. Male dominance helps all men economically, sexually, and psychologically. Every man has oppressed a woman (Bloom and Breines 66).

Male superiority and power have harmed and harmed women, preventing them from reaching the most basic results necessary for their existence, human dignity, and respect. Radical feminism stresses that men's dominance over women is the product of patriarchy, which split social rights, human rights, and authority between men's privilege and oppressed women, rather than limiting oppression to an economic or class problem, as other feminist groups did.

Women involved in the anti-war and New Left political movements of the 1960s were denied equal authority by the males in the movement, regardless of the movements' apparent empowering principles. Many of these women formed specifically feminist organizations while preserving a significant portion of their original political radical goals and practices. Radical feminism became the word for feminism's more radical wing. Influenced by the aforementioned movements, radical feminism tries to understand the principal causes of women's subjugation, which is why it is often revisionary in nature. Without a doubt, a radical feminist seeks to dismantle patriarchy rather than alter it by means of legislative measures.

They used a variety of strategies to raise awareness of women's subordination. Radical feminists encourage a variety of strategies, including awareness-raising organizations, organizing public demonstrations, and university-based women's studies programs.

Male power over women, many radical feminists think, is conferred through coercive institutions such as marriage. Consequently, they be in favor of the eradication of the family and marriage; Atkinson referred to married women as "hostages" as well (260) and Sheila Cronan, who sees marriage

as a form of slavery, claims that "the institution of marriage 'protects' women in the same way that slavery was said to 'protect' blacks—that is, that the term 'protection' in this case is simply a euphemism for oppression... the Women's Movement must focus on opposing this institution. Women's equality cannot be achieved without the elimination of marriage (261).

From around 1967 to 1975, radical feminism was at the cutting edge of feminist philosophy. It is no longer broadly recognized as it once was, nor does it serve as a basis for cultural feminism.

### **2.3.3. Marxist Feminism**

Marxism connects the defeat of women to the capitalist/private property system. As a result, they accept as true that the only way to get rid of the oppression of women is to abolish the capitalist system. Socialist feminism is the product of Marxism meeting radical feminism. Echols presents a definition of socialist feminism as a marriage between Marxism and radical feminism, with Marxism the dominating figure. Marxists and socialists in general term themselves "radicals." (Armstrong 87). Beginning in the 1840s, Marxism has investigated the creative activity of women and their unlawful pay as a Fundamental aspect of capitalism.



Marxist feminism dreamt of an anti-capitalist future because women were exploited and dominated under that system. Particularly crucial to Marxist feminism are its notions of imperialism and primitive accumulation, or robbery, of land, resources and women's unpaid labor to the reproduction of lives and generations.

From the 1930s, Marxist feminism in the US focused attention to the capitalist political and economic contexts of racial, sexist and class abuse. Marxist feminism stressed capitalism as a power role that repressively influenced women's lives. Behind every capitalist social connection that of the capitalist and the worker lies another hidden social relation, that of the family between husband and wife. In the newly privatized family, as a consequence of inherited gender norms, women conducted the majority of all reproductive work under the direction of males. Women, for that reason, reproduced employees-including themselves to return to the following day ready to sell their labor force to the capitalists. The use value of this reproductive labor is the workers' daily and generational rejuvenation. Marxist feminism analyzes how gender conceptions of femininity and masculinity generate production under capitalism.

The analytical relationship between Marxism and feminism – the latter sometimes referred to in early iterations as 'the woman question' – has engaged critical scholarship and leftist practice since the time of the foundational contributions of Marx and Engels. August Bebel's *Woman under Socialism* and Frederick Engels' *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* continue to be considered classic texts of the Marxist canon. The conversation has proven to have substantial longevity, and with good reason. Socialist feminist analysis has deeply advanced contemporary Marxism, developing our understanding of core concepts and pivotal issues. These include, for example, the role of social reproduction (Ferguson 44); domestic labour (Benston and Hensman 77); the relationship between the private and public

spheres the nature of the working and the role of gender and sexuality in shaping state ideology and hegemony (Hennessy 98)

### **2.3.3.2. Social Feminism**

The term socialist feminist most commonly refers to ideas and actions that appeared in the mid-1970s in an endeavor to appreciate masculine control, socioeconomic dominance, and oppression as interconnected institutions and cultures. Social feminism aimed to bridge the gap between Marxism and feminism between classes and sexes, believing that if class disparities could be addressed, sexbased discrimination would vanish. For socialist feminists, analysis that challenges just male domination or economic injustice is weak in understanding or correcting women's reduced position. Concurrently, it injects a socialist criticism of women's exclusion from capitalism's economic structures into liberal feminist arguments, arguing that altering laws and attitudes, but not necessarily economic institutions, would produce equality for women. Socialist feminism began in the late 1960's. It arose out of the same social attitude and the same awareness that fashioned other varieties of feminism. In the 1970s, Socialist feminists attempted to build a innovative synthesis of discussions raging in the feminist community concerning the sources of women's rule. At the foundation of socialist feminist thinking is the concept that women's subordination is tied not just to one system of domination but is the product of multiple related systems such as race, gender, social class, and sexuality.

From this viewpoint, women may attain freedom only by dealing with all the systems of oppression, not simply the sex/gender system. One thing to add about socialist feminists is their conviction that other varieties of feminism, like liberal feminism, violate the rights of women. It does not control the depth of the oppression and subjection of women and generally primarily covers the position of women in the high and upper middle classes. For

them, women of all classes are oppressed and mistreated, claiming that capitalism and patriarchy have merged into one system.

Socialist feminism firmly thinks that we should address and grasp the negative repercussions that colonialism, imperialism, and racism have on the women of the globe. Socialist feminists say that addressing one kind of domination would not lead to women's emancipation since all the forms of domination based on sex, gender, race, sexual orientation, and class are all unified. All the manifestations of oppression and supremacy must be opposed. Socialist feminists cast the light on the economic, social, and cultural responsibilities of women as they are care givers, suppliers of emotional labor, give birth. They additionally underline that women experience lower pay and sexual persecution in the same industry. Socialist feminists launched a variety of women's unions on all sides of the U.S. to confront the diverse sorts of oppression. They definitely played key roles in various sectors, like the reproductive rights of women, the labor movement, and women's and gender studies.

### **2.4. Gender as a Social Construct**

Sex and gender are more essential to feminist philosophy than anything else. It is important to recognize that the differences between gender and sex are not all the time obvious, given that many individuals use the words interchangeably. In the 1970s, feminists in America started researching the notion of gender as socially created, but it was not until the 1990s that the social construction of gender became a developed study. Along with William Roy and Candace West and Don Zimmerman, sex is biological, yet gender is sociological. Gender is constructed by the meanings associated with being male or female: "*[Gender] refers to the process by which certain roles, activities, qualities; traits, emotions, or objects acquire masculine or feminine meanings*" (112-113). Hojgaard and Esseveld, like Roy, think that gender is socially created, asserting that "*gender is thus conceived as a cultural dynamic that*

*is created, renewed, and maintained through interactive processes that are integral to the reproduction of the social order"* (233).

Previously, the term "gender" has been used to refer to the grammatical categories "masculine," "feminine," and "neuter." On the other hand, the term has been extensively used in latest years to refer to sex-based classifications, as in expressions such as "*gender gap*" and "*gender politics*". Countless anthropologists are devoted to this approach, using sex to refer to biological characteristics and gender to refer to social or cultural factors. Lorber observes that

men and women are physiologically more alike than they are unlike; hence, gender is the category or construction within which men's oppression of women may be justified.

Gender as a social construct generates distinctions between women and men, which justifies women's exploitation, which in turn promotes power relationships (44).

Butler and Glenn emphasize the importance of gender in regard to power dynamics. Both think that gender is relational and inextricably linked to power. Glenn defines relational as meaning that the gender categories of male and female acquire importance in connection to one another. Glenn believes that

It has established a social standard that we cannot completely grasp what it means to be a woman until we first understand what it means to be a man. Once we understand what it means to be a man, we can define "woman" as the polar opposite of "man." Maleness, the dominating category in our culture, is seen as "normal"; femaleness, on the other hand, is regarded as "abnormal" and hence "problematic" (9-10).

Between the two categories, binary oppositions are established, and the dominating group maintains its dominance and power as a result of the oppression of the other. The power is in the "*assumed*" actions that sustain gender binary oppositions. Feminists attempt to change the social construction of gender by challenging these "*taken-for-granted*" beliefs and behaviors.

The latter *"assumed"* gender stereotypes may be quite dangerous. Scott conducted a study on Freud and discovered that Freud felt oppressive behaviors had a tremendous effect on society, whether we wanted them to or not. *"Slips of the tongue, jokes, dreams, and fantasies"* might by coincidence strengthen conservative gender norms, consequently teaching them to the subsequently generation (75). Lorber agrees with Freud when she asserts that everyone *"does gender"* mechanically (13). Lorber describes *"doing gender"* as *"the human interaction of consciously or unconsciously creating and re-creating gender constructions"* (13).

### 2.5. Gender and Childhood

According to activist feminist theory, the term "gender" seems to establish social inequalities between the sexes by highlighting the lack of existing bodies of theory in explaining constant inequalities between women and men (Scott 66). In the same line of thought Scott argues, most notably in her article *"Feminism's History,"* that the notion of gender allowed the school of radical feminism to survive by giving feminists with a lens through which to both reconsider history and study the sexes' relations. Sexuality is a biological process. Gender is built by the meanings we assign to being male or female: *"[Gender] refers to the process through which specific roles, activities, features, behaviors, emotions, or things acquire masculine or feminine connotations"* (Roy 112-113). It is a word that refers to the biological differences that are real between men and women. Sex and gender were made different; the former is biological, whilst the latter is a cultural and temporal construct.

In recent years, the term has been over and over again used to refer to sex-based classifications, such as in the phrases "gender gap" and "gender politics." The term "sex" refers to biological classifications, while "gender" refers to social or cultural categories. In accordance with this directive, the medication's success seems to be based on the patient's sex (rather than gender), yet gender (rather than sex) roles are likely to be more firmly defined in

peasant societies. Gender is now and then used to refer to the social and cultural duties assigned to each sex within a society, rather than to biological variations, which give an explanation for the majority of sex differences. Individuals frequently develop gender roles in response to their environment, which includes family ties, media exposure, peer pressure, and education. While this distinction is beneficial theoretically, it is not usually recognized, and considerable variation in use occurs at all levels. Sex and gender differences contribute to a wider conversation regarding the influence of culture and society on bodies, experiences, and pathways for change.

### **2.6. Socialization of Women and Men**

Sexism is the belief that one sex is more valued or superior than the other. It sets distinctions between what men and boys are permitted and should do and what women and girls are permitted and should do. Even though the term sexism was coined to refer to the oppression of girls and women, by the early twenty-first century, it had been now and then broadened to encompass male dominance. All the way through history, misogyny has been more often than not directed at women and girls. As a consequence of this mindset, sexist civilizations keep male supremacy and economic dominance. Sexist acts, events, and attitudes all contribute to the perpetuation of biologically based societal bias about sex.

### **2.7. Processes of Gender Socialization**

Each civilization known to man has some separation of tasks and responsibilities depending on a person's sex (Maccoby 755). Gender is a social construct, which implies that it is formed and acquired by means of socialization. Given the prominence of gender as a social category, it is crucial to examine when and how children acquire knowledge about their gender (i.e., whether they are males or females), as well as the behaviors, actions, and characteristics that are considered suitable for each gender in their society. Children are exposed to a variety of elements that influence their attitudes and actions about gender roles.

These attitudes and behaviors are frequently formed in the family and are toughened by the child's classmates, school experience, and media consumption. As a result, women and men are completely opposed, with radically distinct and complementary roles: women are more fragile, feeble, and powerless than males, mainly in the field of reason and logical thinking. Women are relegated to the role of nurturer and career in the home. Consequently, they are unable of leading in business, politics, or other intellectual sectors. As said by Fagot and Leinbach, "*Children are constantly exposed to gender-related environmental influences from family, peers, and the media*" (663).

These socializing agents acknowledge when a youngster exhibits the "right character traits" and correct the "wrong ones." In other words, the youngster will be rewarded for behaving suitably for his or her gender and will be punish or disregarded for wrong behavior. Giddens also declares that socialization begins the moment we are born (292). For that reason, the first thing his parents and other adults ask when the kid is delivered is, "*Is it a boy or a girl?*" As soon as the gender of the newborn is revealed, parents begin passing on their own gender ideals to their offspring. It is also worth noting that parents may affect their children's gender development through role modeling and encouraging their boys and girls to engage in diverse behaviors and activities (Bussey and Bandura 16-17).

Mothers are more likely to conduct ordinary everyday childcare activities such as feeding and dressing their kids, while males engage their children via play. Numerous studies have shown that parents treat infants in a different way depending on their gender. Female infants are handled more kindly than male infants, and dads will play rough with their sons but not with their daughters. Female infants are pushed to convey their emotions. On the other hand, parents encourage and permit more fury in their sons, but they also educate their sons not to display as many emotions, by stating that "*big boys don't cry*" (Lippa 134-135).

As with parents, educators and peers play a noteworthy part in the process of gender socialization; teachers do not act the same way with girls and boys. They take for granted that females are more polite, while boys are assumed to be uneducated. Primary school instructors may also encourage boys to be curious, leaving them to explore and solve issues on their own, while girls are taught to depend more on one another or the teacher. Peers also have a significant influence on gender assembly *"Both children and adults play an active role in gender construction, and collective behaviors forming lines, selecting seats, teasing, gossiping, and seeking access to or avoiding particular activities – animate the process"* (Thorne 157).

Peers educate one another about gender acceptable conduct via interaction, and peer pressure has an effect on gender stereotypes, particularly on boys. For instance, some guys may make fun of and tease their classmates if they show feminine characteristics, and the same is true for girls. When young children play with youngsters of any sex, positive reinforcement from their same gendered peers for participating in proper gender typed activities has been proven to be much greater than reinforcement from adults (Maccoby 755).

On the other hand, at the ages of six and seven, children often split themselves into gendered play groups. Children's contacts with peers their own age are a important socializing aspect; via direct feedback from friends about setting up game rules or participating in certain activities, children get a better awareness of themselves (Aina and Cameron 119). Lippa addresses the pernicious impact of stereotypical constructs as follows

Once gender stereotypes come into being, they influence behavior in predictable ways. First, they act as standards that guide people's actions (e.g., when women try to act in "feminine" ways, at least in some settings). Second, they cause people to encourage gender-stereotypical behavior in others (e.g., when a manager reins in an "aggressive" female employee more than he reins in an equally "aggressive" male employee).



Finally, negative stereotypes about the relative abilities of women and men sometimes serve to undermine individuals' performance (e.g., when a girl experiences doubts about her math ability because of the stereotype that girls aren't really good at math (132).

Apart from peers, the media also plays a significant role in gender socialization. For example, commercials often incorporate good-looking female models demonstrating cosmetics or cleaning goods, while men are represent as intellectuals, such as physicians, scientists, or engineers, who often give details about technical as well as scientific aspects of things such as machinery and automobiles. In the same way, books are vital in the socialization of gender given that they mirror society's values. Children get more knowledge about social standards and cultural values, in addition to what is suitable for them depending on their gender, via literature. Children identify with characters in books, and while reading, they adopt various social behavioral habits and connect them to their daily lives (Tsao 108). On the other hand, these prejudices are deep-rooted impulsively in the brains of youngsters and readers. As Lippa puts it,

Boys and girls are astute observers of their social world. They size up consistencies in the behavior of other males and females, and they generally behave like the majority of their own sex. It is through such imitation that boys and girls absorb the gender lessons provided by their communities and cultures (143).

These actions, which are time and again naively, copied by parents, teachers, classmates, or the media, strengthen children's conventional gender interpretation. Women who were considered second class citizens suffered as a result of the societal construction of sexist ideology such as antifeminism. Seeing that anti-sexism endeavored to dismantle and

eliminate the tenets that consider women poorly for being women, feminists as well attempted to dismantle and get rid of the tenets that encourage this belief.

### **2.8. Feminism as Anti-Sexism**

A feminist study of gender in society requires ideas to examine social disparities between girls and boys and between women and men that do not limit differences to the notion of genetics as destiny. The notion of sexism argues that assumption and discrimination based on sex or gender are the societal impediments to women's and girls' achievement in numerous domains. To sweep away such preconceptions in society is, therefore, to destroy sexism in society. That's why, feminism as anti-sexism specifies that the solution to gender inequality is in changing sexist society and institutions. The topic of stereotyping gender roles has been researched from a number of different aspects, and with the development of the feminist movement, beliefs about gender and gender roles norms were being questioned.

After years of instances of stereotyped characters and disproportionate possibilities for gender in media, literature, schools feminism as anti-sexism tries to demolish traditional gender roles in a very effective way. For that reason, initiatives have been done in the process of lessening stereotyped gender portrayal or sexism. One promising strategy for distinguishing sexism from racism, classism, and other forms of injustice is to focus on the idea that if an individual is suffering sexist oppression, then an important part of the explanation why she is subject to the injustice is that she is or appears to be a woman.

The notion that someone is oppressed because she is a woman suggests that the best explanation of the subordination in issue will include reference to her sex. On the other hand, the same claim suggests that the rationale or foundation for the oppressive structures requires that one be sensitive to someone's sex in determining how they should be viewed and treated, i.e., that the justification for someone's

being subject to the structures in question depends on a representation of them as sexed male or female. (Gudrun 2-3)

A woman may for instance stand in front of sexist oppression at work if the pay scale for her job classification is justified by a framework that differentiates and devalues women's labor in comparison to men's. According to this interpretation, asserting that women experience injustice as women implies that women are oppressed. "Feminism" is a catch-all term for a range of perspectives on women's injustices. There are disagreements among feminists about the nature of justice in general and sexism in particular, the specific types of injustice or wrong suffered by women, and the group that should be the primary focus of feminist activity. Feminists are then again, committed to enacting social change in order to get rid of discrimination against women, particularly against women as women. Women face a variety of forms of victimization, including sexual, physical, psychological, and economic societal conventions and assumptions reinforcing male superiority and sexual entitlement lead to the sexual, physical, psychological, and economic mistreatment of women. It is influenced by a variety of elements at work in a variety of social, cultural, and economic situations.

Gender disparity is at the core of sexual violence committed against women. Sexual violence is perpetrated against women who are unwillingly subjected to it by the use of force. It is explicitly defined in sexual violence chapter six in *World Report on Violence and Health* as *"any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or acts otherwise directed, against a person's sexuality by any person, regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work"* (148).

Being a woman in a nation with a violent culture and a strong male dominance, ideology implies being at risk to the superior other, who may threaten and blackmail her in order to acquire a job, for example. Sexual violence occurs in a variety of contexts but always results

in physical and psychological damage to women in marriage or any other relationship. Women are not provided with the capacity to resist sexual assault under these beliefs. Therefore, many males modestly get rid of the option that their sexual approaches to a woman would be banned or that a woman would have the right to self-determination about sex participation.

In lots of cultures, women and men similarly understand marriage as requiring women to be sexually within reach almost without restriction. Lack of established assistance and weak principles against sexual assault perpetrators will continue to expose women to all forms of abuse and the mental health consequences that come with them. The occurrence of rape has been closely related to societal norms about the use of violence to accomplish goals. Accordingly, the demand for changing societal norms and elevating women's standing is unfavorable. Health experts have a critical role in supporting sexual assault victims physically and mentally, as well as gathering evidence to aid prosecutions. To put an end to sexual assault, governments and civil society must show strong commitment and engagement, as well as a coordinated response across multiple disciplines( *World Report on Violence and Health* 146-48).

### **2.9.Black Feminism**

Black Feminism is a school of thought that holds that sexism, socioeconomic oppression, gender identity, and racism are all knotted. Intersectionality refers to how these notions connect to one another. Kimberlé Crenshaw, a legal scholar, created the phrase "*intersectionality theory*" in 1989. Crenshaw drew attention to black feminism in her work, which argues that the experience of being a black woman cannot be described in terms of either being black or being a woman. Each notion is studied independently, on the contrary the interactions, which more often than not reinforce each other, must be included. The

Combahee River Collective claimed in 1974 that liberating black women meant liberating all people, given that it would necessitate the abolition of racism, sexism, and economic oppression.

### **2.10. The Distinction Between Black Feminism and Other Feminisms**

Black women have suffered from several sorts of prejudice and persecution throughout history. African American women faced the triple menace of sex, race, and class (Guy Sheftall 1995). These ladies were at the bottom of society for the reason that they were women, and black. Patricia Hill Collins used the expression "*outsider within*" to describe these women, who were present in society but never quite integrated. Collins continues by describing the kind of knowledge that the "*outsider within*" has about their society. In the same line of thought, Collins asserts that although black women acquire knowledge about society's dominant groups, they by no means attain the full power afforded to members of these groups. African American women felt a sense of isolation from society (6). Consistent with E. B. Du Bois; women of color were suffering "double consciousness," which meant that black women were undergoing an identity crisis due to their inability to identify a label or category in society. Black females were rejected by their own gender in the name of racism, and they were also rejected by their own race as a result of sexist oppression. Consequently black women were forced to build both personal and social identities.

#### **2.10.1. Black Women Exclusion from the Feminist Movement**

The Feminist Movement began with the declaration all women are oppressed. Conversely, the feminine unity and collaboration of women in order to establish their unique place in society was a false union, because it was not a union of women, but to a certain extent a union of white women. Black women were marginalized and denied the right to self-expression. In America, the Feminist Movement was more often than not confined to white women. White

American women authors were attempting to establish their presence and remove the repressive suits imposed on them by patriarchal authorities. On the other hand, black women were never given a chance to express themselves in any form; they were left out of the picture completely (Hooks 15).

The anonymous case included black women who had been victimized by their own gender. Black women's marginalization revealed itself in diverse ways, as they were excluded from both society and literary works. Black women were denied the right to present and defend themselves in society, and feminist peers assumed that women of color were either wholly absent or assumed to be absent. Women's self-awareness and comprehension of their independent existence in society was valued solely by white women, as regarded by the feminist movement. Black women shaped the feminist movement; indeed, they were pioneers in defending women's rights, and there were several remarkable black females who played significant roles in the American feminist movement.

Numerous scholars considered this book as a symbol of the Second Feminist Movement in America since it was instrumental in reviving female consciousness, and *"her book was a key factor in the revival of the women's movement and in the transformation of the nation's awareness of the challenges middleclass suburban women faced"* (Harnesses 197) .

Additionally, Friedan encouraged white American women to re-evaluate their lives; she opened a new door for American women and presented them with a new perspective on life. She laid emphasis on the meaning of women's duties outside domestic labour. It is vital to appreciate how the actual situation of being a housewife can generate a feeling of emptiness, nothingness, nonbeing in women. Friedan fought in favor of white American women's liberation from the customary conceptions placed on them. Consequently, Friedan had a considerable consequence on the growth of the modern feminist movement in America. Friedan, conversely, wrote to be in favor of the liberation of a white woman. She was by

chance campaigning for white women's dominance over black women. In spite of the fact that black women made considerable contributions to the building of a feminist corpus of writing, their involvements were never recognized, as Bell Hooks put it: "*The women's movement was theirs.*" (12). Not only were black women expelled from the feminist movement, but were also excluded from the liberation movements.

### **2.10.2. Frustration of African-American Women's Evolution**

Black liberation movements are organizations that advocate for the emancipation of the black race from the white race's control (Lawson 274). Among the participants in these movements were black women. These women fought with black men to abolish racism, and they fought alongside males to end white racial superiority. While Black Liberation Organizations wished to liberate the black race, they by and large liberated black males, putting black women on the outside looking in. Males were awarded privileges via the black liberation movements, but women of color were enslaved to a black patriarchal authority and victimized by their own race. In terms of personal identity or cultural production, black women faced a variety of forms of black sexist oppression (Combahee River 215).

Due to the fact that black men did not see black women as equals and felt that these women had to recurrently submit themselves to the males, black females remained marginalized in respect to men of African origin (Kimmel 95). In black communities, the sexist worldview was tolerated and encouraged, and it was even supported by intellectuals. Amiri Baraka asserts that black males do not believe in gender equality, going on to explain that black men and women will never be equal, and that the ideology of equal opportunity for men and women is odd and unknown to the black community (236).

As a consequence, black women served and cared for children and the house physically. They were denied the chance to play a part in political or social life and were prohibited from obtaining administrative jobs. Black males could not permit black women to have any social

or political rights since it would cause danger to their power. Men of color were careful about providing equal social status to women of any race. An additional manifestation of black girls' sexist defeat was noticeable in their literary and artistic accomplishments. In literary fiction, black men did not give a picture of black women sufficiently or positively.

Additionally, the way males used to speak about, describe, and depict women was a manner of imposing authority on them, since when men represented women; they revoked women's right to speak. While it is true that a writer may develop a literary image of any personality in society, when it came to black women, male writers were often intolerant and never provided a down-to-earth picture. As a consequence, black women have been exposed to an profusion of hostile images and misunderstandings.

### 2.11. The Strong Black Woman Concept

Abundant racial notions have been applied to black women, including the concept of Strong Black Women coined by Chanequa Walker Barnes to give emphasis to the inextricable relationship between strength and black women. The strong black lady represents the cruel and unfair worldview to which black women are subjected. This word refers to the "*mythical power*," of black women, who were seen to be excessively harsh and strong to be classified as ordinary women (Barnes 57). Additionally, this idea demonstrates that black women's power was not a feature; rather, it was an inherent part of their identity. Being strong was not a luxury for black women; it was a necessity. On the contrary, societal and religious duties necessitated this intensity. It was sociological in nature, as "*the strong black woman is a legendary figure, characterized by extraordinary capacities for selflessness and care giving*." (Barnes 58).

Black women were believed to be qualified for dealing with a range of issues and arduous vocations; they were the housemaids and servants. Black women are as well, educated from an early age to help others and to be of service to others (Barnes 77). In addition, Holy



Scripture constrained the black woman to submit to her white lady sister through the black servant legend. Therefore, black women were there, psychologically and financially, to assist others in a number of ways. Whether in actual life or in literary works, the black woman has for all time bore the burden of her personality's power. This woman was unsuitable to be represented or pictured in writing, and if she is, she will be a dreadful and hidden monster. The novel "*Heart of Darkness*" by Joseph Conrad is an outstanding case in point of this, because Conrad portrays black women as a celebrated and mysterious monster. The conception of the strong black woman is one way to marginalize black women. Another concept is real femininity.

### 2.12. True Womanhood's Ideology

Women have been confined to a certain visual frame by society. Women were limited by physical and psychological characteristics, and there was some kind of discrimination in opposition to black women, cultural prejudices. White females were the only ones who were exposed to an ideological discourse on the concept of beauty. Moreover, the physical appearance of women represented their mentality and values (Welter 151). It was believed that morality and virtue were only connected with white females due to their beauty, whereas women of color were deemed to be unhappy due to their physical appearance. Accordingly, white women were weak animals in need of protection from white males, and femininity afforded them this advantage. On the other hand, the femininity of black ladies is unequalled.

According to Patricia Hill Collins "*true women exemplify piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity*" (73). True women were defined as white women, but nonwhite women were not regarded as women. Only white women had the abovementioned attributes, which society gave them in order to maintain white women's weakness and vulnerability. While the white lady was adored and admired, the black woman embodied everything that the white woman did not, given that the enslaved black woman's biological female existence prevented her from

exhibiting long-established feminine characteristics. Rather than that, the convergence of race and gender exposed the black woman to severe masculine forms of work; her feminine body remained subjugated by men of both races, black and white.

The white beauty ideal was absorbed by society and reflected in literary works, as it was usual for white women to play the heroine and take the lead in stories, since the heroine was always a fashionable symbol of a white female. A passage from Caroline Lee Hentz's *Magnolia Vale* demonstrates how the blonde beauty is portrayed: "*Eoline, with her light hair and heavenly blue eyes leaning over the harp... really looked to be on a par with the angels, and the aureole of purity and piety shone around her forehead*" (18). In contrast to the attractive white female princess, the black woman has always been linked with lack of enthusiasm and pessimism. As a consequence of this negative image, a black woman is determined to write her own work.

### **2.13. Black Feminist Literary Tradition**

The notion of Feminist Literature is centered on the feminine struggle for recognition and legitimacy in opposition to patriarchal domination. While white American women were at first at the front position of this movement, black females as well had a say to the growth of this cultural and social conception. The desire for self-promotion among African American feminists is rooted in the country's history. It flourished at the same time as the eighteenth-century debate over slavery, and the growth of the black feminist body of literature occurred over several historical periods, though it is difficult to distinguish and precisely portray these periods as a result of black feminism's eclipse by the white feminist literary custom.

However, the history of the black feminist corpus of literature can be traced all the way back to its beginning in order to keep a record of its development in the course of time. This might be achieved by focusing on specific historical periods that stimulated and inspired Afro-American women's works. Additionally, by acknowledging a few outstanding black

female writers who helped establish the bounds of black feminist literature, it is possible till now, to attach importance to the latter that have always been credited with founding the corpus of black feminist literature.

### 2.14. Male Pseudonyms Used by Female Authors

Throughout history, many female writers have adopted male pen names or else gender-ambiguous pseudonyms; believing that they could simply attain success by concealing their 'real' names and that reveal their 'real' names brings them into the public interest, female authors have published their work under male or gender-neutral pen names. On the other hand, for the majority of female authors, using a male pen name was the only way to publish in a male-dominated field or reach a broader readership. Since the novel's birth in the 18th Century, the conventional canon, established by males, has tended to focus on men. *"In fact, you have a number of women writers who were instrumental in the development of the novel,"* notes Dr Sam Hirst, an associate professor and presenter of free online romancing the Gothic workshops :*"By duplicating these experiences – which women were not permitted to write without using a male pseudonym – you are effectively eradicating the presence of all of these other women. You're promoting the canon's very patriarchal and sexist outlook."* (55)

For the reason that a pen name is a hard thing: it may be used to avoid gendered standards, but it can also be used to preserve secrecy, create a public persona or alter ego, represent a lived queer identity, and conform to – or avoid – racial heritage norms, to write freely in male-dominated groups; to experiment with anonymity; or to promote a male audience. Nonetheless, women writers who utilized male pseudonyms aimed to publish without prejudice in male-dominated settings, to experiment with anonymity, or to increase their male audience. Sexism has indisputably helped in the effort to be heard. Even JK Rowling, the century's most successful female novelist, selected a gender-neutral pen name to guarantee

Harry Potter appealed to boy readers prior to adopting the pseudonym Robert Galbraith to write criminal fiction anonymously.

### 2.15. Conclusion

This theoretical foundation was first and foremost intended to demonstrate the major phases in the history of feminism. This chapter details the origins of Feminism as an ideology and the difficulties that surround it, including gender issues and men's dominance over women. In this context, feminism in the United States was for the most part concerned with putting a stop to patriarchal traditions of female silence. Accordingly, all the waves were planned to wipe out long-held preconceptions about women's inferiority to males.

The debate also touched on the feminist theory's paradoxes, since it openly excludes black women from its program, in spite of the fact that they were among the early participants in the feminist movement. It is blind to the cruel oppression that black women endured as a result of racism and classism. It was in response to this negative response that black women banded together to fight for their right to speak, which they accomplished using the establishment of the black feminist corpus of literature. After setting up a crucial literary framework and conducting an in-depth examination of pertinent works, the next chapter will examine Alice Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women* from a feminist viewpoint, illustrating how the protagonist and other female characters overcome their obstacles.

# **Chapter Three**

## **Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival**

*“Strengthen the female mind by enlarging it, and there  
will be an end to blind obedience”.*

*Mary Wollstonecraft*

## Chapter Three: Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival

---

3.1. Introduction. ....	95
3.2. North American Feminist Literature / Canadian Feminist Writing. ....	95
3.3. Emerging Feminisms and Suffrage, Late 1800s–1920s.....	98
3.4. The Modern Woman and Modernist Masculinity, 1920s–1950s .....	99
3.5. 20th-Century Canadian Writers.....	100
3.6. The Women’s Movement and Women Writers. ....	105
3.7. Alice Munro: Life and Literary Career. ....	107
3.7.1. Virginia Woolf's Influence on Munro: Between Admirer and Opponent.....	109
3.8. Text in Context.....	111
3.8.1. The life of Del Jordan as a Bildungsroman. ....	112
3.8.2. Feminist issues in the lives of Girls and Women. ....	113
3.8.3. Women Advocators in Positions of Subordinations.....	115
3.8.4. Elsepth and grace: Archetypes of Domesticity .....	115
3.8.5. A Customary Housewife .....	119
3.8.6. Miss Faris and her conviction in men's reliance .....	118
9. Rebellious Characters Fighting Against Repressive Social Norms. ....	118
3.10. Addie: A Proponent of Traditional Feminism.....	121

### **Chapter Three: Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival**

---

3.11. Del's Survival is Contingent on her Being a Rebellious, Alienated Female .....	124
3.12. Female Body as a Source of Power.....	127
3.13. Writing as a Means of Survival.....	130
3.14. Conclusion.....	135

## Chapter Three: Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival

---

*"Strengthen the female mind by enlarging it, and there will be an end to blind obedience". Mary Wollstonecraft*

### 3.1. Introduction

This chapter concerns the protagonist's revolt against a harshly unfair social canon aimed at relegating women to insignificant status. It demonstrates how Del Jordan is unique among female personalities by emphasizing her rebellious nature, which characterizes her as a "New Woman." Additionally, it demonstrates how some customary conventions obstruct the success of certain women, such as Naomi, the Aunties, Miss Farris, and Nile, and how others, such as Addie and Del are recognized as outsiders when they fight against the norms. Furthermore, this chapter discusses the distinction between old and modern feminism, which is apparent in the way the mother, Addie, and her daughter, Del, are portrayed.

### 3.2. North American Feminist Literature / Canadian Feminist Writing

In Canada, by analogy to the modern world, a revolution and a concern with feminism appeared with the arrival of such pillars as Margaret Atwood, Alice Munro and Margaret Laurence. Without a doubt, Atwood, Munro, and Laurence "*number among the most important post-1960's Canadian women writers*" (McWilliams 54). These are labelled as feminists for their concern with feminism and women's issues. The focal point about these feminist authors is their rejection of weakness and oppression imposed on women. By employing a conservative form to foreground the *Lives of Girls and Women* and the experiences of a young female artist, Munro, in an act of subversion, places the marginalized female voice at the center of the text. As feminist writers, they investigate the threats women are exposed to in a male-defined society and make available for them with the ways for



### Chapter Three: Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival

---

empowerment and eventually liberation. These Canadian writers aspire to introduce a change and put an end to the discrepancies in women's lives through literature. They are, as Neeru Tandon and Anshu Chandra argue

engaged in a struggle with language and inherited conventions to find more adequate ways of telling about women's experiences, fighting their way out of silence to project more authentic images of how women feel and what they do through their protagonists (6).

Considered as an important member of the literary commonwealth of English speaking nations, Canadian literature owes much to the literary traditions of England, France, and the United States. By the early nineteenth century, as Tandon and Mishra suggest, "*Canadian writing has endeavored to evolve its own voice which bears the hallmarks of assertion and strength*". Important figures of Canadian literature include Douglas Gordon Janes, Margaret Atwood, John Moss, Margaret Laurence, Alice Munro and many others (212).

Looking back, the late nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century in Canada appear to be a crucial turning point not only in political background, but in literature as well. In 1867, the nation commemorated its independence, "*an event which would not immediately transform literature but which would entirely change the political context within which colonial and subsequently Canadian writers wrote*" (Herbert 25).

Prior independence, Canada was subordinated not only to Britain but also to France. In actual fact, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Canadian literary history consisted of the narratives of French and English missionaries and traders who came to explore the land. The literature of New French, throughout the seventeenth century, as a

### Chapter Three: Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival

---

matter of fact illustrated the portrait of the Native American and of North America's tribes and confederations on a two-dimensional cultural graph despite the fact that

English Canada's Earliest imaginative literature was written in mid-eighteenth century Nova Scotia by English, Scottish and Irish emigrants and colonial officials, and their essays, journals and Augustan verse reveal a desire both to maintain British traditions and to value local culture (Hammill 5-6).

In conjunction with first-generation settler authors, two of the best known were the sisters Catharine Parr Traill and Susanna Moodie. In their numerous semi-autobiographical texts mainly *The Backwoods of Canada* (1836) and Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush* (1852), Traill and Moodie wrote down their absolute encounter with the land, their feelings of isolation, of being solitary and away from home, and above all, the wild, environmental character of the Canadian landscape. Both sisters stuck to their English identity and resisted influences from American culture.

The literary production of the period was clichéd, reproducing English and European models and "*the dominant literary forms were loosely raptorial in mode; journals, letters, chronicles, documentary records, all of them designed to send impressions from the edge of civilisation to an authority who stayed back home*" (Herbert 25). Still, most of the period's writings were monopolized by male figures as Archibald Lampman, George Vancouver, James Cook and Alexander Mackenzie just to name a few who tackled "military, political and religious matters" (Marcusse 4). As for women like Susan Moody, Catharine Traill and Ethel Wilson, literature concentrates on the confidential area having to do with their personal lives and emotions.

## Chapter Three: Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival

---

Conny Marcusse reveals that nineteenth century pioneer North American female writers "*focus much on the private sphere of home than on the public world*" (4). On the other hand, it should be acknowledged that the earliest Canadian novel written by Francis Brooke, *The History of Emily Montague*, in 1769, gets the most out of women's oppression at first and political issues in general. Brooke critiques female subjugation and demonizes the institution of marriage that trod their rights under feet. Truly enough, north American literature in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was categorized by its reliance on the English and French colonizers who made it very difficult to Canada to be a integrated country.

### 3.3. Emerging Feminisms and Suffrage, Late 1800s–1920s

One of the first observable instances of public opposition to segregation against women in Canada took place in 1869, when young Hannah Maria Norris from Canso, Nova Scotia, fought for her right to travel and serve as a missionary in Burma. When the male-dominated Baptist Foreign Mission Board rejected her application because of her gender, she organized with other women in Nova Scotia to back up her right to serve in the public area. After making use of substantial public weight on the board, Norris finally won this right. Norris' act personified the influential feature of first-wave feminism: the demand for public rights. This process headed for a public interest on the right to vote and to hold public office in Canada, rights that would take much longer to arrive at. The National Council of Women in Canada (NCWC) was first recognized in 1893, and it is still a significant women's pillar organization. In this varying political climate, lots of Canadian women writers chose to make use of their voices to help work for public amendment. Women in the late 1800s, such as Agnes Maule Macher, Mary Ann Shadd, Sui Sin Far (Edith Maude Eaton), E. Pauline Johnson, and Lucy Maude Montgomery, wrote to open up debate and interrupt normative ideas of gender, rather than solidify colonial and patriarchal values.

## Chapter Three: Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival

---

### 3.4. The Modern Woman and Modernist Masculinity, 1920s–1950s

The first waves of hope in true Canadian literature became visible in the start of the twentieth century and finally established after World War I as soon as Canadian literature made itself known and “*has gained more and more international recognition*” with the arrival of many talented writers like “Margaret Atwood, Michael Ondaatje, Rohinton Mistry, Alice Munro and Carol Shields” (Marcusse 3). The mid decades of the century were undeniably exceptional moments in which these writers not only campaigned for nationalism but were also involve with forging a body of literature that was with the sole purpose Canadian, safe and sound by external influences. Yet, what is important about this period is the supremacy of female voices in the Canadian writing. David Stouck observes that during the twentieth century “*large numbers of Canada's best writers have from the outset been women*” (227).

The early decades of the twentieth century saw an sudden increase of Modernist works of art and literature in Canada, with the first instance of Canadian literary modernism, Arthur Stringer’s *Open Water*, appearing in 1914.

Modernist masculinization was a by-product of the gender politics of the time. Male poets dominated Modernist poetics. On the other hand, innovative writing by Canadian women writers such as Dorothy Livesay, P. K. Page, Margaret Avison, Miriam Waddington, Anne Marriot, and Anne Wilkinson emerged from the same Modernist tradition (Moss and Sugars 3). Along this line of thought, modernism was a sign of an aesthetic, gendered, and generational cleavage inside Canadian literature.

### 3.5. 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Canadian Writers

### Chapter Three: Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival

---

Identifying with Canada's rise of nationalism, the female writers of the period developed an endeavor to attain independence from patriarchal subjugation. In this sense, the rise of Canadian nationalism leads to the birth of the feminist movement in the land, and a combination between the two, feminism and nationalism, was introduced in Canadian fiction. In this context Tandon writes

The marginal position of women in Canada corresponds to the marginality of Canada in the international horizon. It is the patriarchal civilization that defines woman as marginalized creature. Being herself marginalized, the Canadian women feel closer to the cultural milieu of Canada than the Canadian man. (212)

Thus far, twentieth century Canadian women writers noticed the absence of female literary production from the literary canon as suggested by Marcusse:

If Canadians and women wrote about themselves it was always from the margin, as the center were either the imperial powers France, England or the United States in the case of a Canadian discourse, or of the powerful, white patriarchy of the Western world in the case of woman-centered writing (195).

In view of that, Canadian female writers were firm to launch their own literary field by both refreshing the works of their pioneer precursors and bringing them into the literary surface one more for it was believed that *"the discovery of a female self is linked to the discovery of the historical reality of women. Without a sense of their history, both personal and public, women have no sense of self"* (Marcusse 22). Here then, Margaret Atwood's poetic sequence, *The Journals on Susan Moody* and Margaret Laurence picturing of Catherine

### Chapter Three: Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival

---

Parr Traill as a Canadian saint in her novel *The Diviners* are good examples of such experience (Harris 41).

Among the twentieth century female Canadian writers, Margaret Atwood, Alice Munro, and Margaret Laurence took the leadership. They are feminist writers interested in voicing female issues in addition to getting solutions to their imprisonment. They really devote their works to reflect the everlasting attempts of the female protagonists to transgress the borders of center-periphery relations. Their novels can be considered as cameras recording the protagonists' struggle to call attention to their own selves in a patriarchal society.

Atwood's "*Surfacing*", published in 1972 is her second novel. The latter provides a portrait of women's discomfort with the social conventions that affect both their personal and social lives. Christine Gomez suggests that in the novel, Atwood explores issues related to:

the politics of gender such as the enforced alienation of women under patriarchy, the delimiting definition of woman as a function, the patriarchy's attempt to annihilate the selfhood of women, the gradual carving out of female space by woman through various strategies and woman's quest for identity, self-definition and autonomy. (qtd. in Tandon and Chandra 19)

"*Surfacing*" tells the story of an unidentified woman going back to her childhood island in search of her missing father. Accompanied by her boyfriend and a married couple, David and Anna, the protagonist sets out on a physical journey that sooner becomes a journey into her own past, particularly its set aside demons and the way she has defeated them. In the course of the action, the frustrating treatment of women by the patriarchal society and the inner confusion in her personal life are brought to the surface. In fact, the text chronicles the protagonist's traumatic disorder associated with her own experience of abortion. Added to

### Chapter Three: Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival

---

this, men's violation of the fauna and the flora is exposed. As such, Atwood reflects a world that by the same token oppresses both women and nature.

*"Surfacing"* is a carbon copy of its times reflecting the concerns and the preoccupations associated with the feminist and ecological movements that emerged in the seventies. In view of the fact that it explores issues pertinent to feminism and environmentalism, Patrick Murphy allocates it as *"perhaps one of the first of the current generation of ecofeminist novels"* (qtd. in Hartmann 98). Similarly, in his ecofeminist oriented literary analysis, Arno Heller, in identifying the dominating issue of *"Surfacing"*, maintains that *"the victimization of women in a patriarchal society becomes a metaphor of the violation of nature through civilization"* (qtd. in Hartmann 98). In spite of everything, Nathalie Cooke reads *"Surfacing"* as Atwood's call for *"the preservation of the Canadian wilderness, together with a very accurate depiction of Canadian regional geography"* (53). Still, *"Surfacing"* is directed to fix women's sense of weakness and the nation's wounded identity. Carol Christ suggests that in *"Surfacing"*, the image of Canada victimized by Americans is a mirror of the protagonist's victimized by men" (43).

Without a doubt, the line of resemblance between the two, Canada and Canadian women lies in their status as "other". Atwood has incessantly drawn attention to Canada's status as a victim of American control, just as she has continually examined power relations between men and women, and women's inferior position in culture and society. Canada has been all together exposed to the manipulation of Americans who wanted to Americanize its culture and people. Following this, Canada's place, both economically and politically has been decreased within international sphere. It has been reduced into a trivial position both in the American continent and abroad. In accordance with this, the female figures in *"Surfacing"*,

### Chapter Three: Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival

---

given their status as women, like Canadian land itself, are expressively exploited and subjected to the masculine plundering and humiliation.

Margaret Atwood is very mindful of the inequalities and divergences between genders, classes and nationalities as it is obviously reproduced in both her writings and interviews. Despite the fact that she has rejected feminism overtly, she is regarded as an significant representative and contributor in the feminist project. In articulating female's never-ending struggle to find out the self and emerge anew, Atwood has strengthened second wave feminist discourses. if truth be told, one cannot ignore the feminist issues discussed in her novels. Fiona Tolan shows the strong affinities between Margaret's novels and Second wave feminism asserting:

Atwood has become known predominantly as a feminist writer because of her proven interest in feminist-identified issues. The association of women with nature (*Surfacing*), the political implications of costume (*Lady Oracle*), the expression of power relations in the body (*Bodily Harm*), and hysteria and madness (*Alias Grace*)- to name only a few are prominent feminist issues that have all been successfully mediated by Atwood's fiction. And yet, by refusing to accept what she considers to be an orthodox feminist position on each of these issues, Atwood declares herself disengaged from feminism. (285)

As the quotation reveals, feminist concerns like the female identity, the female body, the relationship between nature and women, and the passion for the Canadian wilderness plainly materialize in most of Atwood's writings alluded to above. Still, above all, Atwood takes advantage of female survival and empowerment. Most of her protagonists like Marian in *The*



### Chapter Three: Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival

---

*Edible Woman*, Joan in *Lady of Oracle*, Rennie in *Bodily Harm*, and Elaine in *Cat's Eye* endure psychological and patriarchal victimization by acknowledging the power within their selves.

Alice Munro portrays the female protagonist's endless attempts to confront society with all its constraints and challenges. Her female protagonists are powerful only "*when they change their ideas about the causes of their powerlessness, when they recognize the systemic forces that oppress them, and when they act to change the conditions of their lives* (Bookman and Sandra 4). In her writings, different issues as oppression, inequality, silence, empowerment, and suffering are brought to the surface. These females' authors have played a part in promoting and universalizing Canadian literature and successfully enhancing the feminist discourses. Tandon and Chandra write:

Women writers writing in Canada are committed to bring about remarkable changes in the lives of Canadian women and Canadian society. All contemporary women novelists present vision of alternate worlds that examine the multiple ironies of contemporary society and its cultural identity. They not only portray the barriers to women's power, individuality and autonomy but also attempt to surmount them through their narrative art. Their main concern is to explore the gender relationships (212).

Importantly enough, Canadian feminist writers do not display their female protagonists as feeble individuals, seeking suicide or escape due to their wretched lives but as powerful, conscious and intelligent women. They neither flee the social chains by committing suicide nor do they confine themselves to their conventional roles as mothers and wives, but they involve themselves in the social and artistic life of society. Interestingly, in most of their feminist works, the female protagonists go through deliberate alienation to look for for their

## **Chapter Three: Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival**

---

selves and reconsider their roles in society. In this context, alienation stands as a remedial strength as well as a way to get a sound hold on the self.

### **3.6. Women's Movement and Women Writers**

Feminist criticism itself set its development in the late 1960's as part of the international women's movement. Feminist criticism began in order to reveal how women readers, writers and critics bring different perceptions and expectations to their literary experience. It has been covered with the literary representation of sexual difference, the ways in which literary genres have been shaped by masculine or feminine values and the historical exclusion of the female voice from criticism and theory. Formerly, women writers (not just fiction writers) had been exceedingly set aside by most of the large publishing houses.

The Women's Movement brought about a fresh event - women as subject of study, and publishers began to sideline in the "women's book industry". The connection between women writers and the feminist movement has always been stressed. Women writers are fighting for innovative independence to protect themselves from accusations of "unfemininity" by renouncing more radical women.

Even though the range of organizations that voice the women's movement may have at several times set claim to some Canadian writers, the women who have written fiction declined any official declaration. Even though some women writers such as Jane Rule, Audrey Thomas, Margaret Laurence, Margaret Atwood, Marian Engel, Judith Van Herk and Mavis Gallant have at some time at least recognized the impacts of the Women's Movement on them as women and as writers as well. In an attempt to make sense of the distance between writers and movement, Atwood asserts that

### Chapter Three: Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival

---

Most writers old enough to have a career of any length behind them grew up when it was still assumed that a woman's place was in the home and nowhere else, and that anyone who took time off for an individual selfish activity like writing was either neurotic or wicked or both, derelict in her duties to a man, child, aged relatives or whoever else was supposed to justify her existence on earth. I've heard stories of writers so consumed by guilt over what they had been taught to feel was their abnormality that they did their writing at night, secretly so no one would accuse them of failing as housewives, as women. These writers accomplished what they did by themselves, often at great personal expense; in order to write at all, they had to defy other women's as well as men's ideas of what was proper, and it's not finally all that comforting to have a phalanx of women ... Being adopted is not the same thing as being born" (Atwood 257).

This may possibly give birth to a contradiction among these writers of 'socialist realism' and writing to conform to an ideology, which may put their creativity at stake. Overall, writing is a creative and an individual endeavor in keeping the writer out of the work force and far away from any discrimination that tends to endorse women's subordination. Along this line, Atwood claims

No good writer wants to be a transmitter of someone else's ideology, no matter how fine the ideology may be ... the aim of any political movement is to improve the quality of people's lives on all levels ... Imaginative writing, however, tends to concentrate more on life not as it ought to be, but as it is, as the writer feels it, experiences it. That is to say, Women can and do write effectively about women's experiences without any formal ties or active involvement with organizations (Atwood *Second Words* 203).

## Chapter Three: Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival

---

Atwood does not attempt to be a representative for a particular political movement; more willingly, she writes about the veracity of life.

### 3.7. Alice Munro: Life and Literary Career

Alice Munro is both a Canadian novelist and a short story writer who has put her name down within the Canadian literary canon. David Stouck claims that “*of the many women writers who emerged in the 1970s, Alice Munro has perhaps enjoyed most consistently a high degree of both popular and critical success*” (257). Munro has written more than a few short stories including *Dance of the Happy Shades* (1968), *The Progress of Love* (1986), *The Beggar Maid* (1978), *The Love of a Good Woman* (1998) and a single novel, *Lives of Girls and Women* (1971). Her literary works established her distinction and won her several awards like the Governor General’s Award, Canadian Booksellers Association Award, the Giller Prize in Canada and many other international prizes (Hooper xi).

Most of Munro’s writings revolve around influential female figures that rise up “against custom” (Shuman 1077). These female figures record the harsh life they lead with minute details, while questioning society’s clichés inflected on them. As such, one crucial aim of Alice Munro’s fiction is to suggest out of the ordinary plots to women’s traditional destiny. Munro habitually includes in her writing types of women who disregard society and engage in war against its oppressive rules. In this sense, Shuman brings to mind that “*Munro's early work, with its eager young women, embraces themes of initiation and innocence lost*” (1078).

Alice Munro states in *Riches of a Double Life*, “*I really grew up in the 19th century. The way lives were lived, their values, were very 19th century and things hadn’t changed for a long time*” (Edmariam 1). In the same line of thought, Munro and Laurence wrote at a period when “*Virginia Woolf's thesis that the female author has an uphill struggle in defying the*

### Chapter Three: Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival

---

*customary female position, which is manifestly historical and socially established, [was] a known one"* (Rasporich 11).

Still, most of Munro's stories are real life stories which take account of real life characters. Coral Howells claims that "*Munro works within the tradition of documentary realism, registering surface details of daily lives of the female figures and then disrupting those realistic conventions by shifts into fantasy*" (10). Her heroines mirror what Munro herself has experienced or lived as well as the hardships she has met in her career as a writer (Rasporich 23). Given this fact, Munro's works can be classified as autobiographical. Convincingly, the protagonist Del in "*Lives of Girls and Women*" best typifies this idea. Del lives in Ontario, Canada, and more or less had the same familial ties and artistic concerns as Munro's.

In terms of style and technique, in most of her stories, Munro utilizes a technique called "layering", a story encompassing two levels of meaning; one is surface and the other is deep. Since the beginning of her career, Alice Munro's preferred genre has been the short story. Munro admits that she prefers a story to have several layers of meaning so that her reader can think of something else rather than concentrating just on plot (Shuman 1078). Besides she is also known for the use of female folklore which refers to the stories told by women, recording their experiences and histories (Rasporich 99). Even though "*The Lives of Girls and Women*" was written like a novel, it is apparent that each chapter may be read alone. There is no need to read the earlier chapters in order to be pleased about "Princess Ida," for example, and each tale communicates a distinctive message. On the other hand, Gerald Lynch says, "*Lives of Girls and Women*" is a book. Munro has remarked, maybe a little too modestly, that this is her "*one effort at writing a book*" (215).

## Chapter Three: Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival

---

Munro is an absorbing and accomplished novelist. Beverly J. Rasporich describes Munro as "*an incredibly smart, erudite, and literary lady*" in her book *Dance of the Sexes*, adding that her commitment to writing began when she was 14 years old (3). Munro's work has received widespread recognition in Canada, as seen by the many prizes she has received. Her "*superb sense of craft*" has earned her three Governor General's Literary Awards, Canada's highest honor, as well as the PEN/Malamud Award for Short Fiction Excellence (Croft 15).

### 3.7.1. Virginia Woolf's Influence on Munro: Between Admirer and Opponent

Alice Munro attended Western Ontario University, where she wrote and published her first short stories. She is the mother of three daughters and has been married twice. She has devoted a large amount of her life to writing and teaching, as well as following her hobbies and interests. It's worth noting that as a burgeoning author, she was deeply influenced by D. H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, and many other writers. Alice Munro brings to mind reading "*all the books by and about... the Bloomsbury circle*" with a companion (qtd. in Rasporich 9). This influence is apparent in her narratives, which include "*Lives of Girls and Women*". Munro's work has received widespread recognition in Canada, as seen by her numerous awards. Regardless of her admiration for Woolf's work, she did not adhere to her ideal of a lonely, autonomous writer with no personal life or duties.

Alice Munro is a positive mother and wife who has in no way considered renouncing any of her obligations. In spite of the well-known argument put up and pushed by Woolf, she never gave up that aspect of her life. Alice Munro utilized this time period to further her creative career. She makes the most of her expertise by improving her heroines. Del Jordan "*inherited*" such thoughts and ideals, which endears her to readers as authentic, genuine, and accessible. Rasporich argues that Munro's "*answer to the artist-as-female conundrum was rather naturally and courageously to become the female-as-artist,*" and as an interpreter and

### Chapter Three: Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival

---

bewildering critic of the roles of women and standards of sexual behavior she knew and experienced, she gained notoriety in literary circles (11). Munro acknowledges,

I'm lot more sensitive of people and human interactions now than I was when I was younger, and I want the best for my children and marriage. I get the impression that I want these things with a considerably more intentional, contemplative aim than I did as a teenager. The devout, young mother acted as a front for a very strong desire-a type of writer's monomania. (qtd.in. in Rasporich 3)

Alice Munro reinforces her views on the relevance and worth of women as writers and as human beings in *"Lives of Girls and Women"*. Throughout her life, Alice Munro has established a far larger network of followers and fans. She is a very accomplished and renowned author. Her tales have always annoyed the reviewers' interest. Munro's editor, Charles McGrath, agrees that she *"is evidence that certain individuals – not many – have a genius for the short story and the book,"* and adds that *"she creates novels in tiny"* (qtd. in Awano 99).

Walter James Miller, a poet and critic who admires Munro's writing, concurs that she is *"a master at capturing how the mind works, how we arrive at truths by unexpected roads"* (qtd. in Awano 102). Munro's stories illuminate the strange and fascinating environment that surrounds us, and her work compels readers' imaginations to pause and attempt to fathom the intricate ways of existence. One such example is her attitude toward sex. Her stories on apparently strange ways of feeling or acting calm readers by illustrating that the ideas that many of us are fearful to discuss do not seem to be that unusual. In *"Lives of Girls and Women"*, Alice Munro reaffirms her views on the relevance and worth of women as writers and as human beings.

## Chapter Three: Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival

---

All the way through her life, Alice Munro has gathered a significantly widespread network of followers and of those who appreciate her work. She is a prolific and well-known novelist. Reviewers have always been fascinated by her stories. Alice Munro depicts *"ordinary events in exceptional ways... and she is largely acknowledged as a great short story writer whose power stems from her ability to depict the texture of daily life with both compassion and unflinching clarity"* and is generally regarded as a remarkable short story writer whose strength stems from her ability to depict the texture of daily life with both compassion and unflinching clarity.

Alice Munro's writing is profoundly influenced by what she has experienced, learned, or simply comprehends about life; as she confesses, the protagonists of her stories are close to her, in some ways "real," since they mirror "aspects" of her character (Rasporich 23). Numerous persons, events, and perspectives on life that Munro has amassed throughout the years have formed the bedrock of *Girls and Women's Lives*. In line with Neil Besner, the novel is *"the most thorough and complex exploration of the maturation of a little girl's life, imagination, and imaginative life"* in existing Canadian fiction (13). Accordingly, this book will be the chapter's primary emphasis.

### 3.8. Text in Context

Munro's *"Lives of Girls and Women"* is set in Ontario during the fifties. It narrates the coming of age story of a female heroine named Del Jordan, recording her experiences and the transformations she has undergone as she grows from childhood to adulthood. The whole story revolves around the protagonist's search for her identity as a woman in male-dominated society. Meanwhile, it brings into light the various exploitative forms inflected on women within the social textile. Del's story starts in childhood, moves through a troubled



### Chapter Three: Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival

---

adolescence, and finishes as she is perched on the margin of womanhood. In the process of maturation from girlhood to adulthood and eventually to womanhood, Del Jordan encounters some realities about society, religion, women, love, sex, body, and death. Del resists to attain a self-definition that rejects conventional her artistic vision. Del's process of self-definition is constantly challenged by the concept of gender widespread in her culture. In support of this, Helene Cixous argues that the criteria for, and distinction between, masculinity and femininity are the outcome of patriarchal beliefs.

The story, also, touches upon the lives of other female characters like Addie, Naomi, Del's aunties, Grace and Elspeth, Miss Farris, Nile, and Madeleine who, generally, in a way or another, contribute in Del's understanding of her own self and her social milieu. Munro surrounds the protagonist with these female characters that help her in viewing life with a critical eye. In this view, Diana Brydon notes that *"the female hero does not separate herself from others to achieve maturation. Instead, she defines herself in relation to others"* (qtd. in Lozinka 2). Actually, Munro has opted for a bildungsroman for the reason that *"it is a common ground for theories and ideologies for marginalized groups such as women"* (Kern 5). In the world of *"Lives of Girls and Women"*, the protagonist overcomes hard obstacles and succeeds in emerging as a powerful and a mature being in the passage to self-realization.

#### 3.8.1. The life of Del Jordan as a Bildungsroman

This chapter requires consideration of the Bildungsroman idea, since it focuses on the protagonist's inner development and change as she strives to become a confident woman. in accordance with Hugh Holman's A Handbook of Literature, "the Bildungsroman is identical with the apprenticeship novel *"recounts the adolescence and early adulthood of a sensitive protagonist who is seeking to comprehend the nature of the universe, its purpose and pattern,*

### Chapter Three: Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival

---

*and to develop a life philosophy and 'the art of living'" (33). The focal point of these books is the protagonist's mental and character growth as he or she grows from infancy through various experiences to adulthood and knowledge of one's identity and position in the world. M. H. Abrams says the word "Bildungsroman" refers to a "novel of formation," while "Erziehungsroman" denotes an "educational book" (119-20). According to Abrams, the Künstlerroman is a "significant subgenre" of this genre, reflecting "a writer or other artist maturing into the stage of consciousness of creative destiny and mastery of artistic skill" (120). According to Holman's description of the Künstlerroman, *the protagonist's efforts "from childhood to maturity" are directed "both against an inhospitable environment and inside himself toward knowledge of his creative calling"* (241-42). The factors that influence women's Bildung, or growth and development, are crucial for feminism.*

#### 3.8.2. Feminist Issues in the lives of Girls and Women

As in most of her short stories, in *"Lives of Girls and Women"*, Munro explores feminist issues such as quest, maturation, empowerment and survival. The novel mirrors the intolerable influence of social stereotypes inflicted on women and provides alternative ways to break the social and cultural chains. It portrays Del Jordan as she violates and ultimately breaks free from the oppressive societal rules positioning women within the margin.

Interestingly, studies on gender stereotypes have often emphasized the differences between male and female spheres. Barbara and Castellano Turner assert that men and women are seen as different *"in personality traits, in physical characteristics, in interests, in occupational roles and status levels, and in many other ways"* (95). Indeed, awareness of these differences on the part of Munro's characters influences their carriers and many decisions about their lives. In this view then, women are not naturally inferior but society, with its dividing rules, add up to their inferiority. In this context, Simone De Beauvoir writes

### Chapter Three: Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival

---

One is not born a woman but rather becomes, a woman. No biological, or economical fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilization as whole that produces this creature...only the intervention of someone else can establish a n individual as another... the child would hardly think of himself as sexually differentiate. (The Second Sex 267)

The analysis of this chapter focuses on Del Jordan's choice to confront society and cope with all the challenges that it offers. She opts for rebellion as a way to maturation, identity formation and ultimately liberation. Del also willingly alienates herself from her lover, Garnet French, as well as her community to reach self-understanding and empowerment. In the figure of Jerry Storey, Munro reveals the behaviors. Jerry, Del says, *"was what he seemed"* (LGW 166). Del inserts that there was *"something admirable, an odd, harsh grace about the way he conformed to type, accepting his role in Jubilee, his crucial and [rewarding] absurdity, with a fatalism, even gallantry"* (LGW166). Del, on the other hand, says that her *"natural boundaries were so much more ambiguous"* (LGW166). Yet, regardless of the freedom that multiplicity and ambiguity provide, Del senses something quiet about being able to conform to type.

Munro populates her narrative with many female figures. She has shown them dividing into two sects; weak and powerful. The weak category strictly follows the rules that society dictates word by word and fall prey to its obedient constrictions. In doing so, they contribute to their status as 'other'. These comprise Ruth McQueen, Del's Aunties and Naomi. For some of them, instead of rebelling against society, they resort to suicide as a way out of enslavement and oppression as did Miss Farris when she is no longer able to valorize society's wish against her own as an artist.

## Chapter Three: Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival

---

### 3.8.3. Women Advocators in Positions of Subordination

To begin with, Ruth McQueen is an incarnation of the jailed submissive woman who is *“bound by the local code of social behaviour”* (Li and Qu103). Her life is shaped by false societal assumptions including *“piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity”* (Welter 152). acting in response to Jubilee society's announcements, obliging that going to school and *“reading books was something like chewing gum, a habit to be abandoned when the seriousness and satisfactions of adult life took over”* (LGW153). In actual fact, Ruth turns down the scholarship she has been offered at school for she is *“afraid to stick her head out of her own burrow”* (LGW48). Her act is stemmed from her fear of being laughed at and criticized by society for her hypothetical failure. In doing so, Ruth participates in the approval of Jubilee society's unfair codes which compel people *“turning down things that were offered, marriage, positions, opportunities, and money”* (LGW48).

### 3.8.4. Elspeth and grace: Archetypes of Domesticity

Del's aunties named Elspeth and Grace are no exception. They are old female archetypes who represent the domestic sphere through busying themselves with traditional chores as *“marathons of floor scrubbing, cucumber hoeing, potato digging, bean and tomato picking, canning, pickling, washing, starching, sprinkling, ironing, waxing, baking”* (LGW40). They confirm the assumption that *the “world is cloven into male world and female spheres, and never the twain shall meet”* (Hooper 21). For them, *“between men's work and women's work was the clearest line drawn, and any stepping over this line, any suggestion of stepping over it, they would meet with such light, amazed, regretfully superior laughter”* (LGW40).

As accepted female figures, Elspeth and Grace accept as true that their functions and roles in society are confined to take care of children and surrender to *“the phallic pride of men”* (Gaur 85). They persistently praise their brother Craig and believe in whatever he chooses to

### Chapter Three: Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival

---

do. They count his achievement and raise him into matters to be venerated: *"He could have been elected to the legislature. He could have been in the cabinet, if he'd wanted"* (LGW47). When Craig dies, the aunties become hopeless and lose the sense of living simply because *"they no longer had a man with them, to nourish and admire"* (LGW77). Grace and Elspeth look content with their decision and attempt to defend it by teaching that married women should be sympathized with more than unmarried women.

Del Jordan almost immediately discovers in the story, as Rasporich depicts, that underneath Grace and Elspeth's girlish innocence... an undercurrent of aggressive hostility exists. Although the spinsters pretend to embrace their genteel and modest position, their jokes and talk point to *"tiny razor cuts"* of hatred and may be fatal purpose. (LGW53) their lives have changed and become meaningless in the aftermath of their brother's death. Nile, the wife of Addie's brother, is another female figure that shaped Del's life. She is not similar to the other ladies mentioned before. She may be called the novel's femme fatale, since she is the only woman capable of exploiting men without being as evil as Madeleine.

Elspeth and Grace are constantly in conflict with all the women opposing societal rules. In one of the cases, they revolt against Del's mother and criticize her for her intellectual pursuits. They are neither satisfied with her thoughts nor with her housekeeping. They welcome whatever Addie has to say with *"little stunned smiles"* (LGW45) and when they come over to her house *"They would bend over the pans, scraping, scraping off every last bit of black that had accumulated since the last time they visited here"* (LGW45).

#### 3.8.5. A Customary Housewife

Further, like Ruth and the aunties, Nile, Uncle Bill's second wife, is also a typical housewife. She is described in the text as a good-looking doll that shows *"some extreme of*

### Chapter Three: Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival

---

*feminine decorativeness, and perfect artificiality*" (LGW 110). She desires, as Betty Friedan remarks, "*no greater destiny than to glory in [her] own femininity*" (15). Given her sexual attraction, Rasporich describes her as "*a striking example of the siren and a tempting invitation to Del to the female life of sexual desirability and possible conquest*" (47). In the characterization of Nile, Munro gives us a model of a typical feminine woman whose care of beauty outshines other qualities that a woman may possess.

#### 3.8.6. Miss Faris' Conviction in Men's Reliance

Another passive female character in "*Lives of Girls and Women*" is Miss Farris, a wretched music teacher, "*in charge of the operetta*" (LGW 156). Miss Farris is an artist interested in music and theatre, a field which is not estimated by Jubilee society and at which they relentlessly "laugh"(LGW 158). In reality, she is also a figure of isolation and a subject for gossip among women and children. Throughout the theatrical performances, Miss Farris wears a "*dark velvet costume... trimmed with white fur...The skirt was short and full, lined with pale blue taffeta, and she wore white dancer's tights*" (LGW 158).

The description of her house further emphasizes her clown-like character. Her house is revealed in Munro's description as doll-like house, "*houses which set out to be charming, whimsical, which looked as if they were designed for play, not life*" (LGW 165). Like Ruth and the aunties, Farris believes on her reliance on man. Putting on "*two spots of rouge and a rash, smiling line of lipstick*" (LGW158), she tries "*to catch a man*" (LGW 158) with whom to share her life, but she fails. Mocking the value of the meaningful musical art Farris admires, together with her singlehood state, thrown in an hardhearted world full of gossip, Farris's only exit is suicide. She is "*drowned in the Wawanash River*" (LGW 180).

Ruth, the aunties, Nile, and Miss Farris are examples of typical housewives. For them "*truly feminine women*" as Betty Friedan suggests, "*do not want careers, higher education,*

### Chapter Three: Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival

---

*and political rights*” (16), but want to be perfect wives and good mothers. In her book, *“Feminine Mystique”*, Friedan has described the situation of women in the post-world war years. She stresses the fact that men and society, in general, idealize and worship the image of woman femininity, what she calls the “Feminine Mystique.” According to her, women have been promoted to detain themselves to the narrow function of housewives and mothers, repudiating school, education and intellectual thought in the process. She writes:

Their only dream was to be perfect wives and mothers; their highest ambition to have five children and a beautiful house, their only fight to get and keep their husbands. They had no thought for the unfeminine problems of the world outside the home; they wanted the men to make the major decisions. They glorified in their role as women, and wrote proudly on the census blank: occupation: housewife. (18)

#### 3.9. Rebellious Characters Fighting Against Repressive Social Norms

To the extent that the second category is concerned, it represents the rebellious women who stand in the face of society’s oppressive rules. They chose to be different by articulating their demands and wishes. These include the mother Addie and the daughter Del. Though using different strategies, both Addie and Del, as Munro has shown them, are rebellious.

Addie, right from the start, celebrates and even shows affinities with what Brenda Pfaus calls “the garrison” (LGW49), the structured world of knowledge, rationality and intellectuality, that is lucidly intact by emotions and feelings. Her walk to town represents her hopeless struggle to be and even commemorate “the garrison.” Del, on the other hand, moves to and fro between the world of the “garrison” and the “other country”, a space occupied by “various eccentric, bootleggers, and idiots” (Pfaus 49). Del, as Anita Loos suggests, is “*sweetly erotic and enthralled by books*” (334).

### Chapter Three: Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival

---

Despite the differences in their characterization and their tendencies, their rebellious spirit unites them more than it divides them. Addie, as a mother and also as older and more experienced figure, has been very influential on Del and her thought. The mother, Addie, in *“Lives of Girls and Women”* stands for old fashion feminism, and her rebellion, in a sense, is academic and rational as it implies intellectual reforms, political demands and disregards desire and emotions (Rasporich 111). Her world is of *“serious skeptical questions, endless but somehow disregarded housework, lumps in the mashed potatoes, and unsettling ideas”* (46). Given her unstable childhood and her mother's religious fanaticism bent on insanity, together with her brother's cruelty toward her, Addie develops liberal attitudes and intellectual pursuits; *“Knowledge was not chilly to her, no; it was warm and lovely”* (LGW83).

As a young girl, Addie has developed a strong passion for learning. She wants to further her studies in high school at town, yet her father *“said no, she was to stay home and keep house until she got married”* (LGW99). Following this, Addie runs away from home to make her wish for education and learning come true. Given her rebellious spirit, Addie *“defied her father, she walked a distance of nine miles to town, hiding in the bushes”* (LGW99) and she has *“cleaned chamber pots to get [her] education”* (LGW100).

The chapter entitled “Princess Ida,” in the novel, allows us to usher into Addie's world and follow her concerns as well as her thought as a feminist. Her daughter, Del, records that Addie no longer is able to put up with the abjected world of the Flats Road abounding with *“sexually looseness, dirty language, haphazard lives, contended ignorance”* (LGW10) and described in a compilation of newspapers as follows:

*Father feeds twin daughters to Hogs*

*Women gives birth to human monkey*



### Chapter Three: Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival

---

*Virgin raped on cross by crazed monkeys*

*Sends husbands' torso by mail. (LGW6)*

As such, Addie moves to the town of Jubilee with her daughter, Del. As soon as she has reached the town *"a sense of relief and new sense of consequence flowed from her"*(LGW9). It should be noted that Addie's parting with her family is, in a sense, only one of its kind. Her decision is characteristic of her rebellious spirit and her repudiation of her dependency on father and husband. In Jubilee, Addie works as an encyclopedia's seller. She writes letters to newspapers editors signing them with the name of *"Princess Ida, taken from a character in Tennyson whom she admired"* (LGW104).

In this respect, Margaret Harris argues that Mrs Jordan using the name and even quoting from Tennyson *"speculates about the old order yielding place to a new one in which among other evolutionary advances women have become less subservient"* (LGW101). It is worth noting that Tennyson's poem ends with the princess Ida giving up her project for building a school when she falls in love (Cox11). Yet, Addie in *"Lives of Girls and Women"* does not follow the same path as Tennyson's heroine who has never succumbed to her emotion and the societal rules of the Flats Road.

Given her thought and her preoccupation with knowledge and rational reforms, Addie is marginalized by society, her family and her relatives (the aunts). She is subjected to harsh criticism by her daughter and the aunts. Del, noticing the *"weight of her mother's eccentricities, of something absurd and embarrassing about her"* (LGW81) betrays Addie among her aunts and hates her for her intellectual ideas.

Likewise, Elspeth and Grace do not miss an opportunity to mock Addie and describe her as a bad, neglected mother. Del narrates that the aunts *"might continue [thoughtfully],*

## Chapter Three: Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival

---

*examining the sleeve of my house*"(LGW81), and would "move in and out around her, retreating and disappearing and coming back" (LGW46).

### 3.10. Addie as a Proponent of Traditional Feminism

Addie Morrison's tale does not have a glad ending. After escaping her family, she left a poor childhood and went out to establish an independent life for herself. Unfortunately for her, she was a failure, and despite her dreams, she married Mr. Jordan and returned to her home nation when their marriage failed. Mrs. Jordan chose to pursue pleasure and knowledge abroad when she became dissatisfied with her living on Flats Road. Her profession as a sales representative for an encyclopedia has convinced her that she can at last make a difference in the world. Mrs. Jordan is described in Xiaoxi Li and Caie Qu's book as follows "*The Understanding of Metaphors in the Lives of Girls and Women*": she sends letters to newspaper editors, including one to a city daily.

To pay homage to Tennyson's royal heroine in the poem "The Princess," she titles her letters "Princess Ida." Addie, who aspires to rationality, independence, and mobility, is offended by traditionalists. The author portrays her as a victim of a male-dominated rural society" (LGW102) this is a one-way street. Mrs. Jordan wishes for a change in her daughter's circumstances in order to improve her own. Addie wants Del to get the scholarship with the purpose of continuing her education and support herself. What is obvious is that Del disapproves of her mother, as seen by her recurrent inconsistencies, humiliation, and efforts at quarrel.

There are additional aspects of Del's recollections of her childhood that she doubts, such as the abuse her brother endured and their mother's obsessive religious views. As Cinda Gault argues in her essay "*The Two Addies: Maternity and Language in William Faulkner's As I Lay Dying and Alice Munro's Lives of Girls and Women*," Del will inevitably become like her

### Chapter Three: Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival

---

mother, regardless of how hard she resists. She inherited her mother's passion for language and words, but that was less important. In reality she took advantage of on her mother's obsession with language as well as describes her personal teenager revolt versus her mother in linguistic lexis in place of expressions of substance" (Gualt 453-454).

Mrs. Jordan, as an "old-feminist," lacks an admiration for the joys of one's own body and sexuality in general. Del regards her intellectually and romantically oriented mother as a failure, according to Sue Thomas (111). Del hopes to break away from her mother's destiny and to avoid *developing "attitudes that promote all forms of knowledge while rejecting sexual experience"* (Eldredge).

As a sensible feminist, Addie not only turns her back on the romance but also views the presence of a man in the life of a woman as harmful. She talks about physical passion in language that implies corruption and "contamination" of the intellect using such words as "nonsense...dirty mindedness", to refer to "romance" and "sex" (LGW192). Yet, Addie always warns her daughter to give attention to studies and throw away men if she wishes to live a better and fuller life. She tells her *"use your brains. Don't be distracted, over a man; your life will never be your own. You will get the burden, woman always does"* (LGW230). When Del asks her mother about the way she loves her father hoping to hear a satisfying answer, Addie would claim *"your father was always a gentleman"* (LGW102). By the use of such answer, Del understands that her mother has divorced everything that has to do with love and emotions for the sake of knowledge.

Having to do with feminist matters, Addie manages parties aiming to instruct women in Jubilee and push them to the intellectual area. *"The party was all planned in advance. As soon as the ladies came into beans in a jar, writing their guess on a slip of paper. The evening*

### Chapter Three: Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival

---

*proceeded with guessing games, quizzes made up with the help of the encyclopedia”* (LGW92).

In the letters she writes to the local paper and authorities, Addie, as previous feminist representative, voices and promotes women rights and opposes required religious education (Cox 9). She endlessly includes topics such as birth control as a way to extend awareness among women. She has written to the jubilee Herald-advance that “*prophylactic devises should be distributed to all women on public relief in Wawanash county, to help them prevent any further increase in their families*” (LGW230).

Still, fundamental to Addie's ideas as a feminist is her anger of the imprisonment of women's role into housewives and mothers. She turns away from society's idealization of women's “femininity” and the celebration of the sexual life at the expense of the intellectual life. She believes that women should make their destinies and fight for their rights. Without a doubt, she foresees the change that would take place within gender relations if women fight for their rights. She observes:

There is a change coming I think in the lives of girls and women. Yes but it is up to us to make it come. All women have had up till now has been their connection with men. All we have had. No more lives of our own, really, than domestic animals. He shall hold thee, when his passion shall have spent its novel force, a little closer than his dog, a little dearer than his horse. Tennyson wrote that. It's true. Was true. You will want to have children, though (LGW230)

## Chapter Three: Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival

---

Unfortunately, Addie fails to affect drastic changes owing to the lack of awareness and concern with education among women in Jubilee society and also because of the elitist position of the feminist group for which Addie works. Del narrates that:

Nobody could have any opinions, it appeared, but the Combers; the Combers knew more, they had seen Greece, they had attended lectures by H. G. Wells, they were always right. Mrs. Comber had a disagreement and Mrs. Comber brought up the fact that my mother had not gone to university and only to a-- my mother imitated her accent-- backwoods high school. (LGW94)

Addie believes that Del, and women on the whole, will get hold of the key to success and freedom through studies and team spirit. Intellectual thought may bring about change in the lives of girls and women. Yet, to achieve it, women need first of all to change their own selves, so that other changes will be easily put into action afterwards.

Munro's presentation of the relation between Del and her mother is symbolic of generational clash. This manifests subjects of sexuality, academic and social life. Del's life obviously shows a wider scope of freedom in comparison with that of her mother and other women in Jubilee. Fascinatingly, it is the narrow archetypal 19<sup>th</sup> century's modal of submissive housewife that Del tries to get rid of and as a result look forward to the twentieth century liberal along with rebellious female character of the second wave feminism.

### 3.11. Del's Dependent Survival

Del Jordan is a unique female character who adapts rebellion as her language of struggle against society's clichés. Through Del, as Anita Loos Argues, "*Alice Munro reprises the*

### Chapter Three: Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival

---

*emergent self-reliance of 1940's girl*" (LGW335). Going ahead into a inquisitive journey set in contrast with her rationalist mother, Del passes through numerous adventures that enlightened several things in her life as a woman. Del is trapped between the intellectual rigidity of her mother, Addie, and the rigorous feminine enthusiasm of Naomi.

It should be noted that the conflict between these contradictory dichotomies; reason and passion is very old. In gender understanding, a man stands for mind and reason, while a woman stands for passion and feeling. Rasporich argues that "*Man has traditionally been interpreted as the controlling head, woman the submissive and seductive heart; he, the I, the person; she, the sexual It*" (47). The protagonist Del in the novel is fully aware of this dialectic conflict between the two realms and her journey toward maturation required from her to experience both the two realms and discover what is special about each.

In one instance in the novel, Del expresses her inclination toward intellectual thought while reading an article whose author was a "*famous New York psychiatrist, a disciple of Freud*"(LGW235). The article reads as follows:

The difference between the male and female modes of thought was easily illustrated by the thoughts of a boy and girl, sitting on a park bench, looking at the full moon. The boy thinks of the universe, its immensity and mystery; the girl thinks "I must wash my hair." When I read this I was frantically upset; I had to put the magazine down. It was clear to me at once that I was not thinking as the girl thought; the full moon would never as long as I lived remind me to wash my hair. (LGW 235)

In the above quotation, Del sees the acclaimed difference between male and female thought as a patriarchal offensive. As such, Del responds "*I wanted men to love me, and I wanted to think of the universe when I looked at the moon*" (LGW 236).

### Chapter Three: Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival

---

Del is, on the other hand, also aware of the societal rules that imprison women into the domains of domesticity and femininity. She has experienced her mother's subjection to harsh criticism and marginalization as a consequence of her intellectual thought and she is aware that being a female in a male-dominated society means scarifying everything that has to do with the masculine field. At the beginning of her journey toward feminine identification, Del hides her talented tendencies for writing to live up to society's expectations. In this respect, Gisela Labouvie-vief comments:

In identifying herself as feminine, the woman does need to learn to surrender those attributes that are culturally labelled as "masculine, including her claim to knowledge and achievement. Interpersonally, and culturally, becoming feminine requires that a woman renounces her sense of agency and consciousness. Part of the self-- the creator, thinker, questor- is experienced as monstrous, as outside of the self, and the woman attempts to cut it off from awareness altogether, to banish it into the unconscious. Indeed, she learns to feel a profound sense of shame of her competence. Instead she realizes herself as sweet, beautiful, and caring, while her agency is projected onto the man. (154)

Del's journey follows her rebellious spirit in relation to three different facades; her mother, Naomi and the social rules. In the vanguard, Del's rejection of her mother's advice concerning women's predicament which is based on the view that *"being female made you damageable, that a certain amount of carefulness and solemn fuss and self-protection were called for"* (LGW231). Del's answer reads differently from what her mother thinks, suggesting that *"whereas men were supposed to be able to go out and take on all kinds of experiences*

### Chapter Three: Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival

---

*and shuck of what they didn't want and come back proud. Without even thinking about it, I had decided to do the same"* (LGW 231).

Del discovers that her mother's "*commitment to a public identity, in her role as letter-writer, contrasts with [her own] immersion in private passions*" (Cox9-10). For this Del suggests "*I did not want to be like my mother, with her virginal brusqueness, her innocence, I wanted men to love me*" (LGW 236).

Naomi, Del's friend stands for the most obtainable means by means of which Del has ushered the world of men and its experience of love and sexuality. Naomi represents the world of passion, sexuality that is one way or another new to Del at that phase from her life. To comply with their inner need and to discover the truth about the female's body, and sexuality, Naomi and Del spend most of their time in the library reading popular romantic fiction, and discussing topics related to pregnancy, and the relationship between men and women.

Eventually, Naomi serves as a means for highlighting a woman who prioritizes her family's needs above her own personal growth and professional objectives. Unlike Del, Naomi philosophically accepts her condition, but a part of her thinks she has been misled, and she urges Del to be careful of guys (Macdonald). Del faces social pressure to adopt and embrace the position society has given her; luckily for her, she takes another route.

#### **3.12. Female Body as a Source of Power**

Against society's conception of the female body as a shame, Del uses it as a means to confront the negative association hinged on it. Actually, several women feel the burden that their bodies carry and view it with fear and sometimes hatred. Brooks Bouson argues "*women are conditioned to feel deep body shame and self-hatred and to view the uncontainable,*



### Chapter Three: Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival

---

*uncontrollable female body with fear and loathing*" (5). Del, through adventurous relationships with men, explores her body and uses it, as Barbara Godard asserts "*a subject of [her] desires, not as object of men's desires*" (qtd. in Lesk 1).

As a teenager, Del is conscious of her desire for a romantic partner in order to back up her sense of self as a female. In the process, she is attracted to Mr. Chamberlain hoping that he will provide her a definite experience of her own femininity. Del makes Chamberlain feel that she is under his control to reveal the secrets that her body hides. Smaro Kamboureli qualifies Del's strong desire to decipher her body as "*an affirmative deconstruction of her culture; what the body loses is regained as an awareness of the feminine self*" (38).

Given her liberal spirit and her extreme difference from the other traditional passive women, Del can be said to stand for the latest type of woman who emerged with the feminist movement of the nineteen sixties. Characteristics of this new woman comprise consciousness, confidence, and even aggressiveness (Harvey and Birkett 40). As a way to liberate herself, Del moved away from the traditional taboos and customs and built her personal way of living alone. Instead of living on the edging of society, she holds the center and disposes from her position as an inferior and other.

Del does not only rebel against her mother and society's rules by experiencing relationships with men but she also proves her uniqueness and her voice as a powerful woman. This is obvious in the chapter entitled "*Heirs of the living body*," where Del defies the authority and validity of her uncle's region's history, which in its entirety focuses on daily life activities without any references to the lives of women, describing it as something "*dead, heavy and useless*" (LGW79). Del claims "*I did not want uncle Craig's manuscript put back with the things I had written. It seemed so dead to me, so heavy and dull and useless, that I thought it might deaden my things to and bring me bad luck*" (LGW79).

### Chapter Three: Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival

---

Yet, she gives herself the space to write that history from a feminist point of view. She wants to revolutionize the primitive view, as Simone De Beauvoir suggests, that “*society has always been male; political power has always belonged to men*” (79). In this view then, Del Jordan realizes that women have always been voiceless even in the corpuses written by men. As a result, her act is an attempt to impose female voices and externalize them publicly.

Against society’s strict rules defining women’s relationship with men within the institution of marriage, after breaking with Mr. Chamberlain, Del starts a romantic relationship with Garnet French, a man “*who wants to become a Baptist minister*” (LGW282) and whom Del meets in “*in a revival meeting in the town hall*” (LGW273). Yet even with Garnet, Del has been rebellious. Garnet, showing his power, attempts to christen Del, as a crucial step for marriage. Yet, Del forces him away and rejects to be confined into his world. Her struggle with Garnet under water indicates her determination to refuse imprisonment in the world of patriarchal social conventions. She confesses:

[H]e pushed me down again but this time I was expecting it. I held my breath and fought him. I fought strongly and naturally, as anybody does, held down in the water, and without thinking much about who was holding me. But when he let me come up just long enough to hear him say “now say you’ll do it” I saw his face streaming with water I had splashed over him and I felt amazement, not that I was fighting with Garnet but that anybody could have made such a mistake, to think he had real power over me. I was too amazed to be angry, I forgot to be frightened, it seemed to me impossible that he should not understand that all the powers I granted him were in play, that he himself was—in play, that I meant to keep him sewed up in his golden lover’s skin forever. (LGW342-43)

## Chapter Three: Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival

---

When Del breaks her relationship with Garnet, she does not stand waiting and mourning his departure as did the heroine in Tennyson's poem "Mariana" which she considers as the "*silliest poem [She] had ever read*" (LGW374). Del learns to live alone, without depending on male's assistance, drawing her own way.

### 3.13. Writing as a Means of Survival

After having gone through several experiences, Del reaches a kind of self-maturation. She in the end was able to figure out the difference between the world her friend Naomi wants her to experience and the world her mother encourages her to follow. She discovers that the two worlds are completely different and give different results.

Del rejects Naomi's option of putting herself on the road to marriage and acknowledges her empathy with her mother saying that "*I myself was not so different from my mother, but concealed it, knowing what dangers there were*" (LGW104). Finally, she chooses the road to intellectual life as she discovers her lack of ability to balance between both the life of emotion and the life of intellectuality. Del remarks that "*time came when all the books in the library in the Town hall were not enough for me; I had to have my own. I saw that the only thing to do with my life was to write a novel*" (LGW350).

The closing chapter of "*Lives of Girls and Women*", in particular, imparts a wealth of information about Del's artistic self. Del's own novel, which she wrote during her friendship with Jerry Storey, is incorporated into "The photographer", but she has not recorded it. Caroline Halloway, a Jubilee resident, is the novel's protagonist. Her role model was Marion Sheriff, a local tennis player who committed suicide.

### Chapter Three: Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival

---

Del is forced to create her own version of her mysterious drowning through words and language, as she is unable to comprehend or accept the explanations. Caroline is a woman who is not afraid to appease her sexual desires throughout Del's novel. Munro surrounds Del in "*Lives of Girls and Women*" with several female role models who influence, shape, and compliment her. The protagonist's task is to recognize and accept this truth, rather than allowing it to work against her. This is one of the aspects emphasized in the Bildungsroman definition.

Undoubtedly, a mother's errors are habitually repeated by her daughter. The power of that collective identity occurs when one of those stuck in this "vicious loop" pauses to appreciate and learn from previous generations. As soon as the heroine grasps this, her life begins to make sense and all the pieces step by step fall into place. Women are more attached to their foremothers than males are to their male forebears as a result of that intrinsic sensitivity. This poses a significant threat to the young protagonist, as she may innocently fall into the pattern of her mother's bad conduct.

The last chapter of "*Lives of Girls and Women*", in particular, reveals a wealth of information on Del's creative self. Del's own book, which she wrote during her union with Jerry Storey, is included into "The Photographer," even though she has not recorded it. Caroline Halloway, a Jubilee resident, is the novel's protagonist. Her role model was Marion Sheriff, a local tennis star who committed herself. Del is forced to create her personal narrative of her strange drowning using words and language, given that she is unable to comprehend or accept the answers. Caroline is a lady who is not afraid to carry out her sexual desires throughout Del's work.

### Chapter Three: Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival

---

Caroline seems to be the town's sole resident who is indifferent about the new photographer. She is the only one bold enough to confront it, since his photographs depict people in a pure and dirty light, which seems to be an sign of their true essence. She is not only the single one who does not hide her own self in order to meet others' expectations, but also enters the Wawanasha River after the photographer's fading. This book is required reading in order to comprehend the protagonist's personality. It acts as a guide for her feelings and ideas. In all, Del's books purify their author.

Being an eyewitness, Del is also an observer in search of additional information, data that may give support to develop her personal vision, her personal image of what she can and cannot see; her personal interpretation of what she saw or heard. Indeed, Carscallen affirms that *"Bobby is neither Del's boyfriend nor an average friend – in fact, Del considers him a bore – and yet he bestows upon her something that none of the other boys or men in her life have bestowed upon her: a mystery blessing and commission"* (174).

As previously noted, following the passages and immersing oneself in Del's environment enables one to describe the Künstlerroman process shown in this work simply. However, this road does not come without hurdles for the young female heroine to overcome. Rowena Fowler asserts in her article on Munro that *"Del has two unique impediments to grasping the link between literature and reality,"* one of which is being Canadian (191). She explains, *"'Reality' is a unique issue for a writer living in rural Ontario, who cannot name the closest metropolis without explaining that her London is not the 'real' London"* (191). Del's nationality has a strong impact on her. Though this may seem to be an issue at first glance, given the country harsh and confusing past, she looks to be at peace with her childhood home, despite her desire to leave when she was younger. One must admit that she was successful in

### Chapter Three: Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival

---

transforming these apparently "disadvantages" into "potential." Del's present dilemma is her gender.

Being a female writer has unique difficulties. *"She is developing a skepticism of language as a result of its sexist readings of her as a woman, and she is resisting a statement that unjustly dismisses her credibility as a female artist as a result of her proclivity for subjective reality interpretation"* (Rasporich 190). Del's ability as a writer will be questioned given that she is an active young lady who is aware of her own desires and expectations. Additionally, she will mistrust her femininity. She is afraid of being regarded inappropriate by the opposed gender as a result of her powerlessness to perform in relation to the standards recognized by males. These kinds of questions are probably less likely to emerge in the mind of a male artist, since he does not see his abilities and talents as being at peril in interactions with women. Del overcomes her mother's seeming self-segregation, but she also learns that being a young woman with intellectual abilities is fraught with anxiety of being unwomanly and hence not sufficiently expert for attracting male love, the conventional motif of femininity (Thomas 112). Del defies the conservative stereotype.

Her interests extend beyond her roles as a wife and mother. What did a regular existence entail? It was the life of the girls in the creamery office, showers, linen, and pots... then it was the life of the Gay-la Dance Hall, driving drunk at night... listening to men's jokes, putting up with and warily fighting with men, and finally getting hold of them – by undertaking and becoming accustomed to both, a girl puts herself on the road to marriage And I knew I would be unable of completing it. (LGW 161)

Del's lack of confidence and constant quest for answers, on the other hand, mould her into the young lady and the beginner writer she becomes by the end of the book. As Rasporich puts it, *"Del develops into more than a female teenage protagonist throughout the story... [but]*

### **Chapter Three: Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival**

*becomes*

*what Munro is herself, a dazzling executor of the image – of wonderful portraits preserved in time and place" (51).*

Del Jordan's itinerary to become who she is was not simple, since being a female writer means making rough choices. As she *"grows up, gets 'baptized' into direct sexual experience, endures its sorrow, and chooses the femininity of 'real life' beyond teenage illusions, she acquires the vocation to be an artist"* (Carscallen 163). Del Jordan realizes at this time that she cannot remain tied to the complicated life of sex, desire, and love in order to attain the status of a genuine female novelist.

### Chapter Three: Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival

---

Del's life experiences, mainly the unforgettable event in Wawanash River, where Garnet attempted to "baptize" her into his religion and his way of viewing women and their role in society. This incident led her to believe that she cannot join to the complex life of sex, passion, and love. So as to become a true female author, and leads her to believe that rejecting him and her emotional responses to him is her only option for survival as a female author. According to Nancy K. Miller, "*the heroine's decision to transcend love, to transcend sensual longings, is the figure that the ambitious ambitions of women authors (dreamers) adopt*" (qtd. in S. Thomas 108).

Del As a matter of fact has written an epilogue to the novel, "*Lives of Girls and Women*" in which she records society's oppression of women from her own point of view. The end of the novel captures Del's leaving her home-country, starting a new journey towards a fresh beginning away from Jubilee society. While leafing all through a newspaper, Del says:

[O]pened it up at the want ads, and got a pencil, so I could circle any job that seemed possible. I made myself understand what I was reading, and after some time I felt a mild, sensible gratitude for these printed words, these strange possibilities. Cities existed; telephone operators were wanted; the future could be furnished without love or scholarships. Now at last without fantasies or self-deception, cut off from the mistakes and confusion of the past, grave and simple, carrying a small suitcase, getting on a bus, like girls in movies leaving home, convents, lovers, I supposed I would get started on my real life. (LGW347)



## Chapter Three: Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival

---

Del's story is about more than being a woman; it's also about increasing confidence as a writer. According to Beverly J. Rasporich, "*Del Jordan is on the brink of becoming the writer that her creator, Alice Munro, is already*" and that "*Munro's voice can be heard in Del's... as the narrator of her own tale, as a child and teenager viewed through the lens of adult remembrance*" (44). Sue Thomas supports this remark in her intriguing study "*Reading Female Sexual Desire in Alice Munro's Lives of Girls and Women*"; furthermore, she draws attention to the novel's symbolism, indicating that it was written in the Kunstlerroman, birds are crushed, crippled, strangled, or hanged as a metaphor for the female artist's struggle to bring together her ambition with her sense of femininity" (S. Thomas 118). As the chapters go and Del grows, "*a sense of suspense emerges; each issue seems to grow in importance and difficulty to resolve,*" this as well is just what every reader perceives (Rasporich 160).

### 3.14. Conclusion

By analogy of a host of her stories, Alice Munro "*Lives of Girls and Women*" has recorded the role and the image of women in a world totally defined and controlled by man. She has also articulated the experiences of female figures such as Naomi, Addie, Del's Mother, Miss Farris, Nile, Madeleine, Ruth, and Del inside the societal rules that perceive them as "other" and limit their function to motherhood and housekeeping. Additionally, the chapter has also

### **Chapter Three: Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival**

---

rendered Munro's visualization and representation of the New Woman in the character of Del Jordan. Alice Munro's work gives an idea about a young girl's struggle to keep her identity and ideals against hardship.

In fact Del Jordan is shown as a brave, smart, and self-assured young girl, yet she does have weaknesses. She is a young woman who journeys from the carelessness of childhood through an uphill adolescence in search of love and sexual experience. Her mistakes little by little improve as she explores her sexuality and pursues her dream of becoming a writer. She celebrates her rebellious spirit and the revolution she has waged against society's rules defining women as outsiders or merely "others." She has also exposed how Del Jordan follows her own rules in drawing a life for herself. As eager as she is, Del has defied society's taboos and has entered into quite a few relationships with men for the sake of exploring her femininity and her body. After discovering the insignificance of this world, she resorts to art as a fresh field to experiment. As Del dreams of becoming famous, bears embarrassment about her mother, endures the humiliation of her body's insistent desires and tries desperately to fall in love, she gapples with the crises that marl the passage to womanhood. At the end of the novel, she has weaved a story, much like the town of Jubilee and her experiences in it. Del, as the epilogue reveals becomes an artist like Alice Munro herself.

Besides being a meta-fiction narrative, Munro's text is also a gynotext. It describes the experiences of a woman in a patriarchal society. Art formed for both Munro and her character Del a venue to heal the self. Both women's narratives are helpful and resourceful for the feminist movement and the fight for equality. Munro shows women ways and strategies to empower the self. Women, in her viewpoint, are naturally gifted and need to explore themselves to find a way out to freedom and equality. Sexuality is one possible way. Traditionally man takes profit of women's sexuality. Power is exercised on that woman as a

### Chapter Three: Insurgency, Physical and Psychological, as well as Writing as Means of Survival

---

‘docile body.’ On the other hand, the body becomes a field for empowerment for women. Art or writing is undoubtedly another way of empowerment. Writing helps exteriorise the self and record women’s experiences and lives. The novel’s title is a key clue into the issue; “*Lives of Girls and Women*”. It is meant to be an example or to a certain extent an episode, among the plethora of others, that would be read and grasped as a moral.

This chapter has reconsidered the notion of sexuality in relation to women’s struggle in a promising way, viewing it rather as a means of liberation and survival, dissociating it from disempowerment and control notions customarily related to it. The next chapter will discuss Toni Morrison’s “*A Mercy*” with regard to sisterhood and motherhood as ways of female survival.

# Chapter Four

## Sorority and Writing as Means of Female Survival in Toni Morrison's *“A Mercy”*

*There is movement in the shadow of a sun that is old now. There, just there. Coming from the rim of the world. A disturbing disturbance that is not a hawk nor stormy weather, but a dark woman, of all things. My sister, my me- rustling, like life.*

*(Morrison, A knowing So Deep 33)*

## Chapter Four: Sorority and Writing as Means of Female Survival

---

4.1. Introduction .....	143
4.2. African American literature .....	143
4.3. The Biography of Toni Morrison .....	144
4.4. Toni Morrison: A Leading Afro-American Feminist.....	145
4.5. Social Condition of African-American Female Slaves in the 1960s.....	147
4.6.” <i>A Mercy</i> ” .....	150
4.7. Sisterhood as a Means of Survival. ....	151
4.8. Sisterhood among Lina and Rebekka.....	157
4.9. Sisterhood as a Lifeline for Florans .....	159
4.10. Nature-based survival.....	160
4.11. Obedience as a Necessity of Survival .....	161
4.12. Education and its effect on the Survival of Florens .....	163
4.13. Writing as a Means of Empowerment.....	166
4.14. Female Survival via Motherhood: Motherhood's Strength. ....	169

## **Chapter Four: Sorority and Writing as Means of Female Survival**

---

4.15. Lina as Florens' Mother Figure .....	173
4.16. Sorrow and the Power of Motherhood .....	177
4.17. Conclusion.....	183

### 4.1. Introduction

This chapter examines Toni Morrison's "*A Mercy*" in order to demonstrate the process of female survival and self-discovery. It also focuses on the transition of the traditional image of the black woman from a helpless creature to a commanding figure as she rejects victimhood and advocates for empowerment. As we shall see throughout the thesis, the black female protagonist undergoes the most harsh transformation when she overcomes patriarchal threats and empowers herself by means of a series of methods labeled consecutively as "Sisterhood," "Motherhood," and "Educating the self."

"*A Mercy*" is infused in the ideas of the 1970s women's liberation movement (second-wave feminism), as it reveals many of the issues discussed by this movement, including ideas about female empowerment primarily through sisterhood, the importance of writing as a remedial power for female wounds, and the influence of color, race, and social status on feminism in general. Consequently, this chapter will discuss the work of feminist authors such as Patricia Hill Collins, Simone de Beauvoir, and Betty Friedan, Elisabeth Abel, Audre Lorde, in addition to others who discuss women's experiences and exposure to the multidimensional intimidations of race, gender, and class, as well as the alternatives they construct to disrupt and confront these intimidations.

### 4.2. African American Literature

African American writers and artists contribute considerably to the culture and literature of the United States. African American literature fights to regain black Americans' history and identity, which have been shattered and trampled underfoot by white Americans. For a long time, their work and commitment to culture in general were disregarded and overlooked. Prior to the American Civil War, this literature was centered on the subject of slavery, which was examined via the popular genre of slave narratives and represented in the works of Olaudah

Equiano, Frederick Douglass, and Harriet Beecher Stowe, among others. They were viewed as inferior, as were their ideas and achievements, as a result of historical slavery and racial segregation. The substance of African American literature evolves in lockstep with the evolution of black history in America, particularly in the twentieth century, when this writing was acknowledged and integrated in the American literary canon.

African American literature has addressed blacks' experiences of racism, segregation, and racial biases in an unjust American society during the decade of the Civil Rights Movement. In African American culture and literature, the themes of childhood trauma, female victimization, and oppression have captivated a large number of feminist authors, who have made such matters a significant stress in their works. The authors' interest in the subject and willingness to speak about it may be clearly explained by their direct experience of trauma and subjugation or by their professional activism dedication to the social evils of their society and community.

Toni Morrison, Alice Walker, and other African American writers are attempting to convey the anguish of hundreds, if not thousands, of women and children who are subjected to abuse and molestation. They are adamant about the critical nature of acknowledging the devastation caused by women's and children's abasement. By the mid-twentieth century, the period had become a landmark in the history of feminism, with a surge of feminist literature and art reacting to the oppressed women's voices worldwide.

### **4.3. The Biography of Toni Morrison**

Toni Morrison was born on the 18th of February 1931 in Lorain, Ohio, the second of four children. Her father worked in a variety of professions, but mostly as a welder, while her mother worked from home. Morrison owes her clear and unbroken viewpoint on literature, music, and folklore to her parents. She was raised in an interracial community and was not aware of racial segregation and conflict until her adolescence, despite the fact that she was the



only black child in her class. She was warmly welcomed and treated on an equal footing with them. Morrison was an assiduous student who graduated with honours from high school in 1949.

Morrison studied literature at Howard University and finally earned a bachelor's degree in English with a minor in classics. After graduating from Howard University in 1953, she continued her education at Cornell University, earning a master's degree in 1955 with a thesis on Virginia Woolf and William Faulkner's works. She returned to Howard two years later to teach English. She met her husband, Harold Morrison, there, as well as a group of authors with whom she began writing her first book, which began as a short tale.

In 1963, she left her job and traveled with her family throughout the summer. While pregnant with her second child, she returned with her son. Her spouse, on the other hand, returned to Jamaica, where he was born. After spending a year in Ohio with her family, she moved to New York with her sons, where she worked as a senior editor for a textbook publisher and then at Random House, where she edited works by Toni Cade Bambara and Gayl Jones, both of whom are noted for their literary fiction.

### **4.4. Toni Morrison: A Leading Afro-American Feminist**

Being a singularly significant among feminist authors, Toni Morrison became a well-known member of the black feminist movement and a famous character in current American literature. Toni Morrison, as a black writer, is concerned with problems of race and identity and articulates the pains of the black community under the white figure's rule. Additionally, as a black feminist activist, Morrison, as evidenced by the majority of her novels, including *Sula* (1987), *Beloved* (1987), *Song of Solomon* (1977), *The Bluest Eye* (1970), and most recently, *A Mercy* (2008), speaks of the female yoke and, more specifically, the black female experience under a double blow (racism and sexism). That is, being black on the one hand and female on the other. It's predictable, however, that women take the lead as characters in the

## Chapter Four: Sorority and Writing as Means of Female Survival

---

majority of Morrison's literature, and that female subjugation and motherhood emerge as prominent themes.

In terms of literary appreciation and experience, Morrison's fiction emerged from *"a rich cultural background of her childhood, expanded by a formal education in English and the classics, and shaped by her experiences as an African American woman, thus an advocate of a dual cause in a polarized American society,"* as Oumar Ndongu observes (25). She made her literary first appearance in 1970 with the publication of *"The Bluest Eye"* which was published under the pen name "Toni," a name derived from St. Anthony. This literary work centers on Pecola, a mistreated teenage black girl who is obsessed by white beauty standards and yearns for blue eyes. Although her first controversial book did not sell well, she continued to write on the African-American experience in all its manifestations and manifestations throughout history.

*"Sula"* (1937), her second novel, chronicles a fragile connection between two women who grew up together in Ohio. It received an American Book Award nomination. A watershed moment occurred with the publishing of *Song of Solomon* in 1977. It chronicles the journey of Milkman Dead who attempts to comprehend both his origins and the situation of his planet. The book became very popular and acquired several accolades, including the National Book Critics Circle Award. The work is structured as a family history quest and a recovery of the past. It also demonstrates how African American identity may be recreated via the lens of one's own cultural history.

Morrison earned the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1987 for *"Beloved"* which is based on Margaret Garner's real tale. This tale delves into the life of a former slave. Sethe is troubled by the desire to murder her children out of dread of them living the same life she did. One of her four children is murdered by her. Her departed daughter reappears and is ever-present in the home. Morrison won the 1988 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and a slew of other honours for

this masterpiece, which was made into a film ten years later and was chosen as the finest novel of the last 25 years by the New York Times Book Review.

Still, *"Jazz"*, a 1992 book, is a narrative of violence and desire set in New York City during the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s and references to the period's most heinous deeds. Morrison started writing children's fiction in 1999. She is the author of many novels, including *"The Big Box"* (1999), *"The Book of Mean People"* (2002), and a few more. In addition, she experimented with playwriting and songs. Interestingly, in 2000, her work *"The Bluest Eye"* "was chosen for Oprah's Book Club and soon became a bestseller, selling over a million copies. Morrison departed from Princeton University in 2006, but continues to investigate new facets of the literary world. Margaret Carner's libretto was premiered at the New York City Opera in 2007. She released *"What Moves at the Margin"* a year later, a collection of nonfiction articles, reviews, and speeches.

### 4.5. Social Situation of African-American Female Slaves in the 1960s

Between 1861 and late 1910, the restrictions of liberty, together with the national gendered and racial environment, forced African American women to rethink what it meant to be a woman. This was a difficult era in American history, with two distinct sub-periods emerging: 1861–1880s and 1890–1920. African American males briefly participated in politics, but as W.E.B. Du Bois phrased it, *"the slaves became free; stood a short while in the light; then slid back toward servitude"* (26) jeopardizing their political, economic, social, and institutional positions once again.

Between 1877 and 1901, tensions and pressures between African Americans and whites existed. Apart from the economic, political, and social losses suffered by African Americans, the Supreme Court's Plessy Ferguson decision entrenched women's inferiority. After centuries of contribution to the American economy, American women today face a feeling of emptiness. Their duty was reduced to that of mothers only throughout the industrial

revolution. This is what Sara Evans refers to as a "*maternal commonwealth*" (119-143). As a result of the educational role that women play in the lives of children, society accepted the restriction of women's duties to parenting. Unexpectedly, preserving such a notion of Republican motherhood "*granted women a kind of public position as mothers of future citizens.*" In the nineteenth century, white women were expected to exhibit feminine characteristics such as delicacy, gentleness, and obedience, as well as a self-effacing demeanour. What was revolutionary, though, was not the notion of authentic femininity in and of itself, but its elevation to a pedestal.

Paula Giddings asserts "*Of course, the notion of woman was not novel. What had changed was the cult concept's elevation to the status symbol level*" (43). In antebellum America, enslaved African women were seen as property rather than human beings. Women of African ancestry were traditionally excluded from the idea of womanhood (Carby et. al). Before 1865, the abolitionist and feminist movements were intricately interwoven, and some prominent black female abolitionists, such as Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth, were also feminist supporters. From the outset of their emancipation, black women were not permitted to live by the same standards as white women. According to both northern and southern whites, the four cardinal Victorian qualities did not apply to women of color. Nonetheless, women of color were subjected to pressure which the vast majority of Black women could not possibly live up to "*they were deemed 'less than moral, 'real' women*" (Giddings 47).

While the religion of real femininity did not stay the dominant ideological code throughout the century, it is worth noting that the exclusion of black women persisted. According to Audre Lorde:

Women of today are still being called upon to strength across the gap of male ignorance and to educate men as to our existence and our needs. This is an old primary tool of all oppressors to keep the oppressed occupied with master's concerns. Now we hear it is

the task of women of color to educate white women –in the face of tremendous resistance as to our existence, our differences, and our relative role in our joint survival.

This is a division of energies and tragic repetition of racist patriarchal thought (97).

Black women created their own movements to combat sexism, racism, and injustice in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. African American black women in the United States have developed their own Black Feminist Movement to protect their rights. African women in the United States were conscious of their race, class, and gender, as they managed to get rid of male oppression from their lives. They have made steps to eliminate this supremacy in groups and as individuals, as well as in prepared and unprepared organizations.

The term "Black Feminism" did not achieve popular use until the 1970s. As a consequence, scholars allied with the Black Feminist movement converted it to the Black Women's Act in the early 1800s; the majority of African women were considered slaves. On the other hand, certain black women, such as Maria Stewart, Frances E.W. Harper, and Sojourner Truth, fought for those women's rights on their own terms. Additionally, Sojourner Truth was a well-known black woman who advocated for black women's rights in her 1851 speech "Ain't a Woman?" By the late nineteenth century, black women, such as writer Ida B. and others, started organizing their own jobs and social roles.

Moreover, they founded the National Association of Colored Women in 1896, which brought together over a hundred black women, including Josephine and Marry Church Terrell. Despite the fact that black women were among the early participants in the feminist movement; feminist theory openly excludes them from its agenda. It glosses over the enormous oppression endured by black women as a consequence of racism and classism. As a result of this rejection, black women banded together and fought for their right to speak, which they achieved by means of the establishment of the black feminist corpus of writing.

Black women have constantly defied the dual oppressions of race and gender in their daily lives, and they have transferred this resistance into their literary works as well. The effect of these women's social activism during the Civil Rights Movement will endure. The legacy of social activism faced by these women during the Civil Rights Movement was a continuation of the antiracist struggle that started during American slavery and has continued to the current day. They have been social activists, displaying their commitment to equality and desire for self-expression via a range of physical actions.

As a result, black feminism developed in order to gain respect for all women in society, regardless of class or race. Black Feminism illustrates how black women successfully fight harsh perceptions in order to realize their identity. Black women being defined as feminist leaders encompass their efforts to improve their identities and communities. They concentrated their efforts in the early twentieth century on abolishing racism and other social and political challenges. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, the Black Women's Movement was famous for its engagement in the Civil Rights Movement.

By the 1990s, Black Feminists had developed a significant presence in the black community, where they played a critical role in their success. This victorious event was followed by future meetings, such as the 1991 gathering of nearly 1600 signatures by African American women. Without a doubt, Black Feminism, which sprang out of the efforts of generations of black women, continues to play a significant role in the social lives of women in the United States.

### **4.6. *A Mercy***

Morrison's last novella, *A Mercy*, was released in 2008. It is set in the 1680s, in the early phases of the slave trade, in order to bring to life the intimidation and horrors of slavery, both physical and mental, that plagued the era. More precisely, from a sociocultural perspective, it

demonstrates the complexities that result from slavery at the familial and societal levels. Morrison's novella is populated by a society of women who settle on Jacob Vaark's farm in the New World. Jacob's wife, Rebekka, came from England, as did their servant lady, Lina, a Native American whose tribe was wiped out by smallpox. Florens, a slave girl whom Jacob takes as payment for a debt, and Sorrow, the daughter of a sea captain who perishes in a storm. These characters alternate between recounting the tale and their voices bear the physical and emotional wounds of their lives' hardships. Morrison depicts a society in "*A Mercy*" where women, whites, blacks, and Native Americans are subjected to oppression.

### 4.7. Sisterhood as a Means of Survival

This chapter discusses female survival as a result of sisterhood. It demonstrates the primacy of sisterhood and education as a tool or strategy for female survival. In addition, it is focused on another female survival strategy: parenting and the mother-daughter connection. Female survival via sisterhood is defined as women supporting one another and cooperating to accomplish a common goal. It also serves as a means of self-identification, self-assertion, seizing control, and making one's own options and choices. In "*A Mercy*", female survival represents these concepts of self-definition and maintaining a firm grip on one's self, control, and naming via the adoption of various techniques such as "motherhood," "sisterhood," and "education." In this story, women empower one another by offering and receiving advice and sharing their stories. Their relationship enables them to reap the benefits of their interactions and activities.

The support offered amongst the characters enables them to embrace their link to female unity, which has the potential to influence the development of new national standards and alleviate the agony of patriarchal tyranny. As a result, sisterly relationships have historically served as a medium for women's comfort, consolidation, and, most importantly, empowerment. Morrison situates "*Mercy*" in the 1690s, during which time the underpinnings

## Chapter Four: Sorority and Writing as Means of Female Survival

---

of racial slavery were being laid. The writer takes us all the way back to the origins of slavery in America. Women faced imminent dangers during the era, and being without the protection of males meant that *"autonomous women were accused of being witches, and paternalism between men and women remained the norm"* (Downie 56).

The tale is abounding with female characters. She depicted them splintering into many countries and ethnicities, including Rebekka, a white European immigrant, Lina, a Native American whose tribe was wiped out, Florens, an African-American slave, and Sorrow, an African child who is the only survivor of a slave ship. Female companionship educates women about the consequences of patriarchy and ensures their safety and survival. *A Mercy* recognizes the critical role of female solidarity in confronting patriarchal institutions such as race and class. Despite the many obstacles that stand in the way of women practicing sisterhood, Morrison's novella "*A Mercy*" emphasizes the terrible implications of women's lack of devotion.

Female bonding enabled the female characters in *A Mercy* to live by showing their security to one another. Historically, sisterhood has been a strong emotional link between women. *"Feminists have suggested a sisterhood based on their presumptive psychological, biological, and cultural affinity with and towards one another"* (3). Feminists advocate for sisterhood and emotional bonds between women; they wish for uniting women worldwide via peace, solidarity, and mutual understanding, but also as a response to patriarchal systems that walks on their independence. In the same context, in her discussion about female bound Elizabeth Abel reflects, in developing a theory of female friendship,

I seek to represent the world as women imagine it could be, and as many women have created it. Feminist theory must take into account the forces maintaining the survival of women as well as those that maintain the subordination of women. A theory of female



friendship is meant to give form, expression, and reality to the ways in which women have been for our Selves and each other (434).

As Abel points out, women's friendship is critical in enabling women to gain independence and ensure their own survival. Sisterhood extends beyond biological relationships and includes a variety of emotional links based on fellowship, comradeship, and solidarity among women of various ethnicities, social classes, nations, and cultures. Because of patriarchal and cultural constraints, they support and strengthen one another while they struggle to exist on their own. Because she believes that *"one's ability for compassion, generosity, humour, and amazement is the core of the relationship between two women,"* Elizabeth Schultz supports the possibility of sisterhood among women from varied cultural and ethnic backgrounds (69). The reciprocal support creates a chance to grow, learn, and use all sides of the relationship. With the help and presence of other women, you have a far better chance of success.

Women in *"A Mercy"* are robbed of any feeling of belonging or family. They are thrown into a hostile environment where they must endure hardships as a result of their status as women and as black women slaves. They were the outsiders, treated more like property than human beings, and as a result, there was considerable discrimination against them because of their race. To begin, Rebekka meets other ladies on the ship as she sails to a new world, all of whom have visions of an mysterious future. Here then,

Anne had been sent away in disgrace by her family. Judith and Lydia, were prostitutes ordered to choose between prison and exile. Lydia was accompanied by her daughter, Patty Elizabeth was the daughter, or so she said, of an important Company agent Dorothea, was a cutpurse whose sentence was the same as the prostitutes. Rebekka, alone, her passage prepaid, was to be married ( *A Mercy* 80).

This group of women were denied the right to live in dignity as a consequence of familial and social intimidation. They were mistreated even on board the ship, when they were "separate from men and the higher-classed females and placed in a dreary spot near the animal stalls" (*A Mercy* 79). African women formed a legitimate black feminist movement in order to fight for their rights, whether political or social in character. As a result, Hooks said that the sexism issue cannot be resolved unless a group of black Feminist Movement members collaborate to raise their consciousness and put an end to the patriarchal society in which they live:

Every black person concerned about our collective survival must acknowledge that sexism is a destructive force in black life that cannot be effectively addressed without an organized political movement to change consciousness, behaviour and institutions. What we need is a feminist revolution in black life. But to have such a revolution, we must first have a feminist movement. Many black folks do not know what the word Feminism mean. They may think of it only as something having to do with white women's desire to share equal Rights with white men. In reality, feminism is a movement to end all sexism and sexist oppression. The strategies necessary to achieve that end are many. We need to find ways to address the specific forms that sexism takes in our diverse communities (124).

Women, particularly black women, have learned to fight for equality and better treatment of their race through their own struggles. It was critical for them to establish their presence as women and people of color. The core of their existence was defending their race and releasing themselves from the limits of male and cultural discourse. Despite the many obstacles they encountered as a result of their racial and gender disadvantage, black women persisted and battled valiantly to effect social change and attain social justice. They discovered in sisterhood unity a place of refuge and strength that they had been denied. The importance of sisters in from the emotion of mother hanging, compassion ascends (Jimnez 2). Because the

female characters are orphans or misfits, they support one another despite the fact that they are not biologically related. Indeed, they saw sisterhood as a way to ease mothers' hunger.

While aboard the ship and being treated as a lesser entity, Brad Hooper's suggestion that the earth is cloven between male and female worlds, and the twain shall never meet (21). The women on board the ship, notably Rebicka, Elizabeth, Ann, Dorothea, Judith, and Lydia, face extra abuse and intimidation. They are not only segregated from affluent ladies and housed with animals, but they are also exposed to the most monstrous treatment. *"Anyone higher than five feet bent and dropped her head to walk about,"* the ship's regulations said (79).

Due to the fact that the majority of black women come from the underclass, the race problem is inextricably tied to the class issue. The class is another manifestation of male power that oppresses and damages women. Without any other option, the seven female characters, despite their disparate cultural origins, engage in conversation, tell tales, play games, and expose their wounds in order to appreciate themselves and forget about their ordeal and coercion. *"Together they lightened the journey; made it less hideous than it surely would have been without them"* (A Mercy 80).

Through storytelling, jokes, games, and pranks, the group of females learns about one another's life, converses, and shares their sorrows like sisters do. In this sense, Hudson Weems defines sisterhood as an asexual connection between women who seek support in one another and freely communicate their true thoughts, concerns, aspirations, and goals. Friends of this sort are priceless because they appreciate, understand, and encourage one another. With such feelings of love, trust, and security, it's impossible to envision any woman without a true support system comparable to that found in genuine sisterhood (656). Because of the historical and cultural contexts linked with slavery and racial segregation, Collins stresses the

## Chapter Four: Sorority and Writing as Means of Female Survival

---

uniqueness of African American women's experiences. The commonalities in the lives of black colonial women exceed the differences, and this fact permits them to interact in order to overcome their forms of oppression. He makes the following remark on African American women:

Being Black and female in the United Se United States continues to expose African-American Women to certain common experiences. U.S. Black women 'similar work and family experiences as well as our participation in diverse expressions of African-American culture mean that, overall, U.S. Black women as a group live in a different world from that of people who are not Black and female. (23)

Morrison, as a black female writer, creates connections and utilizes her writing to promote awareness of their identities in her novella, *A Mercy*. This continuous endeavour at unification is a direct challenge to the patriarchal norm. *"The texts discuss women's solidarity as a matter of survival,"* Nnaemeka maintains in relation to black women's literature *"Solidarity among women provides a safety net and a breath of fresh air in a suffocating, constraining environment"* (19). Dorothea makes a brief appearance in the book

She removed her footwear and wiggled her toes... The tattered wool was then nestled between her toes. She greeted Anne with a grin as she replaced the shoe Is your behavior the reason your family sent you to sea?" Dorothea then inquires about Anne, Anne reacts cheerfully and flippantly, stating that she is "visiting her uncle and aunt". Despite this, when Lydia mocks Anne by shrieking "Cows!" (81-82)

The whole female crew, including Anne, bursts out laughing. They get closer as they communicate, share jokes, and eventually gain understanding of one another, which makes their trip more tolerable and transforming. This link helps them to battle the patriarchal

system's impacts and repair their pervasive wounds. Whereas racial segregation was intended to keep U.S. blacks oppressed, it fostered a form of racial solidarity that flourished in all black neighbourhoods. In comparison, when blacks increasingly dwell in economically diversified communities, maintaining the same degree of racial togetherness presents new obstacles (Collins 35). Contrary to popular belief, overcoming adversity may enable black women to form ties and establish female solidarity in order to survive.

Moreover, the ladies on board the ship inspire and motivate Rebekka as she prepares to meet her future husband, Jacob, and begin a new life in an anonymous location via their individual tales. To be sure, *"their alehouse wit, knowhow, laced with their low expectations of others and high levels of self-approval, their quick laughter, amused and encouraged Rebekka"* (A Mercy 79). Their tone and acts inspire confidence in Rebekka, meaning that *"if she had feared her own female sensitivity, traveling alone to a different nation to marry a stranger, these women corrected her misgivings"* (A Mercy 79). Rebekka comes to trust in her own worth and in her ability to summon the power she needs. Rebekka learns to trust in her native value and her ability to endure in this weird new world. The female characters on board the ship establish a pleasant atmosphere via sisterhood, in which one watches out for the other while enjoying their momentary freedom before confronting the new world.

### 4.8. Sisterhood Among Lina and Rebekka

Lina and Rebekka are yet another example of sisterhood in action. Jacob's wife is Rebekka, and Lina is the first slave he purchases to help him on the farm. When Rebekka first meets her, she is doubtful, but because they are left alone on the farm for the majority of the time, they gradually become friends, and *when "the first infant was born, Lina handled it so tenderly, with such knowing, Rebekka was ashamed of her early fears and pretended she'd never had them"* ("A Mercy" 73). Rebekka is the mistress of the home; she is inexperienced and in desperate need of Lina's assistance and companionship. Despite their social and racial

differences, Rebekka and Lina work to establish a pleasant atmosphere in which they may coexist. Both acknowledge that that they *"were company for each other and by and by discovered something much more interesting than status"*. Rebekka laughed out loud at her own mistakes; was unembarrassed to ask for help. Lina slapped her own forehead when she forgot the berries rotting in the straw. They became friends." ( *A Mercy* 51).

This corroborates Helena Michie's assertion that *"the figure of the sister defends a feminist family by implying that the feminist family is capacious enough to contain all women, regardless of how different they may appear to be"* (3). Rebekka and Lina set aside their conflicts and worked together to manage the property. Being sisters, keeping together, and depending on one another enables them to overcome the terrain's and weather's problems. Rebekka and Lina:

Developed friendships. Not only because someone needed to remove a wasp sting from the other's arm. Not only because it took two people to dislodge the cow from the fence. Not simply because one person was responsible for holding the head while the other knotted the trotters. Mostly because neither understood exactly what they were doing or how they were going to execute it. They discovered together via trial and error. ( *A Mercy* 51).

If Rebekka and Lina have each other, they can overcome the hardships of maintaining a farm without the assistance of men. Indeed, developing unity serves largely to fortify people collectively against sexist persecution. Regardless of the fact that, as Morrison notes, *"They had little in common with one another's ideals, but they shared one thing: the promise and menace of males. They agreed that this was the area of greatest security and danger. And both parties had reached an agreement"* (96).

This corroborates Hooks Bell's assertion that feminist sisterhood is established on a common commitment to oppose patriarchal oppression in whatever manner. Women's

political collaboration is weakening sexism and building the framework for patriarchy's destruction on a regular basis (15). Despite their disagreements, Rebekka and Lina create a sisterhood in order to self-identify by empowering and aiding one another in a society where they lack both voice and control.

### 4.9. Sisterhood as a Lifeline for Florens

Florens is the story's protagonist. She acquires her mother's position and becomes a slave. With her mother's permission, she is sold to another employer, Jacob Vaark. She establishes herself as a decent girl and a good slave in her new employment. Her journey to reject tradition, make her own choices, and reclaim her feeling of autonomy began when her mistress, Rebekka, sent her on a healing mission in search of a blacksmith who apparently had a cure for both her ill mistress and her own lovesick heart.

Throughout her travels, she will encounter social and humanitarian issues, including persecution directed at her race and judgements based on race and position. Florens fights objectification and defies patriarchal reasoning, which promotes masculine supremacy and privilege via intelligence, boldness, and trustworthiness. Thus, the capacity to make her own decisions and demonstrate her ability to live was the guiding principle and primary concept of freedom for Florens as a black woman slave in the 1600s. On her voyage, she will encounter perils and dangers that may imperil her purpose, but her cunning and survival instincts prompt her to be brave in her decision-making; when the wagon must be removed but she is unsure what will happen, she recognizes she is in danger. She makes her own choice, independently of the others:

I don't follow. Neither can stay in the wagon. I have a cold stone in my chest. I don't need Lina to advise me that I should avoid being alone with strange men whose sluggish hands when they realize their cargo has gone missing when drunk and enraged. I have to choose quick. I have chosen you. I make my way west into the woods. Everything I

want is in the west. You with your speech. You are aware of the medication that will restore Mistress's health. You will listen to what I have to say and rejoin me. I have only to go west (*A Mercy* 39).

Apart from her brilliance and resolve to fulfill her assignment, her remembrance of her sister, Lina, assists her in making critical judgments. Florens was able to live in the woods because of their sisterhood, which allowed them to remain together even when they were separated.

### 4.10. Nature-Based Survival

Florens has no past experience living in the woods, but she is capable of maintaining security by reasonable thought and whatever Mother Nature has to give. As a consequence, when the darkness sets in and it's time to seek safety, she finds herself self-sufficient in the woods:

The night is thick, no stars anyplace but sudden the moon moves. The chafe of needles causes much too much pain and provides no opportunity for relaxation. I descend and search for a more suitable location. I'm relieved to discover a hollow log by night, but it's wavy with ants. I cut twigs and tiny branches from a young fir, stack them, and crawl underneath. The needle puncture is less painful, and there is no risk of slipping...I am on the lookout for snakes that glide down trees and over the ground, despite the fact that Lina claims they do not desire to bite or swallow us whole ( *A Mercy*65).

The remark above displays Florens's foresight in devising a means of protecting herself at night. Florens finds sanctuary in the wilderness in a "large house" (*A Mercy* 104) while seeking for aid. Florens encounters Widow Ealing inside the home, who is "much taller than Mistress or Lina and has green eyes," in Florens' words (*A Mercy* 104). Astonished by Florens' darkness, the widow recoils from assisting Florens and starts questioning her exhaustively: "Who sent you?" she inquires. She checks behind me, left and right, and inquires



as to whether I am alone, without protection. She squints her eyes and inquires if I am of this or another planet... Christian or heathen?" (*A Mercy*104-5). The widow agrees to let Florens stay at the residence for the night after this inquiry.

Florens notices the presence of another female in the home. The Widow informs Florens that the girl is her daughter, Jane. Jane is not considered a human in that society due to the form of her eye. Widow Ealing must make her daughter bleed in order to prove to society that she is not a demon, as bleeding was previously thought to be reserved for humans only. When the community members arrive in the morning, they are taken back by Florens' presence; the white people immediately forget about Jane and begin accusing Florens of being the source of their troubles:

I step into the room. Standing there are a man, three women and a little girl who reminds me of myself when my mother sends me away. I am thinking how sweet she seems when she screams and hides behind the skirts of one of the women. Then each visitors turns to look at me. The women gasp. The man's walking stick clatters to the floor causing the remaining hen to squawk and flatter .he retrieves his stick, points it at me saying who be this? One of the women covers her eyes saying God help us ...one woman speaks saying I have never seen any human this black. I have says another, this one is as black as others I have seen. She is Afric. Afric and much more, say another....the Black Man is among us. (*A Mercy*107-08).

### 4.11. Obedience as a Necessity of Survival

Florens calmly says, "*Let me show you my letter,*" which indicates that I am only my Mistress's servant (109). The Widow receives the letter and displays it to the others. Florence too employed obedience as a survival tactic. It aimed to eliminate any opportunity for whites to physically mistreat them. Florens' obedience and tight adherence are two of her

distinguishing features. Being submissive meant she would not demonstrate how dangerous she is to others. Only then can she establish her innocence and sincerity. When a white man with three ladies and a kid arrives at the widow's home, for example, they are afraid and regard her with suspicion and strangeness. Florens' reply was measured and composed, since she is well aware that any act of dissent may result in a beating or other type of punishment. Her capacity to appraise conditions and make non-protesting judgments is critical to her survival. Her technique for obtaining independence is to avoid being neglected by white people. She is capable of owning herself and hence does not permit white people to harm her.

When they are both left alone, they have time to reflect on their predicament and the community's rejection. Women of color, as well as white women, have been treated poorly and harshly evaluated. They see that by assisting one another, they may combat the tyranny and subjection of their own existence. Males have the ability to cast judgment on them and accuse women of whatever they choose. Indeed, their ability to overcome such instances of prejudice and stand on their own two feet demonstrates that women will not allow men to take control of their lives.

Surviving demonstrates that they were able to withstand all forms of discrimination. Jane is thankful to Florens for removing her from the center of the community crisis for the first time. Given how soothing sisterhood is, Hudson-Weems asserts that we must embrace it and all of its advantages for others as well as ourselves. Consider how much more lovely our planet would be if all sisters just loved one another for the time being. Our children would be safer if they had more than one female caregiver (73).

Florens and Jane share a number of features and hence understand the hardship of being underestimated and excluded by society. Jane resists the community's leader and shows Florens the route out of imprisonment in the village, while also giving her victuals for the

trek. Again, the sisterly relationship assisted Florens in navigating her path and surviving the perceived harshness of the white culture, which saw her as a lesser human. Florens depicts Jane in loving words in her narrative, stating that she remains by her side throughout her agony, shows her the path out, and gives nourishment for her. "We come to a stream," Florens writes. Jane cooked duck eggs and then wrapped them in fabric. She gave Florens a folded blanket. They then went out running through the meadow, Jane leading the way. Florens expressed gratitude to Jane for her charity, but Jane said, "No thank you." (*A Mercy* 112) and kissed the top of Florens' head. She clarifies the manner in which I am to proceed" (*A Mercy* 112).

This also confirms the notion of sisterhood between white and non-white women. Florens and Jane become sisters despite the fact that the former is a white girl and the latter is a black slave. Angela Davis argues in this context that *"sisterhood between black and white women was indeed possible, and as long as it stood on a firm foundation, it could give birth to earthshaking accomplishments"* (140). Given how soothing sisterhood is, Hudson-Weems asserts that we must embrace it and all of its advantages for others as well as ourselves. Consider how much more lovely our world would be if all sisters just loved one another, and how much safer our children would be with more than one female guardian (73).

### 4.12. Education and its Effect on the Survival of Florens

Florens survives despite being stranded in the woods. When Florens smells animal skins and identifies the approaching animal, she does not look to determine what sort of animal it is; instead, she remains silent to avert the animal's attack. She intends to remain elevated above the earth until the animal has departed. Florens established herself as a strong lady who avoided being a victim to animals. Smarts and courage are critical characteristics for her to fight back against discriminatory practices based on her ethnic origin and gender, displaying to white males her capacity to survive in any situation.

Contrary to the canon that depicts minorities as less human, less capable of expressing their points of view, and incapable of recognizing injustice or even identification, these ideas continue to drive the black slave lady lower down the repressive hierarchy while striving to include her in intellectual debate.

Education is often seen as a watershed moment in female empowerment since it enables women to overcome hardship, face their established roles, and transform their lives. Additionally, education alleviates inequalities and provides a foundation for advancing one's standing within the family. Historically, writing as an intellectual endeavor has been a man's domain, and hence women, both white and black, have struggled to find a place in art to express their anguish. Indeed, it was considered that writing *"was an act of self-assertion, a characteristic alien to the behavior expected of women, especially well-bred ones"* (Gilbert and Gubar 60).

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar claim in their classic book *Madwoman in the Attic* that the weaving of literary texts "was considered an exclusively male domain from which women were biologically barred" (59-60). Black women were deprived from the right of being educated, because education was restricted only to white race, (Brown and Anne 140). However colored women managed to launch their own body of literature. Black women had to explore deeper. They had to use their own words to find about their own truth from the fabricated accounts on their own history. This black feminist body of literature started as "black feminist orality" (Fulton 18).

Intentionally, Florens recognizes that literacy will aid her in life success. White folks would rather keep black people in the dark than acknowledge that they have a better chance than slaves. Florens therefore understands the need to deviate from the norm in order to avoid ignorance and foolishness. And she will be able to gain independence if she overcomes her illiteracy. She is aware of the distinction between submissive and obedient behaviour and

defiant and rebellious behaviour. Again, Florens overcame the adversity of being a female slave and fought the customary female position. She empowered herself via education and decision-making about her social development.

Learning to read and write is therefore another manifestation of her resistance against racial supremacy. Florens, on the other hand, demonstrates her brilliance by secretly learning to read and write. Similarly, Virginia Woolf's essay "*A Room of her Own*," in which the heroine, Judith Shakespeare, William Shakespeare's imagined sister, is denied any desire to study books or attend school to master grammar and logic, demonstrates how writing is seen primarily as a male occupation. Virginia Woolf said, "*Judith Shakespeare sometimes took up a book, maybe one of her brother's, and read a few pages. However, her parents walked in and instructed her to repair the stockings or tend to the stew rather than waste time on books and papers*"(28).

In the case of Black Americans, both men and women coexist as a minority group with women. Racism and sexism conspired to limit black women's educational chances. They had to utilize their own words to piece together the truth about their own past from the falsified narratives.

Recognizing the importance of education as a method of achieving self- and societal recognition, as well as a weapon of empowerment against slavery, colored women desired to improve their reading and writing abilities. After being denied the capacity to read and write under slavery, black women recognized that education would provide them with a stronger position to preserve their black feminine identity. These ladies were aware of the connection between race, class, and education. They choose to participate in an intellectual fight that would empower them and future generations by providing them with the foundations for their black feminine identity.

### 4.13. Writing as a Method of Empowerment

In *A Mercy*, the novel's writing method transforms African American historical narratives into written texts by engaging and encouraging African Americans to translate any remembrance, speech, or tale into written texts. As clearly shown In *A Mercy*, the act of writing assists in the recovery of the past via documentation, wing future generations of African Americans to read and appreciate their forefathers' duties and suffering, and it finally provides voice to and externalizes the person.

Florens writes her account in *A Mercy* on the floor of her master's residence. We watch her writing her autobiography, which details her trials and tribulations in white society, as well as other issues confronting slaves in the seventeenth century. Florens describes the maltreatment and suffering of African slaves, especially women, on her white owner's land. Florens, like many other slaves on the estate, is not recognized as thinking, feeling human being. Her isolation is the result of the patriarchy's brutalization. Florens externalizes her experiences and those of her sisters.

Through her work, she gives voice to the oppressed women and empowers herself as a writer. Florens turns to writing as a form of self-expression and self-acceptance as a woman. Morrison provides a little girl the ability to "*generate texts from the brain*" (Gnanamony 173-74) in order to express the unpleasant experiences she faces in a male dominated world in *A Mercy*. She turns to writing as a means of expressing her own experiences and coming to grips with her gender identity. Virginia Woolf, a feminist, argues that women's writings inherently feminine and that all scientific evidence comparing men's and women's intellectual capacities for writing is erroneous and has no basis in reality. Woolf writes:

Woman's writing is always feminine; early anatomists (Victorian doctors) felt that women's physiological functions diverted around 20 % of their creative energy away from brain activity. Similarly, Victorian anthropologists thought (incorrectly) that the

male brain's frontal lobes were heavier and more developed than the female brain's lobes (qtd. in Gnanamony 173-74).

Florens slowly but surely comes to appreciate the harshness of the outer world as she makes her way through the woods in quest of the blacksmith. She starts to express her feelings of isolation and alienation. She found refuge in her departed white master's room. She started writing her life story on the room's floor.

There is no more room in this room. These words cover the floor. From now will stand to hear me. The walls make trouble because lamplight is too small to by. I am holding light in one hand and carving letters with the other. My arms ache but I have need to tell you this. I cannot tell it to anyone but you. I am near the door and at the closing now...Maybe one day you will learn. If so, come to this farm again, part the snakes in the gate you made, enter this big, awing house, climb the stairs and come inside this talking room in daylight. If you never read this, no one will. These careful words, closed up and wide open, will talk to themselves. ( A Mercy 158-159).

Writing for Florens has aided her in overcoming the hardships she faces as a female slave. For her, words serve as a place of safety and a means of escape from her psychological fomentations. Florens uses them to explain her experiences as a plentiful daughter, then as a tormented slave, and finally as a injured female citizen according to the limited laws of white patriarchal society. Indeed, words have aided Florens in reconciling her own history and enduring the losses she has encountered throughout her life. In this regard, Riegel Christian says that *"words do make it possible to comprehend those losses and their effects on the course of (one's) life. And that, after all, is a type of miracle"* (112). Florens, in fact, knows the power of writing since it frees her from the etched agony in her heart. Judith Harris thinks

that writing is a good tool for resolving and comprehending one's trials and tribulations in this situation. She writes:

Writing is more than a defense—an asylum or refuge into which one can withdraw—it is also an armor one puts on to do battle. Coming to voice is not as simple as it sounds; and it is also an armor one puts on to do battle. Coming to voice is not as simple as it sounds; and it is not the same as using voice, vocalizing, or even signifying. Voice, in both the psychoanalytic and literary encounter, is not only a means of expressing one's pain, but it is also a means of repeating painful experiences that cry out for understanding. (19)

Women authors must overcome all of life's obstacles in order to write and cure their wounded spirits, as well as erase the wounds inflicted by society. Women's therapeutic use of writing echoes the romantics' description of poetry as "a process that could not help but recover and re-enact half-remembered, half-forgotten psychic material" (Harris 22). Florens is also capable of demonstrating her survival skills and characteristics. She overcomes all kinds of racial prejudices and ill-treatment at the hands of the social system, and she also survives by refusing to let white males murder her humanity. Florens proves her capacity to stand on her own two feet, since liberty is defined as being self-sufficient, and humanness is not for sale. She demonstrates her capacity to endure any treatment that would transform her into another's property. As a consequence, she gains her liberty (158).

Storytelling assists in externalizing the ego and assuaging the difficulties that afflict it. Additionally, as shown, storytelling provides a technique for voicing the unvoiced and speaking the unthinkable. Indeed, it has shown how literary expression enables women to empower themselves, reconcile their pain, and come to grips with and maintain a strong sense



of self. Florens, as a writer towards the conclusion of the novel, writes about her and other women's suffering in a world dominated by males and oppressed on the basis of race. She demonstrates the everyday fear and social deprivation that women face as females. Florens also lives on the strength of men. The occurrence at the blacksmith's home exemplifies this. She ultimately makes her way to the blacksmith's home, where the blacksmith directs her to the farm after she informs him of her purpose for traveling. Florens cares for a little kid with whom she has a rocky connection when he is away from the home. She accidentally injures the kid, and when the blacksmith learns of it, he becomes outraged and orders her to leave the home. When Florens came home after her abandonment by the blacksmith, "she appeared proud, rather than a wounded, bare foot, and bloodied woman" (149).

### 4.14. Female Survival via Motherhood: Motherhood's Strength

"*A Mercy*" skilfully depicts the mother-daughter tie via the lens of Florens' relationship with her mother, Lina's relationship with Florens, Rebekka's children, and lastly Sorrow's relationship with her little daughter. While battling for survival, this multi-racial group of women who have been uprooted from their homes, orphaned, and abandoned, like others, continues to be fearful of American culture. The cultural re-creation of slave suffering demonstrates the white mirror's inability to reflect black desire, hence perpetuating the black battle for subjectivity (Schreiber 27). They find in motherhood the possibility of combating injustice through love for one another and for their children. As a consequence, parenting became a source of empowerment and a means for change for both black and white women in that context. Morrison describes motherhood as "*fundamentally and profoundly a form of resistance, essential and integral to black women's fight against racism and their ability to achieve self-and cultural well-being,*" (19).

Surprisingly, the novella's notion of motherhood is motivated by a variety of factors and is shaped and defined by a variety of ties. Motherhood's strength and empowerment are what enable us to create the better future we want for ourselves and our children. Morrison has essentially addressed the infiltration of patriarchy, society, social status, cultural past, and, unavoidably, race into the notion of motherhood in *A Mercy*. On the other hand, "*the characters are overwhelmed by their helplessness as a result of both communal and personal trauma.*" (Schreiber 138). The protagonists in *A Mercy* relive their maternal memories in order to get a better knowledge of them. The African-American woman, mother, and daughter, becomes historically the powerful and enigmatic evocation of a long-gone cultural synthesis—the Mother's Law (Spillers 479).

Morrison at first explored the concept of motherhood in the setting of slavery, as well as the implications of motherhood and daughterhood for slave women. She also distinguishes between biological and foster moms, as shown by the biological mothers of Florens and Rebekka, as well as Lina's adoption of Florens as her foster daughter. Finally, she contrasts black and white moms, demonstrating what connects and differentiates them. Florens' connection with her mother is particularly difficult since it is characterized by slavery and so have all of the related themes of deprivation, pain, and racism. By separating Florens and her mother from her mother's love, companionship, and care, slavery, as a despotic historical behemoth, brought Florens and her mother agony, sorrow, and long-lasting wounds. Florens and her mother are practically D'Ortega's slaves. D'Ortega decides to surrender Florens to Jacob Vaark in exchange for a debt he owes him, and so starts the lengthy epic of mother-daughter anguish. Florens' mother lives near d' Ortega's home "*a lady with two children standing at the doorway. One on her hip, the other concealed below her skirts*" (*A Mercy* 21) catches Jacob's eye.

D'Ortega, on the other hand, refuses to give Jacob the lady, claiming that Florens' mother is a valued house slave and that *"The wife would not permit. She is incapable of surviving without her"* (A Mercy 22). Florens' mother, as an alternative, offers to have her own daughter taken away:

The little child moved forth from behind her mother. On her feet were a pair of woman's shoes that were much too large... The mother approached, clutching the young child on her hip. Her voice is hardly audible above a whisper, but her desperation is unmistakable. 'Excuse me, Senhor. Certainly not me. Take her with you. Consider my daughter (A Mercy 24).

Florens' mother refers to her daughter as the "ill-shod child that the mother was tossing away" (A Mercy 32) when she hands her over to Jacob Vaark, and Jacob interprets Florens' mother's conduct and attitude as cruel and pitiless. He paints an image of black motherhood as violent, nasty, indifferent, and frigid. As a white guy, Jacob feels Florens' mother failed to live up to and produce the perfect mother's dream as a black mother. As a consequence, he neatly portrays Florens' mother as evil and convinces himself that *"acquiring [Florens] may be perceived as a rescue"* (A Mercy 32) rather than an infringement on the daughter's right to her mother. Indeed, Florens has been plagued for a long time by the act of desertion, and it has remained an open sore in her mind. Florens attempts to explain her sentiments and response to what she thinks as her mother's desertion in the chapter she narrates.

According to her mother, she is being used as a scapegoat since she is unrelated to her. She continues to have unresolved emotions towards her mother and seeks an explanation for her actions. She compares her personal rejection and abandonment to *"a frail calf abandoned by the herd"* and *"a turtle without a shell"* (A Mercy 135). Furthermore, Florens says that her mother favours her little kid since he is *"her little boy... her baby boy on her hip,"* She is sure

that her mother favours her brother and lavishes him with more security and compassion than she lavishes on herself. Fortunately, Florens' mother defended and explained her conduct in the last chapter. Florens' mother believed that entrusting her daughter to Jacob Vaark would provide a better life for her. Florens, she believes, will have a better future on Jacob Vaark's land, away from D'Ortega. Monk Steve, in reaction to Florens' mother's abandonment, states:

Thus, the "abandonment" of Florens was not abandonment at all; rather, Florens' mother saw an opportunity for Florens to have a better life and seized it. Consequently, her mother believes that being a mother obliges one to give her child the best opportunity possible in life. She could not totally free Florens from slavery due to the nature of her status and ethnicity, but she could offer her a better life (5).

To her mother, what she has done is not desertion, but rather a rescue and redemption from the clutches of Florens' boss, who has started to cast a glance at her. Florens' mother informing Florens that *"a handkerchief wrapped over your breast did not sufficient, you (Florens) desire the shoes of a free woman. Senhor was drawn to you"* (A Mercy 164) and "One chance, I reasoned. However, there is a difference even if there is no protection (A Mercy 164). In this respect Collins quotes Zora N Hurston (1937) saying

Honey, de white man is de ruler of everything as fur as Ah been able tuh find out. Maybe it's some place way off in de ocean where de black man is in power but we don't know nothin' but what we see. So de white man throw down de load and don't tote it. He hand it to his womenfolk's. De nigger woman is de mule of de world so far as Ah can see (45)

As this comment demonstrates, black women have been liberated by interacting with several strata of society. As a consequence, Florens' mother is fully aware of the tyranny endured by African slaves. There is no differentiation between white and black women in this

environment when it comes to seeing them as assets to be used for sexual enjoyment. Both black and white women are oppressed in the same way, mostly due to their gender. By reducing women's social obligations to commodities defined only by their sensuous function, Simon De Beauvoir argues in her theoretical book, *Coming of Age* “*As she ages and becomes more unattractive, she loses her social standing and evolves into a monstrous monster that provokes revulsion and even dread*” (122-23).

Despite this, Rebekka experiences parenting in *A Mercy*. Rebekka is a white English woman who has been transported across the seas to marry a mystery guy in another nation. This does not imply she is a slave like the other character, but her experiences as a mother have been less than great. As Rebekka's experience demonstrates, parenthood may bring both pleasure and sadness. With the exception of Patrician, who like wise perishes as a child, none of Rebeckka's children until adolescence. Rebekka's confidence and optimism have been restored only as a result of her daughter Patrician. Their camaraderie and support assisted their mother in coping with the difficulties of life in the American wilderness, as well as diverting her focus away from her sadness at the loss of her other boys. Indeed, Patrician is seen as a source of empowerment by Rebekka.

On the other side, her death puts her back into sadness and depression. Rebekka is distraught when she is unable to accomplish her lifetime desire of becoming a mother. She was left alone after her husband's death, and she has been reclusive since. She withdraws from the community and ceases communicating with anyone outside her farm. Likewise; their partnership exemplifies how motherhood empowers both women and enables them to resist patriarchal tyranny. Lina assumes the role of Florens' surrogate mother upon her arrival at Jacob Vaark's farm. Numerous similarities exist between Lina and Florens, including the fact that both end up as slave children and are separated from their families as young children. Florens is sold into slavery at the age of eight and separated from her mother. Lina is one of

the few survivors in her town after a pandemic, and she yearns to be a part of a community and have a family.

### 4.15. Lina as Florens' Mother Figure

Florens represents an opportunity for her to offer her the care she has never had and to begin a family with her as a consequence. Lina takes on the role of Florens' mother excellently. Florens provides her with the opportunity to give the care she never had and to have a family. Lina *"had fallen in love with her right away, as soon as she saw her shivering in the snow"* the instant Florens set foot on Jacob's farm (*A Mercy* 58). Lina claims that when she looks at Florens, she smiles and is enveloped in love; similarly, Florens makes Lina feel passionate and cherished (*A Mercy* 6).

Florens and Lina are on the same page and communicate well. They became more close, spending *"memorable nights, lying together while Florens listened in rigid delight to Lina's stories"* as if they were mother and daughter (*A Mercy* 59). Lina and Florens become more and more like family during the course of their relationship. When he gets enraged, he strikes you with the flat of his hand. When he becomes enraged, he makes use of the flat of his hand to... They remain silent as she cleans the blood from her nose while meandering through the alleyways (102). Lina emphasizes her desire for a fresh future for Florens and her will to improve her destiny and avoid victimization in this line African Americans have long relied on narrative for self-definition and identity formation.

When it comes to the development of the narratives (fictional or otherwise), Sarah Worth says that *"the way we understand, order, and construct our own reality and our own personality is intrinsically related to the way we tell tales"* (54). A person's, communities, or nation's history may be founded on tales about cultural connections, ancestral tradition, tenacity in the face of adversity, and triumphs and failures. Thus, one might argue that these

stories serve as a narrative of community identity for both the storyteller and the listeners, allowing everyone to identify and empower themselves.

Florens wanted to hear "*stories of women trying to preserve their children from wolves and natural disasters*" (*A Mercy* 59). Her profound need for feminine boundaries, such as motherhood, is clear. She admires mothers who labour tirelessly to safeguard their children's wellbeing and to keep them close at hand. She strives not to be like her mother due to her feelings of abandonment. Florens reflected on the time she and Lina used to "*sleep in the damaged sleigh with Lina*" (*A Mercy* 4) and how much she "*needed Lina to describe how to shelter in the wilderness*" (40).

Lina's warmth and support provided her with the essential bravery. It seems that the only media through which African Americans could tell stories or even relay news was orality. When African Americans arrived in the United States for the first time, they were unable to attend school or write. As a result, oral tradition has transcended all other modes of historical representation, self-expression, and social information dissemination (Vans Panckeren 4). The oral tradition is an ancient mode of communication and an integral aspect of African American folklore; it also assists Black American writers such as Morrison in preserving their history.

Lina, as Florens' mother, symbolizes wisdom, knowledge, and an educational establishment. Florence alludes to Lina's instructions while on her expedition to locate the healer, adding, "*Lina says, and not all locals are like her, she adds, so watch careful*" (*A Mercy* 3). Florens struggles to memorize what she learned from Lina along her journey to locate the blacksmith in order to live and escape harm. Florens gains the tools necessary to empower herself and thrive in the woods as a result of Lina's words, advice, and directions.

Florens is capable of transcending her isolation and the trials she has endured. Because of their common experiences, the stories she tells her, and the advice she gives her. Florens and Lina are in dire need of attention and care as they make their way through life. Without a doubt, Morrison writes, *"the mother hunger – to be one or have one – both of them were reeling from that longing which, Lina knew, remained alive, traveling the bone"* (A Mercy 61). Florens and Lina are in dire need of compassion and care as they struggle to make their way through the world. For both of them, parenting is a survival strategy and a method to cope with their birth moms' desertion and grief.

Motherhood also has an effect on the female characters' subjectivities. Lina has an effect on Florens' subjectivity and her worldview. "Given the state of my teeth," Lina estimates, *"I'm probably seven or eight... and Sir has a clever way of obtaining without giving"* (3-5). This implies that Florens believes whatever Lina says and views Jacob through Lina's eyes. Lina's remarks had an effect on Florens' self-perception. Both of them are longing for compassion and attention as they struggle to make it in this world. For many, parenting is a survival strategy and a method to cope with their birth moms' desertion and grief.

At the outset of the tale, Florens may have been an easy target for males. Florens' vulnerability, her desire to please others, and, most importantly, her readiness and willingness to blame herself for the wrongs of others would be publicly recognized by males. Florens eventually gains the strength Lina and her mother want, declaring *"Mãe, you can have pleasure now because the soles of my feet are hard as cypress"* (A Mercy 159). She has survived much too much and has emerged mature and strong as a result of a lengthy maturing process. She has also developed an aura of invulnerability.

At the novel's conclusion, the story returns to Florens, who is ruminating over the blacksmith event; she addresses him as if he were present. Florens explains the events that



transpired at the blacksmith's residence and how she came to understand why her mother abandoned her by leaving her to Jacob. Florens has learnt through her tough life that her mother is incapable of protecting her from her owner's harshness; *"Florens cannot understand what her mother is saying to her, and her mother cannot understand what Florens wants to tell her"* *A Mercy*(161). Being a female slave on the Jublio plantation is like having an unhealed wound. Florens' mother saw Jacob see Florens as a human child, and she asserts that Jacob's response of "yes,

was not a God-given miracle. Bestowed by God. It was a mercy. Offered by a human. I stayed on my knees. In the dust where my heart will remain each night and every day until you understand what I know and long to tell you: to be given dominion over another is a hard thing; to wrest dominion over another is a wrong thing; to give dominion of yourself to another is a wicked thing. (*A Mercy* 165).

Florens' mother felt that only Jacob's goodness would be able to release her daughter from the hands of the vicious Portuguese slave master. On the other side, it is her realization of her mother's genuine love for Florens that ultimately saves her. Her mother's love was the purest compassion, and it was ultimately responsible for Florens' recovery, something neither Jacob nor the blacksmith could deliver. Similarly, the other women in *A Mercy* were able to mend their traumatic abandonment experiences by recognizing the profound bonds of parenting.

### 4.16. Sorrow and the Power of Motherhood

Sorrow is another mother in the novel. She is the lone survivor of a shipwreck. She struggles with her history, but motherhood has instilled in her a strong sense of self-worth. She establishes an imaginary friend called Twin while living alone on the seashore. In her vision, Sorrow and Twin do everything together. *"Both skinned down the damaged mast and began traversing a rough coastline,"* they wrote (115). Twin becomes her solitary company

and a source of comfort in her loneliness and feeling of bereavement. Sorrow is discovered by the Sawyers and recalls that she *"woke up naked under a blanket, with a warm wet cloth on her forehead . . . A woman with white hair was watching her"* (A Mercy 115). She attempts to talk, but Twin *"whispered NO, so she shrugged her shoulders and found that a convenient gesture for the other information"* (A Mercy 116). She will not utter more than a few words, and *"the housewife named her"* (A Mercy 117). She stops speaking and withdraws from social interactions.

Even after Jacob purchases her, she continues to communicate only with Twin and wanders aimlessly alone and away from everyone else. Sorrow is mistreated on several occasions by numerous guys. As a female slave, she associates these abuses and threats with other forms of tyranny and misery. When she stays with the Sawyers family, several occurrences indicate that she has been sexually assaulted. *"On occasion she had secret company other than Twin, but not better than Twin"* (A Mercy 117), hinting that Sawyers' guys were surreptitiously assaulting her. In another case, Sorrows acknowledges to Twin that she was pregnant with Sawyers' sons, asking *"whether it [her pain] was instead the result of the goings on behind the stack of clapboard, both brothers attending... because the pain was outside between her legs, not inside where the housewife said"* (117-8). Sorrow tries to make sense of what happened to her body, but she is without a mother with whom she may express the sorrow caused by the attacks and their consequences. Sorrow is unaware that she is pregnant or that her anguish is a result of sexual harassment and abuse. Indeed, black women have been sexually and physically abused by males. They were considered as devices capable of successfully dissipating men's fury and sexual desire. In her theoretical book, *In Search for our Mothers' Gardens*, believes

That black women and mothers stumbled blindly through their lives: creatures so abused and mutilated in body, so dimmed and confused by pain, that they considered

themselves unworthy even of hope. In the selfless abstractions their bodies became to the men who used them, they became more than "sexual objects.... Instead of being perceived as whole persons, their bodies became shrines: what was thought to be their minds became temples suitable for worship (401.)

Sorrow's destiny on Jacob's farm was not much better than it had been before. Lina feels *that "no good could come of leaving Mistress alone with Sorrow, and now that her stomach was low with child, she was even less reliable"* (A Mercy 53).

Due to the fact that Sorrow is pregnant, there is some friction between Rebekka and her over who is the father's child. Lina thinks he is Jacob's infant son. Sorrow is mistreated multiple times during the book, and when Jacob advises her to sleep inside the home, this indicates him, since he follows the same pattern as the previous men and abuses Sorrow. Regardless matter the circumstances; Sorrow is adamant on having her kid. *"took a knife and a blanket to the riverbank the moment the first pain hit"* (A Mercy 130). She is *"screeching when she had to, sleeping in between, until the next brute tear of body and breath"* when she is alone (A Mercy 130). She is confident that, despite the anguish, Willard and Scully would materialize to assist her. They witness Sorrow and *"kneeling in water as Sorrow pushed, they pulled, eased and turned the tiny form stuck between her legs"* (A Mercy 130) and Sorrow gives birth to a daughter. Following that, she is *"prompted by the legitimacy of her new status as a mother"* (A Mercy 131), and she is pleased to be a mother.

After giving birth to her kid, Sorrow feels strong as a mother. She starts by *"attending everyday tasks, arranging them around her infant's demands"* (A Mercy 132). She cares for her child and interacts with others in ways she did not before to the birth of her child. Twin, her imaginary friend, departed when she realized she no longer needs one. She now has a true and profound connection with her daughter. Sorrow starts conversing with Lina, Florens, and

Rebekka, and she becomes *"bold enough to comment to her mistress, it was fortunate that the blacksmith came to aid when you were dying"* (*A Mercy* 131). Sorrow realizes her true self, her confidence rises with the birth of her daughter, and she eventually gains the ability to speak for herself.

Sorrow adds another dimension to parenthood, empowering her and enabling her to care for both her kid and herself. Following her self-identification as *"I am your mother"* she said, *"My name is Complete"* (*A Mercy* 132). This indicates her entire satisfaction and identification with her mothering position. She was sure that by giving birth to a healthy kid, she had accomplished something significant on her own. Sorrow's aches were alleviated by the recollection of her baby's first yawn, and caring for and feeding her kid strengthened Sorrow to the point that she eventually became a genuine mother to her infant. As Sorrow is powerful, she does not like to be defined by others, as implied by the bad moniker bestowed upon her (Sorrow).

Hudson -Weems asserts that *"Africana people have long been denied not only the authority to name themselves, but also the authority to define themselves"* (18). Sorrow invents her own moniker (Complete). Sorrow gives herself a name in order to reclaim control of her life and her baby, and she is able to empower and mould herself via motherhood. In this regard, Bell hooks asserts that *"marginality is much more than a site of deprivation... it is also a site of radical possibility, a space of resistance... a site one stays in, even clings to, because it feeds one's capacity to resist."* (150). Thus, black women often discover in motherhood the opportunity to combat enslavement by loving and being loved while attempting to ensure their children's existence, rejecting positions of incompetent victims.

*"A Mercy"*'s central protagonists are truly strong women on the inside. Whatever life throws at them, whatever obstacles they face, they use the circumstance to their advantage

and trust in the strength of their own imaginations. They are prepared to die. They will not tolerate meaninglessness at random. They battle male predators. At the conclusion of the book, the substantial changes in the characters' lives are described from the perspectives of Willard and Scully, as well as Florens' personal testimony. Sorrow has improved significantly because *"she was less scatterbrained, more capable of handling responsibilities, and her child was always the first"* (A Mercy 146). Sorrow sometimes declines assistance from others since she only trusts herself.

Sorrow has developed a quick and aware sense of self as a result of the mothering force. For many, rediscovering and establishing mom bonds is the only way to overcome terrible childhood experiences. The recollections of a mother's guidance, the tenderness shared by sisters, and a mother's love for her newborn are genuine acts of compassion that preserve their lives in order for them to live independently. C.Fred Alford explains using Klein's words. *"Is there any reason to believe that what is available in intimate relationships, such as care, concern, understanding, and love, is automatically"* in principle available? *"to overcome the separation from one's mother during childhood"* (29). Lina, Sorrow, and Florens all feel such emotions as a result of parenthood. Those maternal sentiments and ties give a hint to their recovery from their painful recollections of abandonment.

*"A Mercy"*'s female characters overcome misfortune and suffering through motherhood. Through these exchanges, the characters come to understand the true meaning of compassion as they overcome their gender and class barriers. Sorrow discovers the real meaning of motherhood as she strives to save her own child and forge her own identity. Florens acknowledges her mother's genuine love and compassion when Lina remembers her mother's statements. As a consequence of these realizations, they are stronger than ever, and when they rise again, they will be able to eventually vanquish the world's enemies.

As she does in the bulk of her works, Toni Morrison addresses female issues such as quest, development, identity construction, empowerment, and survival in *A Mercy*. The novella illustrates the restrictive effect that cultural prejudices have on women and gives several solutions for overcoming these limitations. It highlights female characters who ultimately break free from confining societal norms, relegating them to the sidelines and forcing them to seek new forms of empowerment.

This chapter has delved into the novella "*A Mercy*" female empowerment and survival strategies. It has illustrated the victimization and adversity that women in the novella experience, and as a consequence, it has classified the many modes of survival used by the female characters to empower themselves. It demonstrates the characters' knowledge of their involvement in transforming their disadvantaged status, as well as their willingness to forsake and reject weakness in favor of strength as a means of survival.

Morrison captured the sorrow and despair of a repressed African-American lady confronted with injustice and humiliation. By doing so, she illuminates the circumstances of all women in patriarchal societies, including their responsibilities, roles, and social status. Her objective was to generalize the experiences of the female protagonist.

### 4.17. Conclusion

Morrison's *A Mercy* presents a woman determined to overcome patriarchal oppression by realizing her own power and, eventually, achieving a place in society via the figure of Florens. She is the kind who never yields to society's oppression and is always on the lookout for alternative paths to liberty. Rather of surrendering to society's slavery or resorting to insanity or suicide, the heroine and other female characters in the novella find peace and strength via sisterhood, motherhood, and education. The heroine comes to terms with her own self and welcomes the energy inside that will emerge to overcome obstacles and heal hurts.

Morrison portrayed a picture of women in a world defined and dominated by males. She has represented the experiences of female characters such as Florens, Lina, Rebekka, Sorrow, Jane, and Lydia while adhering to social norms that identify them as "*different*" and stomp on their freedom. Morrison discussed the portrayal of sisterhood, childbirth, and education as survival strategies used by the female characters. She illustrates how sisterhood is characterized by a complex network of relationships between women and provides a mechanism for them to live as long as they can depend on one another. Without a doubt, the community of women on Jacob Vaark's farm defeats attempts at subjugation and cures the sorrows and wounds caused by tyranny through mutual support and sincere dedication. Sisterhood among the novella's multiracial tribe of women enables them to overcome persecution as well as overcome the trials, challenges, and barriers inherent in being a woman in a sexist society. It has as well highlighted how the novella's female characters utilize motherhood as a source of power, identity, and authority. While moms utilize this capacity to identify and express themselves, daughters see motherhood as a protective and stabilizing force.

The chapter details the difficulties faced by slave mothers and the difficult choices they make in order to shield their children from the violence of their male masters. Toni Morrison demonstrated her ability to portray strong female characters that reject victimization and strive for survival. Rather of surrendering to society's confining standards or turning to suicide and insanity as alternatives, the novella's female protagonists argue for survival methods in the face of patriarchy's oppression. Additionally, the chapter proves this by vocalizing the mistreatment Florens, "*A Mercy*"'s protagonist and narrator of the African-American women's narrative, endures. Morrison universalizes female experiences and highlights Florens' pain and persecution in the world via the lens of an African-American female oppression state of affairs.

# **General Conclusion**



As a result of several cultural, historical, and economic shifts that influenced the globe around the turn of the century, women are aware of the oppressive, dominating, androcentric culture that confine them to become "ideal women" and "angels of the house" – clichés that became fundamental motivators for the battle for freedom and recognition in society. Aside from women activists who fought for women's rights by forming organizations and corporations, female writers allied by gender as well as societal problems endeavor to break with the past stereotypical representation of women through their writings. The rise of tremendous rage as a result of oppression compelled women authors to strive in order to unveil a form of expression. Patricia Meyer Sparks explains that anger fuels the energy in literary depictions of the professions of female teenagers around the turn of the century, whose frustrations are likely to last into adulthood. It develops significant questions of the woman-society relationship which sounds like the most real woman's response to bewilderment, dead ends, and society's inability to respond to women's needs over and over. She elucidates that this rage stems from society's failure to encompass women's needs, which she describes as "identical with men's...the substance is the same: for work and love, for independence and dependency, solitude and relationship, to enjoy community and value one's specialness" (321). With their cultures having established a completely different system crystallized in what is known as "real femininity," these female authors rejected the ideas of this cult and championed, to put it mildly, women's rights. These female writers, via their female heroines, highlight the shifting attitude of women from subservient to stubborn by affording various means of resistance such as women's bounds and writing.

Authors like Alice Munro and Toni Morrison highlight in their writings that women should be equal to men and they should strive for their rights. If they do not, they will not only ruin their own lives but also the lives and hopes of the next generations. They intend to boost women to

find ways to assert themselves and survive the harsh conditions by endorsing empowerment strategies such as motherhood, sisterhood, writing, among others.

Toni Morrison's and Alice Munro's works portray their dissatisfaction with their oppressive social context. Studying their works, one can travel back in time and gain insights into the traditions and the cultural mindset of different communities and the place of women in them. These works, de facto, convey a great deal about the community's social, economic, and literary transformations, as well as their effects on women's lives. Pouring out their personal pain in their writing, what stands out about their work is its powerful and liberating message. The authors of these pieces did not represent a gloomy, docile and frail woman; rather, Munro and Morrison generated a vista of surviving and powerful women. Through the protagonist's persistence, resilience, and determination to disrupt, if not to reform, the hegemonic order, both writers make the female characters models for their culture. The ingenuity of these female authors rests in their capacity to turn adversity into a creative force. Their protagonists did not stay hampered by their societies' restrictions but turned to be powerful, inventive, and resourceful.

Alice Munro and Toni Morrison develop unique female heroines who, despite the obstacles they face, are capable of deceiving their hegemonic communities. The patriarchal society retains its dominance through oppression, yet the same subjugation prompted the characters to adopt survival techniques that may have destabilized the dominant culture in which they lived. They challenged, as in Michel Foucault's thought, the power structure, that attempt to turn them into 'docile bodies,' upon which control is exercised. Each one of these authors approaches her sense of freedom and independence in her own unique way. Munro adopts revolt and writing to get away from the conventional and sensible societal rules that force her protagonist to be an ideal submissive woman. Del, the heroine, realizes the need of overcoming traditional misconceptions about femininity. She succeeds in empowering herself

and gaining independence without jeopardizing her mental and emotional well-being. Munro's goal is to demonstrate how empowering girls and women can alter the world. Munro's depiction of sexuality as a yearning for liberation is another unique and pivotal feature of *Lives of Girls and Women*. Morison, however, employs sorority and mother-daughter relationship as therapeutic methods for the female characters in *A Mercy* to reject their societal conditions rather than remain powerless. Florens defies patriarchal reasoning by rejecting the constraints that traditional societies put on the black female voice. By this token, Morison stood for the unheard voices in situations of racism, slavery, inferiority, sexism, and many other humanitarian issues. *A Mercy* depicts human rights' violations when women and girls are sold into slavery and when women are denied the opportunity to plan their own kids, including being raped against their will.

This thesis was an attempt to explore female survival in two contemporary feminist novels; *Lives of Girls and Women* by Alice Munro, and Toni Morison's *A Mercy*. It provides an analysis of the different strategies women adopt to empower themselves and to overstep patriarchal victimization. The thesis has displayed the oppression, both physical and psychological, to which women have been subjected in a patriarchal society. Moreover, it has listed the obstacles they face while trying to voice their predicaments. It has shown that instead of surrendering to society's restricted rules or resorting to suicide and madness, women espouse empowerment to find a way out to liberation from patriarchy's oppression. Furthermore, it has been revealed that in voicing the intimidation to which female characters whether white or black are exposed, the two authors, Munro and Morrison universalize female experiences and voice their sufferings through a Canadian female oppression case and an African American example.

Above all, the contribution of this thesis lies in tracing different patterns or strategies of female Survival: rebellion and writing in Alice Munro's *Lives of Girls and Women* and Sorority in Toni Morrison *A Mercy* and in grouping the two writers in one single study.

The first chapter entitled "Women: History and Misconception" has addressed major literary concepts related to the topic of the research. It provides definitions for various notions, including empowerment and survival. It has demonstrated how man's traditional association with culture has established a position of privilege from which men are encouraged to write, while women have been denied access to language and thus must overcome intoxicating conceptions of femininity in order to envision themselves as cultural creators. Additionally, it has dived into numerous issues related to the subject of study.

The second chapter entitled "Feminism: Theory and Concepts" has developed female agency and autonomy by demonstrating the numerous varieties of feminism. It gave insights about the fluidity of feminism and African feminism have been disclosed. This chapter has casted light on how it was until the second half of the nineteenth century that black women started to quest for their rights and how black women find in their pens substitute to gain recognition which neither law, nor society offers. It has also revealed how throughout history many female writers have adopted male pen names to achieve success in a male dominated field.

In chapter three, entitled "Female Survival through Rebellion and Writing" in Alice Munro *Lives of Girls and Women*, has analyzed female empowerment through rebellion and writing. It has revealed that writing becomes the refuge for the protagonist, speace, salvation and ultimately healing from past experiences and from the wounds society inflected on her. Meanwhile, it has directed a spotlight upon the troubles and mistreatment to which women are exposed. The chapter has also dealt with such issues as sexuality, enforced marriage, and

exposed their negative effects upon women. It traces the physical and psychological growth of the protagonist, Del Jordan, and follows the rebellion she wages against society's strict rules that define women as inferior and voiceless. The chapter scrutinizes how Del Jordan divorces the realm of passion and espouses instead empowerment as her last exit. The chapter has also exhibited how the protagonist resorts to art, whether writing and reading, to overcome her bitter experiences in society as well as to come to terms with her own self and her past. It has been demonstrated that writing can be healing. Through her literary experiences and through the protagonists she creates in her fiction, the protagonist, Del Jordan has re-written her life and journeyed through the jungle of her past experiences to defeat the ghosts that still haunt and disturb her in the present. The chapter has also revealed the success of the protagonist, Del Jordan, in her literary career.

In the fourth chapter, entitled Female Survival through Women's Bound in Toni Morrison's *A Mercy* the depiction of black female characters in their quest for identity in African-American literature has been an important focus of this chapter. In her novel *A Mercy*, Tony Morrison used her writing to portray the life of people of her own race, blacks, who were alienated from the American society. Her focal point is to afford voice to those who have been silenced by society. Additionally, Morrison's narrative is deeply concerned with the harsh conditions that black females were facing. Morrison's concern is also to shed light on the tremendous impact that common social ideologies can impose on the most vulnerable member of the society, a childlike Florens, Sorrow, and Jane. Through the given images of the black females in American society, Morrison asserts that although black women in such a society share the same history which is full of oppression and hardships, not all of them submit to those conditions. Nevertheless, Florens is a modern character who believes in herself as a black and does not accept what society imposes on her. Hence, by portraying Florens's strength Morrison wants to break the traditional consideration of black women as weak and worthless instead

she constructs a hopeful vision in the revival of black female identity. This chapter explores feminist issues such as the quest, maturation, identity construction, empowerment, and survival. This chapter mirrors how unbearable influence of social stereotypes inflicted on enslaved women and provides alternative ways to break the social and cultural chains. It delineates the women's characters as they violate and ultimately break free from the oppressive societal rules positioning them within the margin and taking other alternatives to empower themselves.

This chapter has discussed female strategies of empowerment in the novel, *A Mercy*. It has shown the victimization and the hardships into which women, in the novel, are exposed to and consequently has cataloged three different patterns of empowerment adopted by the female figures to empower themselves. It has conveyed the protagonists' consciousness of their participation in the transformation of their marginalized status and by forsaking weakness and taking on in its place empowerment as their means to survive. This chapter introduces female empowerment through women's bond. It puts into relief sisterhood, motherhood, and writing as means or strategies of female empowerment. Accordingly, Through the portrayal of various women bonds, *A Mercy* illustrates the importance of relationships between women like sisterhood and motherhood. The bonding between the main character, Florens, and Jane, a white girl from a Presbyterian community is very important for Florens because she helps her to escape. Their sisterhood is possible because they identify with each other's difficulties. The friendship between Lina and Rebekka takes time to develop as they are both not sure how to behave. Soon they are put together to execute chores around the farm and through sisterhood they are able to overcome the difficulties imposed by the wilderness and thus, manage to survive. Morrison exerted her writing skills to demonstrate how motherhood is not limited to biological connections as different women characters come to act as mothers and daughters. In *A Mercy*, Lina and Florens become mother and daughter, respectively to each

other. Together they are able to create an enriching bond that helps them to survive and transgress the reality they were living in.

This thesis is an attempt to elucidate how Alice Munro and Toni Morrison have articulated the suffering and agony of silenced women. In an endeavor to reach this, they expose the conditions of all women in a patriarchal context, their functions, roles, and social status. Their aim is to universalize the experiences of the female characters and make them heard wherever women are subjected to oppression and degradation.

Through the characterization of the protagonists; Del and Florens, Munro and Morrison provide the reader a type of woman who is eager to face patriarchal victimization through acknowledging her own power and ultimately securing a place in society. She represents a type who never surrenders to society's oppression and who always finds other choices for liberation. Instead of simply capitulating to society's enslavement or resorting to madness and suicide as alternatives, the protagonist, and even other female figures in both novels, find comfort and empowerment through rebellion, writing, the sister/mother bonds, and writing. The protagonists discover their true selves and grasp the power inside them that surface to face the troubles they encounter in society and heal the wounds inflicted on them.

This thesis has also incorporated how Alice Munro, Toni Morrison draw powerful women who reject victimization and struggle for survival. The female protagonists in *Lives of Girls and Women* and *A Mercy* espouse empowerment to find their way out to liberation from patriarchy's oppression. By this token, both authors universalize female experiences and voice their sufferings in the world. These female writers are vanguards per se. They succeed in being among the very few bold turn-of-the-century female authors who attempted to escape the clutches of their cultures by offering hope to their female contemporaries in escaping the definitions, expectations, and prescriptions of their societies. Female authors bring up new avenues for their female audience to empower one another and endure their position. Within

their works, they strive to instill feminist ideas of liberty, self-expression, and self-assertion, sister accord, motherhood, and education. What we can glean from this analysis is that they reflect the universal longing for freedom, but this time from gender-biased tyranny.

The sample texts chosen for this study are rich in theme in content. Strategies or ways of survival and empowerment is one way of looking into and analyzing them. A great deal of other themes related to feminism can be explored in depth. Examples include the use of the bildungsroman, the concept of motherhood and sisterhood from another perspective other than as a means of empowerment, women under post colonialism, postmodern feminism, and ecofeminism, among others. In relation to the theme of the body and sexuality in *The Lives of Girls and Women* and even in Morrison's text, it can be deeply developed and explored in a full thesis. The notion of the body is paramount in the text and the author's concern with the theme can be tackled from different perspectives, in relation to the different theories that emerged with the importance given to cosmetics and body surgeries. Language also in the texts is another clue. Some future research may concentrate on the use of language by these female authors and the difference between women and male writing. One more perforation into the worlds of the two texts may be concerned with the relation between women, the suffering they undergo under society's victimization, and the nation living under the control of foreign domination; the biological mother and the national mother bleeding.



# **Works Cited**

---

## Works Cited

---

### Primary Sources

Morrison, Toni. *A Mercy*. New York: Alfred A. Knoff, 2009.

Munro, Alice. *Lives Of Girls And Women*. Ontario: Penguin Group, 2008.

### Secondary Sources

#### Books, Articles And Theses

- Anderton, Katie. "The Denigration ofThe Hyper-Feminine Woman." Medium, Fearless She Wrote, 12 Aug. 2020.
- Andrea, O'reilly Albany. *Toni Morrison and Motherhood: A Politics of the Heart* .Newyork: University Of New York Press, 2004.
- Arianne, Chernock. *Men andThe Making Of Modern British Feminism*. Standford: Standford Armstrong, Elisabeth, "Marxist And Socialist Feminism" (2020). Study Of Women And Gender: Faculty Publication, 2020.
- Atwood, Margaret. *Survival: A Thematic Guide To Canadian Literature*. Toronto: House OfAnansi Press Ltd. 1972.
- Banet-Weiser, Sarah, Et Al. "Post Feminism, Popular Feminism And Neoliberal Feminism?'" .Feminist Theory, Vol.21,No.1,Jan.2020,Pp.3-24.
- Baraka, Amiri. "Afro-American Literature & Class Struggle." *Black American Literature Forum*. School Of Education, Indiana State University, 1980.
- Batiwala, Srilatha. *Empowerment Of Women In South Asia*. Asian-South Pacific,1993.
- Batliwala, Srilatha. *The Meaning Of Women's Empowerment, Concepts And practices*: New Delhi ,1994.
- Baym, Nina. *Feminism And American Literary History: Essays*. California: Library Of Cataloging In Publication-Data, 1992.
- Beckman, Brenda. *Genre And Gender: Autobiography And Self- Representation In The Diviners*. Alberta: The University Of Alberta, 2004.

## Works Cited

---

- Bell, Leslie C. *Hard To Get: Twenty-Something Women And The Paradox Of Sexual Freedom*. 1st Ed. Berkeley: University Of California Press, 2013. Web.
- Berger, Jonah And Milkman, Katherine L. *What Makes Online Content Viral?* Journal Of American Marketing Association, 2012. Web.
- Beteille, Andre. *Empowerment, Economic And Political Weekly*, March ,6,2019.
- Bhasin, Kamala And Nighat Said Khan. *Feminism : Various Approaches And Its Values*. Web, Biblical studies. Otg.Uk/Pdf/Ijt/37.1-058.Pdf.
- Bindel, Julie. “There’s Nothing ‘Empowering’ About The Sex Work On Only Fans”. April 2020. The Spectator. Web.
- Black Past, B. *The Combahee River Collective Statement*. Black Past.Org. November 16.2012.
- Bloom, A., & Breines, W. "Takin It To The Streets": A Sixties Reader. New York,2015.
- Bloom, Harold. Toni Morrison: Modern Critical Views. New York: Chelsea House,1990.
- Bookmann, Ann and Sandra Morgan. *Women And The Politics Of Empowerment: Women In The Political Economy*. Philadelphia: Temple Up., 1998.
- Boserup, Ester .*Women’s Role In Economic Development*’, New York, St. Martin’s Press, 1970.Boston: McGraw-Hill.
- Bouson, Brooks. *Embodied Shame: Uncovering Female Shame In Contemporary Women’s Writings*. New York: Albany, 2009.
- Bouson-Brooks, J. Brutal Choreographies. *Oppositional Strategies And Narrative Design In The Novels Of Margaret Atwood*. Amherst : The University Of Massachusets Press, 1993.
- Brackett, Virginia. “Critical Survey of Long Fiction.”Feminist Long Fiction1-5 :2012.

## Works Cited

---

- Brackett, Virginia. "Feminist Long Fiction." *Critical Survey of Long Fiction*, Fourth Edition (2010): 1-5. Literary Reference Center.
- Brink, Andre. *Novel: Language And Narrative From Cervantes To Calvino*. Hampshire: Mcmillan Press, 1998.
- Brody, L. R., & Hall, J. A. *Gender, Emotion, and Expression*. In M. Lewis & J. Haviland-Jones (Eds.), *Handbook Of Emotions* (2nd Ed., Pp. 338–349). New York: Guilford Press, 2000.
- Blackstone, Amy. *Gender Roles and Society*. Santa Barbara; University of Maine, 2003. Web. 20 March 2017. Electronic Version.
- Brooks, G. R., & Gilbert, L. A. *Men In Families: Old Constraints, New Possibilities*. In Levant & W. S. Pollack (Eds.), *A New Psychology Of Men* (Pp. 252–279). New York: Basic Books.
- Brooks, G. R., & Good, G. E. (Eds.). (2001a). *The New Handbook Of Psychotherapy And Counseling With Men: A Comprehensive Guide To Settings, Problems, And Treatment Approaches* (Vol. 1). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. Business & Society, 52(1), 105-134. Doi: 10.11.
- Bussey, Kay and Bandura, Albert. *Social Cognitive Theory Of Gender Development* And C. R., Jr. (1999). Gender-Based Emotional Stereotyping. *Journal Of Counseling*
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. London: Routledge, 1990.
- Brown, Leslie, and Anne Valk. *Living with Jim Crow: African American Women and memories of the segregated South*. Palgrave MacMillan, 2010.
- Canary, D. J., & Emmers-Sommer, T. M. *Sex and Gender Differences In Personal Relationships*. New York: Guilford Press, 1997.

## Works Cited

---

- Canary, D. J., & Hause, K. S. *Is There Any Reason To Research Sex Differences In Communication?* *Communication Quarterly*, 41, 129–144. 1997
- Glotfelty, Cheryll ; Fromm, Harold (Eds.) *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks In Literary Ecology*. Athens: University Of Georgia Press, 1996.
- Christ, Carol P. Margaret Atwood: *The Surfacing Of Women's Spiritual "Quest And Vision"*, *Signs: A Journal Of Culture Of Women And Society*, 2.2 Winter 1976, 325
- Christ, Carol. *Diving Deep And Surfacing: Women Writers On Spiritual Quest*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1995.
- Christensen, A. (1987). *Detection Of Conflict Patterns In Couples*. In K. Hahlweg & M.
- Cixous, Helene. "The Newly Born Woman." *The Helene Cixous Reader*. Ed. Susan Sellers. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Collier-Thomas, Bettye, And Vincent P. Franklin, Eds. *Sisters In The Struggle: African American Women In The Civil Rights-Black Power Movement*. Nyu Press, 2001.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, And The Politics Of Empowerment*. Routledge, 2002.
- Comeau, Paul. *Margaret Laurence's Epic Imagination*. Edmondton: The University Of Alberta Press, 2005.
- Cooke, Nathalie. "Lions, Tigers And Pussycats: Margaret Atwood Biographically." *Margaret Atwood: Works And Impact*. Ed. Reingard Nischik. New York: Camden House, 2000.
- Coontz, Stephanie. *A Strange Stirring: The Feminine Mystique And American Women At The Dawn Of The 1960s*. New York: Basic Books, 2011.

## Works Cited

---

- Correa, Charles. "Quest For Identity". Architecture And Identity, Edited By Robert Powell. Singapore: Concept Media/Aga Khan Award For Architecture, 1983.
- Cox, Alisa. *Alice Munro*. Tavistock: Northcote House, 2004.
- Crenshaw, Kimberle "Demarginalizing The Intersection Of Race And Sex: A Black Feminist Critique Of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory And Antiracist Politics," University Of Chicago Legal Forum: Vol. 1989: Iss. 1, Article 8. Available At: <http://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/Uclf/Vol1989/Iss1/8>.
- Crick, N. R., & Dodge, K. A. *A Review And Reformulation Of Social-Information Processing Mechanism In Children's Social Adjustment*. Psychological Bulletin, 1997
- Culler, Jonathan D. "' Feminism In Time': A Response." *Mlq: Modern Language Quarterly* 65.1 (2004): 177-194.
- Dandekar, Hemalata. *Indian Women's Development: Four Lenses*. South Asia .Bulletin, Vi (1), 2-10. Delhi. 1986.
- Das, Pauline. *The Politics Of Survival In The Novels Of Margaret Atwood*. Dis. Baharathiar University, India, 2009.
- Davis Matsutomo And Linda Juang, *Culture And Psychology*. Wadsworth: Cengage Learning, Third Edition, 69. 2008.
- -Davis, Angela. *Women, Race, And Class*. London: The Women's Press, 1982.
- De Beauvoir, Simone. *The Second Sex*. Trans. H. M. Parshley. New York: Vintage Books, 1974.
- De Beauvoir, Simone. *The Coming of Age*. Trans. Patrick O'brian. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1972.
- De Oliveira, Natalia Fontes. *Of Women Bonds: Motherhood, Sisterhood And The Ethics Of Care In Toni Morrison's Sula And A Mercy*. Diss. University Of Federalde Mina Gerais, 2011.

## Works Cited

---

- Deaux, K. (1985). *Sex And Gender. Annual Review Of Psychology*, 36, 49–81. Deaux, K., & La France, M. (1997). Gender. In D. T.
- Deaux, K., & Major, B. (1987). *Putting Gender Into Context: An Interactive Model Of Gender- Related Behavior*. *Psychological Review*, 94, 369–389. Discourses.” Boundary 2, Vol. 12/13,Duke University Press, 1984
- Drake, Jennifer. *Review : Third Wave Feminism. Listen Up: Voices From The Next Feminist Generation*. Edited By Barbara Findlen. Seattle: Seal Press, 1995.
- Emmeline Pankhurst, “Freedom Or Death” In *Political Dissent: A Global Reader: Modern Crises, And Alternative Visions: Third World Womenís Perspectives, Development Alternatives With Women For A New Era*, New Delhi.
- Emmons, R. A. (1999). *Personality And Forgiveness*. In: M.E. Mccullough, K. I.,Pargament& C. E. Thoresen (Eds.), *Forgiveness: Theory, Research, And Practice*, Pp.156-175 New York: Guilford Press.
- Enright, R. D. *Forgiveness Is A Choice: A Step-By-Step Process For Resolving Anger And Restoring Hope*. Washington, Dc: American Psychological Association,2000
- Frye, Northrop. "Conclusion", *Literary History Of Canada: Canadian Literature In English*, 2nd Ed.
- Ernest, John, Ed. *The Oxford Handbook Of The African American Slave Narrative*. Oxford Handbooks, 2014.
- Fagot, Beverly I., And Mary D. Leinbach. “The Young Child’s Gender Schema: Environmental .
- Ferguson, K. E. *The Feminist Case Against Bureaucracy*. Philadelphia: Pennsylvania,1984.

## Works Cited

---

- Filipczak, Dorota. "Autonomy And Female Spirituality In Polish Context: Divining The Self." *Feminist Philosophy Of Religion: Critical Readings*. Eds. Pamela Anderson And Beverley Clack. London: Routledge, 2004. 210-222.
- Firestone, Shulamith. *The Dialectic Of Sex: The Case For Feminist Revolution*. 1970. London: Jonathan Cape, 1971. Print.
- Florence Nightingale, "On Family Life" In *Suggestions For Thought*, Ed. By Michael D. Calabria, , 1994.
- Fraser, Wayne. *The Dominion Of Women: The Personal And The Political In Canadian Women's Literature*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1991.
- Fraser, Wayne. *The Dominion Of Women: The Personal And The Political In Canadian Women's Literature*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1991.
- Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy ofThe Oppressed*. Penguin Books, London, 1996.
- French, Marilyn. *Beyond Power. On Women, Men And Morals*. Ny: Summit, 1985
- Friedan, Betty. *The Feminine Mystique*. New York: Dell Publishing, 1979.
- Friedmann, John. *Empowerment: The Politics Of Alternative Development*. Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1992.
- Gaard, Greta And Patrick Murphy. *Ecofeminism Literary Criticism*. Illinois: University Of Illinois Press, 1998.
- Gamble, Sarah. *Routledge Companion To Feminism And Postfeminism*. London: Routledge, 2006.
- Gaur, Rashemi. "Gender Stereotypes And Affirmations Of Self In Alice Munro's *Lives Of Girls AndWomen*." *Studies In Women Writers In English*. Vol. 2. Eds. Mohit Kray, And Rama Kundu. Delhi: Nice Printing Press, 2004..



## Works Cited

---

- Gautan, Vijeta And Jyotsna Sinha. "Role Of Nature In Self-Exploration In Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing*." *International Journal Of Scientific And Research Publications* 2.4 (2012): 1-3.
- Gerson, G.(2002) 'Liberal Feminism: Individuality And Oppositions' In *Wollstonecraft*
- Giddens, Anthony. *Sociology*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009. Print
- Gilbert, S. T. Fiske, & L. Gardner (Eds.), *The Handbook Of Social Psychology* (4th Ed., Pp. 788–827).
- Gilbert, Sandra And Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman In The Attic*. Connecticut: Yale Up., 2000.
- Glenn, Evelyn. *The Social Construction And Institutionalization Of Gender And Race. In Countdown To Qualls, Gender Theories, 2014.*
- -Gloria I. Joseph, "Black Mothers And Daughters: Their Roles And Function In American Society," In *Common Differences: Conflicts In Black And White Feminist Perspectives*. Boston: South End Press, 1986: 76–81.
- -Gnanamony, Robert. *Literary Polyrythms: New Voices In New Writings In English*. New Delhi: Sarup & Sons, 2005.
- Goldstein (Eds.), *Understanding Major Mental Disorders: The Contribution Of Family Interaction Research* (Pp. 250–265). New York: Family Process Press.
- Goodman, Donna. *The Untold Side Of Second Wave Feminism*. Liberation Media, 2019.
- Gray, J. (1992). *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*. New York: Harpercollins.
- Greene, Gayle. *Changing The Story: Feminist Fiction And The Tradition*. Blooming to: Indiana University Press, 1991.

## Works Cited

---

- Griffen, Venessa. (Ed) (1989). *Women, Development And Empowerment: A Pacific Feminist Perspectives*. Kuala Lumpur; Asia And Pacific Development Center.
- Grosser, Kate. "Corporate Social Responsibility And Gender Equality: Women As Stakeholders And The European Union Sustainability Strategy." *Business Ethics: A European Review* 18.3 (2009): 290-307.
- Guy-Sheftall, Beverly. *Words Of Fire: An Anthology Of African- American Feminist Thought*. The New Press, 1995.
- Haldar, Santwana. "Patterns Of Feminism And That Long Silence." *Studies In Women Writers In English*. Vol. 6. Ed. Rama Kundu. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers And Distributors, 2007. 202-34.
- Hammil, Faye. *Canadian Literature*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh Up., 2007.
- Harris, Alice Kessler. *William Mcbrien Faith Of A (Woman) Writer*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1988.
- Harris, Judith. *Signifying Pain: Constructing And Writing The Self Through Writing*. Albany: University Of New York, 2003.
- Harp, H.T. *Empowerment Of Mental Health Consumers In Vocational Rehabilitation*. *Psychosocial Rehabilitation Journal*, 17, 83-90.1994.
- Hasenfeld, Y. *Human Service Organizations*. Engelwood Cliffs, Nj: Prentice-Hall.
- Harris, Margaret. "Authors And Authority In *Lives Of Girls And Women*." *Sidney Studies In English* 12 (101-13): 1986
- Harvey, Elizabeth And Jenifer Birkett. *Determined Women: Studies In The Construction Of The Female Subject, 1900-90*. New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1991. .
- Hashemi, Syed. Md, Sidney Ruth And Ann P. Rilley (1995): 'Rural Credit Programs And Women Empowerment'. In *World Development: The Multi-Disciplinary*

## Works Cited

---

International Journal Devoted To The Study And Promotion Of World Development.  
Amsterdam: Elsevier Science.

- Hasin F, Hasan A K M B, Musa H. *Women Empowerment Model: Strategies To Overcome Challenges*. Journal Of Fundamental And Applied Sciences .
- Heavey, C L Et Al. "The Longitudinal Impact Of Demand And Withdrawal During Marital Conflict." Journal Of Consulting And Clinical Psychology Vol. 63,5 (1995): 797-801. Doi:10.1037//0022-006x.63.5.797 .
- Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. *The Phenomenology Of Spirit*. Trans. A.V.Miller. Delhi: Jainendra Press, 1998.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Being And Time: A Translation Of Sein Und Zeit*. Trans. Joan Stambaugh. Albany: University Of New York Press, 1996.
- Heidegger, Martin. *The Phenomenology Of Mind*. Trans. J. B. Baillie. New York: Cosimo, 2005.
- Hentz, Caroline Lee. *Marcus Warland: Or, The Long Moss Spring*. Tb Peterson, 1852.
- Herbert, William.A *History Of Canadian Literature*. Montreal: Mcgill-Queen's Up., 2001.
- Herk, Aritha Van. "Margaret Laurence: The Shape Of The Writer's Shadow." Margaret Laurence: Critical Reflections. Ed. David Staines. Ottawa: University Of Ottawa Press, 2002.
- Hildegard, Kuester. *The Crafting Of Chaos: Narrative Structure In Margaret Laurence's The Stone Angel*. Amsterdam: Radopi B.V., 1994.
- -Hirsh, Marianne. "Maternal Narratives: Cruel Enough To Stop The Blood." *Reading Black, Reading Feminist: A Critical Anthology*. Ed. Henry Louis Gates. New York: Meridian, 1990. 415-30.

## Works Cited

---

- Hooks, Bell. *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*. Boston: South End Press, 1990.
- Hooks, Bell. *Ain't I A Woman: Black Women And Feminism*. Boston, Ma: South End Press, 1981.
- -Hooks, Bell. *Feminism Is For Everybody: Passionate Politics*. London. 2000.
- Hooks, Bell. *Feminism Is For Everybody: Passionate Politics*. Cambridge: London: pluto, 2000.
- Hooks, Bell. *Private and Fictional Words: Canadian Women Novelists Of The 1970s And 1890*. London: Methuen, 1987..
- Hooks, Bell. *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*. Boston, Ma: South End Press.
- Hooks, Bell. *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. Pluto Press, 2000.
- Hooper, Brad. *The Fiction Of Alice Munro: An Appreciation*. Indiana: Greenwood, 2008.
- Howells, Coral. *Alice Munro: Contemporary World Writer*. New York Manchester Up., 1988
- Howells, Coral. *Private And Fictional Words: Canadian Women Novelists Of The 1970s And 1890*. London: Methuen, 1987.
- Hunt, Sally. *Representations Of Gender And Agency In Harry Potter Series*. University Oxford: Ohio, 2015.
- James, Susan. *Feminism*, In Edward Craig (Ed.), *Routledge Encyclopedia Of Philosophy*, Tylor And Francis.
- Jamili, Leila Baradaran And Rad, Sara Faryam. "Unhomeliness: Deconstruction Of Western Master Narrative In Toni Morrison's A Mercy." *International Conference On Languages, Literature And Linguistics*. 26:2010.

## Works Cited

---

- Jary, David, And Julia Jary. *Harper Collins Dictionary Of Sociology*. Harperperennial, 1991.
- Jimnez, Teresa G. "They Hatch Alone: The Alienation Of The Colonial American Subject In Toni Morrison's *A Mercy*." *Berkeley Undergraduate Journal*. 22(2): 2010.
- Joyce, Nelcon. "Speaking The Unspeakable", *Canadian Forum*, March 1990.
- Kamboureli, Smaro. "The Body As Audience And Performance In The Writing Of Alice Munro." *A Mazing Space: Writing Canadian, Women Writing*. Eds. Shirley Neuman & Smaro Kamboureli. Edmonton: New West Press, 1986.
- Karen J. Warren. *Bloomington And Indianapolis*: Indiana University Press, 1984,
- Katz, P. A. *The Development Of Female Identity. Sex Roles*, 1979.
- Kern, Catharina. *The Realization Of Jane Eyre As A Bildungsroman. Munich: GrinVerlag*, 2007.
- Kilgour, Maureen A. "The Global Compact And Gender Inequality: A Work In Progress." *Business & Society* 52.1
- Kilgour, Maureen A. "The Un Global Compact And Substantive Equality For Women: Revealing A 'Well Hidden' mandate." *Third World Quarterly* 28.4 (2007): 751-773.
- Kimmel, Michael. *Manhood in America*. New York: Free Press, 1995.
- Kimsey, Michael. "Gender Bias And Stereotypes In Dystopian Young Adult Literature 2011.
- Kinman, J. R., & Henderson, D. L. An Analysis Of Sexism In Newbery Award Knowledge. *Sociology For A New Century*. 26 Nov 2021,
- Kolodny, Annette. "Dancing Through The Minefield: Some Observations On The Theory, Practice And Politics Of A Feminist Literary Criticism." *Feminist Studies* 6.1 (1980): 1-25.

## Works Cited

---

- Kolodny, Annette. "Some Notes On Defining A" Feminist Literary Criticism"." *CriticalInquiry* 2.1 (1975)
- Kolodny, Annette. A Map For Misreading: Or, Gender And The Interpretation Of Literary Texts. In E. Showalter (Ed.), *The New Feminist Criticism: Essays On Women Literature Theory* (Pp. 46-62). New York, Ny: Pantheon Books. 1980.
- Kuester, Hildigard. *The Crafting Of Chaos: Narrative Structure In Margaret Laurence's The Stone Angel*. Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 1994.
- Labouvie-Vief, Gisela. "Women's Creativity And Images Of Gender." *Women Growing Older: Psychological Perspectives*. Eds. Barbara Turner, And Lillian Troll. Michigan: Sage Publications, 1994.
- Lahikainen, Johanna. *You Look Delicious: Food, Eating, And Hunger In Margaret Atwood's Novels*. Dis. Jyvaskyla University Printing House, 2007.
- Lawson, Steven F. *Civil Rights Crossroads: Nation, Community, And The Black Freedom Struggle*. University Press Of Kentucky, 2014.
- Leila Baradaran Jamili And Sara Faryam Rad."Unhomeliness: Deconstructing Western Master Narratives In Toni Morrison's A Mercy." *International Conference On Languages, Literature And Linguistics*. 26:2011.
- Lesk, Andrew."Playing The Parts: The 'Corp Morcele' In Alice Munro's Lives Of Girls And Women." *Studies In Canadian Literature* 32.1 2007.
- Li, Xiaoxi, And QuCaie. "The Understanding Of Metaphor In Lives Of Girls And Women." *School Of Foreign Languages* .1 June 2008.
- Lippa, Richard. *Gender, Nature, And Nurture*. California State University, Fullerton.2009.
- *Literature Theory* (Pp. 46-62). New York, Ny: Pantheon Books.

## Works Cited

---

- Loos, Anita. "Lives Of Girls And Women." *Encyclopedia Of Feminist Literature*. Ed. Mary Snodgrass. New York: Infobase Publishing, 2006.
- Lorber, Judith. *The Variety Of Feminisms And Their Contributions To Gender Equality*. Bis Verlag, 1997.
- Lorde , Audre. "Age, Race, Class, And Sex: Women Redefining Difference." I N Lorde, Audre (Ed.) *Sister Outsider*. California: Crossing Press, 1984.
- Lozinka, Martyna. "All I Want Is Everything." *Alice Munro's Lives Of Girls And Women And Margaret Laurence's The Diviners*. Diss. Reykjavik: University Of Iceland, 2010.
- Maccoby, E.E. Gender As A Social Category. Dev: A Development Psychology,24,755-765 .
- Madsen, Deborah. L. *Feminist Theory And Literary Practice*. London: PlutoPress, 2000.
- Mancelos, João De. "Our Traumas, Our Hopes: The Dynamics Of A Multicultural Community In Toni Morrison's A Mercy." *Portuguese Association For Anglo-American Studies Magazine*. 12: 2011.
- Marcusse, Conny. *Re-Writing Pioneer Women In Anglo-Canadian Literature*. Amesterdam: Rodopi, 2001.
- Margaret Atwood: *A Critical Companion*. Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2004.
- Mariana, Szapuová. (2006). Mill's Liberal Feminism: Its Legacy And Current Criticism.
- Maton& Rappaport 1984. Empowerment In A Religions Setting .New York :Hawortapress.
- Mccnann, Ruth. *Feminist Theory Reader: LocalaAndGloba; Perspectives*. London: Routledge, 2003.

## Works Cited

---

- McLaughlin, Lisa. "Feminism, The Public Sphere, Media And Democracy." *Media, Culture & Society* 15.4 1993
- Mccnann, Ruth. *Feminist Theory Reader: Local And Global Perspectives*. London: Routledge, 2003.
- -Mcnaughton, Karen. "Third Feminist Wave: Transversal Politics." 6/10/2005. Web. 22. Apr. 2018.
- McWilliams, Ellen. *Margaret Atwood And The Female Bildungsroman*. Ashgate Publishing Limited: Burlington, 2009.
- Michie, Helena. *Sororophobia: Differences Among Women In Literature And Culture*. New York: Oxford Up, 1992.
- -Morrison, Toni, And Nellie Mckay. "An Interview with Toni Morrison." *Contemporary Literature* 24.4 (1983): 413-429
- Morrison, Toni, And Robert Step to. "" Intimate Things In Place": A Conversation With Toni Morrison." *The Massachusetts Review* 18.3 (1977): 473-489.
- Morrison, Toni. *What Moves At The Margin: Selected Nonfiction*. Univ. Press Of Mississippi, 2008.
- Morris, Pam. *Literature and Feminism :An Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1986.
- Moss, John. *The Canadian Novel Here And Now: Critical Anthology*. Toronto: New Canada Publications, 1983.
- Ndongo, Oumar. "Toni Morrison and Her Early Works: In Search Of Africa." *Revue Du Cames*. 2 (9) : 2007 .
- Nelson, Joyce. "Speaking The Unspeakable." *Canadian Forum*, March 1990.
- Nelson, Kristina. *Criticism From The Heart*. Indiana: Universe Books, 2005.



## Works Cited

---

- Nischik, Reingard. *History Of Literature In Canada: English-Canadian And French-Canadian*. New York: Camdon House, 2008.
- Oakley, Ann. *Sex, Gender and Society*. United Kingdom : the Dorset Press, 2015. Print.
- Okin, Susan Moller. *Justice A Gender, And The Family*'. Wiley-Blackwell, 1989.
- Oldenquist, Andrew And Menachem Rosner. *Alienation, Community, And Work*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1991.
- O'reilly, Andrea. *Toni Morrison And Motherhood: A Politics Of The Heart*. Suny Press, 2012.
- Owens, Craig, Alice Jardine, And Paul Smith. *Men In Feminism*. 1987.
- -Oxaal , Zoe And Baden Sally. "Gender And Empowerment: Definitions, Approaches And Implications For Policy." *Bridge* 40: October 1997.
- Oxfam, 1995, *The Oxfam Handbook Of Relief And Development*, Oxfam, Oxford University Press.
- Paulo Friere (1996). *Pedagogy Of The Oppressed*. London: Penguin Books Ltd. Pergamon, Great Britain.
- Pettman, Jan Jindy. "Making The Difference/Teaching The International." *Working With Experience*. Routledge,
- Pfaus, Brenda. *Alice Munro*. Ottawa: Golden Dog Press, 1984.
- Putnam Amanda. "Mothering Violence: Ferocious Female Resistance In Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, *Sula*, *Beloved* And *A Mercy*." *Black Women, Gender, And Families* 2.5 (Fall 2011): 25-43.
- Rappaport J. 1981. *In Praise Of Paradox: A Social Policy Of Empowerment Over Prevention*. *American Journal Of Community Psychology* 9(1) 6.
- Rasporich, Beverly. *Dance Of The Sexes*. Edmonton: University Of Alberta Press, 1990.

## Works Cited

---

- Reshmi. K. "Eco feminist Vision: A Study Of Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing* And *The Handmaid's Tale*." Ed. K. Balachandra. *Critical Essays On Canadian Literature*. New Delhi: Sarup And Sons, 2002.
- Riegel, Par Christian. *Writing Grief: Margaret Laurence And The Work Of Mourning*. Manitoba: University Of Manitoba, 2003.
- Rigney, Barbara Hill. *Madness And Sexual Politics*. Madison: University Of Wisconsin Press, 1978.
- Riger, S. *What's Wrong With Empowerment?* .American Journal Of Community, Psychology, 21, 279-292.1983.
- Robin, Morgan. *Sisterhood Is Powerful*. New York: Vintage Books, 1970.
- Rose, Sonya. *What Is Gender History*.Cambridge: Policy Press, 2010.
- Rowlands, Jo. "Empowerment Examined." *Development in Practice* 5.2 (1995): 101-107.
- Roy, William G. *Making Societies: The Historical Construction of Our World*. Vol. 474. Pine Forge Press, 2001.
- Royappa, R.C. Sheila, "From Cadence To Confidence: Mapping The Mind Of Margaret Atwood's Protagonist In *Surfacing*", *Canadian Literature: An Overview*(Ed), Balachandran Dr. K. New Deohi: Sarup And Sons.
- Roynon, Tessa. "A New "Romen" Empire: Toni Morrison's *Love And The Classics*." *Journal Of American Studies* 41.1 (2007): 31-47.
- Rueckert, William (1996) "Literature And Ecology: An Experiment In Ecocriticism," In Glotfelty And Fromm (1996): 105-123.
- Sayers, Sean. "The Concept Of Alienation In Existentialism And Marxism: Hegelian Themes In Modern Social Thought. Kent.Ac.Uk, 2003. 12 Nov. 2012.

## Works Cited

---

- Schultz, Elizabeth. "Out Of The Woods And Into The World: A Study Of Interracial Friendships Between Women In American Novels." In Pryse Marjorie And Spillers Hortense. (Eds.) *Conjuring Black Women, Fiction, And Literary Tradition*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985.
- Selden Et Al. *A Reader's Guide To Contemporary Literary Theory*. London: Pearson, 2005.
- Shiva, Negar, And Zohreh Nosrat Kharazmi. "The Fourth Wave Of Feminism And The Lack Of Social Realism In Cyberspace." *Journal Of Cyberspace Studies* 3.2 (2019): 129-146.
- Shiva, Vandana. *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Survival In India*. New Delhi: Kali For Women, 1998.
- Showalter, Elaine, Ed. *Daughters Of Decadence: Women Writers Of The Fin-De-Siècle*. Rutgers University Press, 1993.
- Shuman, Baird. *Great American Writers: Twentieth Century*. New York: Marshall Cavendish, 2002.
- Simon, B. *Rethinking Empowerment*. *Journal Of Progressive Human Services* 1. 27-40. 7.1990.
- Smith Andy, "Ecofeminism Through An Anticolonial Framework". *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature*. Ed.
- Staines, David. *Margaret Laurence: Critical Reflections*. Ottawa: University Of Ottawa Press, 2002.
- Staples .H. Powerful Ideas About Empowerment Administration In Social Work. Vol.14 (20). 8. Vol .14(20).
- Steve H. Monk. "What Is The Literary Function Of The Motherhood Motif In Toni Morrison's A Mercy." *Humanities And Social Sciences* 9 : 2013.

## Works Cited

---

- Stewart, G.A., New Mythos, *The Novels Of The Artist As Heroine* 1877-1977, Montreal, Canada: Eden Press, Women'S Publication, 156, (1981).
- Stouck , David. *A Critical Introduction To Canadian Literature In English: Major Canadian Authors*. Lincoln: University Of Nebraska Press, 1988.
- Stovel, Nora. *Divining Margaret Laurence: A Study Of Her Complete Writings*. Quebec: Mcgill Queen's University Press, 2008.
- Swift, C And Levin, G.1987. Empowerment: An Emerging Mental Health Technology. *Journal Of Primary Prevention*, (1-2), 710 92.
- Sy, Kadidia. "Women's Relationships: Female Friendship In Toni Morrison's *Sula* And Love, Mariama Ba's *So Long A Letter* And Sefi Atta's *Everything Good Will Come*." (2008).
- Tandon, Neeru And Anshul Chandra. *Margaret Atwood: A Jewel In Canadian Writing*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2009.
- Tandon, Neeru And Ranjana Mishra. "Culture And Gender Identity In Canadian Fiction: A Study Of Margaret Atwood." *Feminine Psyche: A Post- Modern Critique*. Ed. Neeru Tandon. Atlantic Publishers: New Delhi, 2008.
- Taylor, Charles. *The Sources Of The Self* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.1989.
- Thompson, Paul Richard. *The Voice Of The Past: OralHistory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978
- Thorne, B. (1993). *Gender Play: Girls And Boys In School*. New Brunswick, Nj: Rutgers.
- Tolan, Fiona. *Margaret Atwood. Feminism And Fiction*. New York: 2007.
- Tong, Rosemarie. *Feminist Thought, Student Economy Edition: A More Comprehensive*. Student Economy Edition, 2015.

## Works Cited

---

- Turner, Barbara And Castellano Turner. "Social Cognition And Gender Stereotypes For Women Varying In Age And Race." *Women Growing Older: Psychological Perspectives*. Eds. Barbara Turner And Lillian Troll. Michigan: Sage, 1994.
- Tversky, Barbara (2004) "Narrative Of Space, Time, And Life" *Mind And Language* 19/4 Pp. 380-392.
- Tyne, A. *Taking Responsibility And Giving Power*. Disability And Society. Human Development Report, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995.
- Van Spanckeren, Kathryn. *Outline Of American Literature*. United State Department Of State, 1994. .
- Walker, N.A. *Feminist Alternatives: Irony And Fantasy In The Contemporary Novel By Women*, Jackson: University Press Of Mississippi, 79, (1990).
- Walker-Barnes, Chanequa. *Too Heavy A Yoke: Black Women And The Burden Of Strength*. Wipf And Stock Publishers, 2014.
- Walters, Margaret. *Feminism: A Very Short Introduction*. Vol. 141. Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Ward, Susan. "Morag Gunn In Fictional Context: The Career Woman Theme In The Diviners." *New Perspectives On Margaret Laurence: Poetic Narrative, Multiculturalism, And Feminism*. Eds. M. K. Greta And Coger McCormick. Westport: Greenwood, 1996.
- Warren, Morris. "The Power And The Promise Of Ecological Feminism", *Environmental Ethics*, 235.
- Warren, Morris. *Escaping Alienation: A Philosophy Of Alienation*. Boston: Up Of America, 2002.
- Welter, Barbara. "The Cult Of True Womanhood: 1820-1860." *American Quarterly* 18.2 (Summer 1966): 151-74.

## Works Cited

---

- Wellman, Judith. "The Seneca Falls Women's Rights Convention : A Study of Social Networks", in *Journals of Women's History*, 1991.
- West, M. & Parent, W. *Consumer Choice And Empowerment In Supported Employment Services: Issues And Strategies*. Journal of The Association For Persons With Severe Handicaps, 17, 47-52. 1992.
- Wienclaw, R.A. Gender Differences: Biology and Culture. In *Sociology Reference Guide. Gender Roles and Equality*. California: Salem, 2011.
- Williams, Suzanne, Seed, Janet And Mwau, Adelina, 1994, Oxfam Gender Training Manual, Women's Empowerment In Bangladesh' *World Development*, Vol.24 No.4.
- Wilson, Sharon Rose. *Margaret Atwood's Fairy-Tale Sexual Politics*. Jackson: Up Of Mississippi, 1993
- Woolf, Virginia. *A Room Of One's Own*. Salt Lake City: Martino Fine Books, 2012.
- World Health Organization .Violence Against Women.9.March 2021.
- Worth, Sarah E. "Storytelling And Narrative Knowing: An Examination Of The Epistemic Benefits Of Well-Told Stories." *Journal Of Aesthetic Education* 42.3 (2008): 42-56.
- Yalom, Marilyn. *Maternity, Morality And Literature Of Madness*. London: The Pennsylvania State Up., 1985.
- Zimmerman, Marc A., And Julian Rappaport. "Citizen Participation, Perceived Control, And Psychological Empowerment." *American Journal Of Community Psychology* 16.5 (1988): 725-750.

## List of Appendices

---

### **Appendices: The Novels Synopses**

#### **Appendix A: The Lives of Girls and Women**

Alice Munro's only book, released in 1971, is a fictitious coming-of-age story that is sometimes interpreted as autobiographical. Munro is best recognized as a short-story writer whose work is mostly concerned with the lives of women. *The Lives of Girls and Women* is an episodic collection of loosely related short tales centering on the life of a young girl. Del Jordan, who begins the novel as a youngster, recounts a sequence of events from her childhood in Jubilee, a tiny rural community in western Ontario. Jubilee may have been inspired by Munro's hometown of Wingham, Ontario. Del's tales are about her struggle to find a place in the little town where she lives. She is dissatisfied with the lifestyles of other young females and has no desire to conform. Del, on the other hand, wants to rediscover her voice. Her attempts provide an intriguing conflict between memory, reality, and fantasy. Del recounts events from a variety of temporal viewpoints as a narrator, recalling them both from the kid narrator's perspective and from the perspective of a mature woman looking back on her life. This narrative technique lends depth and intricacy to Munro's novel. Munro's only book also seems to provide an accurate view of small-town life. Her descriptions of places and people conjure up a picture in the reader's mind that seems to be very real. Additionally, the tale focuses on the lives of other female characters such as Addie, Naomi, Del's aunts Grace and Elspeth, Miss Farris, Nile, and Madeleine, who all contribute to Del's awareness of herself and her social environment in one way or another. Munro surrounds the heroine with various female personalities who assist her in maintaining a critical perspective on life.

## List of Appendices

---

### **Appendix B: Toni Morrison's *A Mercy***

*A Mercy*, Morrison's most recent novella, was published in 2008. It is set in the 1680s, at the early stages of the slave trade, to vividly depict the intimidation and horrors of slavery, both physical and mental that afflicted the period. More particularly, it highlights the difficulties that come from slavery at the family and social levels from a socio cultural viewpoint. Morrison's novella is set in the New World and is inhabited by a society of women who live on Jacob Vaark's farm. At the Vaark farm, Florens meets Jacob's wife Rebekka and their servants Lina and Sorrow. Rebekka came from Europe to marry Jacob after Jacob advertised in England that he was looking for a wife. Rebekka has recently lost her daughter, Patrician, in an accident with a horse. Prior to Patrician's death, Rebekka's baby boys all died in infancy. Florens quickly realizes that Sorrow, who was found half drowned as an adolescent and then given to Jacob, is mentally unstable. Before Florens's arrival, Sorrow delivered a baby that Lina told her was stillborn, adding to her mental precariousness. Lina, a native woman whose entire village was wiped out by fire, takes Florens under her wing and acts as a surrogate mother to her. Jacob begins to amass wealth thanks to his investments, and he decides to build a house like D'Ortega's. Laborers from all over come to help build it, including the indentured servants from the next farm over, Willard and Scully. Willard and Scully, having spent a lot of time at the Vaark farm, are close with the family. Jacob also commissions an iron fence, bringing in a blacksmith to make it for him. Florens falls in love with the Blacksmith, who is a free African man, when she meets him. The two strike up a romantic relationship. Lina, who is herself traumatized by an abusive relationship in her past, warns Florens to be careful. During the Blacksmith's tenure at the farm, Sorrow falls ill with smallpox and the Blacksmith miraculously heals



## List of Appendices

---

her. When the Blacksmith finishes his work, he leaves the farm without saying goodbye to Florens, leaving her devastated. Sorrow is pregnant and Jacob's house is nearly finished when he contracts smallpox. All the laborers leave, fearing contagion, and not even Willy and Scully are allowed near. Jacob's last wish is to be taken into his new house to die there, so Rebekka, Lina, Florens, and Sorrow all carry him inside, where he passes away. At Jacob's funeral, Rebekka realizes she has pockmarks inside her mouth. The next day, she is bedridden with the disease. Rebekka, remembering how the Blacksmith saved Sorrow when she became sick, sends Florens to go find him and bring him back with her. Lina stays behind to care for Rebekka while Florens sets out on her journey. After a wagon ride and a terrifying night in the woods, Florens comes to a village and seeks shelter in the cottage of a woman named Widow Ealing and her daughter Jane. The other villagers have accused Jane of being a demon. During Florens's stay they come to the house to examine her. While there, the villagers see Florens and accuse her of being a devil because of her dark skin. Florens flees with Jane's help before they can persecute her. Finally, Florens arrives at the Blacksmith's house. She tells him about Rebekka, and the Blacksmith decides to set out at once. He tells Florens she must stay at his cabin so that she can take care of a little boy, Malaik, that he has adopted. Florens, who wants the Blacksmith's unrestricted attention and love, feels jealous and threatened by the boy. The Blacksmith rides off to heal Rebekka. While The Blacksmith is away for several days, Florens becomes more and more paranoid about the boy's presence. She remembers what she thinks was her mother choosing her baby brother over her, and feels the same thing will happen now with Malaik. When Malaik will not stop crying, Florens grabs him by the arm hard and accidentally breaks it. Just then, the Blacksmith returns and sees that Florens has hurt the child. Furious

## List of Appendices

---

he hits Florens and casts her out. Florens hits the Blacksmith in the face with a pair of tongs, bloodying him, before running away. She makes her way back through the woods to the Vaark farm barefoot.

## GLOSSARY

**Glossary** : the following definitions are taken from the selected bibliography .

**Androcentrism:** is a term that refers to behaviors, cultures, or events that are dominated by a male viewpoint, sympathize with it, and are governed by it. Androcentric civilizations exclude women's perspectives and undervalue female contributions. Females are recognized, albeit in a minimized and reduced capacity.

**Discrimination (direct and indirect):** Discrimination manifests itself in a variety of ways in daily life. As stated by the International Labour Organization (2003), discrimination occurs when a differentiation, exclusion, or preference is made on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, political opinion, national origin, or socioeconomic origin with the consequence of negating or weakening equal opportunity and treatment in a job or vocation. In addition to racial discrimination, gender discrimination is a significant kind of prejudice. Discrimination may be classified as direct or indirect. The first kind occurs when particular segments of society are openly excluded or disadvantaged by the legal system on the basis of traits such as gender. Indirect discrimination occurs when essentially neutral norms or laws have a detrimental effect on certain groups, for example, female employees. Discrimination against part-time workers is still prevalent in practically every country. Because the majority of part-time employees are women, this disadvantages women as well.

## GLOSSARY

**Domestic work:** work that is largely concerned with the maintenance of homes.

Domestic work includes providing food and other essentials, cleaning and caring for children, the ill, and the elderly, among other tasks. Domestic labor is mostly conducted by women, and so has low social and economic value.

**Empowerment:** is the process of enhancing an individual's or community's personal, political, social, or economic strength. Women's and girls' empowerment refers to women and girls acquiring authority and control over their own lives. It entails raising awareness, developing and control over their own lives. It entails raising awareness, developing self-esteem, expanding options, increasing access to and control over resources, and taking action to reform the structures and institutions that support and perpetuate gender discrimination and inequality. The essence of empowerment is a person's capacity to control their own fate.

**Epistemology:** is the philosophy of knowledge. Feminists and gender scholars contend that conventional epistemologies exclude women from becoming "knowers" or agents of knowledge; they assert that science has a male voice and that history is written entirely from the perspective of men (of the dominant class and race) they have advanced alternative epistemologies that recognize women's expertise as genuine.

**Existentialism :** is the belief in the rigidity and fixity of things. In modern gender

## GLOSSARY

theory, essentialism draws from early views on the meaning of essence, particularly Plato's theory of essences /archetypes. According to the essentialist theory or belief, an essence is something fixed, eternal, and fundamental to the existence of things. In the classification and definition of men and women in society, modern gender theory assumes that men are biologically, socially viewed as superior to women, a fact that is taken to be fixed and unchangeable and ultimately assimilated by traditions and societies. Essentialism is the opposite of modern constructivism, the view that nothing about gender is fixed : everything is constructed and is a product of societies and social groups.

**Femininities and masculinities** These are dynamic sociocultural categories used in common language to refer to particular behaviors and activities that are seen as "feminine" or "masculine" within a society, regardless of the biological sex that manifests them. These are acquired beliefs that have nothing to do with sexual orientation or biological nature. They vary according to culture, religion, class, and period, as well as according to people and other variables. Additionally, the ideals associated with femininity and masculinity differs by culture. Any individual may express femininity or masculinity in a variety of ways. A man, for example, may participate in tasks that are frequently stereotyped as "feminine," such as caring for a sick parent or staying at home to raise children.

## GLOSSARY

**Feminism:** is a movement for social, cultural, political and economic equality of women and men. It is a campaign against gender inequalities and it strives for equal rights for women. Feminism can be also defined as the right to enough information available to every single woman so that she can make a choice to live a life which is not discriminatory and which works within the principles of social, cultural, political and economic equality and independence. Feminism can be also defined as a global phenomenon which addresses various issues related to women across the world in a specific manner as applicable to a particular culture or society. Though the issues related to feminism may differ for different societies and culture but they are broadly tied together with the underlying philosophy of achieving equality of gender in every sphere of life. So feminism cannot be tied to any narrow definitions based on a particular class, race or religion.

**Feminist Theory:** An examination of women's positions in society, based on the belief that current positions are unequal and unjust, which also provides tactics and criteria for change.

**Gender bias** is making gender-based choices that favor one gender over the other often leads to situations that benefit men and/or boys over women and/or girls.

**Gender Equality** is the belief that women and men, girls and boys, have equal chances, circumstances, and treatment to fulfill their full potential, human

## GLOSSARY

rights, and dignity, and contribute and contribute to economic, social , cultural, and political growth . Gender equality is therefore defined as society's equal valuation of the similarities and differences between men and women, as wellas the roles they perform. It is predicated on the equality of women and menin the household, community, and society. Equality does not imply that women and men will become identical; rather, it means that women and men's rights, duties, and opportunities will not be contingent on their gender at birth.

Gender identification normally complies with the parameters of the society, culture, and community in question. There are preconceived notions about how men and women should behave. When gender standards are internalized early in life, they may create a life cycle of gender socialization and stereotypes.

**Gender norms** are attributes and traits of male and female gender identity that are accepted in a certain culture or group at a particular period in time. They are the norms and expectations.

**Gender:** is a social and cultural construct that denotes the distinctions between men andwomen, girls and boys, and correspondingly relates to men and women's duties and obligation. As a result, gender based roles and other characteristics evolve over time and vary according to the cultural environment. Gender encompasses preconceived notions about women's and men's features,

## GLOSSARY

aptitudes, and probable actions (femininity and masculinity). This notion is important for examining how widely accepted behaviors may legitimize gender disparities.

**Intersectionality:** is a feminist sociological theory was first coined by American civil rights advocate Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989. Intersectionality refers to overlapping social identities and the oppressive, dominating, and/or discriminatory systems that accompany them. The concept is that several identities collide to form a whole that is distinct from its component identities.

**Misandry:** Hatred of men.

**Misogyny :** Hatred of women.

**Patriarchy :** A hierarchical- structured society in which men hold more power.

**Race** is a notion that refers to the division of humans into populations or groups based on a variety of physical features inherited from genetic ancestors. Sociologists use the term "race" to explain how people perceive and treat groups of individuals since people often categorize One another based on their race (eg. as African American or Asian). The majority of sociologists feel that race is not “real” in the sense that no distinguishing genetic or physical features actually differentiate one group of individuals from another; rather, multiple groups have overlapping characteristics.



## GLOSSARY

**Sexism :** The idea that women are inferior to men.

**Stereotypes:** are preconceived notions, unconscious connections, and expectations about members of certain groups that convey an oversimplified view point, biased attitude, or uncritical judgment. Stereotypes transcend essential and helpful categorizations and generalizations in that they are often negative, based on little information, and excessively generalized.

**Womanism** is a subset of feminism that is particularly concerned with the experiences, circumstances, and concerns of women of color, particularly black women. Womanism affirms the natural beauty and power of black femininity and seeks unity and connection with black males. Womanism exposes and condemns sexism in black American society as well as racism within the feminist community. Additionally, it asserts that black women's sense of self is contingent on both their femininity and culture. Kimberlé Crenshaw, a Black American civil rights activist and critical race theory researcher, coined the phrase in 1989 to describe the interconnected effects of sexual and racial discrimination on Black women.

**Women of color:** a political phrase that refers to oppressed women from underprivileged communities of color. Women of African, Asian, Latin, or Native American ancestry may be included.

تعنى هذه الأطروحة بموضوع بقاء المرأة في كل من روايتي توني موريسون "الرحمة" و " حياة الفتيات والنساء" لأليس مونرو، حيث تسلط الضوء على تجارب النساء في ظل الاضطهاد الأبوي واستراتيجيات البقاء الأنثوية. يغوص البحث في مختلف أشكال اضطهاد المرأة وإخضاعها لسلطة الرجل التي تشهدها البطلات في عالم الروايات، ثم يعرض إمكانيات تمكين المرأة وبقائها من خلال الكتابة النسوية. تركز الدراسة في هذا السياق على الكشف عن وعي البطلة بكونها الضحية الراهنة وكذا اضطلاعها بالتغيير من خلال الابتعاد عن الخضوع و الإتجاه نحو التمكين. يتمحور البحث حول رحلة البطلة في عالم الأنوثة باعتبارها تنويرا واكتشافا يزيد من وعيهم بمكانتهن كشخصيات اجتماعية فاعلة في المجتمع تحتاج إلى التمكين الذاتي. هذه الأطروحة هي محاولة لمعالجة كيفية الهروب من النظام الأبوي الذي يمكن تحقيقه من خلال التمرد الجسدي والنفسي، و من خلال الكتابة كوسيلة للبقاء في رواية " حياة الفتيات والنساء" أو من خلال جمعيات النساء والكتابة في رواية "الرحمة" لتوني موريسون. تم اعتماد الحجج النسوية في دراسة شخصية البطلات اللواتي انتقلن من كونهن نساء خاضعات إلى متمرديات من خلال سلوكياتهن غير التقليدية. حيث تبحث هذه الدراسة في البيئة الاجتماعية الخائفة التي حفزت هذه الشخصيات النسائية. و الهدف من هذه الأطروحة هو تسليط الضوء على الجوانب الرئيسية لبقاء المرأة في الروايات المختارة لأليس مونرو وتوني موريسون وإثبات أن البطلات تختلفن، من حيث رفضهن أن يكن ضحايا وبالتالي نَجَوْنَ من مأزقهن. تم تفسير استراتيجيات بقاء الشخصيات من خلال اعتماد النظرية النسوية لمنح الكاتبات أساسًا سياقيًا لنضالهن لتحرير المرأة. بعبارة أخرى، فإن التركيز على العنصر الأنثوي في الرواية هو نوع من رفض الأيديولوجية العنصرية القديمة التي تجاهلت النساء السود في جميع مجالات المجتمع. علاوة على ذلك ، فهو بناء هوية عصرية ومستقلة للنساء السود. أخيرًا ، تؤكد هذه الأطروحة أن الكاتبتين السالفتي الذكر اللتان تناولهما هذه الدراسة قدمتا فهمًا جديدًا لهويات النساء من خلال الرجوع إلى التاريخ وتحطيم المفاهيم التقليدية للإناث. وعليه، فإن هدفنا هو إبراز كيفية تلخيص هؤلاء الكتاب النسويين للهوية الأنثوية في الروايتين المذكورتين "رحمة" و "حياة الفتيات والنساء". والكشف عن تطور الشخصيات الرئيسية وتحولها من شخصيات مضطهدة ومهمشة إلى نساء قويات وناضجات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الخطاب النسوي الأفرو أمريكي ، التمكين ، النسوية ، الجندر ، أدب أمريكا الشمالية، استراتيجيات البقاء.