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Between Existential Thoughts and Cultural Dialectics

Black Women Suicide as a Form of Self-Emancipation in Morrison's and Vera's Writings

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Dedication

I Dedicate the present work to all those who encouraged me to fly toward my dream as they stand strong after me so that I could resist demotivation and frustration. It is dedicated to my extraordinary parents and my husband in addition to my siblings and my friends.

I dedicate the present work to my unborn child; this is for you.

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Abstract

The black woman is known for her magnificent struggle to survive as she has been subjected to racial segregation, patriarchal domination and terrible colonization in the American and African contexts similarly. Despite the unlimited torment and anguish, the black woman records the lowest suicide rates among the other human groups in Africa and in the US; this is what signifies the suicide paradox. The present work explores the phenomenon of suicide as portrayed in literature through feminist, postcolonial and existential lenses. The first objective of the study is to decipher the reasons behind the suicide paradox of the black woman and the way the paradox is reflected in the selected literary works. The current study maintains the suicide issue from three perspectives: the philosophical dimension that centers on Viktor Frankl's 'Meaning Making Theory' and the 'Tragic Triad'. Second, the sociological doctrine is attributed to Emile Durkheim whose research is based on social integration and regulation to protect individuals from suicide ideation. The third dimension nominates Edwin Schneidman's psychological interpretation that reflects the relation between suicide and psychache; pain that results from one's unfulfilled psychological needs. The hermeneutic study is composed of theoretical basis and a considerable literary analytical part that dissects the writings of the American author Toni Morrison and the Zimbabwean novelist Yvonne Vera thematically. The two writers have succeeded to a large extent to portray the suicide paradox of the black woman through their black female characters who differ in geographical affiliation, social, cultural, intellectual and even religious belonging. Although suicide may be a means of salvation and liberation of the self from grief and torment; for black women presented in the selected novels, it is an unthinkable option as they long for survival that is loaded with freedom, equality

and dignity. A black woman's strength lies in her resistance and struggle and she rarely escapes life driven by her sorrows; what does not kill her makes her stronger.

Key words: Suicide, Suicide Paradox, the Black Woman, Viktor Frankl, Emile Durkheim, Edwin Shneidman, Existentialism, Social Integration.

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-**AAS**: American Association of Suicidology

-**AFSP**: American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

-**CDC**: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

-**IASP**: International Association for Suicide Prevention

-**NAASP**: National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention

-**WHO**: World Health Organization

Introduction

"Successful Black Woman": What is it like to be a black person in white America today? One step from suicide! What I'm saying is—the psychological warfare games that we have to play every day just to survive... We can never be ourselves all around. I think that may be a given for all people, but for us particularly; it's really a mental health problem. It's a wonder we haven't all gone out and killed somebody or killed ourselves.

(Feagin and Sikes, 1995: 1)

Life and death have always been two controversial issues toward which the human mind remains crippled and determined to a great extent while dissecting each of the two. The spark of enthusiasm that ignites in one's life does in no way mean one is truly alive; he may be a walking corpse, a hollow cadaver whose life has no meaning. It is extraordinary to have a good life with a specific target and a reason to live for; but it is the worst experience ever to have nothing to live for or to have a meaningless life. The unconscious mind would automatically drive the individual to leave the world, the absurd world.

It is true that losing one's own life is outrageous but what is worse is to have no purpose for living. It might be correct that human beings are given the entire freedom to step out of their lives at any moment but this means they do not truly consider life as the greatest gift that should be protected. Sometimes, life turns to be traumatic, painful and unbearable, this does in no way allow man to escape it; it teaches him to challenge and evolve despite the various impediments.

People are born with an innate readiness to live, the will to be and the will to pursue beside the capacity to surpass various hardships. However, some human beings prefer to ignore the law of nature when they decide to put an end to their lives and step out of life. They commit suicide because of a variety of reasons that are usually found in the suicidal notes that suicidal individuals leave behind. The researcher Antoon A. Leenaars admits that "*No one really knows why human beings die by suicide*" (2008: 13) Suicide motives frequently remain ambiguous. Most people do not want to end their lives inasmuch as they want to stop the unbearable pain.

Suicide is more than a wish to die, an urgent eagerness to faint and disappear, or a sudden withdrawal from life. It is the fifteenth leading cause of death in the world

according to the 'World Health Organization' (2014). The suicidal behavior is defined by D.R Jatava as: "*A psychological problem to the psychologists like Sigmund Freud; a sociological issue to the sociologists like Emile Durkheim, and also a philosophical one to the philosopher like Albert Camus*" (2010: 01). If the statement refers to an idea, it points at the multi-dimensional nature of the suicide issue.

Suicide may be driven by any of the causes as: breaking emotional relations, divorce, financial loss or bankruptcy, death of parents, unemployment or huge debt. There are certainly other deeper and more rational motives that make one put an end his/her life intentionally. D. R Jatava has an opposing view: "*The suicide is not a planned action, for it happens suddenly and instantly irrespective of what may be the consequences afterwards.*"(Ibid: 6) Suicide, however, might be prepared very well before the action fulfillment.

Moreover, David Lester whose studies are mostly about the cultural identification of suicide conceives: "*Culture and ethnicity can have an impact on both the phenomena of suicidal behavior and on theories of suicidal behavior, and even on the definition of what is viewed as suicide.*"(2008: 39). It is true that socio-cultural dialectics in which the individual grows shape his thoughts about death, life and even suicide; it is in no way accepted that the environment has a neutral impact on individuals.

Suicide is a sin that is not allowed in Muslim communities and this is clarified in many verses of the holy Quran. It is a crime for Indians but an act of self-sacrifice and honor in Japan. Researchers conclude that suicide is a culturally-bound phenomenon. Moreover, the psychologist Edwin S. Shneidman who has considerable contributions in

the suicidal studies warns researchers "*When making cross-cultural comparisons, do not make the error of assuming that a suicide is a suicide*" (1985: 203)

Taking into account race and gender as cultural factors that have an important role in defining the suicidal behavior in African and the US, it is substantial to clarify what is known by 'The Suicide Paradox'. It indicates the low suicide rates attributed to black women who struggle for survival despite hostilities, discrimination, oppression and dehumanization. The paradox reflects the unexpectedness of the low rates recorded by black women. If suicide is one of the major leading causes of death in the world, white Americans mark very high and shocking rates.

Additionally, Donna Holland Barnes declares: "*African-American women have the lowest rate of suicide among all ethnic groups in the United States.*" (2010: 44). The writer perceives the reason might be due to the fact that African American women have strong family and social ties that they live for and do not like to destroy. Besides, Barnes states that it is also because these women do not reach the level of hopelessness that leads one to commit suicide. It might not be completely true because the pain black women in African and the US suffer a great deal from prejudice; their unbearable pain may sometimes ignite the desire to escape the absurd world.

Human beings are not machines, they are flesh and blood, they have emotions and feelings, views and ideas; they think, they love, they feel pain and hunger. Unfortunately, most of the negative emotions are rarely experienced by white Americans who used to be far from the whole scene being the opposing part of the struggle. For black Americans, the past was so dark and terrible and they can hardly go through it as if it has not affected their present and future.

Though Americans, on the one hand, believe that racism is part of the nation's past, but it is very much the present and there is a strong hidden racial background that controls people. On the other hand, men have also played a crucial role in the segregation process by imposing masculine norms and patriarchy on the female existence. The black woman then is triply oppressed. Her psychological vulnerability is at risk; however, the black woman is strong and she strives hard for survival; this maybe the secret behind the suicide paradox.

Men and women have always been involved in the gender struggle; men request priority and women seek equality. The racial and gender struggle is a long lasting process; it started with earliest feminist freedom calls and it does not arrive at conformity yet. In fact, women suffered throughout time to get the right to speak, discuss, vote and write. They struggled to cross the boundaries that the male's political, social and economic power drew around them. Masculinity offered them oppression, fear, stress and marginalization. Women started equality and recognition calls in the late 18th century through different waves of Women's Rights movement. Various campaigns of the movement ended with the emergence of the term 'Feminism' that stands for equality between the two sexes in rights and opportunities. Feminists advocated for women right to be treated equally like men and to get similar positions culturally, socially, economically and even politically.

Joan W. Scott raises the question of difference and equality and explains the paradox that feminists face in this statement: "*Are women the same as men? And is this sameness the only basis upon which equality can be claimed? Or are they different and, because or in spite of their difference, entitled to equal treatment?*" The contradiction between the two thoughts is interesting to critics of the movement because feminists

plead for equality that is based on sameness on the one hand. However, the natural sexual difference between the two is not undecidable on the other hand.

Christina Hoff Sommers states in *Who Stole Feminism: How Women Have Betrayed Women*: "*Every day the public is witness to feminist outrage at how badly women are treated: in the workplace, in the courts, on dates, in marriages, in the schools—by men mostly, but sometimes by other women.*" (1994: 41) The statement has two parts: the first is about man's exploitation of the woman and the heavy burden of atrocity and criminal abuse imposed on her. The second part seems to ask questions rather than stating a truth, it explains in two words how some women betray the principles of 'Womanism' through accepting to be humiliated and subordinated by men.

Black women decided to construct the frame of their own feminism which would be different and separated from white feminism. Their worlds was totally different with its norms and features from the world of white women. Black women were exposed to triple oppression: the first one was the one that white men obliged them to absorb. First, for white men, the black female was an object for sexual desires and a very ugly doll that they liked to exploit and to throw away at last.

> The colored girl . . . is not known and hence not believed in; she belongs to a race that is best designated by the term 'problem' and she lives beneath the shadow of that problem which envelops and obscures her. (Fannie B. Williams, 1987: 150)

They served as breeders and mistresses for the white gentlemen or simply a 'conquest' as Alice Walker defined the result of violence and rape. The black woman then became the victim of the powerful hands of both masculinity and whiteness.

The famous activist Maria W. Stewart urged black women to create their own spirit of independence that could help them realize self-definition and self –recognition.

The latter was the key to survive in a country that did not only marginalize blacks but it also prevented them from speaking about rights and equality. Protesting against the white world, she believed that the black female was the weakest ring in the social stratification; the reason why her lectures and speeches were so violent and angry like when she addressed black women to be conscious of themselves: "*O, ye daughters of Africa, Awake! Awake! Arise! No longer sleep nor slumber, but distinguish yourselves. Show forth to the world that ye are endowed with noble and exalted faculties.*" (Richardson, 1987: 30)

Patricia H. Collins assures that consciousness is what would help them oppose the intersecting oppressions of race, class, gender and sexuality (2000: 98).

About African American women's dual consciousness Ella Surrey confessed: "*I think that we are much more clever than they are because we know that we have to play the game. We've always had to live two lives—one for them and one for ourselves.*" (1980: 240). Besides, the American famous poet Audre Lorde referred back to the act of 'watching' as the main reason that created black women loaded with dual consciousness. They became acquainted with the oppressor's behaviors and attitudes through their spontaneous acquisition and submission.

The black female resisted the three axes of jeopardy of race, class and sex and could start strongly, though from scratch, constructing what is known as Black Feminism that theorizes, clarifies and defines their politics and standards. However, it is mentioned in the Combahee River Collective that:

> We also often find it difficult to separate race from class from sex oppression because in our lives they are most often experienced simultaneously. We know that there is such a thing as racial-sexual oppression which is neither solely

racial nor solely sexual, e.g. the history of rape of Black women by-white men as a weapon of political repression. (1983: 213)

Womanism is another name given to describe Black Feminism or Feminism of color for the sake of distinction and also because both of them refer to black women struggling against racism and sexism as Omolade Barbara claims. (1994: xx). Not very different from the interests of both Womanism and Black Feminism, Postcolonial Feminism that belonged to the third wave of the Western Feminism emerged from criticizing both Postcolonial studies and Feminist studies for having excluded the black female who lived in postcolonial lands from the scope of research and analysis.

In fact, the boundaries of race and gender differ between traditional Feminists and Postcolonial Feminists though they seem to share more than these standards. However, Postcolonial theorists are blamed for having excluded issues of gender and Western feminists are blamed for having excluded issues of race, the black woman needs and goals are consequently lost in between. She is again thrown into the world of masculinity and colonial impact. However, postcolonial feminists have been criticized and accused of breaking the entire unified feminist movement into smaller groups with different purposes, the thing that might have led to weakness and opposition.

In the postcolonial world, the black female lives within the limits of what theorists call 'Double colonization' which means that even after getting independence, she is oppressed by two powers: the colonial and the patriarchal ones. In a male-dominated context, she is still the invisible thing, not more than a domestic uneducated housewife or a sexual object, the status that she used to accept then she started to refuse all humiliating attitudes being supported by some female writers. These feminist writers tried to draw an optimistic picture of a world full of hopefulness, equality and freedom.

It is in fact a way out of life meaninglessness and worthlessness toward considerable beingness and self recognition.

Scholars justify that phenomenon by the power of the social connections that she constructs in her environment to protect herself from the male tyranny. Besides, she is known for having a religious background and faith beliefs that help her support any attempt of manipulation and alienations as she deeply knows her suffering is going to end one day. Existential thoughts are almost absent in her mind as against what Western feminists confirm to exist within their communities. The African female is different in providing philosophical thoughts to answer the existential fundamental question "who she is" and to justify her existence and the purpose of her life.

In fact, suicide is an existencial issue; it defines one's method of death. Existentialism is a philosophical trend of thoughts that is concerned with the human existence and its different qualities. The first principle that Existential philosophers consider is that 'Existence preceeds essence' by which they mean that one's existence always comes first before acquiring any qualities. Simone de Beauvoir is one of the major Feminists committed to Existentialism. She states that Existential Feminism aims at analyzing women's oppression and freedom. However, specifying the Western woman's needs, this statement excludes indirectly the black woman whose freedom and oppression are completely different from the ones defined by Simone de Beauvoir simply because white feminists used to weave new clothes according to their own size and shape, the latter did not fit the black female.

Life and death, awareness and consciousness, anxiety and alienation, dehumanization and subordination, beingness and nothingness, fear and dread, responsibility and determinism, escapism and resistance, freedom and loneliness,

anguish and the absurd are most of the issues and topics that Existentialism deals with by both male and female philosophers and writers. However, a man's beingness is different from a woman's beingness, the standards of their existence vary to a large extent, the way they define freedom is not the same. Moreover, double consciousness attributed to black men is totally different from triple consciousness that characterizes black women, this stands for the necessity of a Feminist Existentialism that focus only on the female existence and its politics.

Black Existential Feminist is the theory that is concerned with the black female and her existence. She is put in front of many challenges and is then asked to find her way out. The black female has been suffering from oppression of different faces, subordination, exploitation and dehumanization; what leads her most of the time to submit or to escape (either through silence or through suicidal commitment). The difficult conditions that the black woman, whether in Africa or in the US, has been suffering from besieged her and put her in a circle of alienation, estrangement and loneliness.

Feelings of fear and dread from the past and the future created a heavier burden than what she could support; and her responsibility toward herself and her community seemed to be terribly larger. She also felt her inability to move forward or backward because she was never truly free to move, speak, love or even smile. The Black female suffered and is still suffering prejudice that the cultural and social norms drew once upon a time. What kind of a human being we can expect under these circumstances and what a meaningful existence there might be?

The Feminist scholars Bonnie Dill and Ruth Zambrana, in *Emerging Intersections,* claim: "*Women of color scholars have used the idea of intersections to*

explain our own lives and to critique the exclusion of our experiences, needs, and perspectives from both White, Eurocentric, middle class conceptualizations of feminism and male dominated models of ethnic studies" (2009: 3). The statement means that the black female is destined to intersectionality after their exclusion from Feminist and racial studies. What is really important to mention is that men and women react totally different toward that intersectionality and have opposing views to treat the plot and tie the parts of the dilemma; this is mainly caused by their standpoints and the perspectives they use to analyze the problem.

It is necessary to explain at that level of the work that using the word 'black' is not meant for any racist or judgmental intention; it only refers to the category of women selected for the study as the latter focuses on African women having a black skin color beside African American women. It is also crucially important to highlight that despite the three perspectives prioritized in the research, this does in no way undermine the literary nature of the research; it is basically a literary study that is viewed sociologically, psychologically and philosophically. The intersection of the three might mislead the reader that it might be anthropologically or sociologically oriented.

The research major argument is based on the explanation and interpretation of the low rates of suicide in the black woman's contexts, the African and the African American contexts. The research is also concerned with the hidden arguments of the suicidal paradox being analyzed sociologically, philosophically, psychologically within a literary arena. Many scientific researches and academic studies have been applied to the sensitive topic of suicide in relation to various variables and in different disciplines, literature is one of them. Many studies focus on the African American writer Toni Morrison's novels to reflect the suffering of the black women and the oppression they

experience throughout centuries at the hands of the whites, but very few writings paid attention to suicide as a central theme.

Morrison's fictional characters rarely end their lives by suicide, which is mainly the reason why literary analysis precludes that topic for the priority of racial and social argumentation. The same thing for the African writer Yvonne Vera who writes about the postcolonial woman and the identity she struggles to frame. The studies maintained about her fiction are highly interested in the pain and trauma the African woman experiences during colonization and even after independence. However, there is no previous research paper or literary analysis that gathers the two writers under the same umbrella trying to shed light on suicide as a central thematic thread in their fiction.

The suicide behavior topic has been studied from different perspectives; the scholarly theoretical contributions enrich the interdisciplinarity of the subject and valorize its diversity. Suicide itself is the conclusion of the interaction between multiple factors and variables that meet together to solve a traumatic situation. It is hardly fair that the nomenclature of the concept is based only to the intentional and deliberate act of murdering oneself; it further entails the risk factors, initiatives, suicidal ideation and prevention in addition to the fatality rate of the deed. Although it is an aggressive self harmful behavior that potentially steers hatred, sadism and revenge to oneself, it also hides the crucial reference to victimization and sacrifice behind the dark wall of the intentional death.

The dreadful characteristic of the concept is usually coupled with mystery, surprise and feelings of fear and regret; the suicidal notes frequently emerge after the self-murder to disclose the secret and the veiled world of the dead. Suicide loss

survivors feel extremely sad after losing a loved member to suicide first because of the loss itself and second because they discover too late that they know nothing about the victim and his life; the notes tell them who was he/ she and what makes him/ her seek relief in death. In that research, suicide is perceived from three main perspectives: the sociological, the psychological and the philosophical.

First, the French sociologist Emile Durkheim is the most important researcher known for his contribution in studying the phenomenon of suicide in relation to societal constructs. The sociologist believes the individual is affected anyhow by the social environment in which he/ she lives and by the variables that surround him/ her. The individual can hardly isolate himself/herself from his community nor can he/she be perfectly protected from any external influence. Suicide might be the individual's own decision and ultimate option but the responsibility has to be shared by many others around him. It is globally opposed by individuals, institutions, organizations and even by laws; it is considered as a crime in some societies. However, it indicates the victim's inability to survive and to reach conformity within his environment; it also indicates the social failure to protect and save the victim. The social responsibility leads to the social causation that signifies that each society contributes directly or indirectly in its individuals' suicides.

Durkheim's sociological interpretation of suicide is based on the level of the individual's integration within a group meaning that the individual belongs to a social group which he/ she influences and gets influenced by simultaneously. In fact, suicide rates differ from one area to the other according to the integration degree and the social conformity between the group members:

> Suicide varies inversely with the degree of integration of the social groups of which the individual forms a part. But society cannot disintegrate without the individual simultaneously detaching himself from social life, without his own goals becoming preponderant over those of the community, in a word without his personality tending to surmount the collective personality. (2002: 167)

The suicide victim is consequently driven by the social motives and is affected by the socio-cultural conducts, or in other words Durkheim prioritizes the social force over the individual measures as he claims.

The quote refers to one's ability to disintegrate from the social life after prioritizing his/her goals and his individual personality over the collective ones. It also implements the potent that the more integrated in a social group man is, the less likely to commit suicide he would be. Hassan R and Lian T. K relate the suicide rate to the social cohesion as: "*The more socially cohesive the group, the fewer the suicides. The less tightly knit the group, the higher the suicide rates.*" (1970: 14). Depending on the etiology of the phenomenon, Durkheim basically identifies three types of suicide: the egoistic, the anomic and the altruistic; according to him they all emerge from the social disintegration and dissolution.

Second, suicide has also been viewed from a philosophical eye because philosophy focuses in its analysis on existential issues like life, death, suicide, existence, absurdity, after death and many other subjects. However, life as a concept and ideation should be given priority in the philosophical scope; it has to be a source of meditation and inspiration because life denotes beginnings and death denotes the ends. However, the French philosopher Albert Camus emphasizes the domination of the suicidal theme on the philosophical ideation; in his essay *The Myth of Sisyphus*: "*There*

is but one truly serious philosophical problem and that is suicide." (1995: 7). Camus, like other philosophers, sheds light on the metaphysical argumentation and adheres to make the correlation between the suicidal behavior and the absurd.

The most urgent question in Camus's existential philosophy is whether life is worth living. When man faithfully believes that life deserves to be experienced and preserved, he/she will be completely invulnerable against suicidal thoughts. The problem that poses then is what makes people believe in the worthiness of life, it will be the key to prevent them from putting it at high risk. Though it is rarely encountered or inexistent that somebody commits suicide because of ontological reasons, a large number of people do it when they feel life becomes worthless and meaningless. Life worthlessness throws man toward a safe edge or a refuge; it is the existential vacuum where he escapes his own loss and absurdity.

Philosophy dictates that the absence of passion in and toward life is among the circumstances where suicide becomes a priority; Camus states: "*Dying voluntarily implies that you have recognized, even instinctively, the ridiculous character of that habit, the absence of any profound reason for living, the insane character of that daily agitation, and the uselessness of suffering.*"(Ibid: 8). Philosophy is most of the time localizing interest on the immorality of suicide and its religiosity beside the connection between man's religious persuasion and the feelings of nihilism that result from it. Man in spite of this is not supposed to escape the thwarted absurdity and meaninglessness, man instead has to robustly embrace life with passion and strong will, this is the only way to prevent intentional self-murder and to feel total freedom.

Though Sartre, Camus and many other philosophers have treated the suicide issue differently, Viktor Frankl's viewpoint is both innovative and practical. Frankl surpasses the boundaries of dry slogans of wisdom and utopia; his philosophy aims at therapy rather than presenting furnished prophesies.

When treating a subject as suicide, there is a remarkable overlapping of concepts and thoughts between philosophy and psychology especially when applied to Viktor Frankl's theory of 'Meaning Making'. Viktor Frankl is one of the researchers who pave the way for the use of meaning to help patients overcome their thwarted fear and boredom from life. His doctrine known as Logotherapy that he uses during the Jewish Holocaust aims at supporting prisoners and protecting them from suicidal thoughts. His ideation is based on the principle that man has to look for meaning in the midst of suffering in order to stay alive. He encourages people at risk of suicide to struggle for meaning or to create it as it is a key to save life. Frankl concludes three ways through which man can create or attribute meaning.

Additionally, the Austrian neurologist refers to the Existential Vacuum that man may end up inside when he is unable to find meaning in his life. The will to meaning is then a crucial feature and it is one of the protective factors against suicidal thoughts. Viktor Frankl is also accredited for the Tragic Triad, the trilogy of 'Pain, Death and Guilt' that may lead man to an existential crisis. That crisis results from a certain feeling of dread about one's existence and whether his life has meaning, value and target. Existential dread is the logical conclusion of a long path of depression, alienation and loss. When man reaches the peak of existential dread, life becomes unbearable and meaningless, he is consequently at high risk of committing suicide. Frankl also

advocates an important assumption that attitudes really matter, and that man is required to change his attitude if he is unable to change the situation.

Third, psychology plays a crucial role in explaining the suicidal factors. Many studies refer to the mental disorders and the psychological deficiencies that may lead the individual to think about ending his/her life. Edwin Shneidman is one of the psychologists who pays attention to one's psychache that end up most of the time with criminal behaviors either toward oneself or toward others. When pain reaches an unimaginable degree that may not be supported by ordinary human beings, they may seek any way to escape it. Psychache is the body's decision of refusal to support no longer. Henry Murray associates the development of psychache to the psychological needs that people can hardly accomplish; these needs are fundamental for the human existence and they should be fulfilled to achieve the balanced state of satisfaction and psychological comfort.

Marsha Linehan additionally looks for the type of relation that exists between suicide and emotion dysregulation; the latter puts patients at high risk if not maintained seriously. The psychological analysis of suicide also implements Thomas Joiner's Interpersonal Theory of suicide that is constructed mainly at the basis of two components: the thwarted belongingness and the perceived burdensomeness. A state of frustrated feelings is mostly tied to a higher suicide risk; distress, grief and depression frequently worsen the situation and accelerate the suicide decision. In fact, an unlimited number of psychologists have treated that issue and paved new ways each time for renovated hypotheses and probabilities; the psychological basis in the current work is, however, built on Shneidman's views which are being examined until the present day.

Having the concept of religiosity put under the same research cover, empirical studies prove that suicide rates differ across various religions. Suicide is condemned and prohibited by most of the world's religions as Islam, Christianity and Jewish religious traditions, Buddhism and Hinduism, suicide rates change within different religious contexts. According to Dervic et al, the religious affiliation is linked to the decrease of suicide risk (2004). Strong religious connectedness may serve as a protective factor as it leads to the decrease of suicide rates. In the US for example, Maris et al find out that Protestants have the highest rates then the Catholics follow, but the Jewish have the lowest rates. (2000) Muslims also record low rates of suicide when being compared to Jews and Christians.

At last, it is quite important to attract the reader's attention that this work does intentionally exclude, for thematic purposes, the two suicidal types known as euthanasia and suicidal bombers. The first one is truly accounted as an intentional act of killing oneself but because of certain medical, religious and legal criteria that determine the murdering decision, it is better to posit it aside. In the countries where euthanasia is legally permitted, a percentage of 0.3 to 4.6 of deaths account for people who choose that way to pass away quickly; 70% of the whole number refers to cases related to cancer. Regardless of the incorrectness and immorality of the act, euthanasia is perceived by most adopters as the only and last solution for their endless physical pain or mental illness.

Since suicide is everybody's business and everybody's concern, it is imperious to take the individuals at high risk into urgent consideration to stop the murdering flow. Some suicidologists try to look for the nature of the relation between the daily discrimination and the suicidal thoughts in addition to the influence of the racial

belonging on the suicide rates. The hypothesis that the more discriminated an individual is, the more likely he/she is to commit suicide is relatively incorrect; from that debate emerged what is known as the suicide paradox. The suicidal paradox conception is not new in the research world; it has always been a subject of controversy and debate especially that in involves racial issues, gender matters and social classifications.

At a second level, the suicide paradox refers to the contradiction between what truly exists and what is logically expected. The expression is meant to describe the contradictory paradigm, the huge gap of suicide rates between genders and between races. Suicide belongs nowhere; it does not attribute stigmatization on any human category. The suicidal act itself does not change but arguments and motives change; when they do, they lead to one conclusion that signifies the end. Suicide is neither a white thing nor a black thing; suicide is neither a female option nor a male preference. It is contoured by social, physiological, psychological and even religious standards that anyone in the world is prone to choose this mode at any moment. Suicide has not been linked or named after any determined social class or ethnic category, that justifies the frequent use of similar concepts such as: race suicide paradox, gender suicide paradox and class suicide paradox; the intersectional suicide paradox where the three axes meet and indicate the black woman's suicide lowest rates.

The history of black Americans was fueled by discrimination and prejudice. Though they experience high rates of mortality for different pathological reasons, the suicide rates make the exception. In the US, the suicide rates of black Americans are half less than the suicide rates of the white Americans in spite of sharing the same risk factors. For example, the rates are 11.8 and 11.6 per 100,000 for whites, and 5.3 and 5.5

per 100,000 for blacks between 1999 and 2002 (CDC 2005), the gap is astonishing and paradoxical and this is what is known as the suicide paradox.

Taking the WHO statistics of the risk factors and the studies based on the motives and vulnerability assessment, women are suicide-prone individuals inasmuch as men and blacks are suicide-prone inasmuch as whites; heterogeneous social categories are exposed to similar circumstances. Ian Rockett, Samora and Coben make a study that results in registering higher rates for whites than blacks and proving that the highest suicide rates are marked by white males and females. (2006)The same study also shows that black females indicate the smallest rates.

Silvia Canetto has been pointedly interested in research about the gender discrimination in suicidal behaviors. Canetto suggests that the suicidal women are emotional whereas the suicidal men are rational (1997). However, about the relationship between sexes and races, Canetto declares that because women are not opposites to men and blacks are not opposites to whites, it is hardly assumed to study whites or men then generalize to blacks or to women without any problem even if the study variable is suicide (1997). It may seem as one important factor for classification to turn back to the human nature of each gender and its stereotypical manner of expression. In a later study, Silvia Canetto and Ian Sakinofsky identify the gender paradox as when the nonfatal suicide behavior for females exceeds the one of males and that the suicide mortality for males surpasses the one of females in Western countries (1998).

The psychiatry researcher Eve Moscicki dissects the suicidal behavior in relation to four interpretational axes: lethality, recall bias, differential rates of depression and alcohol abuse, and socialization (1994). Lethality indicates the selection of the suicide

method and the extent of fatality it holds and the seriousness of the attempt; men and women differ in the intent and preference. The recall bias is linked to the reliable process of reporting incidents; it signifies that women are more likely to report their suicidal behavior accurately than men. The third factor is connected to levels of alcohol abuse and depression treatment among men and women, alcoholism as a precursor that predicts a suicidal behavior.

According to George Murphy et al (1992), increased degrees of alcohol abuse are attributed to men and they are also linked to suicide mortality; hence women are more likely to have complete treatment of depression than men. Pompili Maurizio et al. confirm that Alcohol abuse may lead to suicidality through disinhibition, impulsiveness and impaired judgment (2010). At last, socialization refers to the social and cultural parameters that identify the suicidal behavior among males and females; i.e. suicide, in some communities, is seen as a merely masculine conduct and it is socially acceptable among men but it is completely disapproved in the female context.

Moreover, Murphy (1998) clarifies that the mortality gap between suicidal males and suicidal females is partly due to the less lethal nature of the suicide methods women use, which lead consequently to surviving the suicide attempt. Denning et al also confirm that men use more violent methods for both suicide and deliberate self-harm (2000). In another interesting study made by Möller-Leimkühler (2003), the researcher finds out that men's lethal acts may denote a hegemonic act of mastery or masculine expression. A large body of evidence shows that the difference between men and women in the suicidal behavior is tightly related to gender roles and the social mission associated to each gender category in the daily life. Sarah Payne et al share a similar view that because women use medical and non-medical sources of help and prefer less

lethal methods, they have decreased suicide mortality rates; men, however, adopt the idea of being the stronger sex and reject the ill-health symptoms, this is why the male mortality rates are higher (2008).

Suicide is not a male problem in the same way that it is not a white thing. Katrina Jaworsky considers the masculine methods as lethal and aggressive whereas feminine suicidal behavior is seen as non-lethal and passive (2003). Taking all the innate natural capacities of gender or color into consideration, it is illogical though to ignore the impact that culture has on the suicidal behavior. Kathy Mackay et al (2014) develop an idea initiated earlier by S. Canetto about the Cultural Scripts Theory dissecting the various components of the cultural context in which the individual grows up.

The cultural scripts explain the implemented guide of rules and directions about how to be a person living with others, and how one can act upon a certain experience. The research comes with the conclusion that despite the usually considered low rates of female suicide rates, there are some exceptions, that is in Japan, Sri Lanka and Hungary; the female rates in these areas are even higher than the global average. It shows that the cultural components can be taken into account while explaining the Gender Paradox.

More interestingly, Evans et al focus on the relationship between divorce and suicide risk implementing gender as a variable in the study. Some studies such as (Cutright & Fernquist 2005, Corcoran & Nagar 2010, Walsh et al 2009) found a causal relationship between suicide risk and divorce; in other terms men are at a higher risk than women after divorce or relation breakdown. However, some other studies like

Masocco et al (2008) prove that women are at a higher risk to commit suicide after divorce.

Evans et al conclude that there is no definitive evidence of gender differential for suicidal people following relation breakdown (2014). At that level, separation, divorce or relationship breakdown can all be considered as vulnerability factors that may similarly lead to suicide for both genders because they threaten the social bonds and the social integration process for the individual; this is to confirm the positive link between divorce and suicide. Furthermore, many other studies are still being developing the subject of suicide paradox in relation to different variables each time, the present work mainly focuses on the way the paradox is reflected in literature and more precisely in the selected literary works of Morrison and Vera.

Among the black Feminist writers who devoted their art to explain the feminist issue like Alice Walker, Audre Lorde, bell hooks, Zora Neale Hurston, … etc, two feminist authors are selected in that research: Toni Morrison from an American context on the one and Yvonne Vera from an African context on the other hand; and they both struggle with words for the sake of defending women's rights. Toni Morrison is an African American Feminist writer who wins the Nobel Prize in literature and the Pulitzer Prize thanks to her literary eloquence and audacity to reveal the obscure and unveil the contradicting realities of the American society and people (Appendix C) Moreover, she is an editor, a playwright, a novelist, and a literary critic treating a variety of issues and subjects as feminism, racism in America, oppression, prejudice, fight for right, etc

Her literary artistic skills are evident throughout her prose writing style and the process of storytelling. As a black female writer, Morrison writes for people like her as she once claims in one of her lectures quoted by Harold Bloom: "*I want to write for people like me, which is to say black people, curious people, demanding people—people who can't be faked, people who don't need to be patronized, people who have very, very high criteria*" (2004: 10). She has been a prolific writer and she wins many prizes and awards for her works.

She tries strongly to make a name for herself as a respected black woman novelist since the publication of her first novel *The Bluest Eye* in 1970 that was followed many other successful works of fiction and non-fiction. What is particular about Toni Morrison is her ability to use difficult and yet accessible language to depict the African American experience as a sample of humanity and humanism.

The Zimbabwean Yvonne Vera is an outstanding African writer known for her audacity and courage to treat the subjects that people refuse to talk about and to bring into the light. She is known for choosing taboo themes to uncover under the roof of the Zimbabwean culture. Her essential purpose of writing is to give the powerless victimized black women a chance to be heard, she could open a secured path to resist different types of marginalization through her female characters. She was selected for many awards and prizes for her novels thanks to her successful works. (Appendix D)

Reading to Vera means discovering the picture she draws about the woman of her country, the stereotype repressed marginalized female who is exposed to violent irrational acts which deepens the trauma. In *Without a Name* the title suggests that being without a name means being without identity, without meaning and without a value as if the nameless character does not exist at all. When Mazvita is raped, she travels around

the country because she becomes homeless carrying with her the newly born baby that she kills on her back in order to bury the baby in a specific place. It is a journey of struggle against pain, against herself and also against her nature as a woman.

Under The Tongue is the story of Zhizha who is sexually abused by the dearest person in a daughter's life, her father. Like Mazvita, she is consequently left alone to struggle in a world of monsters when her family refuses to prevent the crime or to support her after what happens. Moreover, *The Stone Virgins* is a distinctive novel as it covers pre and post independent Zimbabwe. It depicts the picture of a very hard time in the country where armed forces intervened to defend a political party, and the citizens were severely slaughtered and brutalized. Women were targeted in most of the attacks and they were tortured horribly. These brave women struggled and resisted and did not escape from the suicidal door; they would not betray the country when it needed them. It really needs more than courage to stand in the middle of such tempest between fighting parts. Yvonne Vera confirms in that novel that the African woman refuses to commit suicide despite the difficult situation not for herself but for the family, and for the land.

On the one hand, Toni Morrison's novels are selected for that research because they cover most of the intended themes and attitudes. In other words, she is the author whose writings would help decipher the junction of Feminism, Existentialism and culture. On the other hand, the African Yvonne Vera's is one of the best writers to describe unbearable pain and how women react toward that. I have already dealt with Existentialism in my Magister dissertation but it was concerned only with male writings. In fact, doing philosophy always leads the mind to go deeper or to try to discover other aspects of the field. It is more motivating and inspiring to discover the

world of women and to see it through a woman's glasses especially when speaking about the philosophy of life, the obscure abstract subject that has been dominated and monopolized by men for a long period of time.

Toni Morrison is a Feminist and an Existential writer who is mainly interested in Black Americans being segregated, discriminated and oppressed in their homeland by other social classes. Her importance in literature is due to her ability to fictionalize reality and to create unique characters who are described according to their weird behaviors and attitudes on the one hand and their warmth, morality and decency on the other.

In her writings, she opens the door for feminist issues like the black woman's physical exploitation, cultural subordination, political exclusion, emotional and spiritual deprivation in addition to her social prejudice and neglect. Moreover, the author presents a couple of existential themes attributed to her characters particularly those looking for freedom, running away from death and dread, longing for equality, recognition and full identity.

Most of her characters attempt to escape from the sense of loss, hatred and meaninglessness that fills their already empty lives let alone the idea of absurdism that leads most blacks to commit suicide. The feelings of loss emerge when one is torn between two contradicting worlds, he/she belongs to each one of them but he belongs to none of them at the same time. It is not a riddle but black Americans suffered terribly from these harsh conditions for decades, they could not decide what they ought to do: whether to like their country and people or to dislike them. They were exposed to endless existential dread and agony day and night; and it was unavoidable to look for relief even if it costs death.

When life becomes bitter, the person is thrown into the extreme sides of the world to think how much trivial yet difficult life might be. Though they are born black, but blacks in the world are considered to be responsible for their skin color and thus their freedom is determined consequently. The small space in which they are allowed to move reflects the social stress imposed on them beside their inability to breathe freely.

Morrison's characters who are trapped in a query: 'To exist or not to exist, that is the question'; it is after all a question of existence, beingness and identity. The black self is threatened by various forces and is put finally in a position of powerlessness and submission. Morrison defends the black female because she has been exploited more than any other social member. Her women protagonists are presented as weak, submissive and silent characters who are loaded with volcanic anxiety and anger that is ready to explode at any moment.

In *The Bluest Eye*, the author presents Pecola as a young black girl who dreams of having blue eyes believing that her life would become better. Because of the hard times they live in, Pecola's parents are careless and always fighting with each other. She has been raped by her cruel father; then has been beaten by her mother as she can never believe her daughter's story of rape. The father rapes Pecola for the second time and she becomes pregnant but the baby dies after it is born. He runs away and the poor Pecola goes mad believing that she has fulfilled her dream of having the blue eyes. The protagonist suffers to a large extent but does not commit suicide and she is to be compared with other characters who have similar circumstances but different fateful decisions.

In this case, blacks are being exploited by blacks, a sense of cannibalism that calls for nausea. Besides, the writer focuses on the meaning of Pecola's life and the

hope that attracts her to keep alive. The girl ends up psychologically disordered due to the terror and dread that she was exposed to from her own family. For Pecola, to live happily means to have blue eyes and blonde hair. Her dream is so humble and innocent; her father however helps her to gain part of that in a virtual world she is thrown to at last.

Toni Morrison is also known for her famous trilogy *Beloved*, *Jazz* and *Paradise* in which her female characters are thrown in a world of slavery and exploitation. Some of them resist whereas others submit through murdering acts as it is the case of Sethe who kills her two-years old baby to protect her from being a slave. The main theme in the trilogy is the contradiction between male dominance and female resistance. It also presents in the last part of the trilogy the female relationship with God and how it helps her be stronger especially that religious beliefs are not unusual for the black female.

The two authors have been selected because both Toni Morrison and Yvonne Vera are seen as real revolutionary writers in the world of literature especially the black feminist writing field; their works reflect the intersectionality that the research analyzes. Race, gender and class meet together in that kind of fiction; and while they meet, they create an existentialist impulse that pushes the black female to ask fundamental questions about her existence and the meaning of life and whether it is worth living.

Though the two authors' fiction has been studied and analyzed overwhelmingly but they both have a crucial role on the social, cultural and even political levels. Besides, they also pave the way for many others to follow a similar path to fight against prejudice of all kinds. Women today and thanks to Feminist writers and fighters like Morrison, Vera and their peers gain a better position and it is necessary that new generations would carry on for the benefits of all women of the world.

Many people think that suicide attempts maybe the result of the difficult social, economic and cultural circumstances in which individuals live. In some cases it is true, but in other cases, it is totally different from that. Certain individuals are basically haunted by deep philosophical thoughts or religious beliefs to the extent that they change their opinions and views about life worthlessness because of their mental thoughts or psychological interpretation.

The main objective of the present work is to understand the nature of the suicidal black female identity between existential inclination and cultural dimensions; and to clarify to which extent the suicidal paradox is the case for literary female characters. The work also aims at exploring the motives of the black woman suicide and revealing the protective factors that assist her to survive. Drawing a cross-cultural comparison between the African and African American contexts would pave the way for more accurate understanding of the hidden motives of self murder. ?

Furthermore, to meet the objectives of the study, it is suggested that a psychoanalysis approach is preferred to treat the internal factors of the suicidal phenomenon, the existential concepts, triple consciousness and the meaning making theory.

Then, to explain the intersectionality and its impact on shaping the suicidal identity; a socio-cultural approach that is to be followed including social norms and cultural aspects beside religious foundations to be applied on a postcolonial African and an African American contexts.

The present work is an attempt to answer the following questions:

- Is suicide evoked by existential stimulus or by socio-cultural motives?

-How does the black woman seek meaning in her life despite the Tragic Triad?

-How do both writers portray social integration and moral regulation in their novels?

-How is the suicidal paradox reflected in the writers' texts through their female characters?

-Is suicide a form of self-emancipation for the black woman? How does the literature of the two writers reflect that?

To answer these questions, the work is divided mainly into four chapters, the first chapter is devoted to the theories that have been maintained to perceive suicide; it highlights the sociological, philosophical and psychological doctrines. The second chapter turns to explore the context of the black woman who is the research sample; for that purpose, the black feminist and postcolonial backgrounds are analyzed literally. The two last chapters are meant for literary thematic and qualitative analysis of suicidal and non suicidal characters and plots. The work sets together the writings of Morrison and Vera for study but it does not seek any kind of generalization.

Chapter One: Processing Suicide

Fragments

Introduction

The first chapter of the study is dedicated to put the theoretical fundamental axes and explain the methodological distribution of the various segments. It also sets the maintained perspectives altogether within a suggested framework in order to draw a fruitful connection between them as far as the suicidal behavior is concerned. The chapter starts first with a global design for research then it moves to the three various viewpoints. First, the philosophical perspective weaves the complicated meanings of life, death and existence; it is constructed on Viktor Frankl's 'Meaning Making Theory' and the 'Tragic Triad'. Individuals may decide to end up their lives as a result of meaninglessness that emerges from the intersection of pain, death and guilt.

Second, the sociological dimension of the study is based on Emile Durkheim's conceptualization of social integration and the necessity to belong to a family; the sense of belonging may serve as a protective factor from suicidal thoughts. Social regulation is also fundamental for individuals as it determines their behaviors and attitudes by providing a set of values and norms.

Third, the psychological dimension of the work concentrates on explaining the link between the individual's psychache and lethality maintained by the psychologist Edwin Shneidman. At last, the chapter ends up with a concluding part that gathers the three axes to explore the suicidal paradox where they intersect. In fact, the current study asserts that all types of studies applied to the topic of suicide whether they are medical, sociological, psychological, psychopathological, philosophical or else do not oppose each other; they complete each other and share the same target which is suicide prevention.

I. Overview of Suicidology

The primary objective of this study is to examine the suicidal behavior in the black female context then to find out reasonable explanation for the suicidal paradox. The work also attempts to uncover the paradox implemented motives then to explore the suicide perceptions of both writers reflected through their women characters. In fact, research about suicide is tremendously rich and varied; it is frequently multidisciplinary and multidimensional but researches about the way literary texts reflect the suicidal paradox are unfamiliar and infrequent. According to the American psychologist Edwin Shneidman: "*The relevant fields for suicidology include biochemistry (and genetics), sociology, demography-epidemiology, psychology, psychiatry, linguistics and so on.*" (1993: 146) The present work puts together the African female context with the African American one for the sake of exploring the phenomenon of suicide, its motives and consequences.

The work maintains a hermeneutic approach to analyze the phenomenon and to apply the theoretical notions on the novels' characters through the researcher's interpretation. Besides, the qualitative study is the most appropriate research option for non-numerical data as the content of the literary texts that can hardly be measured quantitatively. Additionally, the analysis is basically a descriptive and thematic that employs statistical data to answer the crucial questions and generate the findings. However, it is correct that the study works on both African postcolonial literature as far as African American literature but it does not seek any kind of comparison between the two writers nor their characters and novels because it is not a comparative study. It only examines the main issues in all the selected works similarly. Besides, since the study is maintained in the field of literature, it does not draw its findings from the analysis of

data drawn from questionnaires, interviews or piloting. The research aims at exploring the main ideas and principles of theorists then connect them with the field of literature and the literary depiction of issues and meanings. However, before any attempt to present the various theories of Frankl, Durkheim and Shneidman, it is quite important to shed light on the phenomenon itself and the way it is identified in general terms. What is meant by the word suicide? And what is its etymology? How is it viewed in the scientific research world? The following section is meant to answer these questions.

I.1. Phenomenon Etiology

It is evident that the suicidal act is a multifaceted, multidimensional and multidisciplinary phenomenon. It has been analyzed in the present work from three main perspectives: the philosophical, the psychological and the sociological. Suicide clinical, biochemistry, or even the linguistic axes are equally important but they can hardly be relevant and applicable in the literary context inasmuch as the selected three ones. The philosophical part constructs essentially on Viktor Frankl's 'Logotherapy' and his notions of existential escapism and the 'Tragic Triad'. Frankl struggles hard to help people forget about suicide and give them a boost of hope and willingness to carry on. It is thanks to his therapy of meaning making that he could save hundreds of people.

Philosophically, people escape life when existence becomes meaningless for them and they only seek refuge away from life tragedies. The unbearable pain, the inescapable feelings of guilt and regret in addition to the unavoidable fate of death have a dangerous impact on individuals who may escape toward pathological alienation or complete isolation; but when the three meet, the individual may even construct a suicidal plan to escape existential meaninglessness and the absurd world.

Psychologically, the first chapter also highlights Edwin Shneidman's work on the relation between suicide and psychache, the mental terrible pain that when the individual proves to be unable to handle, he/she may look for the final surrender. Psychache is like an internal tempest or conflict which causes bad effects on the human psyche. The second section of the psychological discussion of suicide reflects Henry Murray's research about the psychogenic needs. These needs require satisfaction for mental equilibrium and in case the needs are not fulfilled, thwarted needs lead to psychache symptoms, a crack in the human psyche and a disconnection between the various psychological functions.

Furthermore, Marsha Linehan's work on 'Emotion Dysregulation' plays a crucial role in that section as it paves the way to explain that emotion stability and regulation is necessary for the human being to avoid impulsivity and uncontrolled affective responses. Linehan's enormous contribution to the field of suicidology marks her name among the foregrounding figures. Emotionally dysregulated individuals are at an elevated risk of suicidality; teaching this category of people coping strategies is obligatory to help prevent suicidal behaviors. The last part of that section explains Thomas Joiner's Interpersonal Theory of Suicide which is constructed on two main elements: thwarted belongingness and perceived burdensomeness; the two may provoke suicide ideation and should be psychologically mollified.

Third, the sociological overview of suicide is highly attached to the individual's ability to get integrated within a group, act, react and interact with others ordinarily. It is one of the secrets that belonging to a family, a group or a small community that cares about the individual that the latter finds refuge within that social group rather than living alone at the margins of life. Besides, the social regulation similarly plays a crucial

role in determining the boundaries of suicidality as it indicates the rules that one has to adapt with while living with others; it consists of the social order, principles and values that communities impose on their members to reach a certain level of equilibrium and stability. Any attempt to get the order disturbed seems to be responsible for high rates of self-destruction and suicidality.

Durkheim has also been interested in the applying the four types of suicide on individuals for the sake of making classifications and ameliorating necessary preventive measures. Durkheim suggests four types of suicide: egoistic, altruistic, anomic and fatalistic; the four types are strongly shaped by the two social factors named: regulation and integration. He paves the way for a more accurate analysis of the phenomenon focusing on the collective force and the impact of religion, education, economy, weather, marriage/divorce, and heredity on suicidality. David Lester's work develops later to apply Durkheim's typology on primitive communities and get them compared with modern ones. He is more concerned with the socio-cultural determinants of suicide and the influence of acculturation on suicide intention. Lester's research in the field of suicidology completes and renovates Durkheim's work.

It is obvious that the thesis main focus is the topic of suicide and it is an elementary target of the work to explore the motives and secrets of the phenomenon. However, the work's basic purpose is similarly to explain the hidden formula of black women to have trivial rates of suicide. It is then important to find out what drives people to commit suicide and what keeps black women away from suicidal attempts and commitment. It is both puzzling and unbelievable to expect that the more the human being suffers, the strongly distant from suicidal behavior he/ she should be.

For the category of African and African American women, it is true. Black women create self-defense mechanisms and turn their pain into power so that they can survive and resist. It is consequently very significant to highlight all these theoretical notions in the methodology chapter and make the link between these ideas and the way literature perceives the suicidal behavior. The first chapter is methodological and theoretical, and it serves as a foundation for the application of these theories on the selected literary works and the black female characters. Though it was basically important to devote a considerable part to prepare questionnaires and analyze interviews with African American and black African women to be implemented in the work, but due to some inconveniences it was hardly possible. Besides, the current thesis is maintained precisely in the discipline of literature which does not strongly emphasize the step.

I.2. The Autopsy of Suicide

Suicide is not a modern issue to be treated by various scholars and researchers; it has been put under the scope of study since ancient times. It reflects the position where people stand on the arena between two options: either to live or to die. Looking at the phenomenon superficially, one would claim that suicide is simply a result of illiteracy, poverty, loss, failure, frustration, or all of them at once. However, it is a complicated subject to define or even to determine. D. R. Jatava states that suicide is a psychological problem to the psychologists like Sigmund Freud; a sociological issue to the sociologists like Emile Durkheim, and also a philosophical one to the philosopher like Albert Camus (2010: II). It is defined according to the researcher's perspective using the variables of the field of interest.

Suicide has no determined boundaries as it is the tragic outcome of the accumulated problems of the young and the old, the female and the male, the poor and the rich, the single and the married. It is a secretly damaging dilemma that takes away people's precious lives to leave a huge emotional wound behind. The wound can hardly be healed as it reminds the survivors of their collective failure to protect the distressed individual from committing the horrible act. Suicide stands at the intersection of biology, psychology, sociology and even religion; in other words, it results from the suicidal person's mental health and the environment where he/she lives. When the numbers reach a terrifying level, the alarm has to be knocked as it is a disease to be prevented by all the societal means.

There are various views about the first time the term suicide was used in the English language. According to *The Encyclopedia of Suicide*, the term suicide was used for the first time in 1651 being derived from the Latin combination of the pronoun '*sui*' and the verb '*cidium*' meaning 'to kill oneself' (2003: xv). However, the opposing view states that the term has been used first by Edward Philips in *A New World of Words* in 1662. (Ibid) It does not mean the phenomenon did not exist before that time; it truly existed but it was described in other words and associated mostly with magic and superstitions of evil spirits that were expected to leave the dead and haunt the living.

People have a superficial idea about suicide and what is meant by the word suicide when it is said, but it is not very easy to be defined though. Suicide is "*The act of voluntarily or intentionally taking one's own life*" according to Encyclopedia Britannica, the intention of killing is implied within the act itself. Besides, Emile Durkheim implied within his sociological study of the phenomenon that "*Suicide is applied to all cases of death resulting directly or indirectly from a positive or negative*

act of the victim himself, which he knows will produce this result."(2002: xlii). It is not possible then to speak about suicide before assuring the suicidal individual's certainty of the result of his/her act. Certainty is then condemned to the level of doubt raised within the actor and around the act of suicide; this is what makes the difference between a suicide behavior and a suicide attempt.

Antoon Leenaars' study about suicide is based on Edwin Shneidman's overwhelming research and analysis of the suicidal notes. Shneidman approaches suicide from a psychological perspective using the definition provided by *The International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* that is: "*Suicide is the human act of self-inflicted, self-intentional cessation*". It means one's consciousness to put an end to his unbearable pain as a response to that situation believing that death would be the only solution to suffering.

Suicide is known in the research field with multiple names that all pour within the same meaning; it is known as: self murder, self infliction, self destruction, intentional death and many other names. (**Appendix E**) Psychologically, pain is mostly the essence of suicide and the secret of the willingness to kill oneself. Shneidman's research is based on the causal relationship between suicide and psychache trying throughout a long period of time to find out why people kill themselves.

We have taken into consideration the inclusion of the jargon words suicidology and suicidality as being related essentially to the phenomenon. Suicidality surrounds the suicidal behavior including the thoughts and the acts whereas suicidology refers to the larger area of studying and analyzing the suicidal behavior, its reasons and circumstances. Though many people believe the phenomenon to be related to madness

and psychological disorder, but contemporary studies show that suicide is simply a normal response of a normal person against an abnormal situation.

Some psychiatrists like Keith Hawton and Kees van Heeringen claim the difference between suicide and attempted suicide. According to them: "*The two terms refer to behaviours that share inten- tional or deliberate self-harming characteristics but differ with regard to the outcome, that is, whether or not they result in death*" (2000: 02). When the wish to die is not intentional and the final outcome is not death, the individual here tends to attempt rather than to die seriously. Though it seems to be unreasonable to imagine a person attempting to commit suicide without having in mind that one of the expected results might be simply death, Hawton and Heeringen insist on treating attempted suicide differently. Moreover, it is one way for the individual to express self-harmful behaviors without caring about the fatality of methods and tools used in the process.

The suicidal behavior goes beyond one's syndrome to apply a self inflicting harm on one's body. It reaches an elevated and risky level of that syndrome when its preludes open the way for intentional self-killing acts. It is further a fatal behavior with a determined intention, it is not a disease but an epidemiology that lays its impact on individuals of various ages, sexes, races, classes and cultures. Self damage is against the natural law, it is alien to the ordinary human will and inclination to survive and pursue. Life then becomes a one-way road that is going to have an intentional suicidal end with no way back.

Besides, philosophers generally view suicide as an ultimate contradiction as when people commit suicide, they look for a utopian world in which they may reach peace of mind; however, by using any means of self-killing they will not be given any

chance to enjoy and appreciate that peace of mind. Here is the paradox and here is the contradiction that draws one to think about the mental ability of the suicidal person before death, the things that can be obtained from the suicidal notes which some of the victims leave behind. The notes indicate a way of the after-death communication desires to write confessions in order to explain, withdraw or apologize from the family and friends. The shocking notes are most of the time discovered after suicide to reveal truths and uncover secrets that surrounded the suicidal crime.

Philosophy determines the boundaries of definition for it is not easy to explain the meaning of life and death, let alone the meaning of self-killing acts using philosophical terminology, meaninglessness and the absurd as an example. Being related to the existential thoughts and beliefs and the human being existence, suicide raises various difficult questions that the ordinary human mind can hardly answer or understand. The French philosopher Albert Camus for example considers suicide as the only serious problem in philosophy as many other important matters turn around like the existential vacuum, meaningfulness of life, the absurd existence, death and after death issues.

Is it possible to assume that the suicidal person can be victimized? If yes, what makes him/her a victim when he/she is the murderer? It is evident that the suicidal person is at the same time the victim and the murderer. Are societies supposed to excuse, blame, criminalize, ignore or solve the cases of suicide? Do Arab Muslim societies receive, interpret and analyze the issue the same way American Christians, Jews or even atheists do? To answer these questions, it is necessary to make a jump into the contextual environment that surrounds the act and the actor similarly. The research starts with the suicidal behavior then moves to the different theories that have been used

to treat the subject; but before that it is necessary to shed light on the different reasons leading to the phenomenon beside its different types. The chapter ends with exploring the suicide paradox and it additionally identifies the various circumstances that determine its occurrence.

Furthermore, the fundamental theories on which the research about suicide can be constructed are the psychological and the sociological trends; this is what makes the psychological discussion as crucially important as the social one. It is also partly substantial to consider the philosophical dimension implemented within the phenomenon study. It is thanks to Viktor Frankl's Logotherapy that researchers become aware of the necessity to focus similarly on the philosophical variables to understand one's decision to escape existentially to a world of himself, for himself.

When the individual is unable to find a meaning in his life, he is more inclined to prefer death over life; he is driven to put an end to everything peacefully and easily through suicide. It is die to that reason that exploring Frankl's 'Tragic Triad', his 'Theory of Meaning Making' and his 'Logotheapy' is essential to understand the circumstances of one' existential escapism, that philosophical state of alienation and estrangement might drive the escapist to definitely end his/her life. Is existential escapism an easy cut toward suicide? Does meaning really matter in people's lives? Are all individual's supposed to look for meaning while being alive? Is meaning that central and necessary for staying alive? To which extent is the human being capable to stay alive despite the Tragic Triad of pain, guilt and death?

II. Viktor Frankl's Meaning-Making Theory and Existential Escapism

Because of the pain, sorrow and despair that black women suffered from, they are pushed to react though differently but they mostly share the quality of having the

desire to get revenge, peacefully or violently, from themselves or from the other people. Despite considering the bad effects of oppression on African Americans in the first hand, it is also necessary to consider the victims of that oppression, who are the subjects of oppression and dehumanization. The following section of that chapter deals with the social context where African American females live and experience bad behaviors through explaining the influence of intersectionality on their lives. That part of the chapter deals with Frankl's theory from a philosophical perspective. The name suggests a philosophical approaching to the topic but it is in fact a couple of both psychology and philosophy though the second is more crucial and pertinent for that study.

II.1. Frankl's Logotherapy

Viktor Frankl is a psychologist whose work is based on the study of meaning and how to make meaning and how to find meaning in life, suffering, pain, love and happiness. His Logotherapy is a new version of the existential analysis, a deep philosophical and psychological analysis of the human psyche and mind as far as existence is concerned. When he started his research, he embraced Freud's ideas and principles; then, he changed his focus to Logotherapy and the existential analysis which is not opposing or denying the Freudian's. Because he suffered a great deal in the concentration camps, he came out of that terrible experience with his theory of Logotherapy that stands for the treatment with meaning. The researcher also takes inspiration from the studies of Alfred Adler about the Individual Psychology and tries to develop them within his work.

Logotherapy focuses on the meaning of human existence and the human will to meaning; and it is considered the third school of psychotherapy despite its small

difference from Freud's will to pleasure and Adler's will to power. Frankl states in his famous book *Man's Search for Meaning*: "*According to logotherapy, this striving to find a meaning in one's life is the primary motivational force in man. That is why I speak of a will to meaning.*" (1984: 121). The first part of that book is all devoted to clarify the consequences of living in the concentration camps, out of his personal experience, and how it leads one to lose meaning of the naked life especially after the loss of family, land, job, status and dreams. Then, he explains the essence of his theory and the importance of meaning for the individual to live.

Frankl has been selected among other psychotherapeutic analysts because his own experiences in the camps are similar to the experiences of African Americans. Both have been imprisoned, discriminated, marginalized, tortured, and even dehumanized for no reason except the human being willingness for superiority. For this category of people, the wretched people, Frankl believes the medical therapy is unable to solve the problem by giving them advice to eat well, play sports and integrate within social groups. It is hardly possible to convince these people to change their attitudes and the way they view life because the problem is highly spiritual and extremely philosophical. They have a problem with the existential vacuum they live in and with their inability to give meaning to life and the principle that motivates the human being to stay alive. The absence of meaning being coupled with the absence of purpose is what drives them to that huge amount of inner void and emptiness that is meant as the existential vacuum.

Searching for meaning in life is never considered a sign or a symptom of having a psychological problem; it is totally the opposite as it means having awareness of being human and purely human. It is evident that the human being needs somebody or something for whose sake he/she lives otherwise he/she is expected to be driven into the

existential frustration and void. Giving meaning to life is according to Frankl: "*The meaning of life differs from man to man, from day to day and from hour to hour*" (Ibid: 130). The statement simply means that meaning can never be eternally everlasting, it changes from one individual to the other and it becomes different in each given moment. It changes merely because the individual is exposed to various incidents at each single minute in his/her life and he/she cannot be aware ahead of what to do or how to behave.

Death is the best example to explain the unexpectedness of life events and the change it brings to one's life and meaning of life accordingly. In fact, the quality of being changeable for the life meaning enables the individual to renovate his feelings of motivation and refresh his energy to restart in case of the meaning loss or the psychological disturbances. Besides, it is indeed man's responsibility to realize and conceive the meaning of his life rather than asking about it because no one is able to answer except the concerned.

> Ultimately, man should not ask what the meaning of his life is, but rather he must recognize that it is *he* who is asked. In a word, each man is questioned by life; and he can only answer to life by *answering for* his own life; to life he can only respond by being responsible. (Ibid: 131)

The existential vacuum is generally resulted from the spiritual void, boredom, sadness and distress and it leads to many problems on the psychological and the physical levels of the individual. It is a source of various illnesses as it makes a different copy of the person that is characterized by violence, aggression, isolation, addiction to drugs or alcohol, melancholy and even depression. It may also lead people to think of putting an end to their lives willingly as life for them becomes meaningless due to their

inability to understand and explain the existential vacuum that drives them to the bottom of the logical reasoning.

Actually, the existential vacuum partly manifests and confirms the impact of the advanced modern life, the technological development, and the automation of industries that create more free time for individuals than necessary. That needless free time is devoted to nothing of importance, what creates in addition to boredom: anguish, gloom, frustration, and loss. Frankl confesses the fact that the context also plays a great role in constructing feelings of despair and vacuum due to the noticeable variation between the American and the European students. It is clarified in his book that when 25 percent of the European students show a marked degree of existential vacuum, the degree of the American students is 60 percent. (Ibid: 129).Moreover, in a study made by Louis L. Klitzke, it has been proved that the percentage of African academic youth suffering from the existential vacuum is increasing.

Spirituality in the individual's life is very important as it supports him/her associate it with meaningfulness especially when one is put in front of very limited choices for the sake of his own instincts. People are ready and eager to ask for freedom and to enjoy it but their responsibility toward that freedom is supposed to go in parallel; and the fear of responsibility is one of the reasons that make them escape their freedom partly if not mostly. However, logotherapists explain one's readiness to be responsible as the heart of existence and the essence of beingness; responsibleness is the concept that stands for that meaning. Spirituality is sometimes related to the religious side of the person as it is explained as a purpose for which the individual believes in life, death, existence, fate as assumptive facts; the concept that is absent from the nihilist's dictionary because the latter lives on randomness and absurdity.

Furthermore, the individual is expected to find meaning in the surrounding environment not within him/ herself. For Frankl, it is possible for one to discover meaning in three ways: "*(1) by creating a work or doing a deed; (2) by experiencing something or encountering someone; and (3) by the attitude we take toward unavoidable suffering*."(Ibid: 133). First, the individual's achievements and accomplishments act as a reason for happiness, satisfaction and self-consideration, they drive him/her to feel his/her own value and importance and this is fair enough for one to find meaning in life. Inventions, creations and artistic manuscripts can serve as safety tools for their owners as they save them from the existential loss and frustration. Second, living for people whom one loves and whose existence is crucially sacred for him can also be interpreted as a reason for life that gives it meaning and value. Third, it is suffering that gives life meaning especially when it is unavoidable, and it is the attitude the individual takes toward that state of feelings that he can find meaning even in suffering.

Again the example of death floats above all other types of unavoidable suffering in the life of the individual who may feel extremely depressed after losing a beloved person. However, one may try to find meaning in that sad situation thanks to the attitude he takes and the viewing point he selects to conceive then interpret the inevitable incident. Instead of weeping for a beloved's death for a long time, one can imagine how much painful his own death will be for that beloved person, i.e: the other way around. Focusing on one angle to view the event leads to nowhere, it is surely necessary to view it from another angle imagining the other version of that event. Once meaning is discovered, the troublesome existential vacuum disappears and the individual will stick to life even with much more eagerness.

In the book entitled *The Feeling of Meaninglessness: A Challenge to Psychotherapy and Philosophy*, Frankl emphasizes the state of meaninglessness and its relation with void and emptiness in life; then explains it from a philosophical perspective which is different from his psychotherapeutic area of study. He also explains the tragic optimism that is one's ability to remain optimist despite the different tragic events of life and to what extent the human being may attribute meaning to life in the light of the surrounding sorrows and despair.

When the individual has the basic human needs and he is able to identify specific goals in his life, thoughts of meaninglessness would stop threatening his existence. It is besides what really happened to the author in the camps when he tried to turn his suffering into a strong power of motivation and positivism so that he could resist, help other prisoners to stay hopeful and faithful. He decided on a purpose to live for even within the worst life conditions where he was treated as an animal despite his innocence. From his true experiences, he developed his theoretical ideas about meaning making and the existential void.

II.2. Frankl's Suicide Ideation

Viktor Frankl admits in his books that his theory of Logotherapy emerges   and develops in the concentration camps where he is put face to face with death, horror and life worthlessness. He attempts to persuade people at risk of suicide to find something to live for so that they forget about suicidal commitment. In *his Man's Serach for Meaning*, Frankl accentuates that the very first question he utilizes with patients to know where to start his psychotherapeutic treatment is: 'Why do you not commit suicide?' Patients highlight the focal concerns and interests that prevent them from abandoning life. Some patients' main reason to stay alive is their children while others

lights up that they have a project to accomplish or a talent to pursue. It is at this exact point that Frankl starts his treatment process, from the persons or things these patients like to stay alive for; they give them a meaning to live for and they render their lives into meaningful experiences.

The Austrian researcher narrates his terrible experience in the camps where he awakes at the death news of his parents and his wife. However, he promises "not to run into the electric wire" that prisoners used to commit suicide. He makes up his mind to turn his weakness into strength and support others to resist. Despite his life atrocities, Frankl states: "*Every possession lost, every value destroyed, suffering from hunger, cold and brutality, hourly expecting extermination, how could he find life worth preserving?*"(1984: 09) Here is the secret and here is the solution. In the camps, almost all the prisoners thought of suicide and were just trying to find out how to do it. Frankl was completely aware of it and was trying to stop suicidal ideas; convincing them that the future might be holding better news and expectations was fruitless this is what led him to further enhance the meaning making approach.

Suicide for Frankl is associated with life meaning and value rather than with constant suffering: " *It was born of the hopelessness of the situation, the constant danger of death looming over us daily and hourly, and the closeness of the deaths suffered by many of the others.*" (Ibid: 36). For him, people do not think of suicide only when they experience successive periods of suffering or shocks, they run into suicidal thoughts when they lose the meaning of life and the latter renders meaningless and worthless. He needs to persuade people at risk that even though they do not expect something from life, life expects something from them. In other words, the future holds

something for them such as: a unique experience of parenthood, a project fulfillment, a dream accomplishment, a happy partnership pursuance, … etc.

The world expects something from each single individual; fulfilling that expectation provides a sense of self-satisfaction and self-esteem. Hope is the key concept for people at suicide risk; Frankl's most challenging task in the camps was to lighten the prisoners' survival chances because in the best cases, nobody knew what the future held for them. Furthermore, it is quite important to clarify that not all depression cases are caused by or trace back to the feelings of meaninglessness. Suicide similarly does not always trace back to the existential vacuum that one is driven to. Suicide is a multidimensional phenomenon and to be pushed away, one needs what to live by and what to live for. 'The live for' (meaning for life) is consequently as important as 'the live by' (physical and financial means). People who do not have 'the live by means' are at risk but the people having no 'live for means' or meaning are at a higher risk, this is what is meant by Nietzsche's statement that Frankl frequently quotes: "*He who has a why to live can bear with almost any how.*" (1984: 7)

Suicide is an ultimate end and a radical act of escape; it means that the individual escapes his feelings of guilt and pain through a suicide attempt. One may also flee the unavoidable expectation of death by going to it rather than waiting for it to occur surprisingly. Frankl's philosophy is based on extremely forbidding suicide and trying to save people at risk by enabling them to find meaning in life despite suffering, despair and pain. The common philosophical opinion gathers on the point that suicide remains an unethical and an immoral act; it is a permanent solution to a temporary problem. Accordingly different was also Sartre's viewpoint about suicide from Camus'. Sartre admits that the absurd man does not commit suicide, he stares at death and that

fascination makes him free. Camus however believes that though man is free to choose the time to leave, he does not have to escape absurdity into death. Life according to him should be embraced with passion.

Besides, some philosophers such as Arthur Schopenhauer reject classifying suicide as an act of cowardice or a self-destruction crime; suicide for them becomes a refuge when life becomes a burden. Man for them owns his life inasmuch as he is responsible for all his deeds and choices. On the one hand, the American philosopher Thomas Szasz goes further to assure that suicide is among the basic rights of any human being; he is free and he may decide to escape into death at any time. The Austrian philosopher Jean Amery on the other hand reaches an extremist edge when claiming that one should justify why not to commit suicide and not the opposite.

Frankl emphasizes his opposition to suicidal thoughts and attempts as he encourages people to look for meaning and fill in the meaninglessness space with accomplishments and creation. People, according to Frankl, have to avoid falling at the intersection of death, pain and guilt because the Tragic Triad threatens to absorb their resistance ad challenging conduct. Existential escapism can be directed toward life, love and happiness instead of loss, despair and death.

III. Edwin Shneidman's Psychache and Psychological Needs

That part of the chapter is concerned with the psychological side of the phenomenon of suicide. Suicide is, in fact, a psychological act that is fueled by the person's emotional disorders and turmoil; it is basically constructed on his/her psychological legacy and psychopathological history. It is not merely moving toward death but it is to step away from unbearable pain, unendurable psychache and life burdensomeness. It is not a disease but a combination of many symptoms that drive one

to self-cessation. Shneidman states: "*It is best understood as a bio-sociopsychologico-existential state of malaise.*"(1980: 04). He ascertains that the mental aspects of the suicidal drama are as much important as the socio-cultural ones.

III.1. Shneidman's Psychache

Various concepts in the field such as: psychache, suicidology, postvention and psychological autopsy are attributed to the American psychologist and thanatologist Edwin Shneidman. The latter, in addition to his focus on psychache, explores the neurological exercise of the mind referring momentarily to: "*That the mind has a mind of its own, and that the main business of the mind is to mind its own business.*"(1998: 245). Committing suicide means putting an end to the painful flow of consciousness; being conscious sometimes is equal to being hurt, to feel an endless pain. Suicide does not emerge from an extravagant state of joy and happiness; it appears from despair, depression and hopelessness. In the previous section of the chapter, pain that is philosophically explored is part of the tragic triad related to Frankl's Logotherapy; it is based mainly on the physical pain, pain as one unit without smaller concomitants:

> This pain has various commonplace names: despair, loneliness, fear, anxiety, guilt, shame, depression, angst, and other more-or-less technical labels such as schizophrenia, affective disorders, depression, alcoholism, widowhood, mental illness. (Ibid: 246)

Pain that Shneidman refers to is purely psychological and it is deciphered in relation to the mental activities.

Psychache is contoured by Shneidman as the main motive that ignites suicidal thoughts in one's mind; any suicidal act is merely an attempt to escape the flow of pain

in case it is unstoppable. Psychache is: "*It is a special kind of pain, psychological pain, the pain of the negative emotions-guilt, fear, shame, defeat, humiliation, disgrace, grief, bereftness, dread, woe, loneliness, hopelessness, frustrated love, fractured needs, rage, hostility*" (Ibid: 248), Besides, the researcher reveals that the secret of psychache is being stimulated by frustrated psychological needs; these needs differ from one suicidal personality to the other. It depends on the environment and the family history that one's psychological needs are shaped.

The psychological needs are divided into two categories, the modal needs and the vital needs. Shneidman associates the modal needs with the ordinary needs that human beings live with; they even personalize the individual and define him. Vital needs however are attributed to the human needs that change when circumstances become more difficult and when the mind narrows to perceive only one solution to a suggested existential problem (vital needs define suicide itself). In that case, one's own internal voice keeps recalling the individual of his only way out of it. When any or more of these needs are thwarted, the individual would seek a way to escape life.

In his research, Shneidman drives the attention to the causal relation between psychache and lethality. He refers to some unfulfilled needs that may awaken suicidal thoughts in the individual's mind: thwarted love, fractured control, assaulted self-image, excessive anger, a surfeit of shame, ruptured key relations and the attendant grief-and the frustrated needs and the inner pain of that turmoil. (Ibid: 249). Besides, it is also correct that:

> As a psychological disorder, suicide relates specifically to unmet or frustrated
>
> needs, such as the need for acceptance, achievement, dignity, self-regard, clear

conscience, safety, and succorance… Every suicide act is addressed to certain unfulfilled needs. (1984: 321)

To cut it short, it is evident then, according to Shneidman, that suicide emerges out of the psychache which spouts from certain psychological needs that are frustrated. In another paper, Shneidman explores the many needs that should be fulfilled.

The researcher Antoon Leenaars perceives Shneidman psychological autopsy as being centered on the intention. Shneidman's work is mostly based on the analysis of suicidal notes that can hardly be achievable without maintaining a psychological autopsy of the suicidal person. The psychological autopsy is constructed on certain standards including the suicidal person's personal information, relationships, reactions, dreams, habits, sexual behaviors, emotional stability, drugs use and even the family's death history. After a deep reading and analysis of hundreds of suicidal notes, Shneidman emphasizes again the impact psychache has on the suicidal person: "*The key, the black heart of suicide, is an acute ache in the mind, in the psyche, it is called psychache. In this view, suicide is not a disease of the brain; but rather it is a perturbation in the mind.*"(2008: 139).

Frustrated of Psychological Needs
▼
Unbearable Psychological Pain
▼
Hopelessness/ Helplessness
▼
Constricted Cognition
▼
Search for a Solution
▼
Cessation of Consciousness
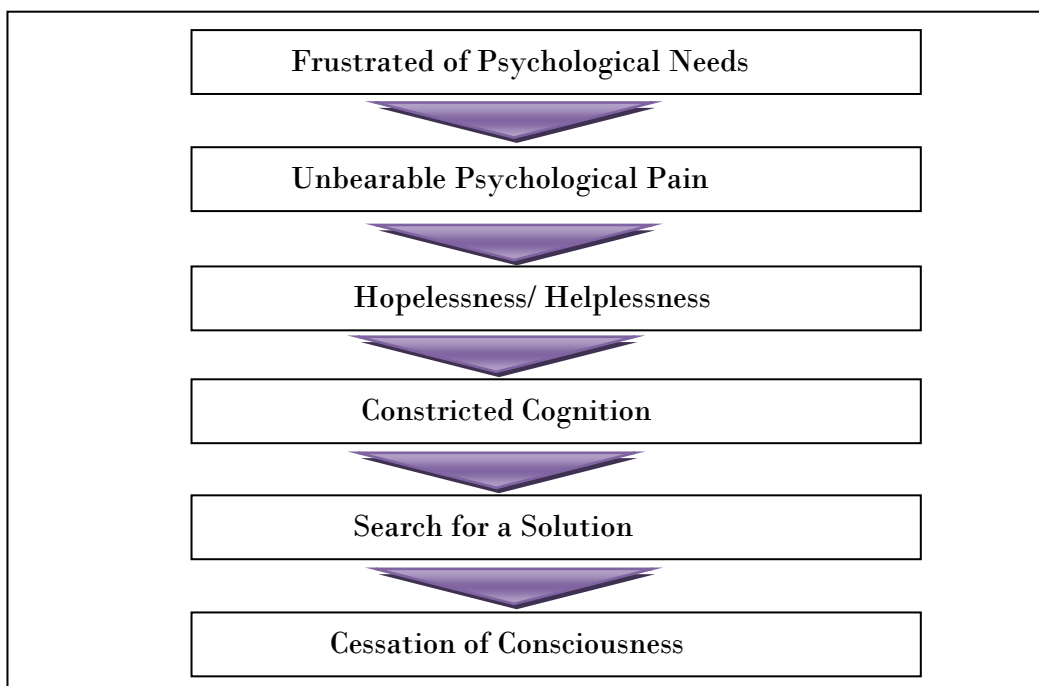
Figure 1: Psychache and Lethality, Michael Sperber, 2011

Shneidman highlights his emphasis: "*Suicide is not adaptive, but adjustive in the sense that it serves to reduce the tension of the pain related to the blocked needs.*" (1993: 145). Besides, the researcher Michael Sperber draws the following schema referring to the way that frustrated needs evoke the desire to end one's life:

Furthermore, the American suicidologist Shneidman draws some common statements that he concludes after many years working on the topic of suicide. Shneidman's commonalities are:

I. The common purpose of suicide is to seek a solution.

II. The common goal of suicide is cessation of consciousness.

III. The common stimulus in suicide is intolerable psychological pain.

IV. The common stressor in suicide is frustrated psychological needs.

V. The common emotion in suicide is hopelessness-helplessness.

VI. The common cognitive state in suicide is ambivalence.

VII. The common perceptual state in suicide is constriction.

VIII. The common action in suicide is egression.

 IX. The common interpersonal act in suicide is communication of intention.

 X. The common consistency in suicide is with lifelong coping patterns. (2010: 9)

There is indeed an ambiguous composition of negative meanings and ideas that lead usually to the cessation of life: hopelessness, constriction, pain, frustration and others. In relation to depression, Shneidman affirms the underlying difference between depression and suicide as many people die of suicide and many people comparatively live a long unhappy life encumbered with depression. Suicide is a momentary tempest in the mind that rapidly reaches the end; it is a nervous dysfunction rather than a psychiatric or mental disorder. All people who commit suicide have inner perturbation but not necessarily are depressed; however not all depressed people commit suicide. Shneidman states: "*Depression never causes suicide; rather, suicide results from severe psychache, coupled with dysphoria, constriction of perceptual range, and the idea of death as preferable to life*" (1993: 147)

III.2. Murray's Psychological Needs

Many other researchers strive to define psychological needs then clarify the relation between these vital needs and the suicidal behavior. The American psychologist Henry Alexander Murray for example has identified some of the inborn needs that are basically essential for the development of one's personality. His work was mainly directed to the theory of personality development which he calls: Personology and he endeavors to identify the psychogenic needs. One's personality is the total sum of behaviors and attitudes that are controlled by his/ her innate needs; one's needs define one's conduct and one's conduct defines who he/she is. Murray works on a taxonomy of needs showing that when the individual's body signals a certain need; this signifies the existence of a disequilibrium in the body functioning.

Murray divides the needs into primary needs that he calls "viscerogenic" and secondary needs called "psychogenic". The secondary needs rely on the primary ones. The two additionally differ in the organ source of the signaling stimulus and they have to be satisfied differently as well: physical satisfaction is required for viscerogenic needs whereas emotional satisfaction is necessary for the psychogenic ones. According to him, viscerogenic needs are: air, water, food, sex, location, urination, defecation, noxavoidance, harmavoidance, heatavoidance, coldavoidance and sentience. (2008: 77). The last four ones signify the act of avoiding repulsive stimulus (as the desire to vomit or cough), physical harm sources and exaggerated degrees of temperature.

In his book *Explorations of Personality*, Murray again divides the psychogenic needs into two categories: positive and negative ones. He identifies more than twenty of the needs which are (2008: 80-84):

-The need of acquisition: to gain possessions

-The need of conservance: to preserve and protect things against damage.

-The need of order: to keep things organized, tidy and clean.

-The need of retention: to retain one's own possessions from others.

-The need of construction: to build and grow one's life and career.

-The need of achievement: to struggle to reach one's target.

-The need of recognition: to enjoy consideration and reward.

-The need of exhibition: to attract attention or excitement.

-The need of inviolacy: to protect one's reputation against criticism and depreciation.

The inviolacy need itself is separated into three types:

      *The need of infavoidance: to avoid failure, shame and humiliation.

      *The need of defendance: to defend oneself against blame and resist probing.

      *The need of counteraction: to overcome defeat through revenge.

-The need of dominance: to dominate, dictate and lead others

-The need of deference: to co-operate, admire and serve with pleasure.

-The need of similance: to identify oneself among others.

-The need of autonomy: to strive for freedom and resist domination.

-The need of contrarience: to intend acting differently, to be unique and unexpected.

-The need of aggression: to punish, blame and harm others severely.

-The need of abasement: to surrender, apologize, confess and accept punishment.

-The need of blamavoidance: to obey the law and avoid blame and punishment.

-The need of affiliation: to belong to a group, interact with others.

-The need of rejection: to be indifferent, to ignore and exclude others.

-The need of nurturance: to help nourish the helpless and sympathize with others.

-The need of succorance: to seek help, sympathy and mercy from others.

-The need of cognizance: to satisfy one's curiosity and seek knowledge.

-The need of exposition: to explain, interpret and relate facts.

In order to avoid suicidal thoughts and attempts, Murray suggests that one's needs should be fulfilled; it is a way to mollify the high degrees of frustration, depression and anxiety that usually increase the risk. Though the negative psychogenic needs are relatively pathological and they deviate toward the psychological deconstruction, they may lead to suicide if they are not accomplished by the concerned individual.

III.3. Linehan's Emotion Dysregulation and Suicidality

The suicidal behavior stems from the individual's pshychache resulting from frustrated or unfulfilled psychogenic needs according to Shneidman. Suicide is not a disease and mollifying the psychache is the key secret to prevent it. Besides, Henry Murray elicits the needs that should be accomplished to avoid disequilibrium and dysfunctioning. Furthermore, the American social psychologist Marsha Linehan also emphasizes the role of the Emotion Dysregulation in paving the way for suicidal thoughts and she focuses on the suicidal behavior resulting from a disorder of emotions.

Marsha Linehan defines the Emotion Dysregulation in relation to what is called 'BPD: Borderline Personality Disorder' as it is: "*A high emotional vulnerability plus an inability to regulate emotions.*" (1993: 43). In another research paper with other scholars, she clarifies: "*The inability even when one's best efforts are applied, to change in a desired way emotions cues, experiences, actions, verbal responses, and/or nonverbal expressions under normative conditions*" (Neacsiu et al, 2014: 493). Linehan believes that individuals who are chronically suicidal are already emotionally dysregulated; they mainly have vulnerable emotion tolerance and inconvenient coping skills with negative emotions.

Milton Brown describes the situation simply by saying that because they invalidate and suppress their emotions, chronically dysregulated individuals vacillate between extremes of emotional experiencing and inhibition. (2006: 4). Individuals with emotion dysregulation are emotion phobic and they avoid all forms of bringing out their emotions; they lack emotion tolerance and they fear punishment or regret. When they are deprived of the right to get their emotions displayed freely or considered seriously, that repression drives them to suppress and subdue their emotions. Emotions of anger, love or sadness should not be trivialized nor should they be oppressed for the sake of avoiding pathological chronic dysregulation that might be an important motive of suicide.

Children specifically have to be raised to overtly express their joy, fear, anger, love, hatred and all other emotions, being positive or negative, without exercising any domination on their freedom of expression; that might lead to catastrophic psychological damage. Children should learn to react with ordinary emotions despite criticism and without threatening or humiliation; any attempt to interrupt the emotion cycle is sufficient to disturb the escalation of the psychological growth. It is important to shed light on the phase of childhood because it is the basis where children should be taught how to react ordinarily and say what they feel exactly.

The symptoms or characteristics of emotion dysregulation are summarized in a research paper by Roemer and Gratz; they are essentially divided into four types. It is due to these features that suicide is maintained, in certain cases, as a solution by people at high risk (2004: 43):

1- (Lack of) awareness, understanding, and accepting of emotions.

2-(In) ability to engage in goal directed behaviors and inhibit impulsive behaviors when experiencing negative emotions.

3- (In) flexible use of situationally appropriate strategies to modulate the intensity and/or duration of emotional response.

4- (Un) willingness to experience negative emotions as part of pursuing meaningful activities in life.

These aspects indicate the importance of one's ability to understand and accept his/her emotions to reach a certain level of emotion regulation. It is additionally necessary not to eliminate negative emotions nor should one exclude them as they are part of the psychological balance regardless of how much trivial or meaningless they may seem to others. The individual's consciousness of his/her impulsive emotional reactions should be associated with the ability to control them; self-control is quite important for emotion regulation. Consequently, emotional vulnerability stems from the individual's inability to enhance his/her coping strategies to embrace positive as well as negative emotions.

Emotion dysregulation is strongly linked to one's introvert/ extrovert habit and to momentary emotional responses to negative stimuli. Additionally, emotional problems or failure to get adapted to new circumstances do not always result in emotion dysregulation. In *The Oxfor Handbook of Emotion Dysregulation*, Hooria Jazairi clarifies: "*A person can experience emotion problems or emotion misregulation and then make necessary shifts, without resulting in emotion dysregulation.*" (2020: 129). Emotion dysregulation has indeed some modulation strategies, development processes

but what is important in that study is how it is connected to suicidal ideation and how it provokes suicidal thoughts.

Is it correct that emotionally dysregulated people are at high risk of suicide commitment? May they truly reach the point of intended self destruction? To which extent is the individual with emotion dysregulation able to cope with it and avoid self lethality? While Marsha Linehan focuses on the intervention of the DBT: Dialectical Behavior Therapy to mollify the influence of the emotion dysregulation. The DBT was basically used for suicidal individuals then it developed to be even diagnosed for suicidal people with BPD: Borderline Personality Disorder. The primary target of the DBT is to show people how to regulate their emotional responses and how to acquire an adaptive value of their own emotions so that they can avoid suicidality. If suicidal behaviors are classified as defense mechanisms, escape strategies or modes of distress communicating, it signifies that there is a problem in the emotion regulation for the suicidal individual.

Some researchers concentrate on the relation between suicide and emotion dysregulation and whether to consider the latter among the crucial factors leading to lethality. In a research completed by Keyne C. Law and other scholars about the role of emotion dysregulation in suicidality, the writers assure that individuals who struggle with understanding, managing, and expressing their emotions have been found to be at an increased risk of making a suicide attempt. (2015: 31). In other words, suicide ideation and attempts are influenced in a way or in another by emotion dysregulation though the latter may not serve as a direct cause but it is a crucial contributing factor.

Besides, the writers of the same paper confirm: "*Emotion dysregulation may serve as an obstacle to suicidal behavior unless efforts to regulate affect involve repeated engagement in behaviors capable of impacting an individual's fear of death and tolerance of physical pain.*" (Ibid: 32). The more emotionally dysregulated one is, the higher number of suicide attempts there will be. Regarding the fact that suicide ideation turns to suicide action in virtue of more repeated attempts, the relationship between emotion dysregulation and suicide ideation, thought very precise and delicate, but it is not a direct cause/effect one. The following model is suggested by Law et al to summarize the relation between emotion dysregulation and suicidality. (2015: 33)
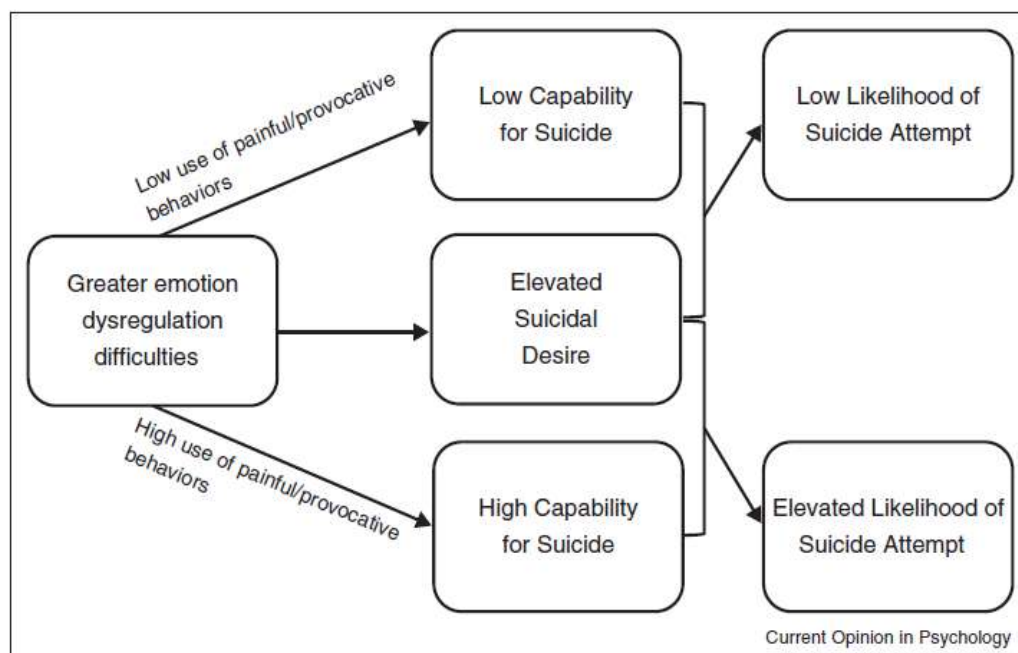
Figure 2: The Relation between Emotion Dysregulation and Suicidality. Law, Khazem and Anestis, 2015

Furthermore, the American psychologist Thomas Joiner develops the 'ITS': Interpersonal Theory of Suicide that is based on two elementary components: thwarted belongingness and perceived burdensomeness. The two are psychological needs that

may be satisfied with social or psychological options. According to Joiner, when the two factors occur simultaneously, they may drive the individual to acquire the desire for suicide. People who have the desire to commit suicide do not necessarily accomplish the act because they mostly lack the capability to do it. Capability is not innate in humans; it is acquired through time with more experiences maintained to fight negative emotions associated with suicide and death. In his book: *Why People Die by Suicide* (2005), the writer demonstrates his family experience with suicide and explains how the two factors increase one's desire for death.

Thwarted belongingness refers to the frustrated feeling of being a member in any group and being accepted by other members of the group. It is an elementary psychological need that humans grow with. Besides, due to some circumstances, the individual may perceive himself/ herself as a burden to others; it may not be true this is why it is named the perceived burdensomeness. The latter refers to another psychological need that humans feel necessary to avoid feelings of dissatisfaction. The simultaneous presence of the two needs creates a desire for death inside the individual. Moreover, the desire alone is insufficient for suicidal ideation and attempt; but when it is coupled with an acquired capability to defeat the internal fear, the individual develops suicidal ideation and may even attempt to commit it. The 'ITS' is a fundamental part of suicidality research field and Joiner's book remains a masterpiece solution to the puzzle: Why do people die by suicide?

IV. Emile Durkheim's Sociological Reading of Suicide

Emile Durkheim has established his sociological model to analyze the phenomenon of suicide within social variables and standards; his model is considered as

a prototype for further analytical rigorous and more systematic studies. Durkheim is a French sociologist and he is ranked as the father of the modern social science and the architect who develops social integrity and integration within societies. He focuses on the human and social behaviors, relationships between the various social actors and the nature of the resulting interaction. For that reason, even his writings about suicide are meant basically to form a highly standardized framework to study the nature of society.

The French professor of sociology aims first at making boundaries between the social science and the other sciences as philosophy and psychology asserting that sociology is unique and separated from similar disciplines. His book entitled *Suicide* was published in 1897 and it analyses the suicide rates among protestant and Catholic groups. Though the book has always been classified as a milestone in the field of sociology and though it is still seen as the analytical background for the topic, but it is evident that the world of research evolves regularly and enormously that the changing socio-cultural assumption of the issue is being given much consideration.

Durkheim has tried to clarify the way that personal phenomenon is shaped and structured by social features and the way the psychology of the society affects the psychology of the suicidal individual. His earlier works are more interested in asserting the importance of positing the topic of suicide within a social frame to be analyzed as the subsidiary and extra-social standards are not sufficient. Heredity, alienation, religion, anthropology and many other similar factors are not rejected by the French sociologist but he affirms additionally the social concomitants which play a fundamental role in each suicidal incident.

IV.1. Suicide between Social Integration and Moral Regulation

In fact, it seems urgent before explaining the social circumstances that shape the suicidal phenomenon to ask a crucial question about the hereditary nature of suicide: Can suicide be transmitted from one to the other by heredity? Does it mean that a suicidal mother gives birth to a suicidal son? Is the suicide ideation injected in people's genes? If so, does science confirm or reject the hypothesis? Basically, to admit that the heredity hypothesis is true, there should be a considerable percentage of the total rate of suicide cases attributed to that exact reason as the source of the problem. It means there should be an approved causal relation between the two issues then it should be scientifically assured as an influencing factor; i.e: the existence of certain exceptional cases does not give any the right of generalization. Scientific research does not confirm yet that suicide is transmissible by heredity though it may be taken as one of the influencing factors.

Durkheim suggests that working on the social structure is efficient in trying to stop the suicide phenomenon; in other words it means reintegrating the individual in a social group may effectively aid in decreasing the suicide risks and rates. In fact, Durkheim is one of the scientists who demonstrate their skeptical thoughts about the exactness and accurateness of the suicide statistics. He defines suicide basically as: "*The term suicide is applied to any death which is the direct or indirect result of a positive or negative act accomplished by the victim himself.*" (2002: xl) Then, in a later definition, he adds the concept of the intention into the previous statement in an attempt to clarify whether the act has already been planned before its application. It may also refer to one's basic target behind the act; the suicidal person may just want to punish himself in a moment of wrath which does not necessarily mean his desire to end his life definitely.

Suicide for Durkheim is considered as a social act that is surrounded by varying social factors; it is a signal of social crisis that threatens not only the individual's existence but also the collective conscience and social ethics that govern societies. The social theory is based on destroying the purported presupposition of linking the phenomenon of suicide necessarily and uniquely with psychopathology, genetic material, mental disturbances and alcoholism. It aims concomitantly at defining suicide as a social fact that derives and can be deciphered within a social group. Luigi Tomasi explains: "*Voluntary death is neither conventional nor inspired by sociologism; rather, it is an act against solidarity, a rejection of society itself, related above all to the state of integration of the individuals and groups who live in that society.*"(2000: 14).

The writer means to say that the suicidal person rejects his society inasmuch as he rejects being integrated within it; it is not a source of belonging for him as he rejects the fact of belonging to that society and he does not seek any other kind of integration. Besides, in a society of high level of social integration, suicide rates would consequently decrease. In his book, Durkheim analyses suicide on three levels: the religious, the family and the political ones.

The religious factor of analysis maintained by the French sociologist is totally fundamental in studying suicide; it is applied to groups of different religious belonging, Catholics, Protestants and Jews. First, Durkheim believes that the correlation between one's religion and suicide is stronger than the one between one's educational grades and suicide. The purpose of that selection is to measure the level of integration among different religious groups. Durkheim states: "*The suicide rate for Protestants everywhere shows itself as higher than that for Catholics, and often for the Jews.*" (2002: xxviii). Though he focuses on the discussion of the various social factors that

surround the phenomenon such as the cosmic factors, the individual's income, marriage, weather, the most important factor in his study is based on the individual's religion and how it protects his/her from committing suicide.

Religion motivates a kind of a collective consciousness and it may even serve as an effective preventive factor. Besides, understanding the concept of individualism itself is highly influential in the Protestant community rather than the Catholic community. Additionally, the overwhelming sense of the individual conscience spread among Protestants is similarly another standard that makes the difference between the mentioned religious groups. Durkheim summarizes then:

> Man seeks learning and kills himself because the religious society to which he belongs has lost some of its cohesion, but he does not kill himself because he is being educated. …it is because religion is falling apart that the need for education is awakened. (2006: 176)

Moreover, Durkheim also emphasizes the role of the family interconnectedness in preventing and decreasing the suicide rates as it serves as a defense mechanism that protects each member; it is thus a safeguard within the social order. He assures that: "*The more strongly it is constituted the greater its protection.*" (Ibid: 160).

More precisely, Luigi Tomasi declares: "*Married individuals with numerous children were less likely to commit suicide.*" (2000: 16). In the light of that statement, how can one justify that the responsibilities and burdens of marriage and children entail an easy life than the ones of celibacy? Does it mean that having marital bonds and having children may protect the individual from suicidal ideas? To which extent it is correct then that marriage may be classified among the protective factors and bachelorhood is one of the risk factors of suicide? The formula of the family is unique

in each community and it plays an essential role in preventing most of the social ills, delinquency, criminal and suicidal acts; the stronger it is, the more protective and inclusive of each single member it shall be.

On the second level of integration, the individual is also better protected when he is well integrated within a social group and he submits to its rules and morals willingly. When the wanting relationship between the individual and the society he lives in is reciprocal, the individual is being considered as a child of his own society and its core element. However, when the individual rejects any kind of integration and puts his/her own society at the end of his/her interests, it is going to react in the same way putting him/her at the margins; the individual is marginalized and then estranged and then pushed indirectly to put an end to his/her existence. Higher doses of individualism may rapidly cause one's social disintegration.

Furthermore, Durkheim emphasizes the notion of social regulation in addition to the social integration. The former is meant for the quality and quantity of control society exerts over individuals' behaviors, attitudes, and even their emotions. It is a social paradigm that contains and organizes the individuals' conducts to a certain extent. The French researcher finds out similar results for both social integration and regulation; low and high levels of social integration and of social regulation are associated with increased suicide rates. Decreased suicide rates are found only in contexts with moderate levels of social integration and social regulation similarly. When there is no regulation in societies, Durkheim suggests: "*No one then knows what is possible and what is impossible, what is just and what unjust, what constitute legitimate demands and hopes, and which are those that exceed the boundaries.*" (2006: 263)

Durkheim focuses on the social facts that determine the phenomenon and considers seasonal variations as an important element; suicide rates in January and June for example are different from rates in other months of the year. Many critics call it the seasonal fallacy of suicide because it is not reliable inasmuch as the other social variables. Beside that, he also perceives the variable of being involved in collective life; belonging to a social group and being strongly committed to it. According to him, what differs between female and male suicide rates goes back to that aspect and women accordingly are less likely to commit suicide than men. What is crucially substantial for Durkheim regarding the social facts is the collective force or tendency of each group that is made up of individual inclinations. This force is unique and distinctive and it implements bits of egotism, altruism and anomie of individuals; he suggests in *On Suicide* that these tendencies of the collective group penetrate the minds of individuals and make them decide to kill themselves. (2006: 311)

Durkheim eliminates the one direct cause to suicide whether socially, psychologically, pathologically or else; he pleads for the multitude causality. He conceives: "*It all depends on the intensity with which the suicidogenic causes have acted upon the individual.*" (Ibid) It signifies that the suicidal individual blames the external conditions for his sadness and suicide decision similarly; his sadness does not though result from certain events but it is the reflection of the group to which he/she belongs. The influence of the group force reveals the state of the social environment exercised on the members; it says a lot about high/low suicide rates.

> Since each society has its temperament which it cannot change from one day to the next, and since this tendency to suicide derives from the moral constitution of groups, it is inevitable that it should differ from one group to another and that

> in each of them it should remain for many years more or less equal to itself.
>
> (Ibid: 316)

More importantly, Durkheim advocates the point that suicide rates differ from one group to the other because these groups are fundamentally; it is due to the interconnectedness of the social, moral, intellectual and cultural standards in addition to the psychology of the group; they all matter together.

Not only does Durkheim's emphasis is poured on the collective force variability but he also hypothesizes that suicide inherits the same tendency of its predecessor and it is just a recurrent echoing event that occurs each year with equal levels. In the same book, the French sociologist devotes a part to explore extra-social factors that shape the suicidal behavior taking heredity as an example for that category. He then discusses suicide in relation to race and whether it makes a difference: does race really matter in suicidal cases? Does it impact the suicide rates? Do white people share similar suicide rates with yellow, brown or black people? Durkheim answers these questions as follows:

> Every race has a suicide rate peculiar to it. For one race is only defined and differentiated from others by organico-psychic characteristics. So if suicide really does vary between races, we shall have to accept that it is closely linked to some organic propensity. (Ibid: 83)

IV.2. Durkheim's typology of Suicide

What is truly significant in Durkheim's social theory about suicide is his baseline that divides people who work in agriculture and others having regular professions. He seeks understanding people's external motives of suicide and he starts from his belief that the social factors of suicide vary between different groups; they are

not the same due to the collective tendency that dominates each group separately. Despite all what statistics that governments provided in their reports, Durkheim spent some time to reveal the truth which opposed statistics.

He thinks that statistics are destined to find out some motives which are called "causes" and these causes are common between all the social groups, which is illogical and unreasonable for him. Each group has a specific formula; the variables of each formula interact differently, so they impact the group members differently as a result of that. How would statisticians draw conclusions based on common suicide motives maintained by Asians, Africans and Americans similarly?

The French sociologist's underlined aim is to prove that suicide rate does not completely depend on human motives but it is the result of societal-produced forces that emerge from the excessive overflow of any of the three: anomie, altruism or egoism. He considers four types of suicide: the egoistic, the altruistic the anomic and the fatalistic; each type has its specific stream and characteristics.

First, the egoistic suicide is linked to the individual's integration within his society; the more isolated the person is, the worse his integration process would be. It is a type that denotes the person's selfishness and high degrees of his ego being implemented in his suicidal act. Second, the altruistic type is however related to some higher orders and commandments and it is mostly illustrated with religious or political causes that dictate taking one's life as a form of sacrifice. That type is simultaneously opposing the first one as the person sacrifices himself for what he believes to be ideal values and principles.

In fact, an excessive amount of individuation may cause one's suicide inasmuch as the lack of it does; the two extremes have the same result. In other words, an increased level of social integration causes suicide exactly like the decrease level does. When man is strongly involved and engaged he becomes like the one who is firmly detached and separated as far as suicidal ideation and commitment are concerned. In certain old times throughout history, forms of sacrifice varied as whereas some people killed themselves for fame and glory (Danish soldiers growing old and weak used to commit suicide to preserve their pride and glory), others did it for religious purposes (Spanish Celts wishing to go to heaven when killing themselves).

Besides, widows in India used to kill themselves after losing their men (to show loyalty and complete sacrifice). Slaves sometimes were also supposed to commit suicide after the death of the master. These people did it out of duty and fear of being detached from existence and life. In some cases, there is a sacred relation between two people (husband and wife, master and slave); when one of the two dies the second is supposed to leave successively; this is where integration originates. At last, the egoistic individual is detached from life because he loses the goal to stay for and life becomes devoid for him. The altruistic individual, however, perceives that his goal is located at the other world, the world of the after death this is why life would look like an obstacle in his way toward that goal.

Third, the anomic type is then connected to one's needs and the way society regulates them in order to reach satisfaction. Durkheim gives an interesting example about that type which can be embodied in the newly enriched people considering surprising fortunes as a stimulus for suicide. A special reference to the ups/downs of economic abilities is made at that level of anomic suicide. What is logical is that

financial crises usually result in an increase in the suicide rates; but what is illogical and even more shocking is that financial prosperity also has the same impact increasing the suicide rates. It means that financial disturbances at both extremes the positive and the negative boost the rates. In fact, it stems from the human need/satisfaction dichotomy as Durkheim suggests: "*No living person can be happy or even live at all unless his needs are sufficiently well adjusted to his means, if he demands more than can be provided for him… he will be constantly irritated and unable to function without suffering.*"(Ibid: 256). What kind of needs Durkheim writes about then?

Furthermore, though it is similar to Murray's psychological needs but Durkheim's list of needs are more likely to be related to the physical and social sides, the well-being needs. Human beings would be hung between the available and the desired, between the greedy insatiable force and the temperance; moral regulation interferes for the sake of physical and moral balance. Durkheim declares: "*If poverty protects against suicide, it is because it is in itself a brake … the less one has, the less one is inclined endlessly to extend the limit of one's needs.*" (Ibid: 264). Anomic suicide occurs then when the individual is defeated by his dissatisfaction and he/she rejects all regulatory rules or values to end up prioritizing voluntary death over a life that does not provide the expected, even if unnecessary, needs.

By anomies, Durkheim does not only indicate economic crises, he also refers to social disturbances such as divorce, orphan-hood and widowhood. Durkheim confirms that divorcees of both sexes kill themselves between three and four times as often as married people (I bid: 275). Divorce and partners separation are both kinds of regime disturbance that result in moral, psychological and social changes after which neither men nor women remain the same. Suicide ideation might be sought consequently after

divorce but separation is not necessarily a direct cause; for that reason, the marital relationship may serve as an effective protective factor against it.

The fourth type is the fatalistic suicide; it is the one related to excessive and oppressive discipline exercised on the individual and it results from high pressure environment such as the prison or the slavery systems. Durkheim believes this type does not truly exist in real life this is why he spends little time on that type. The reader may have observed by now the opposing standards between egoistic and altruistic on the one hand and between anomic and fatalistic on the other hand. Besides, Durkheim also refers to the possibility of mixing the three types of suicide to have other secondary types such as: the ego-anomic, the ego-altruist and the altruist-anomic.

In David Lester's edited book *Emile Durkheim: Le Suicide One Hundred Years Later* (1994), K. D. Breault discusses four causes or types of suicide that he calls the four independent theories which lay at the ends of the two forces: social integration and moral regulation:

> When social integration is at a high level in society, Durkheim argues altruistic suicide occurs; when social regulation is high, fatalistic suicide results; when social regulation is low, anomic suicide occurs; and when social integration is low, egoistic suicide results. (1994: 11)

In fact, admitting that suicide is a social act signifies that individuals kill themselves because they have certain internal weak points that invite and welcome external factors to destroy them. It is similar to the human immunity system that protects the body from outside attacks; the stronger the system is, the better the individual's defensive

potentials would be. There is no better than being socially integrated and morally regulated to enjoy a life of satisfaction and joy.

IV.3. David Lester's Socio-Cultural Classification

Some researchers and theorists in the field of suicidology believe that old studies in the field impede the development of research and hinder its stream of advance. It is indeed a fallacy because the world of research generally has a constructive peculiarity; former studies serve as a basis or foundation for more recent ones and this is how science gets developed. Because Durkheim's research was applied to the first half of the Twentieth Century people and because he drew his conclusions about social facts relying on the social formula of the time, it is hardly sufficient to take only his study into consideration regardless of the newly accomplished studies of the present time. It is not an attempt to underestimate the enormous masterpieces of the French sociologist, but it is because societies and people have changed a great deal since one hundred years ago.

Political, social, economic and even cultural characteristics of 1900 time are hugely and shockingly different; this is why it is usually the duty of researchers to keep the thread along the path of current changes and assure the research continuity and evolution similarly. Many suicidologists start from Durkheim's work, which is the skeleton, to fulfill further accomplishments and attain more discoveries. David Lester, a British-American psychologist and suicidologist, is one of the scholars who builds on Durkheim's sociological research of suicide; he is even called 'The world's pre-eminent suicide researcher' as he is very prolific in that field. Concerning the literature of the social theory of suicide, David Lester's work is even more engaged additionally to

Durkheim's so that to pursue the research and find out more accurate preventive measures.

Lester has obtained a more practicing approach that is meant to analyze with statistics most of the phenomena and variables related in any way to suicide. He constructs his own research on Durkheim's work though he criticizes the definitions and standards Durkheim has provided for regulation, integration and social act. Lester moves forward to apply Durkheim's typology on individuals and he maintains seven social variables to be applied to 53 nations. His main target is initially to classify nations according to the degrees of regulation and integration, but he needs first to identify what he means by both as he develops Durkheim's definitions into more adequate and inclusive measures.

For Lester, high scores of political rights, civil rights, political freedom, religious liberty signify a high score of social regulation and a high loading of marriage rate indicates a high score of social integration. Depending on these variables, he classifies 53 nations into areas with high, low or moderate levels of each of the two. Lester finds out that high scores of both social regulation and integration are found in Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Egypt, Hungary, Poland, Singapore, South Korea and Yugoslavia. Suicide in these areas might consequently be fatalistic/ altruistic. (1994: 225). Low scores on both factors, however, were obtained by Sweden and Switzerland, and suicides might be anomic/ egoistic. (Ibid) Besides, Honduras, Jordan, Mexico, Panama, and the Philippines were high in social regulation and low in social integration; while Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom were low in social regulation and high in social integration. (Ibid)

Lester also sees divorce, for example, as a significant factor that plays on both regulation and integration; divorce indicates the absence of social regulation and it decreases the force of social integration. He analyzes different other examples that were/ are famous in certain societies in addition to individual cases of celebrities, actors and writers who committed suicide for several motives. Moreover, he takes into consideration small minorities and specific groups in societies to be classified with one of the four types of suicide. He claims that Durkheim's typology applies to individuals inasmuch as it applies to groups; individuals also have certain degrees of regulation and integration which classify their suicides into one of the four types.

What is crucial in the present work might be linked to Lester's research about the role of cultural elements in provoking suicide behaviors. What are the cultural components that affect suicide rates? And how do they lead to suicidal ideation? Lester constructs his research on a cultural basis starting from the variation of suicide rates in the US between men and women, and also between black Americans and white Americans. He makes a shift then to interweaving cultural conflicts, gender attributes, ethnic differences with suicidal patterns working accurately on a complex body of cultural variables such as: dialect, religion, age, gender, race, ideology, behavioral codes, …etc. Lester claims: "*Suicidal behavior may be quite differently determined and have different meanings in different cultures*" (1997: 51).

For a better understanding of the way culture influences suicide acts, Lester addresses his study to the immigrants because they are contextualized in a cultural conflict space where they struggle between the necessity to adapt and the need to preserve. He provides some examples of cultural influence on suicidal people; the Danish mothers whose exaggerated obsession and domination on their sons drive the

latter to depression which itself leads to suicidal thoughts immediately after any coincidence of separation or loss.

Moreover, Swedish mothers whose excessive motivation to their children aims at increasing their ambition, self-esteem and desire to succeed; in the very first incident of failure, the sons commit suicide as a result of a damaged sense of self-esteem. More importantly, Lester relies on the notion of immigration to exhibit its relation with suicidality and whether suicidal people follow the same methods and possess the same suicidal intention while living in the mother land and after moving to the nation of immigration. Lester then moved to Asia to make comparisons between different Asian areas and the US.

Since he arrives to the conclusion that cultural factors strongly influence the suicide patterns and circumstances, he specifies then the case of Chinese Americans as: "*Gender and age patterns in Chinese suicide seem to be affected strongly by ethnicity, whereas the absolute suicide rates and methods used are affected by the nation in which the Chinese dwell.*" (Ibid: 52) Does acculturation have any impact on suicidal intention? Do people immigrate because of their suicidal ideation? Do people at high risk of suicide get rid of suicidal thoughts after immigration? Which one (suicidal thoughts and immigration) influences the other and which one is the cause/effect of the other? Are victims of the cultural conflict victims of suicidal ideation as well? Is suicide in that case a result of being hung between the originally acquired discipline and the necessity of acculturation? Does cultural conflict drive the individual to suicidal thoughts? Is suicide an immediate result of the dominant/non-dominant culture after immigration? In fact, this is what David Lester strives to answer in his cultural exhibition of the topic.

Lester finds out that cultural conflicts are rarely enlisted among the causes of suicide though the latter might be an immediate result of stress that is caused by various problems of acculturation. (Ibid: 55). Depending on his research about suicide applied to different ethnic groups, Lester concludes that acculturation does hardly drive the individual to commit suicide though culture conflicts affect both the rate and the meaning of suicidal behaviors. The book entitled *Theories of Suicide: Past, Present and Future* (2014) written by David Lester and John F. Gunn is a real masterpiece as it summarizes old and current studies in the field of suicidology and it highlights the most influential figures and their imprints being exhibited from various perspectives.

Some researchers like David Lester and Herbert Hendin, however, criticize Durkheim's theorizing believing that he excludes the person's sense of individuation when prioritizing the sense of collectiveness. He is similarly criticized that he advocates the irrelevance of psychological factors of suicide, to a certain extent, and for the superiority he attributes to the sociological dimension over other explanatory or analytical perspectives. Steve Taylor contrarily perceives Durkheim's work as opposing neither psychology in itself nor the study of individual; he suggests: "*His opposition was to individualist explanation. This is not a criticism of studying the individual; it is a criticism of accepting individual consciousness as the basis for explaining people's actions*."(1994: 3)

V. The Suicidal Paradox at the Intersection of Philosophy, Sociology and Psychology

The last part of the chapter aims at putting all ends together in order to explore the various facets of the suicide paradox. The suicide paradox is explained in relation to

both variables race and sex as the current work highlights unexpected suicide rates of black female minorities from a philosophical, psychological and sociological perspectives. It is accordingly relevant to consider the previous theorists' views to explain the paradox and to reveal the hidden motives of reluctance. That part is concerned with theoretical and analytical views about the suicide of color and the suicide of gender then the suicide of both together; it is mainly targeting the black woman's decreased suicide rates and what stands behind the paradox.

The phenomenon of suicide has been viewed in the previous part of the chapter from three main perspectives: the philosophical the psychological and the sociological; this is why it is highly appreciated to follow the same pattern with the suicide paradox. The main purpose is to shed light on the paradox from three dimensions in order to explain not what provokes people to commit suicide but what hinders them and drives them away from suicidal ideation. The concept specifically diagnoses the case of black women whose suicide rates are the lowest among the other races in the US. African black women also mark very low suicide rates in the Southern part of the African continent; there is a secret behind that and this is what the current study aims at revealing.

Buie and Maltsberger claim that, regardless the meaning of suicide paradox, the paradox of suicide however signifies: "*It is the paradox of suicide that the victim, finding inner death in life, seeks inner life in dying.*"(1980: 61) It is similar to handling one's deadly life and looking for rest in his/her intentional death; each alternative is bitterly difficult than the other. The suicide paradox, however, describes the inconsistency of rates between men and women, between whites and blacks and even between high class and low class individuals. What makes black women resist suicidal

tendencies and survive a dreadful life? Do black Americans and white Americans share the same suicide paradox correlates? Do black women and white women share the same motives of suicide paradox? The objective of that part of the chapter is to find answers to these questions.

Starting with the philosophical perspective, it has already been based on Viktor Frankl's theory of Meaning Making, Tragic Triad and the Existential Escapism. These notions and concepts have been explained for the sake of understanding underlying motives of suicide. However, it is requisite now to demonstrate the way philosophers in general, and Frankl in particular, perceive the suicide paradox and how they illustrate the racial/gendered contradiction. Frankl states that individuals acquire suicidal ideation when they lack meaning in their lives and also when they do not strive to create it; it is due to the absence of meaning that they endure the meaninglessness of life. They consequently escape life because they believe they have nobody and nothing to stay alive for.

Besides, Frankl claims that when individuals are subjected to an unsupportable pain, experience the dreadful feeling of death and loss or when they develop a sense of regret out of certain guilt, they are prone to escape existentially to a world of their own. The path of the Tragic Triad ends with escape either from one's existence or from one's own life. What makes individuals insist on fighting escape inclinations and stick to life regardless of how much dreadful and tiresome it is? How does meaning that individuals attribute to their lives save them against suicidal thoughts? How do individuals develop a non-suicidal immunity after loss, pain, death, guilt and regret? How do individuals defeat existential escapism in spite of discrimination, prejudice and oppression?

When explaining the psychological therapy he adopts to save prisoners from suicidal thoughts, frankl relies heavily on the importance of finding meaning in life as it is a substantial protective key against intentional death. However, he does not truly classify his samples into genders or races; he utilizes the camps victims in general to draw his theoretical guidelines. Frankl believes that people decide to escape life when it becomes meaningless and when they have nothing to live for. They consequently need to look for meaning to resist the attraction. Black women are less prone to fall within the clutches of existential vacuum and this is in virtue of their spirituality and religiosity. They are stronger and more resistant spiritually and emotionally; they suffer hard but rarely maintain suicidal thoughts. They escape to the best refuge for them which is basically religion, the church and the religious activities. Assisting others in need fills their lives with joy, collaboration and power; this is meaning that life necessitates.

Escapism has always been the choice of the coward people but the black woman specifically has mostly been struggling to the remote extremes of misery but she prioritizes survival over withdrawal. The meaning that the black woman militates to reach is founded primarily on her religiosity and second on the family interconnectedness beside the solid unbeatable social ties; it is a net that protects her from isolation, alienation or estrangement. She is involved within a group that serves as a protective wall against prejudice, discrimination and marginalization; suicidal thoughts can hardly cross the walls and rarely succeeds in the persuasion process.

The African American woman is immune against suicidal ideation attacks essentially because she has a largely important issue to defend; it is the identity issue in addition to the equality quest in the US; this is what justifies the low suicide rates of the

black woman in comparison with black men and white people. Additionally, black women develop their coping mechanisms against escapism inclination and the intersection of death, pain with guilt. The Tragic Triad for the black woman is rendered into a triad of life, power and resistance.

The second perspective that has to be used to analyze the paradox is the psychological one through utilizing psychological notions and ideation to explain non-suicidality. Shneidman's work is based on the conception that individual's psychache stems from his/her unsatisfied needs which are very essential for an emotional and cognitive balance. When the individual satisfies the psychological needs, he enhances the level of immunity against lethality and self-destruction, and he develops one of the protective measures necessary for survival. In addition to that, individuals at risk should center their attention on their emotional regulation as it guarantees a certain degree of protection against cognitive disorder and dysregulation. Do men and women have similar psychological needs? Do black Americans experience feelings of failed burdensomeness and thwarted belongingness similarly as white Americans? How is the suicide paradox exhibited in the light of the emotion dysregulation?

It might be highly striking to encounter the suicide paradox with the mental disorder because it would result in another type in addition to the gendered and the racial suicide paradox; it is the psychic suicide paradox. Many studies have affirmed the relation between psychological disorders and suicidal behavior; Shneidman highlights the concept of psychache specifically. However, Ronal C. Kessler's research (1993) in the field assures that more female patients are diagnosed either with 'Major Depressive Disorder' (MDD) or with 'Borderline Personality Disorder' (BPD) than male patients. However, women are known to be more likely to adopt within various situations and

adapt with different unmet needs, whether the physical or the psychological; the black woman particularly is prone to overcome the need obstacle and she is more open to get adapted and adjusted.

Besides, Schrijvers, Bollen and Sabbe suggest that taking into account the female preponderance in 'MDD' and 'BPD' as well as the high suicide rates in both disorders, a strong association between gender differences in psychopathology and gender differences in suicidal behavior can be expected (2012: 21). While most of the personality disorders, substance-related disorders and mood disorders increase the risk of suicide in males, anorexia nervosa heightens the risk of suicide for females. In fact, completed suicides are larger for depressed men than depressed women. Then, the association between minor psychopathology and long-term suicidal risk appears to be much stronger in males than in females (Gunnell et al., 2002).

Schrijvers and his mates affirm that the higher female prevalences of 'MDD' and 'BPD' do not lead to a higher female suicide rate; they declare:

> The higher rates of internalizing disorders (depression and anxiety disorders) in females appear to be reflected in higher rates of suicidal attempts and ideation in this gender, whereas the higher rates of externalizing behavior (antisocial, violence, behavioral problems, and substance abuse) in males could lead to a higher rate of deaths in male suicides. (2012: 24)

The internalization of disorders attributed to women end up in the form of more suicide attempts whereas externalized psychological disorders for men enable them to fulfill and complete their suicides quickly and with less hesitation. Regarding suicide commitment, women are more hesitant but men are more decisive.

Psychache increases the suicide risk and the latter is positively associated with the psychache level; and males show stronger association between suicide risk and psychological disorders. Because psychache and suicide risk correlate positively, and because women are more vulnerable to psychache than men, the secret behind women resistance against suicidal ideation due to psychache is then less stronger. It signifies that less women commit suicide because of the mental intolerable pain than men, and here lies the secret. Women resist mental pain and they even bear the unbearable. Despite the hypothesis that more men commit suicide because of psychache, more women resist the unbearable pain and resist suicidal thoughts consequently. At last, one should shed light on the critical findings of clinical diagnosis of psychopathological problems because there is a huge gap in reporting real incident and the representation of inpatient/outpatient cases.

The third dimension is meant for the sociological analysis of the phenomenon. It is presented through Durkheim's eyes that decipher the socio-cultural norms that influence and shape suicidality. It is the most convenient part that explains the suicide paradox appropriately as it considers the racial and sexual gap of suicide ideation; it addresses the ethnic variation and the gender difference that contour the paradox to arrive at a reasonable understanding of the high/low rates of suicide between (white/black) and (men/women). It is only within a social frame that the effects of social conditions, as joblessness, prejudice, poverty and inequalities, on suicide are absorbed.

Durkheim divides suicidal cases into four types: egoistic, altruistic, anomic and fatalistic. He highlights the two social factors that lead to the typology: social integration and social regulation. According to the two measuring factors, one's suicide is classified in one of the four types. Durkheim emphasizes the impact that various

states like: religious belonging, marital/divorce state, educational level, economic situation, seasonal weather, heredity acquirements exercise on the suicide rates. David Lester afterwards continues to work on sociological and psychological factors that influence suicide; he relies heavily on the cultural components beside the effects of acculturation on suicidal ideation and attempts. Does the sense of victimization strengthen the power of resistance for black American women? How does racial/gender difference influence the suicide paradox? How are racial/ gender differences illustrated within the two systems of social regulation and social integration? How do social regulation and integration contribute in the making of the so-called suicide paradox?

More importantly, the main question that the current work aims at resolving is: why are the lowest suicide rates attributed to black women despite higher disadvantage levels, despite racial abuse and gender prejudice? For that reason, and regarding the social circumstances that give birth to the suicidal phenomenon, the two researchers Kubrin and Wadsworth have initiated a study that gathers the socioeconomic factors with the gun availability in the US to seek the impact of both on suicide rates. The study is highly considerable as they select both black and white Americans for the study sampling.

V.1. Racial Suicide Paradox

The researchers Kubrin and Wadsworth associate suicide with determined structural conditions: poverty, inequality, family disruption and joblessness. They suggest that: "*These factors are hypothesized to be related to suicide, in large part, because they affect levels of social integration, or the degree to which individuals feel connected to, and part of, a larger social group.*" (2009: 1205). Durkheim insists that

social integration is highly threatened by multiple socioeconomic factors; it consequently means that when social, economic and religious factors increase together with family interconnectedness, social integration increase accordingly then suicide rates decrease; they claim: "*More integration results in less suicide.*"(Ibid)

Kubrin and Wadsworth, however, go further to seek whether these factors influence black Americans and white Americans equally. They first hypothesize that racial discrimination can be taken as one of the predictors of suicide despite all hardships, deteriorated unequal conditions of schooling, employment, health service and excessive violence; these aspects create a negative situation known as the concentrated disadvantage. The latter, though shared arbitrarily between white and black Americans, reveals that black Americans are more likely to experience high degrees of disadvantage and they consequently mark higher suicide rates.

To fulfill their study objective, Kubrin and Wadsworth depend on two variables: disadvantage index and racial inequality index with each one including its own components. The disadvantage index relies on the measures: joblessness, high school graduation rates, median family income, poverty, female-headed household with children less than 18; the disadvantage eigenvalue for black Americans is 5.41 whereas the disadvantage eigenvalue for white Americans is 4.01 (Ibid: 1211). The following table is extracted and based on the statistics provided in the same paper.

Table 1: Disadvantage Index and Racial Inequality Index among white and black Americans (Kubrin and Wadsworth, 2009)

	Disadvantage Index	Racial Inequality Index

Variables	Black Americans	White Americans	Black Americans	White Americans
Male joblessness	0.81	0.82	0.78	0.86
High school graduation rates	0.84	0.82	0.68	0.82
Median family income	0.88	0.86	0.67	0.80
Poverty	0.90	0.90	0.79	0.71
Female-headed households	0.78	0.68	/	/
Black to white unemployment rate	/	/	0.81	0.73
Disadvantage index eigenvalue	5.41	4.01	1.68	2.62

Not surprisingly, the link between disadvantage rates and suicide rates is confirmed for both racial groups in many research papers (Kubrin and Wadsworth 2006, 2009). However, the two researchers summarize the whole story in few words; though it is reasonable that higher disadvantage degrees lead to higher suicide rates, but this is correct only within racial group. The situation changes across racial groups as: "*Disadvantage has not been useful in explaining rates across racial groups—blacks are more disadvantaged compared to whites, yet they demonstrate lower suicide rates.*" (Ibid: 1222) This is what signifies the suicide paradox but what could be the hidden motives behind that reluctance and despite greater disadvantage?

Kubrin and Wardworth conclude that the secret of the suicide paradox goes back to the protective factors that black Americans develop to survive disadvantage. Black Americans avoid suicidal thoughts because of their families and support networks, religious involvement, and civic participation (Ibid). Moreover, other researchers such as Kevin Early and Steven Stack claim that African Americans succeed to a large extent to find out sources of social support and advocacy through creating survival strategies that are bound by cultural norms. They differ from other ethnic groups in their processing mechanisms; the ones that white Americans, for example, show inability to enhance. The social support that serves as a foundation for suicide prevention stems basically from the family and the church for black Americans; family bonds and religiosity play an enormous role in protecting blacks from suicidality.

While Early posits his study on the fact that African Americans mark very low suicide rates due to the prominence of religion in their lives; it goes back to the high level of religiosity and their persistence on regular religious activities. It turns to be a spiritual bond that keeps them safe against suicidal ideation; religion is then among the protective factors against suicide. Early's descriptive study, however, has been criticized because he has not provided a theoretical processing of how religious ideological possessions decrease suicide thoughts for black Americans.

Another interesting study is initiated by Warren Breed's through his Suicide Syndrome (1972) where he develops a tentative framework of five basic components that can apply Durkheim's notions of regulation, integration and typology on individuals. It is a sociological and psychological study that is based on interviewing suicide survivors and the taxonomy dissects the immediate response of the crisis victims who survive after the loss of a beloved. Breed's Syndrome is founded on five essential

aspects: commitment, rigidity, failure, shame, and isolation. In his study, Breed shows more interest in the black community and he calls the suicide behavior of that category "Black Suicide" though in reality there is no such detrimental concept to describe the act. Three of the components: commitment, failure and isolation are related to the process of integration whereas rigidity and shame are connected to regulation.

Breed's research ends up with assuring that black Americans remain less protected than white Americans from the police and the official authorities, this is the reason behind their affirmation that they prefer committing suicide rather than going to jail. In his paper about Negro suicide, he affirms: "*The Negro's position in society-inferior, segregated, powerless, less protected from arbitrary authorities. Thus suicide among young, low-class single Negro males is frequently fatalistic suicide.*" (1970: 162) The declaration stems from the stress of despotism exercised on Negroes by authorities; that stress swings between the need of integration and an excessive proportion of regulation. Besides, Breed emphasizes the vital role of one's freedom in preserving his/her life and that suicide, in all cases, results from the absence of something wanted, a certain need in other terms. Breed asserts:

> Whereas egoistic suicide involves absence of sharing with solidary others, anomic suicide involves the absence of normative regulation, and altruistic suicide involves the absence of a continued role, fatalistic suicide is characterized by the absence of freedom from unjust and arbitrary authorities. (Ibid: 160)

V.2. Gendered Suicide Paradox

Because religion differs crucially in the life of most Americans and because of its importance in changing the suicide rates for individuals of various ethnicities, it is

substantial to shed light on the way religiosity differ between white and black Americans. The Pew Research Center accomplishes a research to compare religiosity among black, white and Hispanic Americans and the surveys come out with the following:

Religious Behaviors	Black Men	Black Women	White Men	White Women
-Individuals who say religion is very important to them.	69%	80%	43%	55%
-Individuals who attend religious services weekly.	40%	52%	30%	37%
-Individuals who pray daily.	65%	79%	43%	60%
-Individuals who believe in God with absolute certainty.	78%	86%	54%	67%
-Individuals who are highly religious	70%	83%	44%	58%

Table 2: US Religious Landscape Study. Pew Research Center: 2014.

Women are more religious than men of both sexes. Black women are the most religious group among four categories whereas white men are the least religious one. Besides, black men are less religious than black women but are more religious than both white men and women. Since it is already claimed by Durkheim that when one's religiosity increases, one's level of suicidality decreases and because black people register very low suicide rates; it means consequently that white men's decreased religiosity goes hand in hand with their increased suicidality and that black women's elevated level of religiosity accompanies their very low suicide rates. Participating in religious activities for black women is more than a protective factor against suicide; it

supports them to be socio-culturally integrated and morally regulated. It is a highly sophisticated dichotomy that the other sex and races do neither understand nor do they share with black women.

In fact, the basis of rejecting suicide ideation for most African Americans can be enquired in Jewelle T. Gibbs' study about religion as a cultural protective factor. First, Gibbs explicates that religiosity protects people when they acquire absolute belief that suicide is religiously forbidden as it is an unforgiveable sin and that it is morally unacceptable. Second, religiosity serves as a protective factor when people contribute in religious practices and activities in the church (Gibbs, 1997).

However, what really signals the variation between black men's and black women's suicidality is justified by men's less mobilization and minimized participation in religious activities and social commitments. Being compared to her masculine partner, the black woman is more socially integrated, morally regulated, religiously involved and committed. Some researchers center their attention on the role of social support and family interconnectedness in decreasing suicide rates for African Americans (Compton, Thompson, & Kaslow: 2005)

Gibbs however admits that black suicide is specific that it differs from other ethnicities' suicides because blacks' circumstances are specific too; they have been particularly subjected to social marginalization, extreme levels of poverty and illiteracy, segregation and inequality of services. Jewelle, T. Gibbs admits that the combination of the three factors: male gender, early adulthood, and substance abuse raise the risk for black suicide. (1997: 73) Meanwhile, when strong religious beliefs meet social support, they both may mitigate against the effects of aging and poverty for blacks, thus reducing their suicide risk. (Ibid)

Regarding the gender paradox, many studies have shown the variation between men and women in their suicide rates and that women have lower rates. In addition to the previously exhibited research, Sarah Payne et al consider that in virtue of the traditional notion that classifies man as the 'stronger sex', men have an increased likelihood to engage in completed lethal suicides. However, women's decreased rates stem from using less lethal suicide methods and better medical sources. (2008: 33) Besides, because the suicide paradox is constructed on the intersecting variables of gender and race, Steven Stack (2000) explicates that the low rates of women are due to certain criteria; analyzed by numerous researchers; he summarizes them in the following points (2000: 146):

1-Alcohol abuse (female rate is 1/5 male rate)

2-Religiosity level as a coping device (Higher rates for women)

3-Completed suicide and attempted suicide (women have stronger negative attitudes against completed suicide)

4-Women have more flexible coping skills than men due to their role changes in life.

5-Women are more likely to recognize the warning signs of suicide (as depression)

6-Women are more likely than men to seek professional assistance.

 7-Women have extensive social support systems to draw on when they are in crisis.

8-Cultural emphases of being male and on masculine strength increase lethal suicidality.

 9-Women have had less access to lethal technology.

10-Failure in the primary adult male role (male economic success) is more visible.

In fact, there is another interesting study that puts at the same row suicide with aesthetic standards and beauty measures that preserve women's overall beautiful picture even after committing suicide. Valerie Callanan and Mark Davis highlight the gender

paradox concerning the ties between facial disfiguration and selecting the suicide method or instrument. Not surprisingly, women avoid suicide methods that disfigure the face or the head though they use firearms as a preferred method; but women are less likely to shoot the head. (Callanan & Davis, 2011); this aspect is not necessary for men who prefer the quickest and more effective method, shooting as an example.

The suicide method selection may be the reason behind the high rates of female suicide attempts and the high rates of male suicide commitment. Moreover, the researchers assert that familiarity with firearms and having access to them is linked to gender differences and it also implies the choice of the gunshot location. (2011: 876). Women, even at the moment of encountering death, are more likely to consider guarding their physical and facial unity with no attempt of disfiguration.

Furthermore, some significant studies have been accomplished in the field of suicidology to explore the self-murdering behavior. The Theory of Imitation and the Opportunity Theory develop out of the need to discover the secret of suicide paradox. The Theory of Imitation is also named Philips' Model of Copycat suicide. The sociologist David Philips creates that model that emerges from his belief in the contagious nature of the suicide behavior. It is an act of imitation that is performed first by one widely known person or a widely spread event of self-killing or even a celebrity then it is imitated by people at risk or at high risk of suicide.

It is sometimes known as the Werther Effect as the whole story is attributed to the writer Johann W. V. Goethe and his protagonist in *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. Werther commits suicide because he loves a girl who is destined to be somebody's wife; he decides to liberate the love triangle composed of the couple and him. More significantly, that type is additionally called the suicide cluster referring to the cluster of

the same behavior that is repeated many times by a group of people who adopt the idea in spite of its immorality and unacceptability.

Moreover, the Opportunity Theory is launched after the application of the Criminal Opportunity Theory on the suicidal phenomenon as to admit that the availability of guns facilitates the crime fulfillment. It is also the case with suicide; it has been proved scientifically by Jeffrey. H. Boyd (1983) that in the US and between 1953 and 1978, firearm suicide increases from 4.9 to 7.1/100,000 people as guns become more available. Higher availability of firearms results in higher suicide rates in the way David Lester (1996) demonstrates that populations valuing gun ownership would be expected to have higher gun suicide rates.

Conclusion

The first chapter is devoted to reflect the multiple perspectives through which suicide has been analyzed. The theoretical chapter is meant to put theoretical axes together in order to find out the secret of the black woman suicide paradox. It also contributes partially in answering the essential research question whether the black woman suicide is a form of self-emancipation.

The present work advocates three major perspectives to analyze the suicide issue. First, the philosophical approach is centered on Viktor Frankl's Meaning Making Theory that emphasizes the existence of meaning in man's life. He additionally claims that as a result to the Tragic Triad, man can be inclined toward an existential escapism state to gratify internal requirements of isolation; the state does not necessarily end with suicide inasmuch it fulfills certain needs of loneliness and peace. In virtue of Viktor Frankl's Logotherapy, a great number of people at high risk of suicide have been saved from death attempts; meaning in life energizes the desire to challenge and resist.

More importantly, Emile Durkheim highlights the importance of belonging to a family or a group of people as the latter increases one's sense of integration and it serves as a protective mechanism. The social and/or moral regulation aims at constructing a reasonable system that includes everybody within and where nobody is excluded because of his race, color or sex; but that order imposes certain criteria and norms on each single individual. These aspects stem from the collective force and the desire to belong, individuals have to assume regulation in concomitance with their willingness to be socially integrated. The absence of any of the two, regulation or integration drives societies into an imbalance and disorder and increases the risk of suicidality.

In fact, voluntary death is a rejection to society and social solidarity, it revolts against the family interconnectedness and the moral order; it threatens the societal collective identity consequently. Moreover, Durkheim refers to the essence of a religious doctrine and the crucial role religion plays to protect people at risk of suicide; faith digs deep in the human spirit to eradicate the evil inclination of loss, absurd and despair. The black woman is indeed highly religious obeying religious disciplines and rules. She is strongly associated to her family; family is sacred for her and this is why the essence of marriage and family unity is highly regarded in her context.

Third, the psychological approach posits at Edwin Shneidman's work to explore the relation between suicide and psychache. It is right that unbearable pain drives man to develop suicidal thoughts but since psychache stems from accomplished needs; man can defeat that pain by striving to accomplish his needs. This is exactly what the black woman struggles to achieve, fighting psychache with better accomplishments each time.

However, the state of emotion dysregulation paves the way for suicide ideation to grow deeper in one's spirit taking him to a state of disorder and internal turmoil that usually rests in the bosom of depression. The black woman's strength rests in her ability to reach a state of equilibrium that keeps her away from sensational dysregulation.

> Risk factors for Black suicide include: male sex, early adulthood, substance abuse, psychiatric disorders, family or interpersonal conflict, antisocial behavior, and homosexuality. Protective factors that mitigate the risks of suicide include religiosity, older age, southern residence, and social support. (1997: 68)

At last, the research hypothesis comes true as Jewelle T. Gibbs cuts it short when she identifies the risk and protective factors of black's suicide as if it is a recipe of ingredients that should preserve the black individual's immune system.

Chapter Two: The Black Woman's Cry in Context

We die. That may be the meaning of life. But we do language. That may be the measure of our lives.

(Toni Morrison, Nobel Lecture: 1993)

Introduction

Though the present thesis is essentially concerned with the issue of suicide as a phenomenon that ranges between the socio-cultural variables and the philosophical interpretations, it is highly important to introduce the background in which the black woman exists because she is the central actor in that work. It is unacceptable logically to proceed with the subject that results partially from the living circumstances without moving through the when and the where the African and the African American women survive. Being black signifies being deemed to experience marginalization, inferiority and stereotypical prejudice. Standing strong at the nexus of the ideologies of race and sex is a real challenge for black women who have been triply discredited.

The second chapter aims at placing the black woman between her struggle against invisibility and her battle for freedom and recognition. It starts with a notion about the movement of Feminism and how it develops throughout time and space into different orientations yet having the same root. The chapter introduces certain miscellaneous views about Feminism, Black Feminism, Womanism and Africana Womanism as other variations providing a united platform that gathers them all yet separates them from each other. Besides, it focuses on the black woman specifically because the current work is basically concerned with the black female's interests and ideology.

It is divided into three sections; the first one explores the concept of suicide in the black minority context. It basically clarifies the way the suicide phenomenon gets spread in the world then it provides crucial statistics according to geographical divisions. That part also demonstrates the relation between suicidality and the black people's anxiety; it serves as an introduction to the second and the third section. The

second and third section are devoted to the black woman identity and voice being contextualized; they elucidate the intersectionality of the threeness in the black female's context and the resulting effects on her struggle for freedom and equality.

The chapter moves similarly to demonstrate the relationship between intersectionality and invisibility in the context where race meets gender and class; oppression is tripled then the concept of the Three-ness is coined for the purpose of expressing that meaning. Not only Black feminism is highlighted in the fourth chapter but postcolonialism is also explored for the sake of identifying the context where the black African woman grows independent. The concept of three-ness seems to be shared between the African and the African American female categories because they are similarly subjected to triple oppression.

I. Suicide and Anxiety of the Black Minorities

Suicide in the black communities whether the African or the African American is an unusual topic that is completely ignored by individuals and neglected by researchers. It is partly due to the very low suicide rates that black communities register each year if being compared with other human categories. It may also be due to race struggle that blacks are involved in that they do belittle the issue and its aftermath. Though suicide has the same identification in any context, but it has a specific connotation in the world of minorities such as the black people.

Black people grow with the stigmatization of humiliation and inferiority; their existence is threatened and their dignity assaulted by the presumed superiority of the white race. The unbearable pain they witness might drive them to unthinkable alternatives which cause ultimate destruction; suicide might be one of them. Multiple daily stressors contribute in widening the fissure of mental instability. The dilemma of

pain, anxiety and anguish move African Americans and black Africans to further complicated levels in each phase; they, however, record very low suicide rates compared to white Americans, Asians and Europeans.

If the high suicide rates of white American adults are cause mainly by loneliness and alienation, black people's low rates are attributed to anguish, stress, fear and more importantly pain. In fact, most suicides have pain and anxiety as common factors between suicidal individuals. Loneliness is indeed the desired fertile landscape for anxiety to settle particularly if it is coupled with physical discomfort and emotion dysregulation. The circle that combines pain, anxiety and suicidality remains open as if it is the magic formula for a successful death by suicide; it may, however, save a life if the individual at high risk ceases to listen to the suicidal calls. Black people have a specific relation of reciprocal ignorance with suicide; they ignore suicidal behaviors for their own survival, freedom and recognition.

I.1. Global Prevalence of Suicide

Suicide is a global problematic issue; it is an international plague that is spreading rapidly and enormously worldwide. It is also one of the major causes that lead to death and the WHO (World Health Organization) sounds the alarm about the dangerous rate that scourge is getting spread and calls vulnerable countries to set serious plans for prevention and integrating people at high risk. About 800.000 people commit suicide every year which means one person every 40 seconds. Each complete suicide act meets 20 suicide attempts; the risk is higher 20 times then. This tragic phenomenon is hardly determined by age, sex, region or reason, it occurs in all the world regions. It is not only limited to low-income countries but around 79% of suicides in the world

happen in low and middle- income countries (WHO 2016). Besides, the WHO shows that the rates of males who lose their lives to suicide are higher than the rates of females who die by suicide. The following figure demonstrates the suicide prevalence in the world.

Figure 3: Age-standardized suicide rates (per 100,000 populations) both sexes, 2016
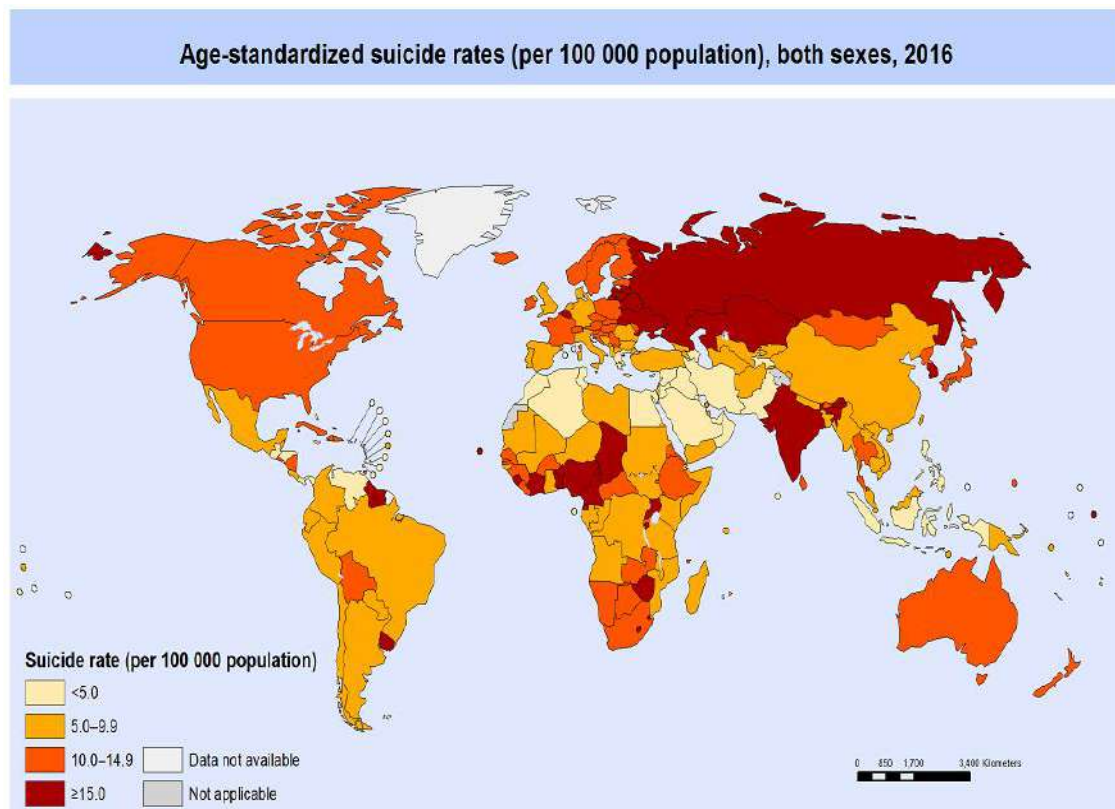
Source: World Health Organization, WHO 2018.

Regarding age, suicide is the second leading cause for people who are aged between 15 and 29 years old (the first for males and the second for females) after road injuries (WHO 2016). It means that it is an adolescence central issue that urgent action is required to protect the world youth. The figure clarifies the statistics of suicide rates in the category of youth (10-29)

-Figure 4: Number of suicides globally in young people, 2016

Number of suicides globally in young people, 2016

■ Females ■ Males ■ Both

Age group	Females	Males	Both
10-14 yrs	4,238	5,130	9,368
15-19 yrs	27,060	25,690	52,750
20-24 yrs	33,046	45,646	78,691
25-29 yrs	30,209	51,074	81,284
10-29 yrs	94,553	127,540	222,093
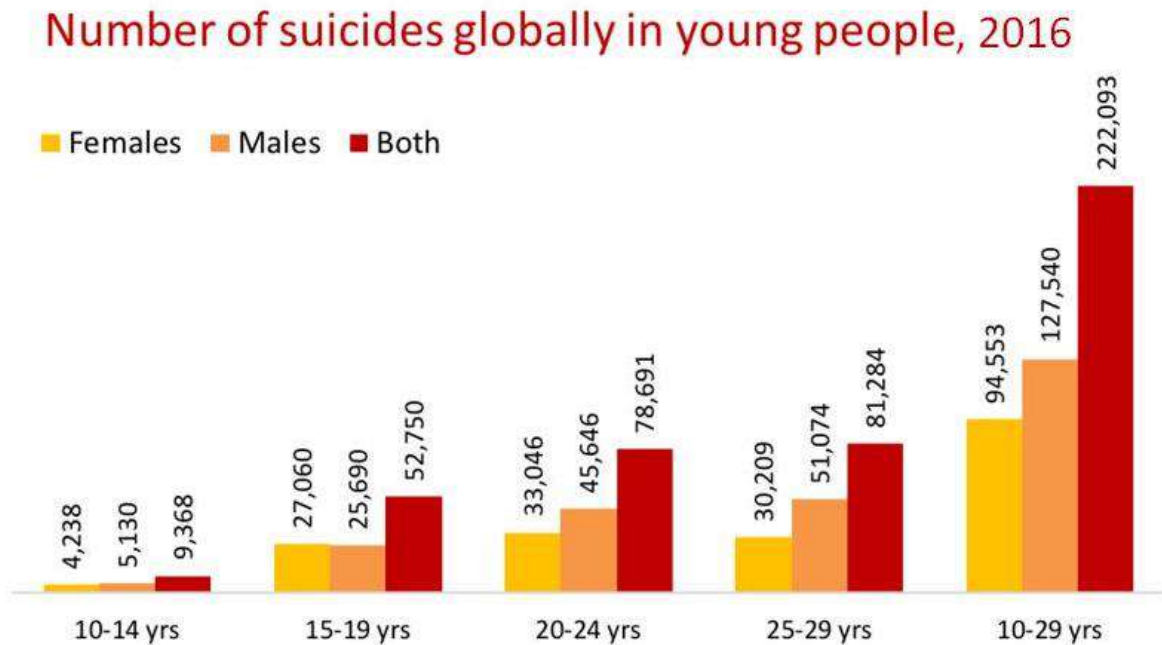
Source: WHO Global Health Estimates, 2016.

Suicide has been a subject of controversy for a very long time; it ranges between the mental disorder and the psychological disturbance. However, when racial, sexual and age differences interfere, data changes and standards move to another level of interpretation. In fact, for every committed suicide, there are many more suicide attempts that for some reason could not be completely fulfilled. More men die by suicide but more women attempt suicide in the world. More precisely in the US and in February 2020, researchers Christopher W. Drapeau and John L. McIntosh prepare a suicide state data (U.S.A. SUICIDE: 2018 OFFICIAL FINAL DATA) for the American Association of Suicidology (AAS); the paper demonstrates the rates of the fatal suicides and the nonfatal suicidal attempts in the US in 2018. It shows that the average of 1 person every 10.9 minutes truly kill themselves:

-One male every 13.9 minutes.

-One female every 49.7 minutes:

-One older adult every 57.8 minutes.

-One middle aged adult every 31.1 minutes.

- One young person every 1 hour and 24.6 minutes.

In addition to that, suicide is the 10th leading cause for death in the US and it is the second for young people. There are 3.6 male for each 1 female deaths by suicide in the US. (U.S.A. SUICIDE: 2018 OFFICIAL FINAL DATA); figure 5 manifests:

Figure 5: Leading causes of death for ages 15-19 years, 2016
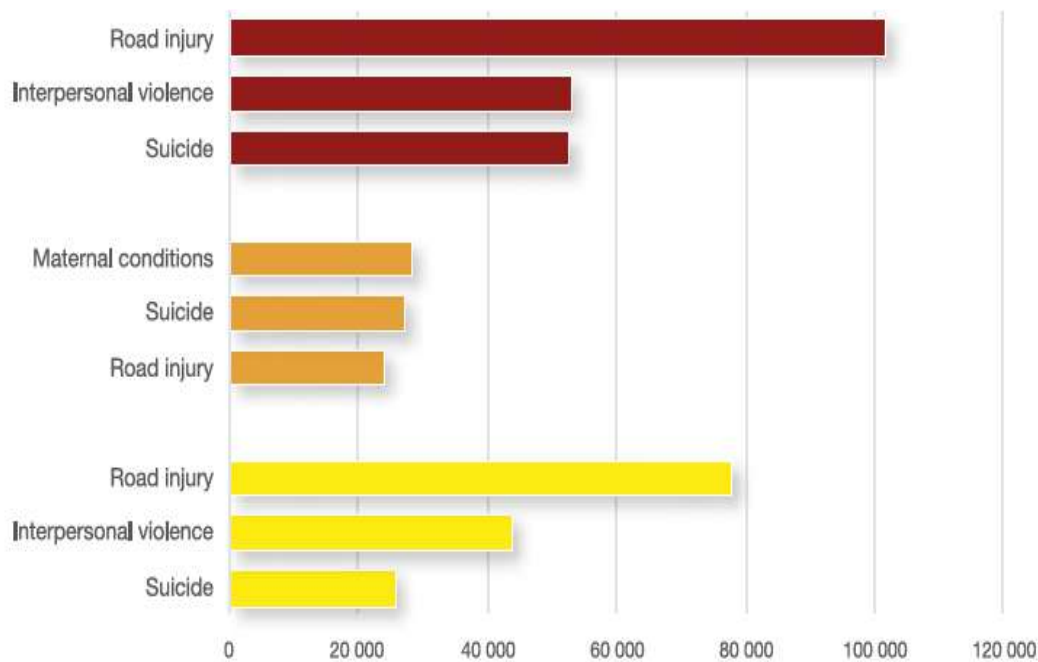
Source: WHO Global Health Estimates, 2016

However, the nonfatal attempts vary to a large degree as 1.208.600 people attempt to commit suicide annually in the US, which stands for one attempt each 26 seconds. The paper ends up with one complete suicide for each 25 attempts and one male attempt for each three female attempts. (U.S.A. SUICIDE: 2018 OFFICIAL FINAL DATA). This means that women are more likely to attempt rather than to

complete their suicidal plans but men are four times more likely to fulfill their suicides (22.4% Vs 6.1%) according to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).Besides, the CDC reveals the suicide methods that Americans frequently choose to end up their lives and they include: firearm suicides, poisoning, jumping, drowning, suffocation or hanging, cut or pierce, drugs and many others. It is not a matter of uniqueness or specification but it is a matter of availability as it is obvious that a man is hardly expected to purchase an expensive gun to kill himself in a low-income country.

Furthermore, the differences between races and sexes appear to be astonishing especially in the US. The following table found on the page of the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) shows the evolution. The first thing it shows is that the rates get higher each decade in all the age categories; the second thing is that the male rates are always higher than the female ones regardless of the ethnic group. It is another cue to confirm that women are more likely to attempt suicide while men are more likely to apply it effectively.

Besides, the table shows that the male rates are four times higher than the female rates regardless of their racial belonging. Additionally, the white males have the highest rates among white females and African American both males and females. However, when the ethnic variable is considered seriously in the suicide rates, the table demonstrates the large difference between white Americans and African Americans of both sexes.

Table 3: Death rates for suicide, by sex, race, Hispanic origin, and age: United States, selected years 1950–2017. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC

Category (all ages)	1960	1980	2000	2017

All persons	10.6	11.9	10.4	14.5
All males	16.5	18.6	17.1	22.9
All females	4.9	5.5	4.0	6.3
White male	17.6	19.9	18.8	26.1
White female	5.3	5.9	4.4	7.1
African American male	6.4	10.3	9.4	11.0
African American female	1.6	2.2	1.7	2.7

The following tables are generated from the previous table; the first one contains the subtracted female rates from male rates to find out the change percentage value for gender difference. The second one contains the subtracted African Americans' rates from whites' rates to find out the change percentage value for racial difference.

Table 4: Change percentage value for gender difference (1960-2017)

Category/ year	**1960**	**1980**	**2000**	**2017**
Both sexes	11.6	13.1	13.1	16.6
White (males and females)	**12.3**	14	14.4	**19**
African American (males and females)	**4.8**	8.1	7.7	**8.3**

Table 5: Change percentage value for racial difference (1960-2017)

Category/ year	1960	1980	2000	2017
(White and African American) males	11.2	9.6	**9.4**	**15.1**
(White and African American) females	3.7	3.7	**2.7**	**4.4**

The tables present the differences between the two sexes (males and females) and the two races (white Americans and African Americans). The difference between white males and white females ranges between **12.3** (the lowest value) and **19** (the highest value) resulting exactly in **6.7**. Besides, the difference between African American males and African American females ranges between **4.8** and **8.3** and it is exactly **3.5**. Moreover, the difference between white males and African American males moves between **9.4** and **15.1;** it is **5.7**; whereas the difference between white females and African American females ranges between **2.7** and **4.4** which is **1.7**.

Moreover, the table reveals that during the last five decades, the highest value attributes to the white males as **26.1** (2017) and the lowest value goes back to the African American females as **1.6** (1960); the difference between the two values is astonishing. In addition to that, if the four categories are ordered according to their values in 2017 (from the highest to the lowest), the result is the following:

1- White males

2-African American males

3-White females

4-African American females

Paradoxically, the lowest rates are attributed to black American women who used to be highly segregated and dehumanized in the US for a long time. Black women have been triply oppressed; they have been oppressed by black men, by white men and white women. General opinion claims that suicidality is usually linked to poverty, misery and bad life conditions, if it is true, it could have been possible to find this social category at the top of this classification; this is what is known in the research field as the Suicide Paradox.

Black women show less orientation and interest in attempting and completing suicide in comparison with white women. The logical explanation does not do justice to the suicidal paradox as the black women could have been strongly driven and pushed to end their lives to stop their suffering but the expectation proves to be incorrect. This social group proves to be less likely to commit suicide for a variety of reasons and this is what the current research aims at discovering and revealing.

In the African context, however, the exact data are difficult to be collected and even the available statistics are less scientifically precise. The reason behind that kind of misinformation goes back to the nature of most of the African societies which still consider the issue as a taboo of high sensitivity especially in the low-income countries. Incidents of that type are frequently hidden or misreported by the conservative survivors; the reason why most of the suicidal cases are not counted and delicate statistics are consequently unavailable in various areas. In spite of that, the statistics presented by the World Health Organization, based on the statistics of few countries, may reach a certain level of reasonability and precision.

The diversity, heterogeneity and inhabitance of the continent play a considerable role in preventing reliable researches and concise scientific studies about suicide cases

and suicide attempts. Ethnic, socio-cultural and even religious variables may have interfered in determining the data collection process in addition to the unavailability of the scientific tools and instruments necessary for the research conduct. As a result, the exact estimation of the suicide rates in the African continent, even in the two first decades of the 21st century, remains a remote objective that may be reached in the coming decades. Mars, Burrows and others confirm: "*Less than 10% of African countries reporting mortality data to WHO, official statistics are available for only 15% of the continent's total population.*" (2014: 02). The following figure demonstrates the geographical difference.

Figure 6: Global age-standardized suicide rates per 100,000, 2016
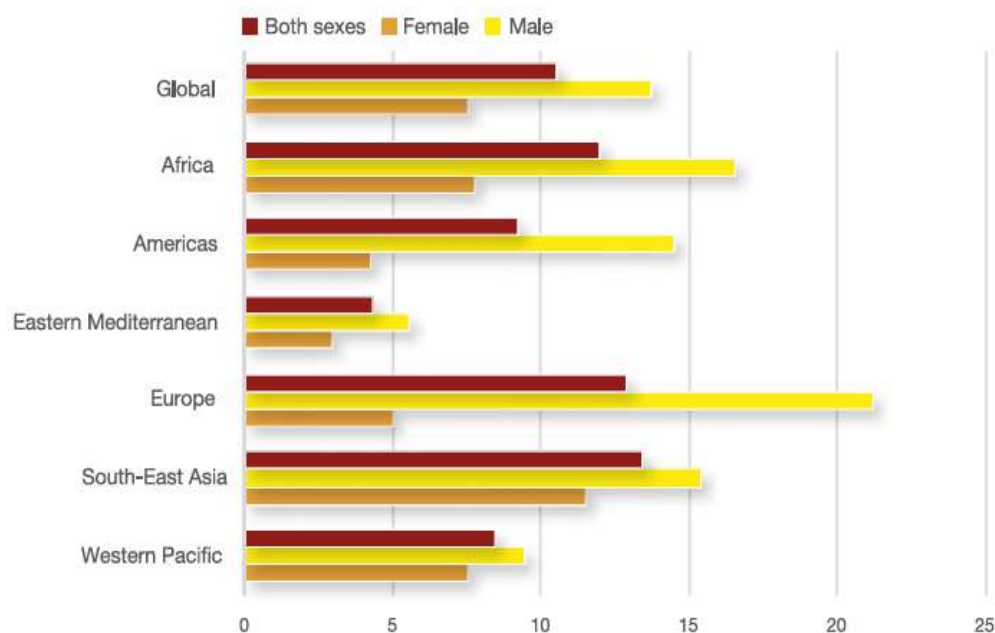
Source: WHO Global Health Estimates, 2016

According to the WHO (2016), 10.5 per 100,000 is the global suicide rate in 2016. In Africa, 12.0 per 100,000 commit suicide whereas the rate in Europe is 12.9 and 13.4 in South-East Asia. Moreover, 79% of the world's suicide cases occur in low and

middle income countries. The highest male suicide rate is found in the high-income countries (17.2 per 100,000) and the highest female suicide rate is found in lower-middle-income countries (9.1 per 100,000). It does not do justice to the scientific research field to ignore the influence of the social classifications and the economic possibilities owned by communities on the people's welfare or adversity, on individuals' choices and preferences. It does not say in no way that the individual can be safe or isolated from the surrounding conditions in his society whether politically, economically or socio-culturally. However, the high male rates in the countries of welfare and development can be partly explained by and through the suicide paradox that will be explained in the following section.

Figure 7: Global suicide rates by age and country income level, 2016.

Figure 5. Global suicides, by age and country income level* (thousands), 2016
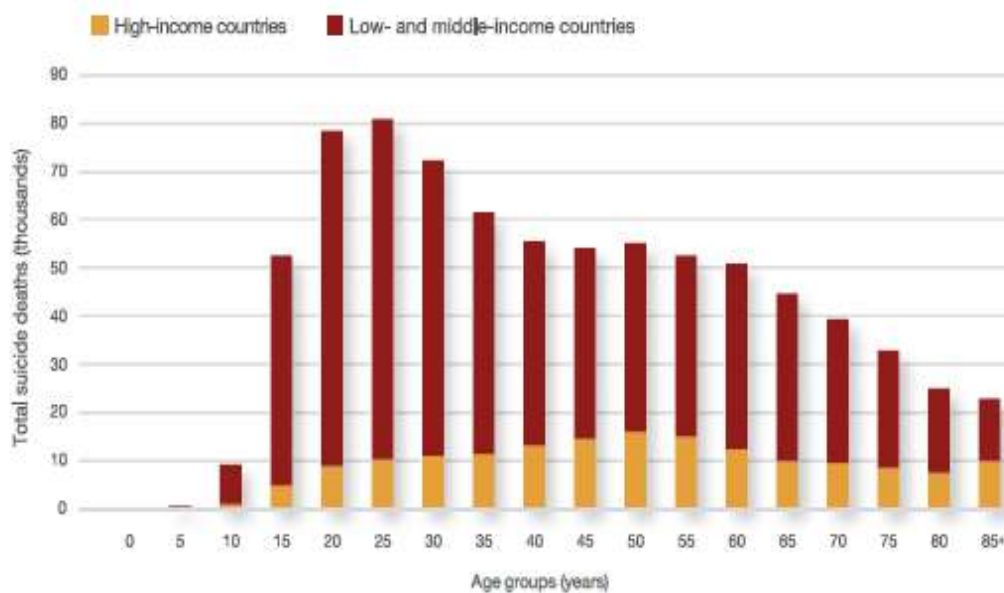
Source: WHO Global Health Estimates, 2016.

In addition to that, the male rate in Africa is 16.6 and in the Americas is 14.5 per 100,000 knowing that the global male average is 13.7 (WHO 2016); both rates exceed the global number though the two continents belong to different income strata. Besides, the female rate in Africa is 7.5 and in the Americas is 4.6 per 100,000 though the global female average is 7.5 (WHO 2016). By comparing the rates, it is concluded that the male and female rates in Africa are both higher than the male and female rates in the Americas. The WHO also declares that the research reveals the potential arguments behind the male rates that kept increasing throughout time despite the high social and economic life standards; it is paradoxical and unexpected. The researchers Ritchie , Roser and Ortiz-Ospina assure in their research that the suicide rate in men can be as much as ten times higher than for women and that across most countries in the world it ranges from 2 to 4 times higher. (2015)

Many scholars have analyzed the risk factors for suicide and the potential motives that lead to the suicide rate increase in Africa, in the US and in the globe. According to Ritchie et al, the first factor is related to the mental health (2015). More precisely, Fleischmann and Bertolote (2002) report through their study that more than 90% of suicide cases have already been diagnosed of having a mental disorder at the time of the death (2002: 3) Second, Ritchie et al confirm that the second risk factor is the economic recession that is followed in the third position by the availability and prevalence of guns in the nation. Briggs and Tabarrock have enhanced a research that results in the positive correlation between gun prevalence and the suicide rate (2014). Furthermore, divorce and family break-up, alcohol use, seasonal variation and the influence of media treatment of the suicide issue are also important risk factors that contribute in the ups and downs of the rates according to Ritchie et al (2015).

The Centers for Disease and Control Prevention (CDC) summarizes the risk factors that motivate people to commit suicide globally into four levels: the individual's level, the relationship, the community and the societal levels. However, as an organization of prevention and protection, it concentrates enormously on the protective factors and encourages the studies that highlight innovative methods and effective plans to stop the suicidal rates from increasing.

1-At the individual level:

-Previous suicide attempt

-Mental illness, such as depression

-Social isolation

-Criminal problems

-Financial problems

-Impulsive or aggressive tendencies

-Job problems or loss

-Legal problems

-Serious illness

-Substance use disorder

2-At the level of relationships:

-Adverse childhood experiences such as child abuse and neglect

-Bullying

-Family history of suicide

-Relationship problems such as a break-up, violence, or loss

-Sexual violence.

3-At the community level:

-Barriers to health care

-Cultural and religious beliefs

-Suicide cluster in the community

4-At the societal level:

-Stigma associated with mental illness or help-seeking

-Easy access to lethal means such as firearms or medications

-Unsafe media portrayals of suicide

Besides, the scholars Mars et al attempt to explain the suicidal behavior in African countries and the risk factors for both suicide and suicide attempts. They conclude that according to the data provided by only four countries, mental health troubles cause 11% of suicide cases whereas drug and alcohol use contributes in 80% of suicides (2014: 7). In addition to interpersonal and social difficulties such as family conflicts, relationship problems and unwanted pregnancy, socioeconomic dilemmas also play a very considerable role in paving the way for individuals to commit suicide in Africa. Risk factors are then similar between African and American regions; and people are at high risk when they are put in any of these of mental, physical, psychological, economic or social difficult conditions.

Because the current thesis is based on analyzing literary works written by an African American and an African writer, and because this African writer is from Zimbabwe exactly, integrating some hints about suicide rates and risk factors in Zimbabwe is thus necessary. Zimbabwe is an African country that is situated in Southern Africa; it is bordered by Mozambique, Zambia, Botswana and South Africa.

The country has been a productive unit in Africa but during the last decades, corruption on the one hand and the collapse of the agricultural sector on the other hand contributed in leading the nation into even a worse level. The Human Development Index (HDI) of Zimbabwe is 0.509 and it places the country at the low human development zone. Besides, mortality rates used to be very high but declined recently thanks to the donation assistance strategy.

Suicide cases in Zimbabwe reached in 2016, according to WHO, the number 1728 cases, 498 from them are female cases whereas 1231 belong to males. In 2016, the suicide rate for both sexes is 10.7 per 100,000 (knowing that the global age-standardized suicide rate is 10.5 per 100,000). If the rate is 15.7 for males and 6.0 for females, it signifies that all the rates are higher than the global rate except the female rate; the male rate is even higher to be taken into consideration in an African low-income country. Research shows few studies and unavailable data and statistics about suicide rates in Zimbabwe during the second half of the Twentieth Century.

The earliest statistics found for the country go back to 1990, the number of suicide cases is 768; 511 are males and 257 are females (WHO). The suicide rate in 1990 is 7.9 per 100,000 for both sexes; 10.6 per 100,000 refers to the male rate and 5.2 refers to the female rate. In fact, there is a big difference between the two rates in a period of three decades. There was a considerable increase in the rate from **7.9** to **10.7** for both sexes; from **10.6** to **15.7** for males and from **5.2** to **6** for females. The highest difference between the three pairs belongs to the male category (5.1 per 100,000).

Furthermore, because the research is maintained in an Algerian university, it is important to shed light on the suicidal situation in Algeria in order to call for action if

the situation necessitates. In Algeria, the number of suicide cases in 2016 is 1299; 339 from them are females and 960 are males. The suicide rate of 2016 is 3.2 per 100,000 for both sexes; 4.7 per 100,000 is the male rate and 1.7 is the female rate. According to the World Bank indicators collection, the rate was higher in 2000 but it started to decline to be 3.2 in 2016. Though Algeria is classified by the World Bank as an upper-middle-income country and though it relies heavily on the exportation of oil and gas as a source of national income; the economic growth level is low in addition to the social problems of unemployment, poverty and inequalities. Despite the suicide low rate, Algeria is ranked the fourth among the Arab countries which signifies that the government should find urgent solutions to stop the continuous sliding.

The WHO declares that suicide in Algeria is the second leading cause of death for the age category between 15 and 29 years old. National organizations refer to the dangerous quiet social change that leads to the dissociation of the society and the break-up of families; this is what is known as a silent explosion and this is the main reason behind the suicidal behavior. The social and economic situation plays an essential role as 55% of suicidal individuals are unemployed, 32% have no stable income and 10% from them have regular jobs. It is similar to what is happening in the whole world though in different grades but the terrible measure in Algeria is that suicide becomes a way to attract attention after despair and a tendency to protest against bureaucracy, nepotism and prejudice. The following figure presents the evolution of suicide rates in Mediterranean and African nations (For both cases of Zimbabwe and Algeria)

Figure 8: Age-standardized suicide rates (100,000 populations) for both sexes over time
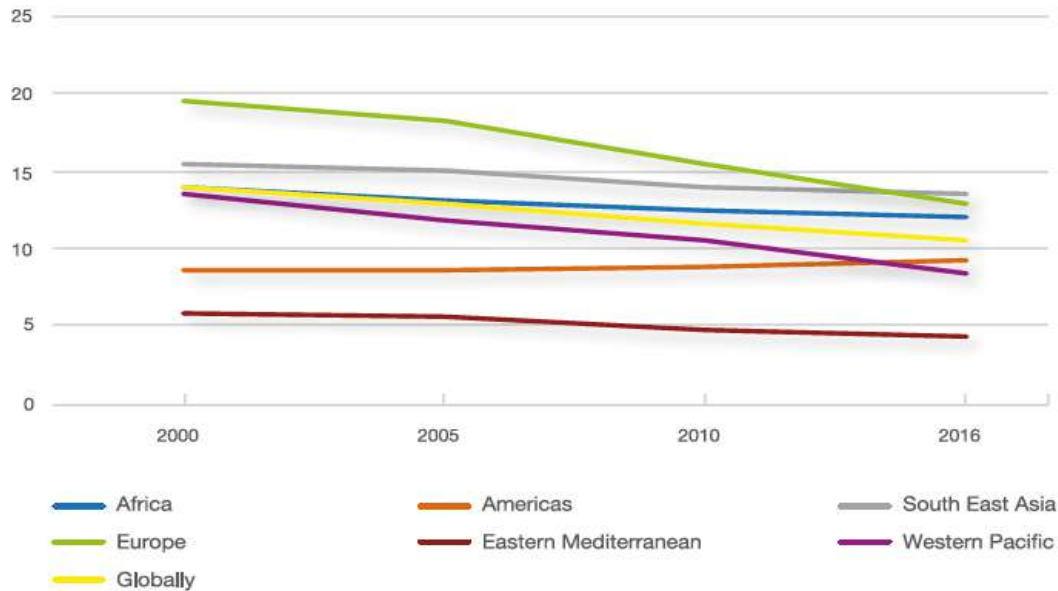
Source: WHO Global Health Estimates, 2016

I.2. Anxiety Disorder and Suicidality of Blacks

The human being is the product of the society where he grows and lives; and though suicide might seem to be one's own choice and decision for which he/ she assumes complete responsibility, it is not obviously true. Man assumes part of the suicide decision responsibility and his society assumes the other part and so does his family; responsibility is divided and the guilt is shared. Suicide for black people might be driven by unbearable pain and unendurable anxiety; the two problems are experienced at a daily basis. More importantly, where does the black man's anxiety come from? And what does it cause him at last? Pain indeed manifests itself physically but anxiety reflects an internal type of pain; both of them are closely tied to suicidality.

Anxiety is a mental problem that does not reach the ferocity level of being labeled a disorder. It emerges from the internalization of the daily stress and absorbing the stressors. Black people in fact face more risk factors of anxiety than white Americans as they are subjected to racial trauma, color abuse and despised identity. Despite the anxiety associated with psychological stressors; yet, it can hardly ignite the black man's temptation of self-murder; anxiety enslaves blacks and determines each single behavior or practice.

Moreover, the researcher Mohammed Seghir Halimi claims that: "*Being anxious in general means that one is unable of making a choice, and if he/she makes it, then he/she remains always subject to this anxiety*" (2013: 246) Significantly, the state of anxiety dictates unwanted conditions that besiege one's free choice. It signifies that the more anxious man is, the highly suicidal he might turn. He adds then: "*The character's anxiety is but the result of this irrational throwness*". (Ibid: 247) It is also the brokenness of one's self into irrational constituents. Black people manifest a great ability to cope with surprising psychological breaks, failures and smashes.

Anxiety is one of the impairing conditions for black people though it is highly prevalent among whites. The researcher Joseph A. Himle et al, maintain a study that comes out with: "*Results indicated that whites were at elevated risk for generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder, and social anxiety compared to Caribbean Blacks and African Americans*" (2009: 578). In fact, what illustrates the low rates of anxiety disorders in the black community is the same thing that justifies the suicide paradox with its low rates. They both decrease because of the blacks' resilience toward daily stressors and their

If psychache is the author of suicide, anxiety is its candle. Anxiety is the pen that writes each suicide story. However, the black woman's anxiety might be very influential in increasing the risk of her suicidality; this does in noway signify that the black woman is a blind deaf slave at the hands of her interactive responses. Anxiety elevates the degree of psychache and emotion disorder but it does not necessarily drive the black woman to suicide.

It is true that people do not kill themselves when they are very happy, but they do so when they suffer painfully and at moments of anger, anxiety and rashness; Shneidman claims: "*It is a special kind of pain, psychological pain, the pain of the negative emotions-guilt, fear, shame, defeat, humiliation, disgrace, grief, bereftness, dread, woe, loneliness, hopelessness, frustrated love, fractured needs, rage, hostility*" (1998: 4). He confirms at the same time that the tremendous variety of negative feelings may turn into a generalized experience of mental pain and a continuous anxious state of mind.

That part of the chapter serves as a bridge between the demonstration of suicide as a worldwide issue and the black woman who is primarily selected for the study. It aims at creating a common surface where the two intersect and reveal the hidden secret. The black woman's identity is the direct result of empowerment, resistance and perseverance. Her self-emancipation process starts with her denial of submission, and it ends with pride, dignity and success, but not suicide.

II. Black Feminism: The Whole and Its Parts

That part of the work is devoted to shed light on the black woman because she is the constant actor about whom the topic is based. Though the thesis explores the suicide

phenomenon but it specifies the female gender for analysis this is why it is essential to explore the background where the African American then the African grows in starting with the black feminist then the womanist postcolonial contexts.

The old legend of attributing superiority to men over women has been eliminated by the feminist successive calls for equality and justice. Women around the world have been asking for equal rights politically, economically, socially and culturally. A basic definition of Feminism can be linked to the concern of women's inferiority and discrimination because of their sex; it is a struggle for liberation. Feminism emerged from the belief that one's gender should not be the only standard according to which one's identity could be shaped and integrated.

It did not only attempt to liberate women from the various forms of distinction and oppression imposed by men, but it also aimed at gaining a better position for the woman and defining her status as an independent and influential member in her society. Feminism is better described and explained by women themselves rather than by men as they are completely conscious and concerned with their own problems, needs and dreams.

The researcher Gayatri C. Spivak is among the first scholars to raise the question about men's ability to theorize Feminism and to insist on prudence and vigilance necessary for a man to treat feminist issues; it is a question of reliability and credibility. It has been a difficult journey for feminists because persuading most of the women, who were already accustomed to submission and weakness, of the necessity to change and revolt was hardly easy to reach. Though feminists' basic principles and precepts emerge from their desire to fight exploitation and destroy the constraints of inferiority, they

divert into different dimensions and paths because European women's needs and quests prove to be different from Americans' and Africans' needs and demands are also different from Asians' and the process goes on that way.

Earlier feminists highlighted the slogan that no woman was to be excluded, exploited or even suppressed and they violently fought the tyrannical patriarchy. They articulated their common needs, hopes, demands and complaints. However, since they came from various backgrounds it was hardly possible for them to have the same understanding and interpretations of various subjects and quests. The use of the term itself has truly been problematic as it used to be considered a battle against misogyny and an attempt to assert the female in the economic system by allowing her equal chances to have a job and to earn a living. The term was rejected by many intellectuals claiming that what the woman truly wants is recognition and consideration, in other terms, to be considered as a member of the society having the same duties and rights with the other members. It is not an attack against man himself but against man the oppressor.

Feminism is known to be a collection of movements and developments that women tried throughout a long time to achieve on different levels, the reason why scholars analyze the many feminisms rather than one feminism. Because of the various obstacles women found in their way to assert their presence, they got divided many times into smaller groups, this did not weaken the original quest but it enabled the members to include new concerns, cover new areas and welcome new perspectives. The movement adopters could proudly gain certain achievements that were valuable and victorious being embodied within the context of that time. In spite of that partial

success, the movement witnessed some splits of feminists who did not share the original principle.

Feminism seems to be a simple concept to be defined but it is not easy to form an accurate definition that includes the necessary criteria for it. Sarah Gamble introduces in *The Routledge Companion to Feminism and Post-feminism*:

> The belief that women, purely and simply because they are women, are treated inequitably within a society which is organized to prioritize male viewpoints and concerns. Within this patriarchal paradigm, women become everything men are not (or do not want to be seen to be): where men are regarded as strong, women are weak; where men are rational, they are emotional; where men are active, they are passive; and so on. (2006: vii)

The writer suggests that women are usually attributed to submission, weakness and negative roles in most of the societies but men are aligned to the opposite; and this is what was initially rejected by earlier feminists as an enthusiastic endeavor to change the actual situation. Women basically questioned the total free access of men to all the public concerns, political and economic affinities, cultural and social representations in front of the stereotypical falsified reality veiled with deficiency and incompetence.

In fact, Feminism started as a monolithic endeavor to advocate women's rights and to maintain equality between the two sexes in all fields. It was basically a unified and consistent strife to free the woman from the masculine domination and oppression. It aims at nullifying the gendered differences and preserving the value of the female recognition and liberty. Early Feminists drew a larger framework and decided on general guidelines to be followed for in order to attract other advocates to join and

strengthen the movement. Early attempts were strongly confronted by misogynists who rejected the position and wanted to preserve the masculine superiority over the female submission and obedience. Many women associated the ideology and contributed in working to reach the underlined goals though the idea of equality itself was not yet deeply clarified and determined, there was no adopted practical plan that might have met the presumed the target. The latter served as a reason to discuss plural Feminisms rather than a singular Feminism.

Besides, there were various initiatives that reformulated the initial structure and moved forward with the basic ideology far from the mere proto-feminist anticipations and fruitless efforts. It led to the emergence of successive waves of the Feminist movement, having the same background but moving toward multiple offshoots. The first wave was succeeded by the second and the third then the post-Feminist calls toward newly shaped definitions of concepts like equality and freedom for women. The hidden cause behind the consecutive attempts and movements of women is the fact that different categories of women belong to different regions of the world and distinctive cultures and social systems.

It was hardly possible for the movement advocates to settle a common platform for the same needs, concerns and objectives for all women to be equally represented. It was very difficult to create that common ideology that might surpass time and space and enable all the ends to meet together. The early version of Feminism as a movement was not a movement for all women of different categories because not all women in the world are women of color; that point was not adopted by early Feminists.

European Feminism is different from the American version of Feminism in as much as the white woman's feminist concerns differ from the black woman's. The perspective used by each single category is specific and unique though very common; they only shared the headlines not the details. The European white woman did not share the same social status, concerns and objectives with the American white woman, neither did she with the American black woman. However, both the African white and black women were initially excluded from any inclusion priorities. The black women in the US were primarily excited about the new ideology of representation and a movement that might defend their rights to be free and equal and help them retain recognition and justice.

However, they were mightily disappointed after a while when they discovered that the new movement did not truly speak of their own pain, their needs and their dreams; it did neither address nor practically include the black woman identity as a considerable and influential member in the larger group. The black woman had to find another space for her, a space that was unique the same way she was unique, her dream and quest were unique. She was unique because no other woman in the world was exposed similarly to triple oppression like she was and no other woman in the world had to struggle against race, sex and class the same way she had to. The triple oppression she was resisting was one of the leading causes that boosted the African American woman to seek a newly shaped ideology that might represent her own needs and concerns. It was additionally a standard that might drive her to draw a plan and set goals then work hard to reach them.

The voice of the African American women started to develop during the 70's and 80's of the Twentieth Century. It was named 'Black Feminism' and it signified their

standpoint and the perspective from which they look at the collective black identity and their quest as being highly different from the original feminist call. The writer Alice Walker calls it 'Womanism' and considered it initially interchangeable with 'Black Feminism' or as another variation of the pluralized movement, one of the many 'isms' that refused to come under the singular umbrella because it did not fit and it did not move toward the same objective that concerned all women in the world equally.

Patricia Hill Collins explained, in her article *What's In A Name? Womanism, Black Feminism and Beyond*, that black female nationalists advocate a blacks' moral superiority over whites due to the black suffering; it is the recognition they deserve as a compensative procedure. She also explained that 'Womanism' preserves the black woman her own safe space and distance from the enemy, whites in general and the white woman specifically because she is part of the black females' problem. (1996: 10-11).

Moreover, African American women believed that Feminism aimed at attacking men and trying to gain the female superiority over men following a separatist tendency for the purpose. This was not a shared point between the two variations because 'Womanism' aimed at creating stronger bonds and fostering harmony and complementarity between black men and women. Black women did not want to be separated from their men but only to be self-masters and self-dominated, they wanted their men to be their equals not their suppressors.

The movement was criticized by scholars who believed that the miscellaneous conceptualization is not the source of the problem and it does not alter the general goal. Similarly, that group of scholars claims that the white woman and the black woman

share certain aesthetic attitudes and values yet they differ in their priorities and agenda indicators. It is like one tree and its branches, the furthest the branches go the closest they remain to the root; for that reason, various names are offered in the area referring to each vision distinctively. The Pulitzer Prize winner Alice Walker describes it magnificently in that metaphorical image: "*Womanism is to Feminism is like purple to lavender*" (1983: xii). Besides, the Nigerian critic Chikwenye Ogunyemi professes that she came to define the concept of Womanism independently before she encounters Walker's definition. She declares:

> Black womanism is a philosophy that celebrates black roots, the ideals of black life, while giving a balanced presentation of black womandom … Its ideal is for black unity where every black person has a modicurn of power and so can be a 'brother' or a 'sister' or a 'father' or a 'mother' to the other. (1985: 72)

The African American author Clenora Hudson-Weems also focuses on the significance of separating Womanism, and specifically 'Africana Womanism' that she coins, from all other Feminisms because it has a distinctive ideology and broadened priorities. For Weems, the conflict that any female movement professes is based on the relationship between men and women of that culture; she believes that the relationship between white men and white women is essentially different from the relationship between black men and black women in the US or elsewhere. She asserts that the white woman has to fight the white man's domination and oppression but the black woman has to fight all kinds of oppressors to protect herself, her man and her child.

As the white female who belonged to a certain social class was totally different from the other female members of the same revolutionary group, her needs and requests were also different; it was not thus an easy task for revolutionists to draw the roadmap

of their work and to acknowledge common principles. The white female living in the USA was not expected nor was she able to understand the circumstances of the lives of black females living in the same country. It seemed hardly possible for the black female to be a member in a revolutionary group to ask for the rights of women with whom she shared nothing except the quality of gender. That was one of the reasons black females separated themselves from other waves of the movement and unfortunately some of traditional feminists considered that separation as a form of betrayal or attack which was not true. Feminism in its large sense has always been a multifaceted and actively changing movement welcoming various viewpoints.

The American black woman has been suffering from oppression of three axes; it was the triple oppression that the white female has never witnessed. She is oppressed by the white male, the white female and even by the black male; which was not the case of the white female. Her needs and goals were different, her conditions and aspirations were also different. The second half of the twentieth century was a period of Civil Rights movements and riots in America, black feminists then decided to get separated from others because of the intersectionality having three dimensions: race, gender and class.

Black feminism is the term that black feminists used to name their separate trend having their specific principles and standards that really fitted their needs and desires. The black females were partly excluded by the Women's Movement on the racial level and by the Black Liberation Movement on the sexual level. It served as an implicit reason for them to seek their own movement that sincerely reflected their situation. In fact, some black female activists like Frances Beale and Angela Davis went so far when they claimed they had nothing in common to defend or to fight with the middle class

white women's liberation movement. Similarly, white feminists considered black feminism not an extension to feminism but a distinct independent framework having its own specific principles.

Womanism is another term that was coined by the African American novelist and Pulitzer Prize winner Alice Walker who is known for the masterpiece entitled *Color Purple* argued that the term is to feminism as purple is to lavender (1983: xii). It means that it is simply one of its forms and it can never be separated from its roots. She professes: "*We are not white. We are not Europeans. We are black like the Africans themselves.... We and the Africans will be working for a common goal: the uplift of black people everywhere*". (1982: 137).

However, womanists' attitude toward the man is different from the feminists' as he is not the enemy of the female in the black community; and because he is also a victim of the white oppressor, he is not targeted by the movement activists. Like black feminists, womanists also prioritized the elimination of racial barriers before the sexual ones, but they focused more on family issues rather than the black female and her battles against men:

> I will not be called a feminist here, because it is European . . . I don t like being defined by them. It is just that it comes from outside and I don't like people dictating to me. I do believe in the African type of feminism. They call it Womanism, because, you see, you Europeans don't worry about water, you don't worry about schooling, you are so well off. Now, I buy land, and I say, 'OK, I can't build on it, I have no money, so I give it to some woman to start planting. That is my brand of feminism. (1988: 175)

Unlike womanists, black feminists moreover considered only the black female living in the USA and seemed to be closer to the white feminists. The difference between the two though debatable but it is still very small that it does not lay a contradiction in interests, needs and wishes. The Nigerian writer Buchi Emecheta stresses the distinction between feminism with capital 'F' and small 'f' in her statement:

Similarly, black womanhood is fenced within a highly negative pejorative and derogatory assumption as Mahassen Mgadmi claims that the gendered racial conceptualization suggests the black/white division as: "*It assigned Black women all the negative traits of disgrace whereas White women were attributed all the idealized aspects of "true womanhood", such as piety, deference, domesticity, passionlessness, chastity, cleanness and fragility.*" (2009: 41).

She resumes then that black women are consequently conceived as: "*Primitive, lustful, seductive, physically strong, domineering, unwomanly and dirty.*" (Ibid) The contradiction then stems from where the two of them spout and where they thrive. The essential issue for the black woman is the identity quest; it is the urgent call for recognition and reconsideration that is lost within the debris of discriminatory conducts.

II.1. The African American Woman's Three-ness and Non-Prototypicality

The black woman does no longer possess a specific individual identity attributed to her beingness; she has multiple identities and multiplied consciousness. Going back to W. E. B. Du Bois notion of 'double consciousness' that was used to describe black men's situation of being American on the one hand, and being African on the other, some black feminist scholars later talked about the black female triple consciousness and drew the analogy between the black man's 'tow-ness' and the black woman's 'thre-

ness'. The latter simply identifies the three qualities interacting together to shape the woman's identity, being a black American, a female and a second class citizen.

Black women struggled against triple dimensions of jeopardy trying to protect their existence and defend their rights as they were thrown hard into the most inferior level of the social stratification. Though they were exposed to oppression alike with their men and children but women suffered more. In her famous book *Women, Race & Class*, Angela Davis confirms: "*As females, slave women were inherently vulnerable to all forms of sexual coercion. If the most violent punishments of men consisted in floggings and mutilations, women were flogged and mutilated, as well as raped*". (1981: 03). She also claims that black women are worse off than black men as they unavoidably bear all of the burdens of racial beside sexual subordination; which is truly more than what they can support.

> Women experienced more sexual harassment than men, minorities (African-American and Latino) experienced more ethnic harassment than whites, and minority women experienced more frequent and severe harassment overall than white males, minority males, and white females. (2006: 426)

In a very recent and interesting research is held by Jennifer Berdahl and Celia Moore (2006) on the harassment of minority females at their workplace; the researchers conclude that the black female is found at the very bottom of the social classification being compared to the white female and the black male.

Moreover, recent studies in that field have also been dealing with the levels of oppression exercised on people of intersecting identities to find out whose group has the worst level. They come out with certain results: one of them is conceptualizing the term

"intersectional invisibility" that stigmatizes the resulting dangling identity. The concept is found in the research that is held by the Psychology scholars Valerie Purdie-Vaughns and Richard P. Eibach who explain that when people with multiple subordinate identities do not fit the prototypes of their original groups, they experience the 'intersectional invisibility'.(2008: 378). In their research paper, they attempt to clarify that the discriminating experiences of intersecting identities people are shaped by the accumulation of disadvantage; in other words, the more oppressed and abused these people are, the more devalued their identities will be.

Furthermore, the two scholars go further in their research that is based mainly on the integration of the three concepts: androcentrism, ethnocentrism, and heterocentrism and how it leads to invisibility in addition to the quality of prototypicality of the group members. Prototypicality is an essential standard to compare and classify members of ethnic and gendered groups. In *The Lenses of Gender*, androcentrism is well defined by the psychologist Sandra L. Bem as:

> Androcentrism is the privileging of male experience and the "otherizing" of female experience; that is, males and male experience are treated as the neutral standard or norm for the culture or the species as a whole, and females and female experience are treated as a sex-specific deviation from that allegedly universal standard. (1994: 41)

The prototype means the original or typical model of an individual whose standard features are supposed to be exhibited for others who are similar.

The term 'androcentrism' identifies the stereotypical spontaneity of people to prioritize prototypical members to represent the whole group and exclude the deviated ones. The second concept "ethnocentrism" has a similar meaning but now being based

on racial variation between white people and minority people including the blacks; the standard here is ethnicity. The two social ideologies together will create a double jeopardy for the non prototypical members. Third, though the term heterosexual refers to the ordinary stereotype of considering the sexual desire toward the other sex, it is not the third dimension that completes the triplet.

However, it is the social class that is meant in that chapter to complete the triple dimensions of prejudice; in other words, it is evident that even within the same gendered ethnic minority there are still different categories of the members. In the case of the minority of black females, that group is also divided into smaller classes according to economic abilities (job, salary, house, status,…), social influence and privileges (leadership, access to various services, powerful social relations, …), cultural achievements (writer, intellectual, artist, journalist, …) and even the member's closeness to the superior prototype.

The superior prototype is specifically found within the minority of blacks and it is known as colorism; it means having different levels of the skin blackness: fair light-skinned black females and ugly dark-skinned black females. The term 'Colorism' is coined by the writer Alice Walker in 1983; it is defined by her as: "*Prejudicial or preferential treatment of same-racepeople based solely on their color.*" (1983: 290). The term is known as 'Skin Color Bias'; it is also the black woman's confession of their sisters' inferiority which they fight and adopt at the same time.

According to the model of prototypicality and the triple jeopardy of gender, race and class, the low-class black female is supposed to be considered as the deviant non-prototypical element in the American context because she has got the highest levels of

deviation from the prototypicality standards of the constituent groups. The experience of invisibility for that minority group is then the fact of their being marginalized within their marginalized groups. Intersectional invisibility thus means the individual's inability to fit the required standards, when marginalization is tripled; it consequently leads to a severe decline of the person's status politically, economically, culturally and socially then to absolute invisibility.

Deemphasizing or neglecting the historical experiences, the cultural contributions and the social achievements of people of intersectional identities causes them to be marginalized again and again then to become invisible, bell hooks explains in her book *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* that: *"No other group in America has so had their identity socialized out of existence as have black women. We are rarely recognized as a group separate and distinct from black men, or a present part of the larger group 'women' in this culture."*(1989: 7)

Her statement clarifies the idea of the double jeopardy that results in being socialized out of existence. In fact, the reason behind that invisibility is that theories and studies which investigate these issues are built on prototypical patterns and models; this is why non-prototypical intersectional identities are poorly integrated within investigation then misrepresented, misunderstood and misinterpreted. People who are poorly integrated are discriminated legally through the ambiguous generalization of laws that do not always protect minorities (blacks for example) the same way it protects people with prototypical identities' (whites for example).

II.2. Living at the Intersection and the Enigmatic Invisibility

First, Black feminist scholars like Barbara Smith, Patricia Hill Collins, Kimberlé Crenshaw and many others refused throughout their research to sideline issues related to

race for the sake of feminist concerns as both are crucial in governing social relations; and race should be taken as an important aspect of the feminist struggle. They have based their studies on the conceptualization of the black female intersectionality. The term though coined by Crenshaw but the meaning was already there before 1980's; it was the equivalent of 'triple jeopardy' or "multiple interlocking oppressions".

Indeed, intersectionality is the most influential concept in the fields of gender and racial research and it simply occurs at the crossroad of the three territories: race, gender and class but it may also include other social divisions and aspects. In fact, it started emerging in the field of research as a double jeopardy around 1970; then it developed into a triple jeopardy including class as a third standard. Later, it involved the person's sexual orientation as a fourth element to classify the oppressed. Crenshaw explains wonderfully that eloquent image in her statement found in Yuval-Davis' article:

> Intersectionality is what occurs when a woman from a minority group tries to navigate the main crossing in the city…the main highway is "racism road." One cross street can be Colonialism, then Patriarchy Street. She has to deal not only with one form of oppression but with all forms, which link together to make a double, a triple, multiple, a many layered blanket of oppression. (2006: 196)

 The intersectional identity of the black female is the result of the three interwoven lobbies and is consequently shaped by the extension of their interlocking. Crenshaw recognizes the various layers of oppression exercised on black women prioritizing racism and considering it the highway that all the other roads must unavoidably cross.

However, newly made researches incline to envision the concept as merely a paradigm of research, a framework to approach the phenomenon. Sirma Bilge for example speaks rather about 'whitening intersectionality' that happens when race is no longer taken as a social aspect to categorize groups, and then there should be a process of re-marginalization of the black female in order to settle intersectionality as a universal paradigm again.

Second, invisibility is mysterious, it is enigmatic and foggy; the issue of blacks' invisibility remains widely contradictory raising many questions about its nature and its purpose. One can hardly claim whether it is a matter of blacks' invisibility or whites' blindness which makes African Americans out of sight, is it because the black color is unseen or because the white color reveals the unseen? Is it because of whites' hegemony or blacks' submission? Is it physical or psychological? In fact, invisibility in African American literature is mostly associated with the name of the writer Ralph Ellison and his famous novel *The Invisible Man*.

> I am an invisible man… I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids -- and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me. Like the bodiless heads you see sometimes in circus sideshows, it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination indeed, everything and anything except me. (1965: 7)

The writer tends to present a nameless protagonist on his own path of self-discovery; he also speaks about the inner eyes of people who refuse to see him, because of whom he is invisible.

Invisibility occurs when the others (who are, according to the writer, whites) refuse intentionally to see all who is black as a real human being; it leads African Americans to doubt their own existence. Out of sight and out of vision means out of existence, and this is what hurts mostly those who live at the intersection. They move to a world of suspicion where they struggle to convince themselves first that they truly exist and belong to the real world; and that they are not phantoms or ghosts in stories or nightmares. Their secondary goal is to convince the others of that, which seems to be an impossible task to do.

Invisibility is also a central theme in Richard Wright's *Native Son* as Charles Johnson confesses: "*Invisible Man is indebted to Native Son for certain themes such as the social 'invisibility' of black Americans and the 'blindness' of whites to their individuality*" (1999:99). It is in fact a mutual dichotomy when whites adopt blindness as social behavior; blacks accept that inferiority and become socially invisible. Wright's protagonist Bigger Thomas is also invisible for he is unseen in most of the novel events especially when he remains in the room with Mary Dalton. The mother Dalton is blind and her blindness is intentional in the novel so that it assures whites' blindness toward blacks.

Though Jan and Mary are friendly to Bigger Thomas, but he still feels that he is made inferior to them when they call blacks 'Your people', 'Our country'. These expressions emphasize the distinction and separation between races; they tell him indirectly that he and his people are different and the country is not theirs. Because of that invisibility and blindness dichotomy, the protagonist kills then burns the white Mary Dalton. Wright explains that in the novel: "*He was trying desperately to understand ... they made him feel his black skin by just standing there, one holding his hand and the other*

smiling. He felt he had no physical existence at all right then ... He felt naked, transparent."(1940: 98)

When they stand and smile in front of him, that cancels his existence and their whiteness overshadows his blackness and eliminates it; and this is exactly what fuels the fire of his hatred and leads him to kill, cold-heartedly, the white lady. Besides, there are many other African American novelists who have treated the issue of blacks' invisibility in their works, but the protagonist is most of the time a black male. Toni Morrison is one of these writers who consider blacks' invisibility in their works but she prioritizes the black female's invisibility.

III. Postcolonialism and the African Identity Conceptualization

That part of the chapter deals with another version of struggle, it is the struggle of liberating the African woman not only from enslavement and its toxic impact but also from the effects of colonialism and what it consequently drives with it. The reader may ask about the type of the relationship between the subject of the research and that inclination toward colonialism and Postcolonialism; the answer is potentially crucial to understand the movement of the study and the sequences included within. Because the research is about the black woman's concerns and needs, it is important to contextualize that identity and voice within the borders of time, space and theory. It is necessary to explain the components of the background in which the African woman survives and grows up as an independent strong social female actor.

The present work aims at finding out the ingredients that drive or prevent the black woman from suicide commitment; for this reason, it is highly essential to give a hint about the environment that both writers come from, the theoretical axis not the

physical or geographical ones. Toni Morrison proclaims through her writings for equality and justice for all women in the world, and so does Yvonne Vera. Though they emerge in different time frames and are from different continents but the skin color unites their quest and objective, and enables them to take the lead.

Postcolonialism is briefly explained in that part beside the postcolonial literature and the way it reflects the Postcolonial female identity. The latter is maintained here as it is substantial to know that one's identity is sharply tied and grounded on their existence. Simultaneously, when one's existence is threatened, self-destruction or even suicide commitment may lay among the probable options that the mind opens for the body.

It is unwise to ignore the psychological impact of the personality constituents 'the Id, the Ego and the Superego' on one's mental stability and identity formation. The individual's personality, identity and existence melt within the same pot, the human life, and the conflict has always persisted inside the human being. For this reason, the second part of the chapter initiates a contextualization attempt to find out in later chapters how the context where the black woman shapes her identity affects her existence.

Before any attempt to explain the concept of 'Postcolonialism', it is necessary to explain the basic concept 'colonialism' which is the roots of .*Webster's Dictionary* defines colonialism as: "*Control by one power over a dependent area or people*". What calls for attention in this definition first is the word 'dependent' because there is no area in the world that can be named this way before being dominated by others to turn it from its autonomous state to a state of being dependent. The second point about it is related to the word 'control' which is made neutrally objective more than what is

logically accepted because what is exercised in these areas goes far away from the significance of the colonizing act.

That definition refers only to the colonial powerful part of the dichotomy evading any reference to the colonized compliant part. Besides, it evacuates it from its meaning, the real and negative connotation; it is not presented as an unfair process to deny people's freedom and obliterate the collective identity. It also evades clarifying the encounter between the two people and the two cultures which is the core element of the process; colonialism does not only mean the political and economic dominance but it also signifies the social, cultural, historical, religious and intellectual domination.

It is the case here because it is viewed from one perspective, the second perspective though will provide a clearer vision and reveal the hidden aspects; it is through the postcolonial writings and literature written by the colonized intellectuals themselves. Colonialism paves the way for colonial, precolonial and postcolonial studies and theories; that chapter is devoted mainly to Postcolonialism and its impact on nations' cultures, heritage and formation as far as literature is concerned.

Postcolonialism is one of the most potentially intricate concepts used by historians and researchers to signify not only the period and impact that follows colonialism, but it additionally "*… covers all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day*" (2004: 02) as it is stated by Bill Ashcroft in *The Empire Writes Back* The prefix 'post' is no longer used to indicate the after-colonialism period, but it also includes the before, during and after colonialism due to the continuous preoccupation of the land, history, culture, politics, religion, language and people exercised by the colonizer on the colonized people. The thrusting urge of Europeans to expand their control over powerless subservient nations and widen

their territories into the subversive parts of the world was initiated during the Renaissance. Later, it was renovated by the successive conflicts and quarrels between the European forces to monopolize the best schemes in a monocentric world.

The postcolonial thought has been increasing to detect the implicit dominating intentions and unveil the imperial strategies. The Sociology writer Julian Go clarifies the distinctive variation between the postcolonial thought and the social theory as being extremely contradictory when he claims in his book entitled *Postcolonial Thought and Social Theory*: "*Postcolonial thought is primarily an anti- imperial discourse that critiques empire and its persistent legacies.*" (2016: 01). Within the anti- imperialist and anti-colonial contexts, various popular liberalizing waves began to erupt opposing colonialism and attempting to stop the imperial voracities and exploitation of the subjugated nations.

The Roaring Twenties were not only prosperous for Americans and Western Europeans, they were truly roaring for dominated people because they initiated their movements toward liberation. Though the period between the First and Second World Wars revealed many anti-imperial attempts but they ended up systematizing and reinstituting imperialism instead of concealing it. After the Second World War, strongly spreading patriotism calls and anti-colonial movements succeeded to grant independence to many colonized countries but not all. Colonial empires had to elapse finally paving the way to liberated developing nations to stand out of the colonial past and hegemony.

The term Postcolonialism emerged within an anti imperial context as insured by Julian Go: "*It emerged from the margins if not the underbelly of empire, flourishing amidst anti- imperial protest and resistance from subjugated peoples around the world*"

(Ibid: 06). However, scholars and academics nowadays refer to the concept focusing mostly on the Eighties of the century being related to famous scholars as Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak. Though Frantz Fanon, Amilcar Cabral and Aimé Césaire were among the earliest proponents, they could contribute in many revolutionary movements that sought liberty from colonialism.

The African American activist W. E. B. Du Bois played a great role similarly in creating the NAACP that aimed at defending the rights of black people in America. These activists are crucial names in the field of anti-colonialism as they fought strongly for the sake of highlighting the damaging effects of colonization and enslavement. Later attempts of those scholars concentrated mostly on future vision of a world without colonialism, race, discrimination and ignorance; and on the sense of being human, of belonging, of collective identities rather than the individual presence.

Bill Ashcroft again draws attention to the use of the hyphen to distinguish between Postcolonialsim and Post-colonialism. Though Edward Said's book *Orientalism* was published earlier demonstrating the relation between the colonized and the colonizer, the term Postcolonialism did not emerge unless Gayatri Spivak's work entitled *The Post-Colonial Critic* (1990) was published. Ashcroft assures: "*The term 'post-colonial' per se was first used to refer to cultural interactions within colonial societies in literary circles*" (2007: 168). In order to end up the interpretative contestation between critics of different disciplines around the concept, he then adds: "*The term has subsequently been widely used to signify the political, linguistic and cultural experience of societies that were former European colonies.*"(Ibid)

Postcolonial Theory developed from the urging need to give voice to the voiceless colonized people, it emerged to change the mis-conceptualization, false

reflections and distorted image that the European colonizers displayed to the world. Being the 'other, inferior, submissive, weak, inhuman and uncivilized', the colonized people were enslaved in their countries and intellectuals were appealed to resist and reshape the image of the oppressed. European colonizers strongly believed in their domination and justify their exploitation of the other nations. They considered their oppression as a noble mission and a generous endeavor to spread civilization, enhance education and improve economy. However, postcolonial studies are based on the works fulfilled by scholars from both sides, the colonizers trying to speak about 'we' to 'they' and the colonized expressing it the other way as 'they' to 'we'.

Despite their attempts to embellish their picture and distort reality, it was no longer hidden for the dominated people that they were being utilized and invested for the benefits of their colonizers. They hence began to prepare the platform to prove the opposite and reveal the idea to the whole world that they have been struggling to live in peace and freedom. Writings about the colonized people's history, culture and social clichés may be considered authentic only when they are produced and depicted by those who are concerned, in case the colonizers attempt to write about them, their works are not to be trusted because the perspective through which each part of the two perceives reality and logic differs.

Moreover, the colonizer' discourse, objectives and audience are completely different from those of the colonized. The dominant power leaves what preserves its long lasting impact on the colonized nations even after independence. Political independence has rarely signified the complete separation nor did it guarantee the end of tyranny and exploitation to the dominated countries. Literature is not an exception and postcolonial literature has been produced according to the colonizer's rules and

instructions; challenging initiatives to reveal the complete version of the truth were not allowed for publication and denied the access for distribution.

Additionally, postcolonial literature in its broader sense refers to the literature that was produced during and after the colonial era including the works written after independence. It refers to the literary works and criticism documents based on the readings and writings made about the previously colonized countries regardless of the author's belonging. Ashcroft identifies the stages postcolonial literature has been through and confirms that it includes the works written by the representatives of the imperial powers and the intellectual upper class natives who were taught the language of the oppressor and used it to defend him. Postcolonial literature refers to the written manuscripts based thematically on the relationship between the colonizer/ the colonized and the oppressed resistance or submission.

The American literary heritage is also part of the postcolonial literature because it was colonized by Great Britain and it was dominated by the British forces for some time even after independence. However, due to its current position and power, and also due to its newly colonizing mission, the postcolonial background of the US is purposefully ignored and not recognized. The writer Elleke Boehmer defines it as follows: "*Postcolonial literature is generally defined as that which critically or subversively scrutinizes the colonial relationship. It is writing that sets out in one way or another to resist colonialist perspectives.*" (2005: 3). However, Ashcroft, Tiffin and Griffiths used the term post-colonial: "*To cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. This is because there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European*

imperial aggression." (2004: 2). The last statement broadens the vision zone focusing mainly on the semantic content but expands the time borders of the process.

That part of the chapter aims on the one hand at contextualizing the black woman's identity and beingness within a feminine theoretical framework to know the role of the woman in shaping the scholarship scene and theorizing for the woman. On the other hand, it draws attention to 'superior/ inferior' dichotomy through explaining who 'the other' is. It is for this reason that this research should have concentrated on a female figure like Spivak or Boehmer to demonstrate the postcolonial identity.

However, because Frantz Fanon simultaneously provides a fascinating perception of the concept of 'the other' being connected to the hybrid identity, Fanon's conceptualization is similarly highlighted in that part. In spite of this, it does in no way prevent a spotlight on postcolonial feminism and its crucial contribution in preparing the path for a newly feminist call to emerge. It is the call of the 'Third World' woman who believes that other feminist calls despite all endeavors fail to represent her status and reflect her pain. It is another wing that the larger bird called Feminism develops for another category of women in another area of the world. Postcolonial Feminism is that part of Feminism that handles the female sex as 'the other' of 'the other' who is already meant to be the colonized, the inferior or the oppressed.

Oppression is one of the causes that affects individuals psychologically and creates a psychological complex inside them; it even puts them at the risk of thinking about ending their lives. This is the reason for including that part about 'the other' and 'the Subaltern', because the creation of these concepts was based on prejudice and discrimination between the colonizer and the victim, it is a life threatening issue. It was first explained in relation to the history of slavery in the US and to 'white

Americans/African Americans' dichotomy in the first part of the chapter; then it is reflected in relation to the 'colonized/ colonizer' dichotomy.

Oppression does not only destroy the psyche of the human being as much as it threatens his existence and identity. At this basis, explaining postcolonial process of deconstructing the colonized identity to dominate its moves plays a crucial role in understanding the colonized response to it. Some people consequently decide to fight while others prefer to escape it or escape life as a whole; it is only here that it becomes clear how identity formation is significant in one's life and any constraints may affect one's existence negatively or positively.

Postcolonial Feminism emerges to criticize and reject any attempt from Western Feminists that ignored the specificity of the women living at the previously colonized countries. Western Feminism failed to a certain extent to achieve universality and homogeneity and represent all marginalized women in the world under the same umbrella. It is not easily reachable because female experiences, interests and purposes around the globe differ; it requires the need to look beyond the difference, from the colonized perspective, this is what Western activists failed to attain and this is what Postcolonial Feminists refused, the euro-centralized discourse and their stand to speak for and about them. It is also called 'Third World Feminism' as it focuses on third world women issues, and because they can be evaluated and classified according to the standards and variables of the third world nations. Equality and freedom of the woman are prioritized by Postcolonial Feminists because the theory suggests the combination of the two liberation theories: Postcolonialism on the one hand and Feminism on the other.

Postcolonial Feminism stems from the two and did not operate out or against any of them; it criticizes both of them but completes each of them in terms of variety and globalism. Rajan and Park declare in *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*:

> Postcolonial feminism cannot be regarded simply as a subset of postcolonial studies, or, alternatively, as another variety of feminism. Rather it is an intervention that is changing the configurations of both postcolonial and feminist studies. Postcolonial feminism is an exploration of and at the intersections of colonialism and neocolonialism with gender, nation, class, race, and sexualities in the different contexts of women's lives, their subjectivities, work, sexuality, and rights. (2005: 53)

The writers also confess that Feminist critics exactly first world activists criticize the theory for it reflects the fallacious victimization of the third world woman and brings to light the ethnocentrism that threatens the eurocentrism superiority. The disparities between the Feminist branches develop around the location, time, target, sample and plan despite their intersection upon the bold lines as far as the thematic replenishment is concerned. However, they mostly share a common response to 'the other' and start from the same clues to identify the woman's identity.

III.1. The Postcolonial African Woman's Identity Quest

That part of the chapter looks at the African woman's identity from Spivak's perspective because she inquires about the meaning of being called 'the other'; what it means for a woman to be put in a second position then be regarded as inferior, oppressed and marginalized. The black woman can be classified as an oppressed member whose voice is unheard and silenced; she is considered as 'the other' this is why the subject of identity is crucial in the post-colonial context.

Among the most pertinent concepts that the postcolonial context secretes is Spivak's 'the Subaltern' which signifies 'the other' or 'the oppressed member' asking one of the most known questions in this research area 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' The significance of her question pertains to the persecuted voiceless member who is silenced by oppression applied by the colonizer. In fact, the colonial force withdraws people's voices but worse than that, it renders them invisible. The significance of highlighting the concept and implementing it within that chapter goes back to the fact that it concerns the oppressed female who is the main subject of that research, the persecuted voiceless black woman.

The current research focuses mainly on the black female suicide and her motives to end her life; it is basically due to the burden of silence she has to endure. Silence is regarded as a gap between man and women and also between the oppressor and the oppressed, the colonizer and the colonized; silence indicates the difference, the separation rather. Basically, the 'Subaltern' concept is grounded on the historical submission and subordination of the colonized member. Moreover, though the 'Subaltern Studies' paved the way for the muted and oppressed members to express their pain loudly and speak up their subordination, postcolonial research proceeds while trying to answer Spivak's substantial question and set it within investigation ups and downs. Spivak's crucial contribution to the field is interesting in that part of the chapter because of her 'Subaltern' issue which is essentially connected to the oppressed identity. It aims at reaching a unified picture about who the Subaltern is and what denies its voice.

It is true that a large number of scholars and researchers have been interestingly investigating postcolonial and feminist issues and experimenting with the various

dialectics that control the situation each time. However, it is also correct again to state that the woman better understands and explains women issues than the man does as it was stated previously in that chapter that a black man is the best one to speak up black man concerns rather than any other individual in the world. Gayatri Spivak is one of the most influential contemporary theorists especially that she writes about Marxism, Feminism, Postcolonialism and even about Deconstructivism. Interdisciplinarity adds to her scholarly background to be named the spokeswoman for these disciplines; it promotes her to be classified among the theoretical elite most importantly when she dives within psychoanalytical approach to textualize her thoughts. Spivak is a prominent feminist critic of international fame and eminence and her studies about 'the Subaltern' brings her more fame and criticism.

Postcolonial Feminist scholars have been trying to identify the black female's identity and the limits of her freedom and equality in the light of the double oppression exercised on her by the colonizer and the male of her community. If the postcolonial theorist struggles against colonial domination, the postcolonial feminist scholar has to fight colonial and patriarchal domination; this is what Anna Rutherfold and Kirsten H. Peterson called 'Double Colonization'. The postcolonial woman is misrepresented by Postcolonialism that is man-centered and by Feminism as it is Western woman-centered; this is what is called 'double bias'. Spivak's iconic essay entitled: *Can the Subaltern Speak?* that has a long rarely witnessed impact on many disciplines through the concept of the Subaltern and the idea of Subalternity. By the concept, she refers to the oppressed female, the colonized other who is silenced and the persecuted woman whose voice is retreated by colonialism and patriarchy.

The Italian Marxist activist Gramsci Antonio was the first to coin the term of 'the Subaltern' within his 'Prison Notebooks' and it has a political connotation. It was fundamentally found to explain the situation of the low rank people who were dominated by hegemonic high class members particularly simple workers and peasants who were extremely oppressed and exploited. The relationship between social classes used to be tremendously vulgar during the Fascist regime specifically for the vulnerable sections. The concept was later reshaped by a group of Indian scholars who formed the 'Subaltern Studies Group' and introduced their reflections and visions about the contexts and dialectics change.

Spivak brings the concept into the light again in her essay entitled: *Can the Subaltern Speak?* In that essay, the writer reflects a renewed dress for the concept that shares the quality of dominance and oppression with Gramsci's definition. It is thanks to Spivak that the concept is revived and is given a different orientation in relation to Post-colonialism and Feminism. The semantic attribution of the concept moves from a political restriction to a Deconstructivist and Postcolonial reflection then to reach the Postmodernist implication.

It is far more important for that research because understanding 'the colonized other' is a way to understand their identity and it is also a way to decipher the constituents of their existence and personality; it is a gate to the psychological disorders that threatens one's life. The concept triggers piles of research and criticism in various disciplines and it attracts attention of scholars to trace back its efficiency in different areas; it was no longer monopolized within the historical field. The Indian American Feminist critic Spivak's contribution takes the concept to a different orientation especially when she highlights the Subaltern consciousness in relation to historiography.

By the concept 'Subaltern', Spivak initiates an extended scholarly discussion of the position of the oppressed woman and her identity, placement, voice and existence; these variables change and evolve consequently around pertinent disciplines. Who is the other? Is the Subaltern an oppressed man or an oppressed woman? How is the other devoiced or muted? What brings back the other's voice to be heard? Can the other be heard when speaking? These are some questions that the postcolonial field implements within studies about the identity of the colonized being male or female. That part of the chapter aims at answering them successively. The crucial question in Spivak's intervention about Subalternity is based on the issue of origin and gender; it also sheds the light on the dilemma of identity and representation.

The concept is used in the Postcolonial area to reflect the lower social groups that were marginalized and devoiced due to the imperial hegemony and its long term effects; the colonized people were represented as 'others, objects, inferior' without being aware of it. However, Spivak connects it with caution to the state of inferiority and difference from the elite but going beyond oppression and its impact; it is social and cultural radical classification before being a political agency. She includes also the people who are classified according to the norms of the cultural imperialism into superior powerful groups and inferior subservient groups.

According to her, the Subaltern male and female are called so only when they are unable to speak and be heard, but when they can speak and get their voice heard, they are no longer called Subaltern. Landry and McLean confirm the idea after interviewing her: "*The subaltern as such cannot be heard by the privileged of either the First or Third Worlds. If the subaltern were able to make herself heard … she would cease to be subaltern.*"(1996: 5). One condition preserves the name, it is through being

colonized, inferior, muted and unheard by the First and Third worlds privileged categories.

The issue of identity and representation is the core element of the Subaltern studies; it is connected to how the 'Other' sees himself/herself and how he/she is represented. The writer claims in her essay:

> Within the effaced itinerary of the subaltern subject, the track of sexual difference is doubly effaced. The question is not of female participation in insurgency, or the ground rules of the sexual division of labor, for both of which there is 'evidence'. It is, rather, that, both as object of colonialist historiography and as subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant. If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak; the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow. (1988: 83)

The writer here focuses on the double marginalization, or displacement as she calls it, of the subaltern female and the obliterating impact of imperialism, patriarchy and gender difference. She also refers to the difficult state of living at the intersection; she devalues however the significance of the axis of skin color being compared to the axis of imperialism, it becomes useless according to her. She states simultaneously:

> The analogue of class-consciousness rather than race-consciousness is this area seems historically, disciplinarily and practically forbidden… It is not just a question of *double* displacement, as it is not simply the problem of finding a psychoanalytic allegory that can accommodate the third- world woman with the first. (Ibid: 90)

The female's consciousness of her own identity is an essential pillar in Spivak's discussion of the Subaltern because she demonstrates the double shadow the woman is

forced to maintain beside the non-representability of people who use her voice. Spivak summarizes it in:

> Between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object-formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the 'third-world woman' caught between tradition and modernization. (Ibid: 102)

Spivak concludes her essay with a simple confirmation that: "*The Subaltern cannot speak. There is no virtue in global laundry lists with 'woman' as a pious item. Representation has not withered away*." (Ibid: 104). The Subaltern's voice indicates her existence and shapes her identity because it foreshadows her consciousness of being or nonbeing. In her essay, Spivak assures that the name 'Subaltern' is attributed to a woman only when she is unable to speak; when she speaks for herself and represents herself personally, she is no longer called in that way. It is a question of identity rather than a reconsideration issue related to representation of the colonized and oppressed woman.

Understanding the opposing forces that contribute in forming the postcolonial woman's identity is a key to understand the ideological, social and psychological circumstances that drive her to behave or respond in a certain way. Spivak engages with the notion of Subalternity being tied to the ability to speak for oneself, but other researchers refer also to her capability to make her voice heard. If the woman is able to speak but has no space to be heard, it is another issue then, the surrounding space or location devoted to motivate her to speak plays an essential part in that quest. Sara De Jong and Jamila Mascat respond to Spivak's question and interpret her notion in four modes: the subaltern cannot be heard; the subaltern cannot speak; the subaltern is being silenced; and the subaltern escapes us. (2016: 719).

In the four cases, she is named Subaltern though she is forced to be unspeakable or she is silenced. She escapes when she is neither able to speak nor is she heard while speaking, she escapes when she is muted by the force of hegemony. Does this drive the reader anyhow to think about Spivak's intention to allude to the Subaltern's voice reception rather than her voice articulation? It is true to a certain degree though the ambiguity of the concept in her essay does not reveal any answer until later.

Moreover, the space that Spivak highlights is the situation where the Subaltern is found within her double shadow as a deep aura of oppression and misrepresentation. That space is a prominent variable that facilitates the distinction between 'the old Subaltern' and 'the new Subaltern' due to relocation endeavors, such attempt is strongly connected to the female identity and the dialectics of transmission and movement. The equipment of hegemony changes and alters the definition of Subalternity simultaneously though not very noticeably. Spivak confirms at first that: "*There is no space from which the sexed subaltern subject can speak*" (1988: 307). It signifies that the female Subaltern has in no way the intelligibility to speak or to be heard.

However, Morton is among the authors who interpret it differently claiming that Spivak's notion has been explained by researchers out of its context: "*Spivak would certainly not want to deny the social agency and lived existence of disempowered subaltern women… these disempowered women receive their political and discursive identities within historically determinates systems of political and economic representation.*" (2003: 66-67). Morton's interpretation gives sense to Spivak's question and response epistemologically within the historical agenda and intellectual agency of reproducing Subalternity.

It is correct that when Spivak asks her famous question, she does not confess that the only problem is the Subaltern's inability to produce the sound and articulate the message. The question itself presumes the availability of the room that the listener offers to receive the message and react accordingly. In both cases, the process of communication is interrupted and the message is hardly delivered correctly. The real obstacle for the process lays in the space between the sender and the receiver in addition to the noise, distractions and the other intruding elements that can efficiently hinder the communication process. The latter can reach the target only when there is persuasion and accordance; it means the sender may as may not succeed in convincing the listener.

However, when the society shows no intention to receive the speech or communicate with the Subaltern woman, she is forced to accept her utterance to be unheard, ignored or silenced. Spivak draws an end to the question when she later claims in an interview: "*It means that even when the subaltern makes an effort to the death to speak, she is not able to be heard, and speaking and hearing complete the speech act. That's what it had meant, and anguish marked the spot*" (1996: 292). The Subaltern woman is muted by ignorance and rejection rather than being silenced only by the power of dominance. Societies do hardly offer a comfortable space for the gendered Subaltern to speak, convince, communicate or even be heard.

Furthermore, because discussing Subalternity related thoughts is a way to understand the postcolonial identity from different viewpoints, it is important to elaborate Spivak's ideas in comparison with other views. The Subaltern identity is the identity of the other, the oppressed; the postcolonial identity is also the identity of the other, the oppressed other, it is then the shared point between the two. Spivak focuses

on the Subaltern's identity as being the identity of the 'Other, the different, the inferior, the oppressed' regardless of the sex and race of the concerned.

The colonized people have a Subaltern identity that signifies subordination and subservience in its larger sense, but very significant questions pop into the discussion about Subalternity: How much difficult it is to erase and clear the colonized ideological perception from the minds of the Subaltern especially from the intellectual minds? To which extent it is socially approved for the colonized to exercise any attempt to retrieve the past into the present especially if there is no glorifying or praising purposes behind the attempt? Is the answer supposed to be the same if the Subaltern subject is female? This is the heart of that part of the chapter because the answer dismantles the postcolonial identity politics and reframes its boundaries of integration and hybridity.

When Spivak claims that the Subaltern cannot speak and that the female Subaltern is specifically more deeply in shadow (Ibid: 83), she emphasizes the domination duality of the Subaltern woman. The statement signifies the dividedness of identity and the hybridity of the Subaltern, between the two axes, the Subaltern identity is divided despite its hybridity as stated by Peter Barry: "*The subaltern celebrates hybridity, and cultural polyvalency*"(1988: 198).

The quality of hybridity is fundamental for the Subaltern woman as it is a matter of existence and identity; it determines the limits of freedom and prohibitions for her. The meaning of being divided is synonymous to being a part of two different worlds but belonging to none of them at the same time; the concerned is hung in between. It is the situation where the individual is superficially privileged the polyvalent options and preferences but having deeply no right to make use of them in the real sense. To say it in other words, it is like having everything and having nothing at the same time, it is

paradoxically interpreted. The double domination creates then divided identities that are unsettled and undefined.

Looking at the postcolonial identity from another lens, the philosopher and activist Frantz Fanon develops the concepts of the 'Self' and the 'Other' throughout his writings. He writes to clarify the way colonial forces maintain power and priority over the colonized who is made different and inferior as to be called the 'Other'. Imperialism is an ideology that tolerates the discriminative behavior to consider the 'Self' as different and superior to the colonized 'Other'; this binary opposition of the (colonizer/ colonized) and the (Self/ Other) is Fanon's main interest. He is one of the writers who reject the unequal categorization of imperialism based on domination measures though it is one of the many contradictory divisions as (good/ bad), (true/ false), (oppressive/ oppressed) or even (white/ black).

In fact, Fanon's dichotomy (colonizer/ colonized) is rooted in the Manichean religious philosophy that insists on dividing the world into good and evil and classify everything in one of the two categories accordingly. The two poles keep struggling, they have equal potentials and none of the two wins or defeats the other, it is the delayed or hung victory. Fanon assures: "*The colonial world is a Manichean world.*"(2004: 6) He explains that Manicheanism sometimes reaches its logical conclusion and dehumanizes the colonized subject (Ibid:7) It might bear the same meaning as turning the human into non-human and the subject into a mere inanimate spiritless object as a result of the dehumanizing response of the philosophy. This is the source from where Fanon launched his division and explains the dehumanizing conduct that colonial forces maintain toward their dependent subjects.

Spivak indeed utilizes the 'Subaltern' concept referring to the oppressed social member; Fanon uses the 'Other' signifying the 'not me' in an attempt to address the different, the separate, the detached. The dichotomy of 'Self/ Other' is historically and socially evolving around the principle of prioritizing the man as 'Self' and dehumanizing the woman as the 'Other'. It also consists of a similar division as to 'white/ black' binary formula. For the racist male ('Self'), the female ('Other') is always submissive, dependent, negative and bad and for the racist white ('Self'), the black ('Other') is inferior, powerless, negative and evil; that is the dichotomy and that is the question.

More interestingly, Afaf Ahmed Hasan Al-Saidi expressed her viewpoint in a research paper about the male/female division as: "*The concept of Otherness sees the world "As divided into mutually excluding opposites: if the Self is ordered, rational, masculine, good, then the Other is chaotic, irrational, feminine, and evil.*" (2014: 96) According to her, the 'Other' is by necessity meant to describe the woman who is described as not only an inferior dependent subject, but an irrational and evil one. However, attributing the quality of demonization to the female category is nonsense because men are not flying angels anyway. Because the divided world is exclusive, one of the two parts must exclude the other, the two 'the Self/ the Other' are not expected to have the same level of rationality and strength; one would most of the time outperform.

For Dereje, A. Bulbula and Fedila, Z. A/Jobir: "*Otherness includes double-ness, both identity and difference. so that every other, every different than and excluded by is dialectically created and includes the values and meaning of the colonizing culture.*" (2020: 5) The writers here draw that declaration from Fanon's borderline to divide the colonizing West from the colonized Orient. If they presume that otherness includes

double-ness, it means that each 'Other' includes the 'Self'; otherness is inclusive and it implements that both identities are part of it and are defined and shaped by it.

However, an opposing viewpoint may be provided in relation to the superiority of the 'Self' and inferiority and the 'Other' and it is based on the fact that the world itself is originally and fundamentally divided into various dichotomies as if the world of the unique sex or type is unimaginable. Beside all the existing pairs in the world as (day/ night), (sun/moon), (heaven, hell), (Adam, Eve), (life, death), (white/ black), (man/ woman), the 'Self' and the 'Other' classification has not emerged in relation to the last gender pair as if to claim man to be the 'Self' and the woman to be the 'Other'.

It developed along within a historical and social circle due to the role attributed to the woman to be devoted to the household, the family chores and the four-walled space concerns. The man has been responsible for the family living and the financial concerns. These conditions supported the division and pushed it to be deeply rooted in societies giving more priority to the male member due to his unrestrictive mobility and financial opportunities. The woman was then confined to the house space and duties with less mobility and knowledge out of the house borders; this pushed her to be a second-class member or a family member of a secondary degree.

The financial domination drives consequently another extended form of dominating the female by her man especially if it is coupled with the female's physiological delicacy and softness. Consequently, the historical and social features contribute in widening the gap between the two sexes and pushing them into the extremes. The woman is then dominated and exploited by the society masculine category; she is terribly subordinated and oppressed. Patriarchy is the reason behind

attributing the role of the 'Other' to the female individual and it is also responsible for promoting the male individual to be considered the 'Self'.

The identity of the black woman in the post-colonial context is shaped by its dialectics and socio-cultural standards; it is the identity of the oppressed female who struggles for independence and liberation. It is the identity of the 'Other' that is ranked in the second position because she is a citizen of a second class. The African black woman is persecuted by colonial and patriarchal forces; she survives between the ashes of destruction and the clouds of a beautiful dream. The following part is meant to explain how she manages to assure a considerable position for herself in the African community; the struggle for freedom and equality is essential for all women in the world not only for the African woman, she is however more insistent that life deserves to be experienced despite the terrible obstacles.

III.2. Affinities between the Struggle for Equality and Triple Consciousness

Not surprisingly, the African black woman has always struggled against marginalization and prejudice beside the effects of colonialism. Her major quest has been centered on the need for liberty and equality; the battle of equality has been as significantly crucial and urgent as the battle of decolonization. The last part of the fourth chapter explores the various dialectics of the African woman's battle against segregation; it also underscores her situation between racial and gendered variables. The African woman has been subjected to patriarchy, domination, colonization and injustice.

The notion of Double Consciousness was coined by the African American writer W. E. B. Du Bois signifying that black Americans view themselves through three lenses: being American and being African at the same time; it indicates that they belong to the two worlds but they truly belong to none of them. It is sometimes called 'Tow-

ness' or even the 'Negro-ness'; it is another version of living at the margin where one has to submit to all duties in spite of having no precise rights.

As a result of that view, the writer means to say that inside each black American, there are two polarizing identities that reside in one body; they are in a constant combat. The notion then developed into Triple Consciousness that is projected onto the African American female who is viewed then as being African, being American and being a woman. She has endured the consequences of that situation for a considerable time. The threefold components wrestle in one body, in one mind due to the psychological and physical anguish for the sake of reconciliation between the three.

The triple consciousness for African women varies according to the different set of circumstances they live in; the African woman is viewed from three perspectives: being African, being a woman and being post-colonized. What draws the distinction between the two notions having the same labeling is the white dominating force; if black Americans are oppressed by white Americans who live with them in the same society, black Africans are oppressed by the white European colonizers who were loaded with the sense of devastation, dissociation and decay:

-Black American women's triple consciousness is the result of being American, being black and being female.

-Black African women's triple consciousness is the result of being African, being female and being post-colonized (experiences the life during and after colonization).

Nahum Welang explains what double consciousness results in within the quote:

> The social identity of double consciousness attempts to find some semblance of power and equality within the framework of a political, linguistic and ideological American paradigm that dominates societies … and refuses to take

into consideration the multiplicity of fragmented cultures and identities catalyzed by this very domination. (2018: 297)

Though the statement refers to the hegemony white Americans exercise on minorities on different levels, it also points out to the white American/ European patriarchal system that thrives on the remains of minorities' ignored interests and marginalized concerns. The triple consciousness concept is transitory and relative as it changes according to the where and when it is utilized; in addition to the axioms of blackness and womanhood, the third axis alters from one context to the other (it could indicate being post-colonized, being a Muslim, being a Jew, being lesbian or even being a celebrity, they all end up creating an inner struggle and mismatch between identities)

The story then is that of a distinctive variety of consciousness struggling against another, a deviation from what African social reality with its white male patriarchy inhales within its hegemonic paradigm. Black hypermasculinity is an offshoot of white patriarchy; it is birthed from an oppressive hegemonic and destructive system that targets the black woman and that reflects the grudge grounded in their spirits toward the 'other'.

Janet McCabe perceives the gendered racial stereotyping differently that white patriarchy, in a committed quest to sustain its values of white supremacy, hegemonic masculinity and hetero-normativity, has utilized the conservation of dehumanizing black stereotypes and the institutionalization of systemic barriers to control, oppress and exploit all black bodies. (2012: 52). The key conceptualization in McCabe's declaration points out to the terrible act of institutionalizing the dehumanizing stereotype that digs deep into the consistency of social and collective identities in multiracial societies.

Triple consciousness in African societies, hence, picturizes its distinctive delineation at the basis of Du Bois' original notion. Therefore, women in Zimbabwe are

destined to share a portion of the identity quest and the consciousness struggle in virtue of their contribution in the liberation of the country and the liberation of the minds. Because the writer Yvonne Vera is Zimbabwean, it is then crucially important to shed light on the gender conflict women have been forced to adapt with inside that postcolonial nation. African women have to endure the burden of that Three-ness and the weight of having to navigate sexism, racism, classicism, colorism and other variants of bias to thrust the heart of inequality.

Not surprisingly, African Southern countries had not witnessed the color-line life until after the arrival of the white colonizers into their African lands; the latter inaugurated a new color violating dissipation to impose their hegemony and assure their supremacist legacy. African men and women endure similarly the predatory heritage of colonialism but women have always been expected to submit and sacrifice passively and continuously. Gloria Chuku confesses that womanhood in Africa signifies: "*A high level of responsibility; an embodiment of social etiquette; and familial and community expectations of an adult female as a wife, mother, and responsible member of the society.*" (2018: 171).

The statement means that, unlike African men, African women were already loaded with more responsibilities and excessive work to complete of a daughter, a wife, a mother and a grandmother. The presence of white colonizers contributes in the transition from an old to a more open livelihood and in transforming the existing indigenous institutions in which women exist; it alters the woman's challenges and opportunities which reveals the African woman's thriving potential to defend her indigenous identity and convoy the necessities of change and development. The newly reformulated conceptualization of womanhood within the colonial boundaries is the

reasonable consequence of her versatility and resilience, her cooperation and assertiveness; this is to mention the Zimbabwean woman as an example.

Postcolonial African nations preserved the woman's standards of equality and recognition; hence, this had no relation with practical conducts in the real world. Women had to struggle against not only white colonial supremacy, but they had to endure the domination of their men, the black men. Out of grudge, hatred and outrage, black men accumulated the discriminatory and dehumanizing behaviors of the colonizers just to be poured on their women regardless of its effects. This is the fundamental motive that drives to the inception of the double then the triple consciousness in African societies.

Triple consciousness indicates that there is a conflict between the three identities; it is an internal zone of an occult instability that ends up in the victory of one at the expense of the two others. It is a triangulated bind between opposing forces which interrupts the sense of belonging and violates the unity of personal, emotional, mental, biological and psychological segments that produce one specific individual. It is an unhappy awareness that attempts to adjust one's fate to his/her urge of freedom.

Du Bois' question that relates to double consciousness is about the meaning of feeling oneself as a problem; Doris Sommer, though, threatens: "*To feel oneself as a problem breeds the kind of self-hatred that members of any minority group are likely to experience, to the degree that they also belong to the majority group that hates them*" (2005: 165). The prevalence of hatred and outrage both double and triple consciousness causes in communities is highly devastating. Regarding the problematic attribution to certain skin-colored categories is by no means irrelevant to African women, but how does it apply to the African woman living in a postcolonial nation?

Being forced to absorb the ideation of being labeled a problem because of your skin color and your gender signifies being a victim of a disruptive and dissociative system initiated by white imperial institutions that move at the socio-cultural, socio-psychological, socio-economic and socio-political scales toward deconstructing individual and collective identities. Zimbabwean women fought beside their men for the sake of liberation; they still fight for the sense of humanness, being equal to men. Gay W. Seidman acclaims that black Zimbabwean women described their goal not only in terms of freedom from racial and economic oppression, but also in terms of freedom from oppressive gender relations. (1984: 419)

Post-independence era in Zimbabwe, meaning after 1980, did not show extraordinary support to women practiced in real life despite the ZANU's (Zimbabwe African National Union) proclaims to improve women life conditions and its insistence on woman rights. Unless they prove to be innocent, a large number of women were sent into prison camps in a campaign to stop prostitution in the country. Only the female gender was punished for any suspicion of prostitution though both genders contribute in the vulgar act; many women rights movements supported the step regardless of the alleged slogans of sexual freedom. The party leadership explained that its target was to construct stronger family structures with good mothers and wives; that signifies more responsibilities compiled to the basic ones. Gender discrimination is fundamentally institutionalized by post-colonial governments, organizations and parties before it is ideologically maintained by male citizens.

Post-independent Zimbabwe calls for women in times of crisis and they respond immediately but they continue demanding more far reaching changes and refuse to be resettled again in the pre-independent Zimbabwean norms of behavior. The social

mechanisms found in the new context challenged the already existing gender hierarchies and drove women to request their own emancipation. That has been suggested to be the influence of the white gender ideology brought by the white colonizers on the social formula of the Zimbabwean society and it was an unavoidable transfer.

The position of post-independent Zimbabwean women results from the traditional female structure being coupled with the role she has been attributed by white settlers then the various missions she has been loaded with during the liberation war. In the same research paper, Seidman reports at the tongue of one of the surveyed women:

> We are carrying a heavy load by being women. It's good to be a woman but I am oppressed. I am always kicked, as though I am still a child, because women are not yet independent. It's horrible to be a woman. All women are taken as dogs with puppies. We are not even counted in this country. I don't know if it's because we are created being useless, or we make ourselves useless and pretend to like being that way. (Ibid: 428)

The contradiction between the happiness and sadness of being a black woman in Africa is deeply rooted in the institutionalized traditional hegemonic frame that develops into another colonizing and post-colonized paradigm of prejudice and inequality in which the black woman is the only scapegoat. Though European colonization contributes in moving the social variables of the gender framework, women in Zimbabwe still struggle against patriarchal segregation and marginalization seeking the safe path toward their emancipation.

Conclusion

Women are known to be more patient than men are; let alone the black woman who turns her wounds into flying wings toward freedom. She fights to be free not only

from domination but also from pain and surrounding traumatic circumstances. She fights for herself and for her beloved; she rejects discrimination and oppression. Postcolonial and Feminist theories intersect and meet at many significant points; recognizing the woman's right for freedom, equality and consideration is one of them.
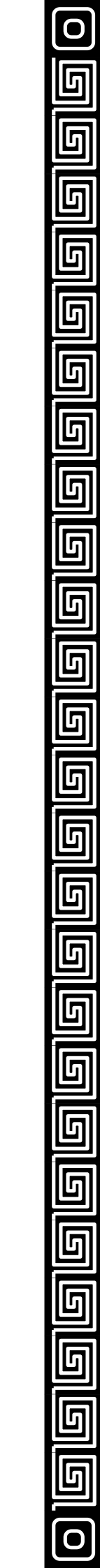
Though the female subject is viewed differently by each one of them, they both share the initiative to free the woman and raise her consciousness about social status and recognition. Feminists and Postcolonial scholars have struggled for the female identity and have been fighting to distinguish its characteristics and motives in order to highlight its components within an adequate frame. The nature of the postcolonial identity drives research to be oriented toward the inversion of the 'Self/ Other' dichotomy. The 'Other' is a universal term that requires recognizing the 'Self' as the main and only subject and all the remaining related constituents classified as the 'Other'.

The concept of otherness is, according to Simone De Beauvoir, just a fundamental category in human thought and that duality was not originally based on the division of sexes in her feminist appealing work *The Second Sex*. (2011: 29). She also confirms that the feminine quality has not been integrated in an opposing paired formula to be the best or the worst. Fanon states: "*It becomes clear that what divides this world is first and foremost what species, what race one belongs to... The cause is effect: you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich.*" (Ibid)

The black woman is unique; she is exceedingly specific because in addition to her accomplishments and self fulfillment, she has an authentic sacred struggle for freedom; freedom drives happiness and satisfaction. Whether in the US, in Africa or in any other area, she has her distinctive imprint and this is why she strives for survival.

Her sublimity is deeply rooted in her resistance and strength; and it is an evidence of the low rates of decreased numbers of suicide behaviors, violent conduct, alcohol consumption and depressive disorders. The black woman is religiously committed, socially integrated and morally regulated and for these conditions, her suicide rates are the lowest among other races.

The second chapter is an attempt to decipher the various constituents of the background where the black woman constructs herself to be free, strong and happy; it highlights the numerous features that drive her to develop and move in that specific way. The chapter starts with a global idea about suicide in the world and its prevalence; then it sheds light on the connectedness between the blacks' act of suicide and the feeling of anxiety. Besides, the second and third sections highlight crucial concepts in the context of black feminism and postcolonialism. It explores the concepts of invisibility, threeness and prototypicality that are maintained in the feminist and womanist fileds. The second chapter is a window to the black woman's real life with all its drawbacks; it seeks understanding her low suicide rates puzzle.

Chapter Three: Struggle to Survive

between Suicidality and Reluctance

How can death arrive when the mouth has not allowed it to arrive? Death has a name which we can carry in the mouth without dying. Only words can bury us not silence

(Yvonne Vera, 2002: 135)

Introduction

This chapter is substantially devoted to applying the theoretical views on the literary works trying to find out the way black women survive and the means they use for victory. It first seeks to explore the impact of invisibility and segregation on the identity shaping in Morrison's novels. The novels selected for that purpose include: *Beloved*, *Sula* and *The Bluest Eye*. Then, the following section of the chapter moves to examine the identity quest in Vera's novels. Among Yvonne Vera's novels, the chapter relies mainly on three of her literary texts: *Without a Name*, *Under the Tongue* and *Butterfly Burning*.

The last section then crystallizes the depiction of the female characters' strife for meaning within literary plots. The ending section of the chapter draws a clear portrait about suicide in fiction attempting to identify the boundaries of the phenomenon being depicted in literary texts. What drives a black woman to commit suicide? And what ignites the light of her resistance against self murder? The current chapter answers these questions accordingly.

I. Invisibility Threat and Self Destruction in Morrison's fiction

Blackness in America signifies invisibility especially when it is coupled with being female. Many intellectuals, writers and artists have attempted to shed light on the hypothesis, Toni Morrison, Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison and Alice Walker have always struggled to defend blacks' rights through their works. In *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison presents her protagonist as a black young girl who wants to have blue eyes and her failure is a result of her own obsession, she becomes a victim of her an unattainable desire and a victim of her society. The writer introduces in the foreword of the novel a short statement that summarizes many terrible facts in the lives of blacks:

> I knew that some victims of powerful self-loathing turn out to be dangerous, violent, reproducing the enemy who has humiliated them over and over. Others surrender their identity; melt into a structure that delivers the strong persona they lack. Most others, however, grow beyond it. But there are some who collapse, silently, anonymously, with no voice to express or acknowledge it. They are invisible. (2007: x)

Morrison makes the difference between those who become strongly violent and aggressive due to the inner power of self inferiority and those who submit silently because they have nothing to do to defend their rights so they are all invisible.

Morrison emphasizes the intersectional road that leads black females to conceive their invisibility and to accept it so that they can live peacefully in "*A purée of tragedy and humor, wickedness and serenity, truth and fantasy.*"(Ibid: 139). They receive orders from white men, women and children and even from their black men, and they obey welcomingly:

> Everybody in the world was in a position to give them orders. White women said, "Do this." White children said, "Give me that." White men said, "Come here." Black men said, "Lay down." The only people they need not take orders from were black children and each other. (Ibid: 138)

Moreover, they are naïve, nice and attentively careful despite the triple oppression; the following example truly diagnoses the meaning: "*When white men beat their men, they cleaned up the blood and went home to receive abuse from the victim. They beat their children with one hand and stole for them with the other*."(Ibid) Though being additionally victimized, they strongly play the role of shelters for their abused men and children; and they are ready to fight the entire world for them.

I.1. Blue Eyes, Black Face Dichotomy

Pecola Breedlove is a young, weak and innocent girl, she is however unsafe even inside her house. She is a victim of her mother's severe manners as she says "*My mother's anger humiliates me; her words chafe my cheeks, and I am crying*". (2007: 11). Besides, her father's sexual desires have been a good reason for fear, horror and self disgusting. She wants only to have blue eyes but she is given a broken childhood instead with a little dead baby in her womb that is the baby of her own father after rape. She is psychologically murdered at a very young age exactly when her seeds refuse to grow green and to see the light and her father's seeds inside her womb produce a baby. Innocence dies the day the seeds die deeply inside her little body.

Her otherness is tripled as she is the other in the category of gender (female) and the other in the category of race (black) and the other in the category of the social class (being poor, weak, young and ugly). Despite all of that, she dreams of having beautiful blue eyes that may cover her ugly blackness the way she describes her standards of beauty: "*All the world had agreed that a blue-eyed, yellow-haired, pink-skinned doll was what every girl child treasured.*"(Ibid: 20). Due to the absence of these beauty qualities, Pecola becomes invisible as she describes people in the streets gazing at pretty white girls but never at her. She wants to discover the magical secret that they weave on others so that they "*look at them and say 'Awwwww'* " (Ibid: 22) Poor Pecola grows up with a traumatic complex of ugliness, weakness, submission and poverty; she spends her life at the intersection of the various social variables, what results in her invisibility.

The Breedloves' ugliness is unique unlike their poverty; they used to wear it like actors wear their suits. The writer describes that ugliness terribly well so that readers are completely convinced of the picture their minds draw for it:

You looked at them and wondered why they were so ugly; you looked closely and could not find the source. Then you realized that it came from conviction, their conviction. It was as though some mysterious all-knowing master had given each one a cloak of ugliness to wear, and they had each accepted it without question. The master had said, "You are ugly people."(Ibid: 40)

What is really strange is their reaction toward that dehumanization, they simply confirm their own ugliness and accept their inferiority silently which deepens their invisibility:

"*They had looked about themselves and saw nothing to contradict the statement … "Yes," they had said. "You are right." And they took the ugliness in their hands, threw it as a mantle over them, and went about the world with it*." (Ibid)

Furthermore, their responses varied, each according to his specific conditions. The mother wears hers as an actor being prepared for a certain role. Sammy is smarter and he uses his own ugliness as a weapon to make others feel the pain he feels because of it. Pecola hides cowardly behind hers as an everlasting mask that should never reveal the truth; she is not audacious enough to face the world with her reality. It is not easy for the whole family to live in harmony when their ugliness tends to shape their world; it conceals any doubt about their resulting invisibility. It makes them react violently toward each other as if they are enemies.

Pecola's larger surrounding is dirty as it is not the case for her family only but it is the same thing for the neighborhood where she lives. She is neglected and ignored by her parents who tend to emphasize her invisibility, what happens at the Fishers' house reveals their carelessness. When Pecola spills the juice on the floor, her mother Pauline kicks her out of the house and goes back to serve the white little child whom she prefers over her own child. She wishes she disappears at that moment: "*Please God, make me disappear*" (Ibid: 45) because she can no longer support the incident though it is

nothing new of her mother's behavior, she gets used to that type of treatment. Moreover, her brother tries to run away many times because life with his parents is unbearable.

In fact, both of them have been suffering for their entire lives and this is why they cannot live together and they cannot teach their children correct morals and ethics. They are unable to love each other and to teach their kids the meaning and importance of love; because of that, Pecola is convinced that nobody loves her and that she does not deserve to be loved. For that reason, her feelings of inferiority and invisibility are strengthened especially when her parents decide to show some affection as when she is raped by her father; her mother beats her terribly for being a victim of her father's animalism.

She tastes pain inside her house with her parents and it is sweet for her as when her mother sings, the voice takes the grief and leaves only an endurable sweet pain. She used to ask what is the secret behind her traumatic pain, why is she ignored? Why do people love her white mates but not her? After the coming of her classmate Maureen Peals, she never asks again as she comes to see the answer with her little eyes. The narrator of the story Claudia MacTeer confesses: "*We felt comfortable in our skins, enjoyed the news that our senses released to us, admired our dirt, cultivated ourscars, and could not comprehend this unworthiness.*" (Ibid: 74). Then she wonders: "*What was the secret? What did we lack? Why was it important? And so what?*" (Ibid) The MacTeer sisters are reconciled with their blackness and they used to accept their situation without envy, jealousy or hatred, the feeling that is not absorbed by Pecola.

Pauline Breedlove tries once to be visible for her husband Cholly and for the outside world, she imitates a white female actress in her hair style and clothing, but

when she is almost like her, one of her front teeth is gone. At that moment, Pauline decides to accept her ugliness and settle down. She thinks her life with him will be happy one day, but that day never comes, it becomes worse after her pregnancy and the coming of children. She starts working for the Fishers, and she realizes herself in their house better than at her own house with her kids because luxury, cleanliness, order and beauty at that house are her job and she likes to take care of that. She forgets her family and her house consequently and the gap between her and them becomes wider to the extent that she neglects them totally.

Pecola lives at the intersection and is most of her time unseen and unrecognized by her parents and her friends because she is not a colored black female, she is a nigger. Niggers are more dehumanized within the minority of black Americans and that judgment is based on the level of skin darkness of the black individual: "*Colored people were neat and quiet; niggers were dirty and loud.*"(2007: 87). In other words, classification also tends to divide blacks into smaller groups according to their blackness and ability to get a good house and fine clothes.

> Grass wouldn't grow where they lived. Flowers died. Shades fell down. Tin cans and tires blossomedwhere they lived. They lived on cold black-eyed peasand orange pop. Like flies they hovered; like flies they settled. (Ibid: 92)

Pecola's colored friends attempt to emphasize the difference between their lives and hers and that is clearly clarified in the milk brown lady Geraldine's ferocious description of niggers.

Though she belongs to the black minority but she is more racist than the whites themselves. The terms she uses and the disgust she feels toward the girl are terribly shocking. "*Her words were hotter and darker than the smoking berries*" (Ibid: 109).

She tries to make herself look like the white ladies and behave their way; but for them she is merely a black weak inferior female and they describe her the same way she describes her own people (niggers):

> They were everywhere. They slept six in a bed, all their pee mixing together in the night as they wet their beds each in his own candy-and-potato-chip dream. They sat in little rows onstreet curbs, crowded into pews at church, taking space from the nice, neat, colored children; they clowned on the playgrounds, broke things in dimestores. (Ibid)

For her, niggers are not more than nasty tramp homeless animals that disturb colored children in the streets, stores and playgrounds.

Pauline agrees on that distinction among blacks as when she moves north with Cholly, she discovers the truth: "*Northern colored folk was different too. Dicty-like. No better than whites for meanness. They could make you feel just as no-count, 'cept I didn't expect it from them.*" (Ibid: 117). Pauline realizes she is invisible for her own people more than she is for the whites because of being strange, poor, illiterate and jobless. She tries nothing to change her conditions until her life with Cholly becomes very difficult especially when their fights, beatings and contradictions increase. When she gets her first baby, she admits its ugliness and she knows that her baby girl is going through hard times because of that ugliness.

Cholly's life has been very difficult too. He is abandoned by his mother then his father; his grandmother saves his life and takes care of him. He is a lonely quiet boy whose cries and tears are all implemented within his dreadfully inflicted soul. The incident of his sexual experience with Darlene influences his life as he directs his hatred later not to his enemy (the white strong men who call him nigger and make fun of him when he is found on top of Darlene outdoors at night) but to black females that come

into his life. He hates the girl though she is not the only mistaken person in the event and hates all black women that she represents. Because of that incident, he spends his life tormenting black women dreadfully, and the best example of his bad manners refers to his wife beside his daughter.

Pauline declares that after a short period of marriage, Cholly becomes violent and careless; he leaves the south but he cannot forget the white supremacy and dominance. Feelings of invisibility follow him everywhere and dominate his life leading him to try to find any person who is inferior so that he can feel superior to them. The only people inferior to him are his wife and kids.

After Pauline directs her interests and efforts to her job, the kids are the remaining victims of the father. He rapes his daughter Pecola who is still young to understand what happens to her. He frees himself of his bad memories on the one hand and he finds a little weak creature to enjoy his superiority on the other hand. Pecola becomes the main topic of the town people conversations. They look at her belly pitifully wondering about the fate of her baby but she believes they admire her new blue eyes.

The father takes revenge of his terrible past and the loss of his mother, father, home and community from the closest person to his heart, as when Pecola used to be neglected by people around her, he is the only one to consider her presence and think about the source of her sadness. In fact, he has that day a sequence of feelings toward her and he is unable to distinguish; because of that contradiction of feelings she gets raped: "*The sequence of his emotions was revulsion, guilt, pity, then love*" (Ibid: 161) Besides, he wants to make her feel happy in his own way as she is young and she does not deserve to feel sad for any reason; he wants her to smile: "*She was a child—*

unburdened why wasn't she happy? The clear statement of her misery was an accusation." (Ibid)

He also feels guilty and dissatisfied because, as a black man, he has nothing to do for her; he blames himself for her misery. However, he uses her to free himself of the hidden emotional complexes and his disgust of the female weakness and hopelessness. He is peculiarly contradicted, he loves and hurts her at the same time; he blames and pities her at the same time too. Pecola is invisible to her father as he has never seen the young ugly black girl as a daughter except when he wants to rape her, she becomes visible. Cholly becomes free then, free of fear, guilt, shame, love, grief and pity. After he completes the destruction process of Pecola's personality and presence, he enjoys freedom from the inner obstacles through the use of his daughter's body.

However, in an article entitled *Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics*, Kimberle Crenshaw explains the black female's rape as a weapon of racial and gendered terror that males use to exploit the woman. Raping Pecola is only gendered because the doer is her father, a black man, who is supposed to be the protector. Even rape as a sexual experience is influenced by the dimensions of race, gender and class:

> When Black women were raped by white males, they were being raped not as women generally, but as Black women specifically: Their femaleness made them sexually vulnerable to racist domination, while their Blackness effectively denied them any protection. (1989: 158)

The story ends with Pecola's eagerness to have blue eyes; according to her, she will not be able to become visible unless she gets blue eyes.

Her invisibility is strictly related to her physical appearance and exactly to the pair of blue eyes the same way her ugliness is related to her pregnancy. It is consequently veiled and swept by the blue. Neighbors say her ugliness will be doubled with the coming of the baby, those are the same people to whom Pecola used to be totally invisible. Poor Pecola is invisible for her mother when being compared with the white young girl, for her careless father and also for the people of the town.

The only exception is demonstrated by the sisters MacTeer who refuse to consider the stereotypical classification imposed by the whites. They proudly accept their blackness and their African American identity and culture. Frieda and Claudia support Pecola all her life even in her decision to keep the baby and even wish the baby to be born. They share the experience of planting the seeds of marigolds and waiting for the flowers to emerge. Their flowers unfortunately do not emerge because they are planted in a land that nurtures a certain kind of seeds over the others; the image is used metaphorically to reflect Pecola's experience: "*This soil is bad for certain kinds of flowers. Certain seeds it will not nurture, certain fruit it will not bear, and when the land kills of its own volition, we acquiesce and say the victim had no right to live*". (Ibid: 206)

I.2. Intersectionality and Self-Destruction

Because of intersectionality, black females around the world and specifically in America have been manipulated and discriminated by the superior social classes. They have been enslaved, oppressed, dehumanized, beaten, raped and even brutally killed. In a research made by Susan Bibler Coutin about the legal nonexistence and its psychological impact, she claims that one of the participants explains the situation as:

> From the moment that you have to hide under the shadows you understand that you cease to exist, you cease to belong in the system, you cease to belong to society, you cease to belong. Then, somehow, you lose your dignity. (2002: 132)

The researcher speaks about illegal immigrants who fall out of status because of certain reasons, but they are still considered as minorities in European countries so that they can stay in the selected country for a better future. They live under the shadow and they try to be invisible for all the others. They are thrown into the world of invisibility because of intersectionality, the multiplication of different acting powers.

However, the situation of black Americans is not very different; it is similar to the immigrants' despite the legalization of their existence and their conditions. Their pain and suffering is caused by their preserved detention within an intersectional area where they have to protect their existence and stay alive. Blacks are left to drench their own weaknesses and submissiveness, the reason behind their hidden pain and awful feelings that take them to another world where they can feel strong and safe, it is the world of crimes where they attempt to defend themselves and take revenge from their oppressors.

It is already stereotypically stigmatized for the whites that the black person is criminal; it becomes one of their characteristics and a personal aspect that can never be removed. This is for example interpreted in Wright's *Native Son* and his protagonist Bigger Thomas who is accused of the murder directly because of being a black servant in the house.

Blacks are indirectly pushed to become dangerous and violent as they attempt to recreate and reproduce violence that has been imposed on them as a defense mechanism. Striving to keep alive and to confirm their existence, blacks react this way

toward others and even toward themselves in the form of self-harm actions. In *The Bluest Eye*, Toni Morrison assures that feelings of self hatred and self loathing that come from humiliation and marginalization create victims who are unable to control and direct their behaviors like ordinary people do.

The source of pain is then related to self evaluation of one's own situation.

> I knew that some victims of powerful self-loathing turn out to be dangerous, violent, reproducing the enemy who has humiliated them over and over. Others surrender their identity; melt into a structure that delivers the strong persona they lack. Most others, however, grow beyond it. But there are some who collapse, silently, anonymously, with no voice to express or acknowledge it. They are invisible. (2007: x)

Since blacks clearly perceive their inner feelings that turn them into violent people, criminals, vagabond burglars and killers, they also become violent against themselves as an act of self revenge from their weaknesses and backwardness trying to demonstrate their strength and assure their existence.

Toni Morrison portrays the influence in some of her works and demonstrates the traumatic pain that leads to violence toward oneself and toward others. Her novel *Sula* is the best example of pain and suffering that lead to violence, the writer starts the novel with the story of Shadrack's coming back to Medallion and his decision to celebrate the national day for suicide each year. Though blacks are not used to have that subject in their discussions, and though they ignore him and his celebrations, but they become interested after a while because of the successive dreadful events in the town: "*They knew anger well but not despair, and they didn't stone sinners for the same reason they didn't commit suicide—it was beneath them.*"(2004: 90)

They do not need somebody to remind them of their terrible life and the need to commit suicide because suicide is living with them in a way or another. They survived many plagues, diseases and even white people treatment, why they should commit suicide then. Shadrack's creation of the National Suicide Day reflects his insistence on violence and pain and his eagerness to spread despair among black people and to remind them of their misery. It is embedded for those who are fed up of life in order to postpone their crimes against themselves or against others to that day specifically and to celebrate their collective deaths.

Another example of intended violence in the novel is reflected when Eva kills her son Plum. She is Sula's grandmother and she puts her seventeen years old son into fire so that she saves him according to her logic, to help him die like a man. Hannah is Sula's mother and she is the only person who knows about the event; she keeps the secret until many years later. Eva burns her only son because he has become a broken boy after the war. When he asks her to put him back into her womb as he is not able to survive any longer, she responds violently as she has no enough room in her womb for him.

It is because she is a black woman, a helpless black mother who has nothing to do to help her son as he feels pain and disability:

> There wasn't space for him in my womb. And he was crawlin' back. Being helpless and thinking baby thoughts and dreaming baby dreams and messing up his pants again and smiling all the time. I had room enough in my heart, but not in my womb, not no more. I birthed him once. I couldn't do it again. (Ibid: 71)

She violates his right of dreaming and living in his dreams violently when she kills him and justifies her deed strangely: "*So I just thought of a way he could die like a man not all scrunched up inside my womb, but like a man.*" (Ibid: 72). He becomes a real man

when he is killed by his mother, a strong man, mature and conscious enough to realize his dependence on his mother. Though the mother wants to kill him secretly, she could not keep secret only for herself because her daughter Hannah sees what happens and does nothing to save her brother. It is the same fate she gets when she has burned in the fire, her daughter Sula does not try to help her.

The protagonist Sula also reflects the influence of living at the intersection for black females and how it leads to violence when she sees her mother burning and she does nothing to save her; she keeps watching Hannah dancing like a fireball in order to know how it happens: "*Sula had watched Hannah burn not because she was paralyzed, but because she was interested.*" (Ibid: 78). After her mother's death, Sula confesses the truth and indirectly portrays her inner hatred and willingness to get revenge from those with whom she lives.

The girl already has an idea of her uncle Plum being put into fire when his mother does nothing except listening to the shouting voices of children, why does she need to do something if she is the killer? Sula in fact does nothing more than imitating her mother when she keeps her mother's secret of the crime and imitating her grandmother when she kills her son secretly. She simply repeats what elders do; it is another reason for her to hate her grandmother. She consequently learns to be strong, severe and independent.

Moreover, Sula is the reason behind the boy Chicken Little's death. Though it happens mistakenly but she keeps, together with her friend Nel, the secret of his death until the body is found. Sula disappears for a long period of time leaving her grandmother behind; and when she comes back, she is considered as a symbol of evil in the town especially after her violent crash with Eva. The crash reveals the truth that

used to be hidden or simply silenced; one of the terrible facts that Sula faces Eva with refers to the event of her leg. Eva has once tried to put her leg under the train in order to get the insurance money; it is an extremely violent act from a black female to hurt herself for money, but it is kept as a dark point in Eva's memory book.

Sula also faces her grandmother with the fact of putting Plum into fire, she severely blames her for all what happens to the family; evil is the result of evil. When Eva is confronted with that reality, she attacks Sula blaming her for watching her mother dying and doing nothing to help. The family members are violent against each other, against others and even against themselves, Sula even threatens her grandmother to burn her alive: "*One night maybe I'll just tip on up here with some kerosene and— who knows—you may make the brightest flame of them all.*" (Ibid: 94) forshadowing her flames to be the best. Sula inherits that bad quality from her grandmother and this is why she puts her later in a house for elders and never comes back to see or ask about her.

In that novel, violence is the result of violence; and Sula learns to be so from her family members specifically her grandmother. Her carelessness, stubbornness and rebellious behaviors result from living at the margins as a low-class black female; she is driven to the extremes of pain, sorrow and despair, the reason why she runs away after her friend's marriage. Nel represents half of Sula's story and they share most of their life events together; it is obvious then to influence her positively or negatively.

However, their relation changes after a while; it becomes worse after Nel's marriage to Jude. After Sula recognizes that Nel will be busy in her new life as a married woman, she will end up alone, as usual; she prefers to leave that day exactly

even before she attends the wedding party. She feels terribly sad because Nel used to be a mother, a sister and the only friend for her: "*She had clung to Nel as the closest thing to both another and a self*" (Ibid: 119)

Nel lives happily with her husband until Sula comes back. She cannot support having to see the happy couple. She takes Jude from her friend and they both betray Nel. In fact, Sula takes revenge from herself through Nel and she takes revenge from Nel because she marries and leaves her alone. It happens not even because Sula loves Jude, but because of the free space: "*There was this space in front of me, behind me, in my head. Some space. And Jude filled it up. That's all. He just filled up the space.*" (Ibid: 144). She destroys her own life before Nel's and she hurts herself more than she hurts Nel because she will find nobody beneath after Nel. Differently behaving, when Sula falls sick, she finds nobody around except her only friend who tolerates her for the terrible betrayal.

Sula believes she hurts others with her deeds, but she hurts herself more when she hides all the pain in her chest and pretends to be strong and proud. Living at the intersection of her gender, race and class creates a monster inside her, the latter offends others and keeps watching them bleeding. She enjoys watching her mother dancing while burning: "*I wanted her to keep on jerking like that, to keep on dancing.*" (Ibid: 147). She also has good feelings when the boy sinks into water: "*Why didn't I feel bad when it happened? How come it felt so good to see him fall*?" (Ibid: 170). She faces her grandmother with the hidden truth then sends her to a house of the elders in order to get rid of her; at last Sula is dead before her

Furthermore, Sula's internal violent monster betrays her skin color and all black females when she allows herself to sleep with men generally and with white men

specifically; the thing that is forbidden in the black community because it deepens their enslavement and reminds them of their paralysis and failure in front of the white oppressors:

> She went to bed with men as frequently as she could. It was the only place where she could find what she was looking for: misery and the ability to feel deep sorrow. She had not always been aware that it was sadness that she yearned for. (Ibid: 122)

Black women in her town feel scared after Sula is back because she has no problem to take their husbands from them easily, the thing that her relation with Jude confirms later. Women then decide to change their attitudes toward their men in order to protect them from her. She is the type of women who fear nothing in the world and who seek sadness, pain and despair in most of their deeds.

Sula comes back after ten years, a destroyed black female, lonely, sad and helpless and she is no longer welcome in her town by her people. She feels, however, proud of her own loneliness because it is hers: "*Lonely, ain't it? Yes, but my lonely is mine. Now your lonely is somebody else's. Made by somebody else and handed to you. Ain't that something? A second hand lonely.*" (Ibid: 143). She becomes a stranger and finds that things have changed and people have changed too. Loneliness, alienation and estrangement that she feels in her town with her people will be doubled outdoors. She destroys herself and comes back to get revenge from those who pushed her to leave, the reason why she is considered as a symbol of evil, a curse, a person with a destructive eye.

She is a sadomasochist character that depicts one figure of blacks' reactions toward their bad situation and toward living at the margins of the world. When she dies, many things improve to a better situation, what makes the town people convinced that

Sula has been the reason of their misery. However, black men are treated differently now by their wives who do no longer worry after Sula's death; they do not care anymore as the source of danger has gone forever.

Sula lives alone and dies alone because she insists on finding sadness anyhow. She also intends to hurt herself using those around her. When she is dying, she thinks again and again and blames herself for what she have been doing all her life and she accuses herself of betrayal and selfishness: "*It was a fine cry - loud and long - but it had no bottom and it had no top, just circles and circles of sorrow.*" (Ibid: 174). Living at the intersection of Sula's race, sex and class as a lonely black female, weak and helpless creates a violent monster out of her; she is ready to hurt herself and hurt others aggressively but she does not even think of committing suicide despite pain, loneliness and despair.

II. Vera's Female Characters between Subservience and Recognition

That section of the chapter aims at prioritizing the need to struggle for one's freedom and voice; it reflects the postcolonial female identity through Vera's literary lenses and through her female characters. The African woman fights terribly for her right to be equally integrated socially, economically and politically; she strives for recognition and appreciation denying all attitudes of prejudice, inferiority and submission.

When the black female identifies herself using feminist or womanist features for characterization, this does by no means profess that she stands in favor of the woman against the man or classify him as an enemy regardless of his color. It is not an attempt to prioritize but to enhance integrity at the basis of equity and liberty. Besides, black Feminism challenges the universality of Feminism as it revolts against the assumed

quality of whiteness adopted by earlier feminists. It disturbs the racial ideology inherent within the feminist plan to defend the rights of all women in the world equally and disrupts the unity of the quest.

The deep structure of refusal was built on the black women rejection to Feminism because it is associated with whiteness which is nothing more than the color of oppression for them. Patricia Hill Collins explains that when women are compared in terms of gender and race as an opposition between (white American and black American): "*Black women routinely choose 'race' and let the lesser question of 'gender' go*" (1996: 13) This is the unquestionable decision that black women have taken to move separately yet close to Feminism and start their own call for freedom necessarily before equality.

In fact, Feminism, Black Feminism, Womanism, and the other names given to similar ideologies and philosophies are not the essential issue; it is not only a matter of being female, it is also about the woman's belonging, culture and values.

> I come out of a tradition where those things are valued where you talk about a woman with big legs and big hips and black skin. …. You didn't feel that people didn't like you. The values that [imply] you must be skinny come from another culture…. Those are not the values that I was given by the women who served as my models. I refuse to be judged by the values of another culture. I am a black woman, and I will stand as best I can in that imagery. (1981:46)

The shift that black women made toward Womanism aims at attaining a broader sense of the movement and addressing a larger category of women around the world, this is what the writer Virginia A. Blandford quotes in the book *Black Women and Liberation Movements*:

Moreover, the African black woman was oppressed by certain forces that worsened her already bad situation and deepened her marginalization. She lived at the intersection of race, sex and class and she was manipulated by black men and white colonizers; she had to struggle to turn her submission into power and resistance. Her existence was threatened and her identity was subverted at the same time when feminists launched their calls to free the woman, yet the black woman was not among the activists to speak about her specific pain, urges and interests.

She had to accept a call that did not represent her, she was invisible and voiceless but Feminism came merely to make things worse for her, to double her marginalization and oppression. The challenge was then more enthusiastically difficult for the black woman to turn her voiceless call into a loudly heard voice that represents her identity and speaks for her freedom.

II.1. The Postcolonial Reshaped Identity

The Zimbabwean author Yvonne Vera succeeds in her depiction of the township lifestyle before and after independence. She also depicts the longing of the Zimbabwean people for liberty and security with special reference to the patriotic nationalism against terrorizing imperialism with all its destructive aftermath. Behind each female character in Vera's novels there is a story that is born within violence, hurt and despair. She is labeled the Zimbabwean writer of pain as she eloquently describes the scenes of pain and suffering; she draws beautifully painful pictures of psychological damage and spiritual injuries.

In postcolonized Zimbabwe, it was not an easy task for women to speak loudly for their rights or gender equality; it was not part of their usual daily discussions. However, Vera endeavors to reflect the struggle of black women for self realization,

fulfillment and recognition. It becomes more complicated than a urgent call for liberation and equality; women request more opportunities for contribution and accomplishments. Similarly to Morrison's Pecola whose dream of possessing blue eyes defines her existence and personality, Vera's Phephelaphi associates her identity and beingness with the realization of her dream, the dream of being a nurse. The two, Pecola and Phephelaphi, are good examples to reflect the black woman's identity struggle against the ideological incarceration.

In Vera's *Butterfly Burning*, the protagonist Phephelaphi lives in the street of Sidojiwi E2, Makokoba town in Bulawayo city, the dream of being a nurse signifies presence, existence and being. The writer complains against the segregation and apartheid systems in the southern part of Africa and in Zimbabwe specifically; she claims that black people are always expected to obey with no single resistance symptom.

> Bulawayo is not a city for idleness. The idea is to live within the cracks. Unnoticed and unnoticeable, offering every service but with the capacity to vanish when the task required is complete. So the black people learn how to move through the city with speed and due attention, to bow their heads down and slide past walls, to walk without making the shadow more pronounced than the body or the body clearer than the shadow. (2000: 6)

The situation, before and even after independence, does not differ to a remarkable degree as if it is a type of discrimination that is legalized locally. Vera states at the tongue of her narrator.

In fact, the identity quest frequently floats to the postcolonial surface as a result of the inhabitants' hesitation between hybridity and authenticity, loyalty and modernity. A very interesting incident is narrated in the novel; it is about Fumbatha's father who

was one of the anti-settler warriors (1896). The colonial forces hung seventeen warriors on a tree day and night because they had been fighting against colonial settlement in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia at that time); Fumbatha' father was among these murdered fighters.

> Beyond the top of this singular tree, beyond the Umguza River, the women raise their voices at dawn to mourn seventeen men and thousands more. Their resistance to the settlers has been silenced. They weep but nothing can be heard of their weeping… It is better that the murdered are not returned to the living: the living are not dead. … The men are buried in their mouths. (Ibid: 12)

These memories last for a long time in Fumbatha' mind and he recounts them to Phephelaphi after their first meeting; it is the black diaspora of the victim and the survivors. The destructive heritage left by the white colonial powers in African nations resides in the creation of death spaces and traumatized young witnesses. The writer describes the horror of the seventeen dead bodies hung to a tree as:

White colonizers insisted on creating more other atrocities to silence the freedom call of warriors using extremely ugly mechanisms to frighten the inhabitants even more; it is a silencing clue inasmuch as it is an act to get revenge. These dead bodies become silhouettes; their flesh betrays them and the ropes release the corpses to fall down. The birds and the tree papers fall with them immediately. Women are watching their men being naked, hung and constricted in chains; they weep and mourn in absolute silence gazing at the tree holding their men. This is exactly the image that colonial forces grate to glorify; a muted and murdered resistance and a group of destroyed submissive survivors.

Besides, in Vera's *Under the Tongue*, Zhizha's grandmother describes the cruelty of colonizers in a very eloquent style that makes it related to the country, to the land and to the inhabitants' loyalty. European white colonizers destroy all the African nationalist values of patriotism and sacrifice through attributing qualities of dehumanization and enslavement to them:

> They think we are animals. They make your grandfather work on Saturday. They make us suffer. They built the township. It is crowded in the township… We live like bees. Who will bury us here? We will die like fruit falling from a tree. We will bury ourselves. Shadows will bury us. We arrived as people, became strangers, share nothing but our suffering. (2002: 144)

Women also express their hatred of colonial oppression and male hegemony that is exercised on them frequently at the hands of both black and white policemen.

Policemen endeavor to make black women feel even more inferior through various discriminatory behaviors. Deliwe, who is one of the female characters in the novel, feels sick whenever policemen approach because they assure the continuity of the white masculine imperial iniquitous conduct. Throughout the novel, policemen are described as the best representatives of the evil power because they love to see the black blood and they lead salivating dogs to frighten the inhabitants; Phephelaphi claims: "*She hated the black policemen. She said they were not only capable of eating their own vomit but slicing open the stomachs of their own mothers.*" (Ibid: 59). Policemen inherited the cruelty, mercilessness and severity of white colonizers in an attempt to ascertain an absolute manipulation of male and female citizens; the love of domination and prejudice grows in their genes as a second colonial hand in the country.

Resistance resides within the mess and disorder of Makokoba and Bulawayo and it is manifested in the bodies and psyches of men and women similarly, but women have always been obliged to suffer strongly and to be highly submissive to the various surrounding factors; this is the survival condition for black women. This is the reason behind the feminist and womanist calls for liberty and equality; Yvonne Vera discusses the gendered Subaltern and the voiceless female calls. Spivak's notion of Subalternity has already been explored in previous parts of that work; the concept is tied to the black female's position in society as a second level citizen. The black female is the oppressed subject, the other; she is discriminated, alienated and marginalized for colonial and patriarchal purposes. Who is the real Subaltern, the oppressed member, who is the 'other' in Vera's novel? In fact, not only the black woman is abused, hurt and segregated, the black children also are posited as second degree citizens in pre-independent and post-independent Zimbabwe.

Subalternity is crucially connected to the identity issue and Vera could perfectly depict that kind of relationship through her female characters who struggle hard to achieve self esteem, self recognition and self satisfaction. Fumbatha promises to make Phephelaphi the happiest woman ever; but it soon becomes evident that she renders extremely depressed and sorrowful. The contradiction that emerges surprisingly between Phephelaphi's two pregnancies and the fulfillment of her dream to be a nurse gets wider; the gap between Fumbatha and her deepens to cause separation.

Fumbatha plays an important role in Phephelaphi's process of self realization as he tends to underestimate her capabilities and despises her desire to succeed. She is determined to reshape her identity to be an equal, active and challenging member in her community but her husband perceives the opposite by convincing her that she is

nothing: "*You are nothing*" (Ibid: 114). Not surprisingly, she gets persuaded of his utterance claiming: "*I am nothing*" (Ibid: 145). She ends up setting her body into fire as she sees her world falling apart; she could neither protect her child and husband, nor could she obtain the job.

Phephelaphi represents the Subaltern; she is the oppressed female who is besieged by the socio-cultural norms of dominating masculinity, racial hegemony and colonial ideology. Fumbatha is the husband and she is the 'other', the subordinate subject that is attached to his owner under the name of absolute submission. She has been nobody but she tries hard to be somebody. In fact, it is because she is born to the wrong mother who proves later to be the friend of the real biological mother that Phephelaphi finds herself in a dilemma. She struggles to be somebody: "*Finding herself; that was it. Phephelaphi wanted to be somebody*" (Ibid: 75); she suffocates to be different and unique: "*She wanted an opportunity to be a different woman*" (Ibid: 106)

One's identity is manifested in one's name and Phephelaphi's name is mysterious; her origin is ambiguous because her true identity has been hidden from people for some time. Her mother's friend claims that the girl is her own daughter: "*My mother named me Phephelaphi because she did not know where to seek refuge when I was born. She slept anywhere. She had no food in her stomach, but her child had to sleep under some shelter. She had hard times.*" (Ibid: 29) After the girl discovers the truth that her real mother is not the woman whom she calls 'mother', the quarrel of naming signifies nothing to her. It becomes a meaningless issue as long as her true identity is distorted, the only truth in her life turns to be a big lie: "*You could give me*

another name. I do not mind being named by a stranger. I do not mind being renamed if it makes the present clearer." (Ibid: 30).

Her name is no longer important, what truly matters at that moment is her future, her dream and her family. Unfortunately, the three are destroyed in a moment; she is unable to be a nurse as long as she is pregnant. No dream means no future for Phephelaphi; Fumbatha drives her to kill the baby then kill herself due to his ignorance, carelessness and domination. She believes he would be the entire world for her but he betrays her confidence and love then kicks her out of his house.

After she confirms that her humanness is doubted and that her womanhood is threatened, Phephelaphi conceives the world in 'only white or black' lenses: "*I have to forget about training as a nurse altogether and what else am I to become but nothing… My being. My woman self tearing away. My sorrowful self. No matter my need, no matter which. I will not. Now he has broken my stem with this child he has given me. I am nothing.*" (Ibid: 145). She is lost, torn and depressed; she thinks of a refuge, a way out of Fumbatha's hell; she is driven to commit infanticide and suicide successively

II.2. The Silent Cry of Womanhood

It is because throughout her writing career Yvonne Vera has frequently been the voice of the voiceless African woman, her novels weave stories that dive deep in the social strata and taboo issues. Vera's novel entitled *Under the Tongue* is an excellent example to depict the voicelessness of women's cry for freedom, equality and respect. It is a story where three generations of women meet representing a new set of values toward a horrible incident; it is about Zhizha's journey to get back her lost voice from under the tongue.

The girl is muted after she is raped by her father who is killed by the mother; the mother is imprisoned for the murder. The girl's world is broken and she is left to live with her grandmother unable to utter a word for an entire life. Not only her parents betray her but so does her voice. Yvonne Vera indeed points to: "*The power of words, speech and of telling stories as the means to fight silence and taboos*." Claims Elika Ortega-Guzman (2007: 103)

Zhizha is silenced by the boundaries her society draws for unspeakable subjects especially what concerns the female body being sexually violated or physically assaulted. The words refuse to come out and she absorbs the heavy weight of her own pain and trauma; her tongue grows bigger inside her mouth. The traumatic experience of violation and loss is shared between the older wise grandmother and the younger impulsive girl; age does not matter, what really matters is the size of the scandalous event and the way communities view it. The girl feels guilty as if she brings death to her grandmother; the latter dies of distress and grief. In fact, the multiplicity of the two tremendously violent actions aggrandizes the impact; murder meets rape let alone the fact that it happens inside a small family.

Silence is not only o mode of response; it becomes a part of Zhizha's lifestyle as she thinks:

> A tongue which no longer lives, no longer weeps. It is buried beneath rock. My tongue is a river….My tongue is heavy with sleep. I know a stone is buried in my mouth, carried under my tongue. My voice has forgotten me. (2002: 121)

The female protagonist expresses her grief and sadness because she is highly aware that her tongue has no meaning and no life; it is a useless object inside the mouth. The sexual abuse that she experiences paves the way for a long term traumatic phase, the

reason why the novel is a trauma and post-trauma narrative that transforms a woman's psychache and distress. On the one hand, Zhizha claims that her tongue is like a river that moves and runs all the time the same way as she has so many things to say. It is like an endless stream of expressions or an infinite medium of names, alphabets, adjectives and verbs which hesitate before they are set under her tongue. On the other hand, she assimilates her tongue to a lifeless buried object that does not express her pain and weeps; it only sleeps in a long numbness and laziness.

In a research paper about sexuality, violence and silence, Martina Kopf assimilates Zhizha's body as landscape or open territory; she perceives that: "*Her body language is translated into metaphors of water and stone. Her body/soul/spirit landscape is mainly shaped by a river, her tongue, which hides beneath the rock her belly has turned into in fear and defense*." (2005: 248). Metaphorically, the father's act defeats Zhizha's body and his voice buries hers; her tongue is estranged from the mouth, it is disconnected and frozen. While her father's voice reminds her of defeat, violence and horror, her grandmother's voice thrives the sense of peace and love. She is silenced as a result of the clashing voices, the feeling of fear and the disordered thoughts; her cry is also silenced by the force of patriarchy.

The writer's decision to use both first person and third person narrators drives the reader to a state of confusion beside the description of the dreamlike situation of the protagonist. The reader is forced to read what occurs in the protagonist's mind through her perception. What is truly intriguing is that the text does not exhibit any words related to the violent act of rape explicitly; it means that Zhizha does not possess the required vocabulary to spell these terms neither do the mother and the grandmother. If it signifies something, it would suggest that the girl is too young to encounter these rape-

related terms and it also suggests that the subject is highly forbidden in daily discussions in the family and village. Repeatedly, Zhizha's cry is silenced by the force of reputation, family rules and social values.

Zhizha learns how to survive with her psychological trauma caused by both of her parents, the father who rapes her and the mother who kills him; both leave her alone with an absorbed tongue that deceives her need to think loudly and share her thoughts with others. She thinks: "*But my voice is lost. … My voice blinded. My voice wishing to escape. My voice is pulled from its roots… My voice falling. My voice empty and forgotten. My voice is stolen*". (2002: 123). Not surprisingly, Zhizha perceives that being female destroys her life; she believes that it would not have happened to her was she a boy. Being a woman means to her being mute for an entire life; the girl blames her grandmother: "*She cries for being a woman…. You have said that a woman cannot speak… Is it well if I speak the heaviness on my shoulders?*" (Ibid: 165)

Her internalized trauma together with the mental dissociative moments represented in the dreamlike scenes she often has drive the young girl to create her own alienated space. In that personal space, Zhizha enjoys and suffers similarly from the privacy of her isolation and the intimacy of her thoughts, description and anticipations. Her cry is painful as long as it is silent; her silence signifies death as she is deadly alive: "*My cry is silence and death…. I cry in my sleep, this sleep is death….. Death has entered my dreaming entered my growing turned it into mud and now I cry in one small whimper, cry quietly into my memory.*" (Ibid: 225)

The horrifying power of father-daughter incest and the father's murder at the hands of his wife represses the girl's self consciousness and deeply augments her

psychache: "*I hide under my tongue. I hide deep in the dark inside of myself*" (Ibid: 142). Zhizha has nowhere to go except to stay under the tongue. Under the tongue there is a entire world that is different from the usual world; it is the world of silence and long waiting where the 'oppressed other' has to wait silently; the grandmother speaks the unspeakable: "*Women are children because they remember birth. If women are children, then children have tongues…. Under the tongue is a word. I wait under the tongue.*" (Ibid: 174) Paradoxically, under the tongue, there is a word, a rotten word that needs to be freed, there is a grief that needs to be uttered; under Zhizha's tongue, there is a silent cry of a black woman.

III. Female Characters Seeking Meaning Despite the Tragic Triad

That part of the chapter explores the black woman's struggle to find a meaning in her life in the literary texts of both writers. Black female characters differ in their needs and differ consequently in the way they accomplish these needs; they, however, share the eagerness to create meaning in their lives as it enables them to survive. Meaning making for black women is a survival mechanism, it is a secret of strength and resistance this is why they are mostly inclined toward accomplishments rather than an impulsive focus on life tragedies and sorrows.

In the light of the difficult conditions where black Americans have been living, concepts related to hope, meaning, dream or goal could not find their way easily inside that community because betting on their total freedom and equality seemed unachievable in the remote future. Though intellectuals, writers and artists were fighting for that purpose, to enable this category of Americans realize the meaning of their lives and avoid falling within the clutches of loss, despair, absurdity and meaninglessness that would drive them inevitably to the existential vacuum. Centuries of oppression and

dehumanization could successfully attain the intended impact on African Americans who paid a very expensive price for their freedom. Some of them were influenced physically; others were affected mentally when some others manifested no remarkable sign of it.

However, they have succeeded to a certain extent to use one of the important coping strategies to make meaning of their lives and their suffering in a way that protected their humanism. In a research included within the edited book entitled *Meaning-Making, Internalized Racism and the African American Identity*, L. K. Hill, K. A. Hill and D. D. Roberts confirm that: "*Regarding the strong link between spirituality, meaning and purpose, and identity, particularly for African Americans, we predict that the first two constructs may provide some insight into the positive relationship between ethnic identity and self-esteem.*"(2016: 65).

Self realization is thus closely related to one's race and social environment. Additionally, one's identity is strongly based on the personal components and principles naming the purpose for which African Americans live, the meaning they strive to find and the spiritual understanding they find refuge in. The researchers try to create models of coping for individuals through analyzing, interpreting and evaluating their reactions and behaviors.

The black female's strife to find meaning in her life is in itself a struggle to avoid or to get rid of the ghost of existential vacuum that threatens her beingness. Going back to Frankl's three ways to make meaning, previously explained, the African American woman can choose one of the three for that purpose. First, when she creates, produces, constructs or invents, she is on her right way to confirm her existence that no one is able to deny her despite discrimination and oppression. She moreover tells the

whole world that she, representing her race and sex, is able to get highly recognized accomplishments and fulfillments. Second, when she allows herself to try being involved in various life experiences from which she learns how to react in future similar situations. Encountering people of different backgrounds and various belongings would also help her share feelings, exchange ideas and construct meanings with others.

The third way is the most important one for African American women because they have been suffering for a long time and they needed to find meaning in their lives and in their suffering so that they could stay alive. They needed to change their attitudes toward the unavoidable suffering that manifests itself in the form of oppression, persecution, injustice and prejudice. Though it seemed to be impossible to attain that condition for blacks to view what happened positively and try to get benefits out of it, but they could sincerely avoid the existential vacuum, statistics show each time that black American females have the least numbers of psychological problems, mental illnesses, existential alienation and despair and even in the rates of suicidal attempts. That result is clearly explained due to their spirituality and their resistance to keep looking for meaning, somebody or something to live for. Additionally, what keeps black females alive within an oppressive world is their ability to adapt to the all modes of tragedies imposed on them.

III.1. Morrison's "Buried Flowers"

Despite the Tragic Triad, black women fight to get rid of subservience and subjection. Many writers attempt to portray the recognition battle through implementing women fighters among their characters. The first part of that analysis is based on Toni Morrison's characters and the second one would move to Yvonne Vera's characters to end up with a probable answer to the question: What makes life meaningful in spite of

all the pain and suffering, in spite of death and the enormous mass of guilt feelings? These female characters try hard to find meaning for which they can survive, some of them succeed while other fail and faint.

First, in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, The protagonist Pecola dreams of having a pair of blue eyes and she lives for that dream, she has nothing else to think about or to take care of except that. For her, the black woman's life is meaningless and has no sense without beauty, as far as beauty for her is manifested in the blue color. Its meaning in fact goes beyond that to the belief that life will change, will be better with the blue eyes. She also believes the blue color is preserved just for the white women, what makes her feel deeply humiliated. Though her friends are also blacks, but they are not truly victimized especially that they always try to overcome the problem as though it does not exist at all. What makes Pecola even more depressed is when white women neighbors warn their children to play with her because she is a nigger, like a disgusting animal she feels when she is asked: "*How dare you get into my house?*" (2004: 20) by a classmate' mother who is deeply worried about her pet.

Because Pecola Breedlove is an ugly girl, she feels her absence would be better than her presence and her death would be better that her life particularly that she is contempted even by her parents who confess her unique ugliness. Her pregnancy from her father increases her eagerness to disappear from life but she tries to forget her hollow life and to focus on her dream, the impossible dream, this is her specific way to give her life meaning so that she can remain alive despite her suffering. Pecola changes her attitude to view and interpret her suffering, from a traumatic blackness, ugliness and hopelessness to a life dream for which she is ready to do anything.

She rejects her blackness though it gives meaning to her existence and she insists on achieving change. She keeps praying to God, the only one to whom she reveals her suffering and pain asking at the same time for a pair of beautiful blue eyes. Despite her increasing pain and misery, she preserves her ability to hope for the best and to imagine a better future world.

Moreover, the baby gives her a reason to live in spite of all the consequences it brings to her life and her family, she feels that she has to stay alive for that baby, her baby from her own father; the curse that destroys everything even the little mother. Again, her existence becomes meaningful when it is coupled with the baby's, the reason why she totally refuses to get rid of it. However, before Pecola realizes and grasps the meaning of what life is, her life is simply lost between her reality and her dream.

It is in the huge gap of void and emptiness where Pecola does no longer know what she wants or what she wishes for that she creates a wish of impossibility and links it to her entire life and existence. She ends up a crazy little girl with nobody around except an angry and a jealous mother and a large amount of broken memories of a lost baby and void, void everywhere. Despite her eagerness to create and discover the meaning of her life through suffering and to turn her pain into power and happiness, she finds herself swimming in the world of emptiness and nothingness. Her quest for the fulfillment of the impossible dream becomes a reason behind her madness; her struggle to make meaning destroys her instead of assuring her a respectful life. She wants what is not hers and what can never be, this is fairly enough to be confronted with rejection coupled with a sweeping destruction.

When the present becomes like the past, life bears more than one interpretation for meaninglessness. Pecola's self-hatred is tripled partly because of her ugly dark skin

color and also because of being raped by her father who wants first to make her happy anyhow. Not being conscious that by this terrible deed, he destroys her, he increases her eagerness to leave. Rape is the last drop over her full cup of pain, because the little girl has always been subjected to violence physically and psychologically by both of her parents; this is just for her to find no excuse to forget and forgive them.

They hate her to the extent that they ignore her existence because she reveals their failure in making a good family and protecting its members. It is a traumatic complex for most African Americans that they get revenge from each other instead of fighting their enemies, what leads to the high levels of violence and criminology within their communities blaming each other for the deteriorated and inferiorated situation they achieve.

Furthermore, Sula is also an excellent example that might reflect invisibility interwined with intersectionality on the one hand and meaning making stubborn quest on the other hand. Sula's internal conflict about whether to submit to social standards or enjoy a free life that excludes all human and non-human obstacles persists. The novel according to Maureen T. Reddy clarifies has three protagonists instead of one: Shadrack, Sula/ Nel, and the black people of the Bottom. He also insists that the novel has triple plot, center and theme tendency (1988: 31). The novel depicts a strong rebellious black woman character whose longing for meaning leads her to neglect the socially determined convictions and run her own life in the opposing way. Sula struggles to leave the existential vacuum she is forced to build around herself as a way of protection, she wants to make meaning of her existence. She decides to fights men and women, social norms, religious values and even human qualities for the sake of her inner peace and quest for meaning.

Sula witnesses death many times, the death of the little boy whom she causes his drowning, the death of her mother and the death of her uncle Plume. She does hardly show emotional reactions toward miserable events as the death of close people, the statement that is confirmed by her strange reaction and cold heartedness when her mother was dying in fire and the boy was dying in the river water. Ordinary human feelings when one's mother dies provoke tears, groans, pain and screams; none of these are invoked inside Sula after any of the deaths she witnesses. She has nothing to offer neither positively nor negatively; she is emotionally sterile and unable to consolidate with anyone spiritually. She is victimizing others and being victimized by them at the same time. However, death is a key variable that Sula uses to pursue her meaning making process regardless of the fact that death brings everything and everybody to an end.

She ponders at the past, the present and the future to understand her reactions and she realizes that she is breathless and her heart has already stopped beating at thrilling scenes. She is dead and she lives in a circle of illusions trying to give meaning to what is already made meaningless. The pain of living at the intersection as a marginalized person deepens her desire to stick to her void; emptiness does not hurt her as much as human beings do. She internalizes the pain of being a woman in a male dominated community and the pain of being black in a white prioritizing society. Moreover, she engraves inside her heart the pain of being rebellious, enthusiastic and resisting in a deadly submitted powerless town; this is what blows her out. She finds out at last that death is painless and the only thing she wants to do is to tell Nel about it.

Sula's ugly deeds and vulgar behaviors serve as a good reason for the town people to curse her and besiege her within her isolated arena. Feeling guilty is unusual

for her even at the very destructive situations she causes. Sula leaves her town alone for no reason and no exact direction and leaves everything and everybody behind; she does hardly feel guilty though. She kills the little boy and keeps it as a secret for her entire life and she does not feel guilty though. Besides, she sleeps with many while men and black men deceiving herself and her blackness and she does hardly feel guilty though. Then, she betrays her intimate friend with her husband Jude for no reason just to fulfill her empty space; she does not feel guilty though. Sula sends her grandmother Eva to the house of the old people and yet she shows no feelings of guilt. Sula reaches the most ultimate dark spot of the human being's evilness trying to reach a certain meaning in her life but in vein; she fails to create meaning that would enable her to survive and to enjoy freedom and equality. She might have chosen a misleading path to make meaning this is why she lives alone and dies alone.

III.2. Vera's "Burning Butterflies"

Yvonne Vera is the African writer whose fame and success result from her extraordinary depiction of the African lifestyle and her marvelous capturing of black women in their longing for autonomy, equality and acknowledgement. Vera is a masterful storyteller whose works are constructed on a highly poetic and brutally realistic mode. She writes about the voiceless Zimbabwean woman, the unnoticed and unnoticeable. African women also had to fight to free themselves from colonial bitterness and masculine constriction; the strife for meaning is then a tiresome and time consuming plan.

However, they struggle against meaninglessness and void rejecting the chains of chaos and disorder imposed on them. The Zimbabwean novelist draws through the bodies, the eyes and the senses of women wonderful portraits of suffering and survival

in township. Womanhood and motherhood emerge as central themes in Vera's writings being enriched with many other postcolonial and racial issues. Vera is the voice of the voiceless abandoned African women.

In her novel *Butterfly Burning*, the butterfly burns at last within the fire of regret and desperation. In pre-independent Rhodesia, the novel tells the story of Phephelaphi, a young girl who loves an older man Fumbatha then moves to live with him. The girl grows up with her mother's friend after the death of the mother Gertrude. It is a story of an African girl who struggles between her fears and dreams of being somebody; she just wants to be somebody.

All she wants is to fulfill her dream of becoming a nurse and after she is admitted to the nurse training Phephelaphi finds out that she is pregnant. At the same time, she is unable to persuade Fumbatha, the child's father, of her eagerness to go for the training especially that it was the first time for colored people to be accepted in nursing schools. The only obstacle between Phephelaphi and achieving her dream is the baby as pregnancy prevents any candidate from acceptance; she decides then to remove it from her way through abortion.

Besides, Phephelaphi is deeply influenced by the way her mother Gertrude lives and the way she dies; the mother has been a prostitute and she is killed by one of her customers. In fact, the girl discovers that her real mother is Zandile not Gertrude. All these circumstances affect her while thinking of her child especially after she discovers her beloved Fumbatha's betrayal. Poor phephelaphi is forced to commit suicide at last after she loses the opportunity of becoming a nurse, her beautiful portrait of her future dream is broken then she is psychologically broken too.

Phephelaphi looks eagerly for a balance in her life; she needs respect and some power for herself more than any other things. She is besieged first by a lightening attractive emotion toward Fumbatha who persuades her of his reciprocal love. That love turns quickly to a chain that restrains the sleeping monster inside the ambitious girl. The instances of silence used by Vera are more expressive rather than the words most of her characters utter while they feel pain. "*She wanted a birth of her own ... it was that a woman must love herself enough. A woman like that is the sweetest woman there is ... finding herself, that was it. She did not know what this entailed.*"(2000: 80)

Despite her complete dependence on her beloved, the strength of Phephelaphi is embedded within her silence and ambition. She struggles to be someone, to be herself, to be a woman as she claims in the novel: "*Finding herself, that was it. Phephelaphi wanted to be somebody. Not once but twice, thrice ... It was an urge ... Finding herself, that was it*" (Ibid: 75) She is also haunted by the desire to find a meaning in her life through achieving her dream; the bridge to success should first overcome her suffering and pain.

Phephelaphi has a dream that she wants to achieve in spite all the tragedies of her life. She experiences the Tragic Triad as she has been through pain, death and guilt multiple times. Her pain is the pain of any African black woman who is segregated and oppressed by colonial and masculine forces. Vera explains:

> Phephelaphi walks in a stupor, unable to bury her pain, not clear if she has parted from death or life. Folded into two halves, one part of her is dead, the other living. Not knowing which is the stronger; her pain involves this struggle. Awake, she is consumed by a strong temptation to tell her stranger that her life has ended. A stranger would gather the details and toss them to the wind. (Ibid: 127)

Her pain is enormous as an orphan and it deepens after discovering the truth of her origin and both of her mothers: the one who gives birth and the one who take care of her. Additionally, her inability to fulfill the training dream breaks her even more badly.

Moreover, Phephelaphi witnesses many deaths that thrive her distress: "*They weep but nothing can be heard of their weeping... It is better that the murdered are not returned to the living: the living are not dead. The women keep the most vital details of their men buried in their mouths*" (Ibid: 12).

> A man can be hanged more than once. The first, he watches himself die. He dies several times. Then something crushes in the roof of his head, his faith a wisp of flame thinner than life. Only a perfect circle can hang man. Then death is sudden and quick. Before death, there is silence. The body is undone by a violent touch. A rope. These are prisoners in a tree. (Ibid: 13)

Fumbatha describes the incident of his father and the other soldiers being tortured and hung by the white settlers in a way that drives her to weep simultaneously at the terrifying silence that precedes the execution.

Furthermore, Phephelaphi's feelings of guilt get disordered because she wants the nurse training and she wants the baby; she dislikes being forced to give up on one of the two. Since she has to decide on one option, she becomes aware that regret is unavoidable. Before her departure, she reflects about the meaningfulness of a fulfilled dream in front of a human life. Feeling regret awakes her conscience of the guilt she commits and drives her to erase it; this is what she thinks she is doing by her suicide act. At a certain moment, feelings of regret, memories of unbearable pain and the baby's death drives Phephelaphi to commit suicide; being confined to the attractive idea of escapism facilitates the self-murder. The butterfly burns and so does her dream

Furthermore, in Vera's poetic novel entitled *Without a Name*, the writer portrays the protagonist's quest through the use of an eloquent and highly significant title. The protagonist is named Mazvita, but the writer sheds the light on the identity issue through that title. Mazvita also reflects the black woman's eagerness to reach her dream and make meaning out of tragedy. She experiences death, pain and regret and she ends up estranged from herself and from the outside world. The protagonist seeks freedom; she wants to be strong, independent and successful' she endeavors to make herself different in the bigger city.

However, she feels lonely even with her partner and her child; the child is blamed for her failure and it is killed by his mother consequently. Mazvita breaks her baby's neck softly and buries the small corpse in the small town. The writer inserts: "*She felt the bone at the bottom of that neck tell her that the child had died. The bone broke softly…. She had broken the neck of her child.*" (2002: 109)

She indirectly blames the baby for her failure to succeed, to be free and to have a good relation with Joel. She feels hollow, empty and guilty; she ends up walking as a dead body, emotionless, distressed and unconscious. Vera depicts the situation as:

> She sought to discover the path she had taken toward this particular horror, but the memory hid from her. It came in flashes of a fathomless and heavy guilt… She sat in painful isolation… the unusual detail confirmed the horror in her head. A mountain grew in her head. … There was a burning on her tongue. Her tongue seemed to grow in her mouth, into something large and unrecognizable. She could no longer breathe cleanly and regularly. The bitterness spread to her face. (Ibid: 110)

Mazvita is also victimized by a falsified version of success. She can hardly conceive that success, independence and motherhood do not exclude each other.

A mother who kills her baby is in fact killing herself and her motherhood instinct; she would never purify her heart from such a self-destructive crime, she asks herself: "*Where can I go and remain whole? Who will help me carry this pain? Where will I speak this tale, with which mouth, for I have no mouth left, no fingers left, no tears to drink. Let me thirst and die … Who will hear my song? Who will carry it for me this pain and this suffering heavy on my back*?" (2002: 98) Regret hurts her spirit and destroys the remaining of her mental capabilities. In her way to be strong and free, she destroys her baby and herself.

Furthermore, Vera also narrates Zhizha's story of trauma and silence, the way she is muted by her father's violation of her body and her mother's criminal response. Zhizha is an example of the wretched young black girls in the world as she experiences more than what she can handle: "*Suffering is not death. Suffering can be carried in my mouth, not death.*" (2002: 173) Her voice is drowned under her tongue; she is a victim of a double voicelessness.

She also reflects the intersection of the three tragic axes: Pain, guilt and death because they occur at the same time and the same event. The greatest pain Zhizha has ever felt is the pain of a huge body that presses her small body then violates her intimacy and childhood; it is more outrageously revealed to be the father's body. She wants to cry loud, her cry signifies death: "*My cry is silence and death … I cry in my sleep, this sleep is death… Death has entered my dreaming entered my growing turned*

it into mud and now I cry in one small whimper, cry quietly into my memory.” (Ibid: 225)

The girl remains silent, not for one or two days, she is muted for a lifetime. She feels guilty and responsible for the dissociation of her family, a lonely daughter, a murdered father and an imprisoned mother. The animalistic Sexuality of the man that is followed by the criminal rashness of the mother devastate the girl’s existence; she wishes to die instead of her sorrowful life: “*How can death arrive when the mouth has not allowed it to arrive? Death has a name which we can carry in the mouth without dying. Only words can bury us not silence.*” (Ibid: 135)

She even feels guilty for the death of her grandmother; in fact she dies of anguish and melancholy: “*I have brought this death to grandmother*” (Ibid: 134); she also feels the sense of blame bursting from people’s eyes. Her silence tells a lot let alone her speech. Zhizha lives with her grandmother who reciprocal silence makes the girl think again and again about what happened exactly.

> Grandmother says that a woman cannot point to the source of her pain, saying, it is here and there. A woman finds her sorrow in her dream and everywhere. She is wounded even in her awakening. Sorrow is not like clay which is put beneath the sun to dry. It has no shape. It is only tears. Slowly she cries, slowly she weeps, sleeps and wakes. (Ibid: 162)

Pain ruins the girl’s world inasmuch as it buries her within her silence; it is deep and hidden.

III.3. Grief and Trauma in Morrison's *Beloved*

The triad of pain, guilt, death is outstandingly depicted in Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved* as it displays the intersection of the three axes in many characters not only the protagonist. The novel is about a ghost destroying a family during the slave era, a story of an African American mother who kills her little daughter because she loves her and wants to protect her from having the same fate of enslavement. It is also a story of spending many years within the prison of feelings, feelings of regret, pain and guilt. Sethe is an attempt to depict a real story, the story of the woman Margaret Garner who kills her children to save them from slavery.

Though written by the end of the Twentieth century, it gives voice to the silenced and oppressed slaves of the slave period. Morrison demonstrates a larger scope to re-visualize and remember the cruelty and exploitation of blacks and the negative consequences of slavery physically and psychologically.

> Rather the physically unattractive, intellectually incompetent and spiritually degraded black psyche always remained preoccupied with the daily struggle for existence; ghetto living, frustration of ambition in the professions, irksome separate entrances and exits at public places, police terror and torture, house arrest, banishment, jail life, etc. Deprivation of human dignity, loss, hatred and the physical violence made the Black life much more harassing. (2017: 01)

Emancipation brought them no relief as it is claimed by Srikumari Panda in the research paper *Toni Morrison's Beloved and The Bluest Eye: A Saga of Untold Suffering*. All types of dehumanization and prejudice are meant by white owners to terribly worsen the situation of blacks.

Beloved is a story set around 1873 Cincinnati (Ohio) about Sethe who used to be a slave but could successfully and unfortunately remove herself and her children out of the dilemma. She lives with her daughter Denver and her mother- in-law Baby Suggs before her death. Her two sons run away after the house becomes haunted with the spirit of the murdered sister, the baby that was once killed by their mother. The novel is divided into two parts, a part about the current time the family lives during and a part that includes a collection of flashbacks about the different characters. The protagonist Sethe is born to an African mother whom she never knew; and at the age of thirteen, she is sold as a slave to the Garners' family.

The family members treat them well but after the death of Mr. Garner, Mrs. Garner brings her sadist evil brother to run the farm: the schoolteacher who is extremely severe and arrogant. Slaves' Lives become terribly deteriorated and they decide to leave Sweet Home. Sixo, Paul D, Paul A and Paul F, the pregnant Sethe, her husband Halle and her kids decide on running away. Schoolteacher anticipates the plan and Sixo is killed. Sethe is brutally violated by schoolteacher nephews when her hiding husband watches the cruel show silently, he becomes mad consequently. She tells Mrs. Garner about her brother's cruelty and is punished outrageously by him. The tree scar on her back is a permanent result of that story symbolizing the whites' animalism toward the black slaves.

She runs away finally to Baby-Suggs house; but in her way, she suffers a lot because of exhaustion and sickness. A white girl named Amy Denver helps her improve and give birth to her baby Denver. The one month of the new life is the best in all Sethe's life; then it becomes enormously sad after schoolteacher arrives to take her back to Sweet Home. In a moment of fear and dread, Sethe kills her daughter to protect her

from having the same life of slavery. After she comes out of prison, life has changed a great deal, the family lives in isolation, and she suffers psychologically because of regret.

The two sons escape from the house because of being afraid; first from the picture of the killing mother and second because of the spirit living with them; it is believed to be the spirit of the murdered daughter. Paul D joins the family and life becomes better until a girl named Beloved is found one day by their door. Believing she is the murdered daughter, she lives with them as a member of the family. Sethe becomes extremely excited and obsessed with her presence; it is a reward or a symbol of forgiveness for her. Beloved seduces Paul D and he leaves the house; then, she turns to be manipulative and abusive. In an incident with the town women, Beloved disappears suddenly. Paul D comes back to Sethe who remains truly affected after losing her "*best thing, Beloved*".

In fact, Morrison devotes an extended part of the novel to criticize practices related to slavery in the form of flashbacks of the slaves who leave Sweet Home because life becomes unbearable after the death of the original owner. Some of them are narrated by Sethe herself while others are told by the other characters. The chapter is not expected to treat the issue of slavery in itself but it explains the pain that results from the oppressive deeds of white Americans. Morrison lives, as most black Americans, between the need to bury the past and the necessity of reviving it; it is at the same time the past they do not want to remember though it is a crucial part of their present.

Pain is not what makes individuals human, guilt is not what makes them real. For Sethe, pain leads her to guilt, to commit a crime against her child and then to

isolation, loss and alienation. As a black female, she suffers to a large extent because of her pain and grief. Throughout her journey of freedom, Sethe pays very expensive debts and large loads of pain as an escaping slave and a rebellious black woman. She has terrible scars on her back, the tree that white owners draw on her back after the excessive whipping when she tries to flee. She also has terrible scars in her heart because after all, she is the mother who kills her daughter. Pain is then destined to be her inevitable companion that will remind her of the price of freedom she has to pay in order to become the woman she becomes.

To study the protagonist's pain, guilt and death and the nexus that ties the three, the scholar Elizabeth Kubler-Ross's research about death and healing is applied to analyse the stages of Sethe's pain and feelings of guilt because of the death of her Beloved caused by her. The researcher explains in her book entitled *On Death and Dying* (1969) that the individual goes through five stages of grief and pain after the death of a loved person. The five stages of grief are: denial and isolation, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance; and they are all experienced by Sethe's throughout the novel.

Each phase may take time differently for the person to be overcome till the last stage of accepting the subversive truth of death and final loss. Though Sethe' trauma is caused not by death but by a crime of infanticide but that does not deny the five steps of the process. The white girl who saves Sethe's life in the woods confirms what can truly summarize the essence of trauma: "*More it hurt more better it is. Can't nothing heal without pain, you know. What you wiggling for*?" (1998: 78)

When the two axes of the triad death and pain meet, the result can be summarized in five stages that one may experience after losing a beloved. Sethe experiences all the stages throughout the novel. Denial is the phase that Sethe experiences toward the existence of the ghost in the house; which is at the same time a rejection of her daughter's death. The second phase is isolating the family from neighbors and relatives; the situation becomes unbearable as claimed by Denver: "*I can't live here. I don't know where to go or what to do, but I can't live here. Nobody speaks to us. Nobody comes by. Boys don't like me. Girls don't either*," and she confirms: "*It's not the house. It's us! And it's you!*" (Ibid: 14).

Denver blames her mother for the situation they are thrown into because people refuse to talk to them, visit them or even approach them after the murder event. That part of isolation includes Sethe and Denver while the second part includes Sethe and Beloved as it is reflected in the novel. Sethe spends all her time alone with Beloved as an attempt to compensate the girl of her loss. That part of Sethe's life is extremely different as she forgets about her own life; she ignores Paul D and abandons Denver in order to devote herself entirely to Beloved. It is isolation within isolation.

> Denver thought she understood the connection between her mother and Beloved: Sethe was trying to make up for the handsaw; Beloved was making her pay for it. But there would never be an end to that, and seeing her mother diminished shamed and infuriated her. Yet she knew Sethe's greatest fear was the same one Denver had in the beginning- that Beloved might leave.(Ibid: 251)

Sethe's decision to be completely devoted is caused by her fear, the fear that Beloved might disappear one day; the fear that she can no longer support if it is to happen.

Anger is another important phase of Sethe's process of trauma and grief, not by her now, but first by Paul D's coming to live at 124 and second by Denver. Paul D

attempts to protect the two ladies from the ghost and from their feelings of fear, he challenges the ghost when he is strongly angry confirming that if the two women can support the ghost living with them, he can never do. Ina rage of anger caused by terror, Paul D addresses the ghost shouting and asking it to leave them alone: "*God damn it! Hush up. Leave the place alone! Get the hell out!*" (Ibid: 18) Then he adds: "*You want to fight, come on! God damn it! She got enough without you. She got enough*!" (Ibid) He keeps trembling and his body shaking, he insists on whipping the table till it is all quiet; the ghost has left 124.

Sethe's anger turns into a great sense of loss, she has to face the infanticide alone. Her wrath is enormously exposed to the outside world when she is asked by Paul D to leave everything behind and escape. Her reaction is violent claiming that it is only because of her previous escape from slavery that she has been forced to kill her baby; this is why she decides to stay and face the ghost, misery and isolation instead of running away. The latter is not always a solution for Sethe.

Besides, she accepts the way her sons run away without taking the responsibility to look for them just to stay home and endure the results of her deeds. She has never been a coward to run away from her fate, she used to be a weakened black slave and she could make her way throughout suffering toward freedom. Her anger is freed by Paul D's insisting on leaving the house and the ghost behind. Her anger again is quietened a bit by the second birth of the ghost in blood and flesh. Beloved's sudden appearance is very similar to the birth of any ordinary baby, coming out of the water first, consuming milk excessively, requiring one's care and support and sleeping for four successive days. That is exactly the period Sethe needs as a second chance to turn the last page of the past forever.

Another important scene that demonstrates anger is what Denver expresses after the ghost's disappearance because she used to consider it as a partner, a friend that listens and never speaks. She feels lonely now and she strongly blames Paul D for her loneliness especially that her mother is also taken by Paul D's presence in the house: "*Now her mother was upstairs with the man who had gotten rid of the only other company she had.*" (Ibid: 19). She expresses her anger and jealousy from the first moment Paul D gets into 124; being the reason behind the ghost's banishing gives her an additional argument to hate him further: "*She wished for the baby ghost–its anger thrilling her now where it used to wear her out. Wear her out*" (Ibid: 13).

Denver grows more suspicious after the ghost reappears but in blood and flesh now, Beloved; she appears to spoil and change everything in the house. She even has a relation with Paul D, the person who deeply wants her out of the house from the very beginning. After a long period of loneliness, missing her grand-mother and her brothers, Denver believes Beloved is more than a sister till they are separated again by the newly created relation between Beloved and Sethe. However, Paul D is always wrathfully accused by Denver for her isolation though happiness of belonging to an ordinary family finds its way into 124 House with his coming to assist them.

Bargaining generally occurs after anger, after one is angry at God and at people trying at the same time to achieve any kind of truce to face the sad facts whether before loss or even after the loss of a loved one. Bargaining is mostly accompanied by feelings of guilt and repeating the statement: 'If only …, if only …' The person wishes the past to come back in order to stop the incident or to change the reaction. When the person realizes the impossibility of his wish, he prefers to keep living in the past thinking, negotiating and blaming himself for the loss, the reason that leads him directly to the

fourth phase of the process. In the novel, Sethe's bargain lasts so long because when she commits the crime, gets punished and isolated from society, she is stuck in the past.

Trying to settle her fears and beat the past, she endeavors hard to pull herself out of the day of her crime and loss of her baby. Her "If only…" comes back to her under the name of Beloved and Sethe is enormously trapped in a deal with the past. Besides, the bargain she draws for herself with the second copy of the ghost influences the whole family especially when she surrenders completely to Beloved; she attempts to get a deal with the past to rest her pain and silence her internal negative voices.

Denver is worried about the limitless relation and exploitation Beloved exercises on Sethe as the latter shows no reaction to defend or to push her away. Sethe's bargain aims at gaining satisfaction and getting rid of self blaming through trying to compensate the ghost and allowing herself to be totally occupied by Beloved day and night. Beloved is greedy taking each single opportunity to herself alone with Sethe excluding Denver and Paul D from their conversations and meetings. Paul D is the only one who can evaluate the situation objectively because he is new to the house and he is not truly conscious of the difficult period they have been going through before his coming. His own bargain starts when he feels he loses Sethe and the desire to stay in the house any longer, that occurs when he is forced by Beloved to make a sexual relation. He makes up his mind to leave the three alone and Denver finds herself between two abnormal women, a very greedy girl asking always for more love and care and a totally submissive mother whose grief tells her to accept everything the girls asks for.

Denver is also against the situation because she is facing the whole world alone trying to protect the two. She is responsible for them now after Sethe leaves the job to stay home with Beloved, the two hardly leave the room. It happens when greed meets

endless love, countless attention and care beside so deep feelings of grief and trauma; Sethe herself confesses she has been conscious of the truth: "*I just had to watch out for it because it was a greedy ghost and needed a lot of love, which was only natural, considering. And I do. Love her. I do*" (Ibid: 209)

The fourth phase of grief is depression, to be followed by acceptance, and it occurs when the mourning person reaches the deepest point of his void, emptiness and sad feelings. It is a complicated step in the process after losing a loved one and it does not signify mental disorder. Sethe falls within the trap of depression after the surprising disappearance of Beloved, after she realizes that it is the last time she may see the girl she believes to be her daughter. Her feelings of failure to fulfill the overdose of the girl's emotional hunger, selfishness and exploitation strengthen her pain and deepen her loneliness that lead her to depression of a complicated level. She is drowning in her sadness and she has no other person except Denver after Paul D decides to leave the house.

Many people are exposed to surrender during that period to ideas related to meaninglessness and life absurdity and they end up committing suicide to close the bracket and to end the dilemma they live in without their beloved. Few people can get out of that stage successfully and it should be thanks to a strong basis: psychological, religious, social or intellectual; this is one of the objectives that the study is proceeding to achieve.

Acceptance is a difficult stage to reach especially if it is coupled with long time period. It is a stage of mental and psychological peace in which the person realizes at last the impossibility of the beloved's physical existence anymore. Recognizing the new

fact that the absence of the beloved will be painfully permanent is what makes it truly difficult about the stage. Feeling of betrayal may worsen the case requiring more time to feel better, and it happens when the person resists his internal desire to forget and move on because he feels that by doing so he is betraying the dead beloved. His peace is then disturbed by that kind of emotions especially when moments of happiness knock on the door, one may find himself between the desire to enjoy and the longing to cry and mourn the dead. When grief and depression take time to be healed, the loser will find his way to forget, change and live.

Pain is magnificently demonstrated in the various pictures of slaves suffering under the domination and exploitation of whites. They were enormously exploited and humiliated by their owners, animals were treated better. It exceeds suffering millions of times: "*Slave life had "busted her legs, back, head, eyes, hands, kidneys, womb and tongue," she had nothing left to make a living with but her heart--which she put to work at once*" (Ibid: 87). It is very difficult to find the appropriate words that can describe that kind of grief resulting from bodies in pain and only the hearts awake.

> During, before and after the War he had seen Negroes so stunned, or hungry, or tired or bereft it was a wonder they recalled or said anything. Who, like him, had hidden in caves and fought owls for food; who, like him, stole from pigs; who, like him, slept in trees in the day and walked by night; who, like him, had buried themselves in slop and jumped in wells to avoid regulators, raiders, paterollers, veterans, hill men, posses and merrymakers. Once he met a Negro about fourteen years old who lived by himself in the woods and said he couldn't remember living anywhere else. He saw a witless colored woman jailed and hanged for stealing ducks she believed were her own babies. (Ibid: 66)

Suffering of blacks all over America is clarified at the tongue of Paul D as the quote describes.

Moreover, slaves were known for having no names before their owners gave them any, without being aware of it, accepting or refusing these names was never a matter of discussion. Baby Suggs is an example that she is named by Mr. Garner Jenny without being conscious of it. Slaves were generally accustomed to be all called 'nigger' with no difference. In fact, it has rarely been a problem of naming as it is a problem of identity, when one's name is imposed by foreigners and one has to accept it the way it is. It is truly a problem of identity construction but because slaves' other issues are heavier and more important than their names; the whole matter is given no priority by blacks themselves. At last, when becoming a freed slave, Baby Suggs asks her owner: "*Why you all call me Jenny?*"(Ibid: 142) "*Cause that what's on your sales ticket, gal. Ain't that your name? What you call yourself?*" Mr. Garner is shocked when she confirms: "*Nothings … I don't call myself nothing.*" (Ibid) The statement denotes that it is deeper and more complicated than a problem of naming.

Furthermore, suffering has many faces which are summarized in the following scenes during the times of blacks' lynchings. Blood and dead people were spread all around, weeping children and mourning mothers filled the cities; the writer reflects the events eloquently:

> And him. Eighteen seventy-four and white folks were still on the loose. Whole towns wiped clean of Negroes; eighty-seven lynchings in one year alone in Kentucky; four colored schools burned to the ground; grown men whipped like children; children whipped like adults; black women raped by the crew; property taken, necks broken. He smelled skin, skin and hot blood. The skin

was one thing, but human blood cooked in a lynch fire was a whole other thing.

(Ibid: 180)

Many other pictures are skillfully laid in the form of past sketches and Morrison emphasizes that reality when she dedicates Beloved's story to sixty million people, the victims and deadly survivors of the multiple genocides inserted within the scope of slavery exercised by white Americans. The number is estimated similarly to the genocides of the Jewish people in Europe being persecuted by the Nazi Germany as an attempt to exterminate the Jewish race completely from the world which is known as the Holocaust. Morrison draws that comparison to shed light on the revived past again and to contradict those who denigrate and belittle the subversive effects of slavery.

In her book titled: *Remembering the Past in Contemporary African American Fiction*, the writer Keith Beyrman explains the meaning of pain, but not any kind of pain, it is the pain of memory that is reflected in Morrison's Beloved. Beyrman's explanation is also tied to the Elizabeth Kubler-Ross's research and to the Tragic Triad as they are based on pain resulting from memory, repression resulting from oppression and death that generates feelings of pain and guilt. Past memories are unwanted intruders that insinuate and spoil the present because life after the loss of a beloved renders the survivor to a victim and a witness at the same time. The survivor feels terribly bad when he relives the pain that precedes the death and remembers his helplessness to face or prevent it; this is what creates the complex of guilt.

The most important question that ends the traumatic phase of pain is the one requested by Denver to Beloved: "*If it hurts, why don't you cry?*" The question is highly expressive as it does not seek any answer; it only reveals the speaker's intention to share the massive amounts of pain that resists to be healed. Burying the dead is not enough to

be healed, to forget and enjoy an ordinary life. Slavery atrocities, brutalities and misdeeds of the past should be settled to pave the way for a peaceful present life. Beloved appears to fulfill that mission to help Sethe forget and enjoy her life with Denver and Paul D because she has always been besieged by voices from the past, from her crime of infanticide, from her resisting memory. Remembering is important to heal as it aids one to confront oneself with the evil and cruel hidden side to confess and get purified. After that stage, one can recover and heal from memories of death, guilt and pain, Sethe experiences all these phases to get finally healed from her terrible past.

Guilt is one of the complicated existential issues as it is mostly confused between considering guilt as a feeling, an emotion or a state of mind. It is a moral awakening that calls for the human conscience to evaluate and drive certain restrictions. Being guilty means confessing the wrong or bad deed one has committed resulting in uncomfortable feeling and state of mind. The philosopher Martin Heidegger explains the meaning of guilt in relation to many other philosophical concepts as being and nothingness, death and conscience, freedom and understanding. Guilt is also linked to self-accusation and conscience because when conscience is silenced, one would rarely have feelings of being guilty; and when they are coupled, the result may drive the person to depressive states or suicidal attempts.

In Morrison's *Beloved*, Sethe reaches a drastic degree of feeling guilty and accusing herself of her daughter's death. It is correct that Sethe is the killer but it is evident that nobody can stop or face death as it is destined and dictated by fate. Sethe considers herself the only responsible person for death, misery, depression, loss and meaninglessness found in her life with her family. She is an example of a victimized killer whose criminal action has been meant to attribute meaning to the freedom of

blacks to choose and decide how to live. It is a defying attempt to challenge the meaningless system known as slavery and give a life opportunity to one expected to be enslaved and dehumanized. Sethe's attempts to silence her human conscience and the voice of her self-accusation fail and this is the reason behind her surprising exaggerated reaction after finding Beloved.

IV. Reactionary and Revolutionary Suicide in Morrison's novels

Huey P. Newton assisted by J. Herman Blake wrote about suicide in the American black community and they distinguish between revolutionary and reactionary suicides. The division goes back to Dr. Herbert Hendin who spends a long time doing research about suicide of black people. The concept of reactionary suicide explains itself as it is a reaction to a certain situation that becomes unbearable. For black Americans, it is a matter of dignity; they think to react in a suicidal behavior when oppressive conducts maintained by white Americans intend to crush their dignity and deny their right to live with pride and respect as ordinary human beings.

A determined freedom is hardly to be named freedom; black Americans have been incarcerated within the racial prison for so long and they develop various mechanisms to react and protest. Newton defines reactionary suicide as: "*The reaction of a man who takes his own life in response to social conditions that overwhelm him and condemn him to helplessness.*" (2009: 25) According to the writer, it is the social situation that drives a black man to commit suicide. This does in way reject Durkheim's theory about the causal relation between one's suicide and his/her external factors. Reactionary suicide is often the price of self- respect and self-esteem. Newton continues: "*Only resistance can destroy the pressures that cause reactionary suicide.*"(Ibid: 28)

Revolutionary suicide, however, means to move against the driving force despite the evident truth that such a movement would end up in death. It is similarly a type of protesting against the existing circumstances that underestimate one's humanness and beingness. Revolutionary people live at the edges of danger and death but they are doomed to be fighters for the survival of their essential quest and for the accomplishment of their revolution goals. Black Americans revolt against dehumanization and inferiorization to attain equality and total freedom; that is the ultimate objective which necessitates sacrifice.

Triumph does in no way mean the survival of revolutionists but it means to achieve the predestined target of the revolution. More importantly, revolutionary suicide is not a direct move toward self murder inasmuch as it is an attempt to wipe the oppression that keeps blacks under absolute hegemony and defeat. Revolutionary suicide has never meant to send youth to jump off a high building or a bridge; it seeks and plans for life rather than for death, but which life is meant: a life with dignity.

> It conveys an awareness of reality in combination with the possibility of hope—reality because the revolutionary must always be prepared to face death, and hope because it symbolizes a resolute determination to bring about change. Above all, it demands that the revolutionary see his death and his life as one piece. (Ibid)

Revolutionary suicide is not a fatalistic attempt but a survival plan for black Americans that ascertains their right of freedom, dignity and pride. What is the reason then behind calling that type of revolution a suicidal revolution? Newton answers in the previous quote.

In fact, African American literature is haunted by the description of the expensive leap toward freedom that might cost one his/ her life; it is freedom with the

flavor of death. James Baldwin and Paul Marshal for example depict the behavior of jumping toward death for the sake of freedom; they, however, have not described the act as a suicide. Further, in relation to Frankl's, Shneidman's and Durkheim's theoretical perceptions of suicide and due to the selected novels of Toni Morrison, who are the suicidal characters in Morrison's fiction? What type of suicide do they acclaim and under which motives? That part of the chapter aims at answering the aforementioned questions and deciphering the suicidal behavior in literary texts.

IV.1. Reactionary Suicide of Black Characters

In Morrison's fiction, there is an unlimited number of deaths in numerous ways but the self-inflicted deaths are very few though the writer has maintained the issue of suicide as a central topic for her doctoral thesis. The little attention she has paid to suicide in her novels go back mainly to her attempt to be highly realistic and write reasonably. What the African American community has truthfully experienced is due to the atrocity and oppression of white Americans which does not always drive them to self murder; black people are strong and black women are stronger.

In her writings, Morrison presents certain interesting incidents and characters that hold determined messages and values. Reactionary suicide is to be explored in that part through the behaviors of three characters: Shadrack (*Sula*), Eva (*Sula*) and Pecola (*The Bluest Eye*) First, in Morrison's Sula, the male character Shadrack initiates a new habit of celebrating the National Suicide Day on the third of January each year; the astonishing idea is hardly appreciated or welcomed by the township people though he does not endeavor to encourage people to commit suicide. Shadrack spends some years fighting in the war; and as a warrior, he is used to the scenes of death, blood, cut body organs, injuries, separated heads and many other terrifying pictures. Shadrack is

strongly traumatized after his return to his town; his trauma turns to madness that serves as a survival strategy. His fear of death ignites his desire to celebrate death rather than to keep waiting for it to arrive surprisingly.

Shadrack is dramatically satiated with pictures of the war brutality and savagery; his craziness is an ordinary consequence of his cruel experience. His emotion dysregulation results from being hung between hesitation and repression, his anxiety and fear from death lead him to numbness and fugue. He initiates the habit though he does not intend to commit suicide nor does he develop any suicidal or self destructive behaviors; it is metaphorical. Shadrack's psychological disorder boosts his creative potential to speak the unspeakable and fulfill the unexpected. Shadrack reflects the innovative male whose reputation and authenticity reaches its lowest extremes, he is ignored and avoided by the people of Medallion.

Not surprisingly, his ordinary death does not contradict his ideation as he does never intend to encourage people to commit suicide by his new habit of celebrating death. The shell shock that the veteran has experienced has created a gap between the now and the here, a fissure between the internal and the external. The violent break causes him an interruption in the continuity of his mental abilities and a temporary dissociation from the real world; he is no longer the same person of the before the war phase. The truly strange aspect about Shadrack is that despite his mental dissociation and damaged process of self-recognition, he is strongly persuaded of the ugliness of war, death and violence; the war pictures have been permanently registered in his mind. Violence is unforgettable, it lasts long.

Shadrack's new habit is a reaction to his cruel experience in the war; it is a reasonable response to the prevalent ugliness. He even feels anxious about his body

parts but the reflection of his black face provides him with feelings of comfort and trust. More sarcastically, the celebration of that invented day is not to be interrupted by any incident or condition; it is absorbed by people at Medallion despite their refusal. The researcher Katy Ryan perceives Shadrack's habit as: "*Shadrack's annual holiday encourages people to avoid death's random blows and free themselves of fear, to control death and resist disorder by killing themselves.*" (2000: 400) It is indeed a day to celebrate the bravery to look at death in the daylight and defeat people's fear from it.

Shadrack's National Day of Suicide is a strategy to prevent suicide and it is contradictorily initiated by a psychologically traumatized black man. Sula's death that occurs against Shadrack's anticipation and expectations drives him to a second trauma phase; if it says something, it would claim that his fear of death has not been cleared in spite of his successive efforts to ease people's fears. Shadrack's trauma persists and his permanent melancholy; Ryan adds: "*Suicide Day leads not to glorified, individual deaths but to a political protest in which identity is collective.*"(Ibid: 401)

Second, in Morrison's Sula, the grandmother Eva also reflects a determined image of a self destructive behavior that might be implemented within reactionary suicidal attempts. Eva Peace is also Hannah's mother, a cold hearted mother who kills her son because he can hardly go back to her womb. She kills him because she wants him to be a man who is completely mature and responsible, her son is sick and she feels pity as she cannot grow him in her womb neither can she assume care and responsibility for him. Plum is burnt by his mother because of his dependence on her beside his decay. Eva loves Plum the best but she kills him as she wants to make him free of the chains of sickness and destruction. She kills her son to protect him, to make him free.

Eva's relation with self destruction is not only her crime of murder that emotionally anesthetizes her body before it ends her son's life; it is linked to the incident of her leg. Eva puts her leg under the train so that it saves her the insurance money. It is true that Eva has been left to face poverty and life charges of two children, but this does not necessitates that she sacrifices her leg for few coins. For Eva, it is possible; for a mother, it might be accounted as a self- sacrifice for the best of the family. Eva's personality is paradoxical, she represents, at the one hand, the loving mother who devotes her life and body for the unity of her family; she is after all a lonely mother whose cruel experience with her husband drives her to seek a safe refuge with the children. She also represents the cold mother who kills her son because he is too big to go back to her womb and get a second birth.

From the surrounding circumstances, it might become evident that Eva's self-destructive act is a logical response to the stimulating difficult conditions such as poverty, discrimination and helplessness in addition to her husband's violence and violations. Eva's husband named Boy Boy is an abusive drunk man who left her alone to take care of the children. She manages to find a way to fee them but it is highly difficult; this is what pushes her to go away for 18 months and come back with one leg. She represents the loving mother who gives her life to her children. However, when Plum comes back from the war as a destitute drug consumer, she is highly depressed to see him suffering. She kills him because she wants him to be a man, to live as a man and to die as a man.

Eva's reactionary suicidal attempt assimilates her multiple unfulfilled needs that posit her among millions of black women whose strength and bravery surpass their pain and fear. However, she is blamed by both her daughter Hannah and her granddaughter

Sula for having sacrificed her leg for some money; they doubt her motherly love and her psychological state. In fact, the three female characters are the same coin but with various faces and little difference.

Third, in Morrison's novel *The Bluest Eye*, the protagonist Pecola is a young girl whose dream is to have blue eyes instead of her dark eyes. Despite her difficult life conditions, Pecola Breedlove's dream is not to have a better life inasmuch as to have blue eyes; she conceives beauty only with a pair of blue eyes. Pecola is the victim of her family, her terribly cruel father who rapes her twice until the girl gets pregnant in addition to her mother who beats her violently after the incident because of hatred and jealousy. Her parents quarrel most of the time and they do rarely care about her; she experiences the hatred of the whole world at the hands of her parents.

In spite of her agony and continuous grief, Pecola does not think of suicide to be saved; she, however, draws a beautiful dream on the dark sky and keeps the wish ignited inside her heart so that it assists her through her difficult times. She endeavors to create a meaning for which she lives especially after the loss of the baby, her baby from her father. Hence, Pecola demands self disappearance believing that the pair of blue eyes would retreat her lost visibility and assures her a certain degree of beauty and attractiveness.

She prays: "*Please God ... Please make me disappear*" (2007: 45). Her prayer of disappearance implements an internal desire to leave the world if her dream is not accomplished; the statement requires implicitly Pecola's equation that puts the whole world on one side and the pair of blue eyes on the other. Harold Bloom explains Pecola's response as:

> Pecola, Morrison's main focus as the person in the novel most vulnerable to societal and communal failure, wants to disappear. To this end, she has invented a mental strategy to make each part of her body disappear, except her eyes. She cannot get them to disappear, and, since they were "everything," Pecola decides that her wish to be invisible was not worth the effort.(2010: 40)

She spends a year praying though discouraged sometimes but she preserves her hope that it might happen one day. The prayer implements a threatening promise that her being alive depends heavily on the fulfillment of her dream; that might be interpreted as a suicide ideation that occupies her mind. She disguises her ugliness and spends hours in front of the mirror trying to imagine her face with blue eyes. Moreover, she expects herself to be totally different after her eyes turn blue; this may expose a relation between existence, identity and face.

According to the protagonist, the racial problem in the world might also insert a new beauty standard that is the eye blueness for the sake of creating a new line for division based on the eye color. Pecola's reactionary suicide attempt is indeed a response to the horridness and violation exercised on her by the closest people to her, by her parents. Although she is dehumanized and ignored, she succeeds in creating something for which she resists and struggles, this is the meaning she attributes to her life and this is what saves her from self-murder.

Morrison's Shadrack, Eva and Pecola react differently to the life atrocities, prejudice and hegemony; the common standard is the suicide ideation and/ or attempt; their attempts, however, fail and their lives are saved at last.

IV.2. Hannah's Psychache and Revolutionary Suicide

In that part of the chapter, the main focus goes to the complete suicide act fulfilled by the black female character Hannah in Morrison's Sula. Hannah Peace is Sula's mother, a second copy of Eva Peace, the cold hearted mother who sacrifices her life for her children on the one hand and who sets her son into fire on the other hand.

In fact, most of the black female characters in Morrison's fiction experience the ugliest side of life and struggle to achieve the least of their rights, but they do not often think of suicide as a solution. It is in virtue of various factors that the preference of life defeats the desire to escape it.

Differently, Hannah is one of the characters who commit suicide by setting herself into fire; by doing that, she does not only burn her body but she also burns the hearts of the town's people. Her mother cries out of pain while trying to save her but her daughter Sula keeps watching her mother dancing and shouting of pain inside the flames. Hannah commits suicide in that terrible manner because of various aspects and motives; she suffers for some time silently but she is forced to escape.

In order to find out the motives of the suicidal behavior, it is substantial to go through the character's life, her childhood and adulthood for the sake of discovering the level and degree of psychological damage that ignites her self-infliction desire.

Hannah is a woman who manifests negative aspects rather than positive ones; she is the kind of the ignorant and arrogant woman who looks for problems all the time. She does hardly express her love to her daughter; this justifies partially Sula's reaction when her mother's body is burning. It is a kind of a reciprocal cold-heartedness and carelessness that grows between a mother and her daughter.

Hannah commits suicide because of an enormous amount of unbearable pain that grows bigger inside her since her childhood and it triggers her desire of escapism. From the philosophical perspective of Viktor Frankl, Hannah lacks meaning in her life because she does not work and she has no dream or target to accomplish. Hannah lives in a complete emptiness after the death of her husband; she spends most of her time with other men in the neighborhood; she does not even take care of her only daughter. She endures the void that fills her life for a long time but in a certain moment, she decides to leave.

Hannah's existential escapism is a logical result to her loneliness and alienation; she is intentionally isolated by the town's women because she teases them when she makes relations with their husbands. She is existentially driven to escape toward a safe refuge where she interacts merely with her inner thoughts. She is thrown to the world of nothingness and absurd to discover that life is truly meaningless. She might be easily persuaded by the meaninglessness of life because her life is empty; she has nothing and nobody to live for, and the vacuum gets consequently wider to the extent that it absorbs her.

Besides, the Tragic Triad in Hannah's life proves to be thoroughly destructive; the meeting of pain, death and guilt is extraordinarily influential. First, pain in the life of black women becomes a daily habit, a necessary event or a substantial ingredient; it is all around. Hannah is spiritually consumed by the death of her husband succeeded by her brother killed by the mother. Death has already killed part of her, the most lively part of her spirit is damaged by the surprising nature of death. However, what truly destroys her physically and mentally is her mother's act of murder and the picture of Plum struggling with fire.

It is true that she does nothing to respond to her mother's crime but this is mainly the reason of her feeling of regret. Hannah believes that she could have done something to stop Eva and to assist Plum to be better. This may also be the main motive behind her cold heartedness toward her family members. Hannah's personality is paradoxical exactly as her mother's and her daughter's; the three are neither very evil nor are they very angel-like women. Philosophically, Hannah lacks meaning that might have loaded her life and convince her to survive. She can hardly resist the intersecting poles of the Triad and this is what accelerates her transition toward the world from which nobody comes back alive.

Second, depending on Durkheim's sociological interpretation of suicide motives, Hannah's exhibits different conditions that posit her at high risk of suicide. In fact, Durkheim refers to the crucial role of family and marriage as protective factors against suicide. Hannah has lost her husband and the intimacy, privacy and connectedness with his departure. She shows no affection toward her daughter and this is due to her childhood phase where Eva leaves her kids for one year and a half in the neighbor's house. She loses all kinds of feelings toward people and this is what her question reveals: "*Mamma, did you ever love us?*"(2004: 67). Her cold-heartedness stems from her extreme thirst for emotions; she can never give something that she does not possess.

Furthermore, Hannah does not succeed in making real friends; she is estranged by the town's women because of her behaviors and extramarital relations. Family interconnectedness is also damaged and the three women live separately though in the same house. If it says something, it should say that, on the one hand, the process of social integration is destroyed by Hannah's conduct. On the other hand, she rejects all

the required social norms and disrespects the values and ethics prevalent among the inhabitants. That leads to another level of damage that occurs to her process of social regulation.

Above all, Hannah does hardly associate religion with black women's lives; she believes in the absurdity and randomness of human life and she expresses her consciousness of the irrelevance and meaninglessness of faith in life. The availability of the risk factors facilitates the suicide commitment of Hannah sociologically, psychologically and even philosophically.

More importantly, Hannah's suicide is both egoistic and anomic. It is egoistic as it results from her outsiderness and isolation, her inability to get involved within her community, accept people and be accepted by them; she remains a stranger for them. It is also anomic as Hannah rejects the values and norms of her society; she lives in her own world and imposes her own standards regardless whether her life norms are appreciated by other or not.

Third, at the psychological level, Hannah's suicide is also a result of psychache, and that unbearable pain is the legitimate outcome of her inability to fulfill her psychological needs. Shneidman claims that one's psychache occurs when the individual is unable to turn his needs into realization. As a black woman, Hannah manifests highly demanding needs that her context does hardly assist her to fulfill. Not surprisingly, her fundamental need is the need for stability because she experiences family dissociation, conflicts and abuse. The need for affection is strongly depicted in the feminine part of Hannah's character, it drives her mostly to have multiple relationships with men. Hannah lacks affection inside her family and it deepens after her husband's death.

Besides, through her sexual relations with various men, Hannah attempts to satisfy her biological need and fulfill the need for recognition because she feels her life becomes useless and needless. Moreover, she also misses the need for affiliation and belonging which provides one's existence with meaning and value. Hannah's failure to get her basic needs fulfilled throws her to the bosom of psychache; the latter reaches its peak at Plum's murder.

The researchers Saktiningrum and Andini resume that Hannah's personality is haunted by fear, the fear of abandonment that drives the fear of intimacy. The experience of being abandoned as a child by her parents develops into a complex that is reflected in her relation with her daughter. The fear of getting intimate closeness to people stems from the fear of emotional separation. The researchers think:

> Hannah's suicide has something to do with her painful experiences in her past. She is abandoned by her parents, she loses her husband, and people in her society mock and avoid her because she has affairs with her friends and neighbors' husbands. Moreover, she also experiences a traumatic incident before her death, which is her mother has apparently killed her brother. Those painful experiences cause psychological pain. This psychological pain triggers Hannah to commit suicide. (2020: 104)

Hannah represents the category of black women who unconsciously destroy the most appropriate protective factors that may save their lives because of their behaviors, discipline and life ingredients.

V. Disputable Suicide in Vera's Fiction

Yvonne Vera writes the colonial history of Zimbabwe, the liberation struggle and the postcolonial holocaust through the eyes of her black characters and the bodies of fighting men and women. She succeeds to crystallize the essential struggle of black

women for liberation, equality and success. However, most of her works implement the issue of violence, essentially or partially, but her fiction entails the female body being manipulated, exploited and violated. Carolyn Martin Shaw conceives:

> Vera consistently returns to a concern with the mother-daughter connection or disconnection, loss of the mother, rejection or abandonment of the child, and denial of motherhood. Protagonists in Vera's poetic novels are defeated by maternity: as young women, they commit infanticide, perform a successful self-abortion, or trade the physical for a spiritual life. (2004: 35)

Vera's reflects the postcolonial turmoil in her characters' flesh and bones; she implements different kinds of violence that black women resist physically, psychologically, sexually and even verbally.

While phephelaphi chooses to leave the meaningless world with her babies, Mazvita and Zhizha resist even more developed violence forms but with elevated and hopeful expectations that life would be better one day. The first protagonist prefers the world of the dead, the other two escape from violence and oppression toward other escape alternatives where they survive despite the persistent unavoidable trauma. In Butterfly Burning, Phephelaphi escapes by setting herself into fire; her self- murdering act is controversial and disputable as it articulates multiple questions about whether she has the right or whether she might be excused anyhow. However, in Under the Tongue and Without a Name, Zhizha and Mazvita escape to their unique refuges where they stay alive but extraordinarily.

V.1. Escape but not through Suicide

Zhizha and Mazvita represent the African black subservient woman whose tongue is buried inside her mouth because she is unable to refuse the violence she is subjected to from any patriarchal force. Both protagonists are victimized and both of them choose to escape but not through the suicide window. They escape toward other refuges where they seek safety before independence or equality. The choice falls indeed on other survival mechanisms where life becomes equivalent to death or even highly bitter; they avoid suicide but chose a deadly life, to walk as a dead, to sleep as a dead, to live in the darkness as Vera implements in her novel: "*I know the darkness is just in my head, waiting. It is not even in my head…. The inside of my head has swallowed darkness. Perhaps it is the sky which has entered me because sometimes I can see the morning rolled inside my head.*" (2002: 135)

Suicide might seem an easier and a quicker solution but both characters do not dare to take a step toward self-murder. It is in fact approaching suicide as an intentional escape from trauma in the dichotomy 'Perpetrator survivor Vs victim survivor' that can also be narrowed to give another applicable example that can connect to both characters 'Infanticide survivor Vs rape survivor'. The two women survive but with long lasting effects of magnificent incidents that make suicide an easy coward escape if being compared to that survival.

When Zhizha escapes to the world of silence where she lives a deadly life of an oppressed raped black girl, Mazvita escapes to the criminal act of infanticide through which she assures a spot in the world of criminals who survive after killing their babies. Both protagonists commit suicide-like behaviors by escaping to the deadly world where

individuals are physically alive but they are dead mentally, psychologically and spiritually because they have to hide all the time in the dark side.

First, Mazvita is a black woman who moves to the town seeking better life conditions, comfort and joy. She runs away from the countryside life of poverty, hard work and exhaustion. Similar to Phephelaphi, Mazvita forgets about her basic goal as a black mother; instead of providing love and care, Mazvita kills her child and carries it back to her old village. A broken dream with a murdered child and a distressed black woman, this is how Vera describes her protagonist in *Without a Name.* What drives a mother to kill her own baby? Vera answers: "*Mazvita rejected the baby because it pulled her back from her design to be free.*" (Ibid: 73) Mazvita escapes from the hardships of her life not toward suicide but toward infanticide which is the worst crime that a human being might think of.

The protagonist is extremely consumed by the silence and emptiness that she survives, Vera explains: "*In an instant, she had turned blind. The blindness rose from inside her and overwhelmed her entire face. She no longer spoke. Mute and wounded she moved through the streets and wept. Her weeping fell in silent drops into her cupped palms. The streets grew rich with showers, with her tears*." (2002: 15). She has always dreamt of being a strong independent woman but she fails to achieve that because she remains hung between modernity and origins, between Mubaira and Harare.

She runs away from the disappointment of the township life and the deepened discrimination and exploitation of black countryside new arriving inhabitants. Though Mazvita has been forced to leave Mubaira because of the revolts and after she has been

raped and thrown to the streets by a Guerilla soldier, she suffers before she can displace and settle. The story summarizes Mazvita's tiresome journey between two dates: leaving Mubaira toward Harare then going back to Mubaira from Harare. Mazvita hides the rape story as Grace Musila claims: "*After her rape, Mazvita responds to the ordeal by shutting out the experience completely from her mind ... Her body interrupts her dreams by conceiving from the rape*" (2007: 54).

The consequence of the rape is the baby that she strongly abhors; she has to confront her fears and the reality that she struggles to hide. However, she can hardly hide that baby that is born to be the witness and the evidence of an unwanted memory. Besides, Mazvita is not happy with Joel as she always feels lonely even when they are together; loneliness destroys her psyche; the writer assures: "*Mazvita was completely alone while she was with Joel.*" (Ibid: 68)

Moreover, her life becomes unbearable with Joel after the arrival of the baby; it is filled with silence, a concealed boiling anger and a reciprocal underestimation. The novelist claims: "*Mazvita did not understand that the cry had defeated the silence in her body, that the cry was a release dangerous and regrettable. The cry was not a lulling freedom she sought.*" (Ibid: 70) She arrives at a point where she hates everything around her including her baby that destroys her world; she decides to get rid of it. The act of killing the baby is extremely ugly, merciless and haunting as a scene in a horror movie. Mazvita kills the baby by breaking its bones and carrying it back to Mubaira; the murdered child to be buried in the destroyed land. She weeps then listens to her cries: "*She listened to every sound in her thought, and wept deep and slow for the stillness on her back, a heavy cold stillness that hugged her.*" (Ibid: 113)

She escapes from the ordeal, life hardships and depression through a criminal act to the deadly world of criminals; living with feelings of regret and grief is even more tormenting than death by suicide, it is a long way of agony and distress. Mazvita's experience of anguish and misery forces her to escape her unbearable suffering through a suicide-like act, infanticide; that turns her into a walking dead. The author reveals:

> It was nothing to see a woman with a blind stare on her face, with a baby fixed spidery on her back. It was nothing to be sorrowful… there was a uniformity about suffering, a wisdom about securing your own kind of suffering, your own version of going forward. (Ibid: 43)

Second, Zhizha is a young girl whose dream is to have a peaceful and happy life; violence, however, turns her life into a real hell.

Zhizha's lived experience of physical and sexual violence mutes her for a long time, a complete hollow silence that imprisons her words inside her mouth. She is expressionless and mute as most traumatized people who turn to be passive, depressed and emotionless as a result of their interior struggle to utter their pain. The protagonist thinks: "*My cry is death not life, softens, like stone breaking in water.*" (Ibid: 227). The writer in fact implements the protagonist's mental language to allow her be the narrator of her story beside the omniscient narrator who fills the silent gaps.

Silence is a curse that renders her mind into an extremely large container of words that need to be uttered out for self- release. Silence is a deadly preference or refuge turns the girl into a volcanic pot that is about to explode at anytime because words are hardly imprisoned for an entire life. Does silence save her or rather hurt her even more? She answers: "*I remember the pain in my growing. I remember my stolen*

dawn. I cried in the voice of my mother and my grandmother, I remember my hidden world." (Ibid: 200)

In fact, Zhizha's father shows intelligence when he chooses his daughter; by doing that, he knows he has pointed at the weakest and the most vulnerable individual in his environment. Death is all around her; she is no longer safe as she feels frightened from an approaching silent shadow that should be called death: "*My cry is silence and death…. I cry in my sleep, this sleep is death….. Death has entered my dreaming entered my growing turned it into mud and now I cry in one small whimper, cry quietly into my memory.*" (Ibid: 225)

Zhizha would have preferred to keep silent even if she has not lost her voice; in both cases, she is victimized and oppressed; her lost voice deprives her from the power that she needs to resist. Zhizha describes herself eloquently as: "*I seem to belong to everyone's mouth for a whole season. I am harvest. I am rain. I am river and rock. I am sky and death. I am Zhizha.*" (Ibid: 218) She is the victimized rape-survivor whose escape toward silence proves to be deadly inasmuch as suicide is.

> Silence, as the antithesis of orality, is characterised symbolically as a way to perpetuate abuse and leave it in … Representing its own silence, the colonized body speaks; uttering its wounds, it negates its muted condition… The fact that Vera chooses a silenced narrator and not a silent one reveals that she is convinced that the unheard voices are not non-existent, but stifled by abuse. (2007: 110)

The researcher Ortega- Guzman Elika perceives silence differently.

V.2. Phephelaphi Falls Apart

Among Vera's female characters, Phephelaphi is the one who commits suicide; she is driven to self murder because of certain factors. The protagonist is an orphan who has lost her mother Gertrude in a terrible incident though the last phase of the novel reveals that Gertrude is not her biological mother, the mother's friend Zandile is the real mother. Phephelaphi meets Fumbatha and moves to live with him in a small room. Her life with him provides her with much love and care but things start to change gradually. After her-self inflicted abortion, her relation with Fumbatha shatters consequently and it gets worse after her second pregnancy. The latter drives her to strong exhaustion as she becomes aware that her loss would be tripled: her dream, her husband and her baby. She sets herself into fire because of emotional abuse and masculine underestimation.

The philosophical and the psychological perspectives manifest a remarkable overlap in the protagonist; her tragedy and psychache emerge from the same area. Significantly, what drives Phephelaphi to the act of suicide is mainly the loss of the only opportunity to create meaning in her life; the beautiful picture of her successful future is distorted. Pregnancy prevents her from the candidacy attempt for the nurse training; more significantly, that was the first time to open that training for black women and Phephelaphi dreams to be among the candidates. However, she prioritizes the fulfillment of her dream at the expense of the life of her baby despite Fumbatha's total absence from the abortion scene.

The young woman is unique and different; she has a dream that gives meaning to her life; her inability to accomplish her dream is significantly equal to her inability to live any longer. She wants to be herself, she wants to be different from the stereotypical

model of the subservient woman; she is full of ambition, power and hope. Being a nurse means everything to her; the destruction of her dream drives her to self-destruction and self-abortion, it turns her to a murderer. Does her act of infanticide bring back her dream? Does it protect her from regret and self blame? Realistically, she abandons her babies for nothing; it only deepens her feelings of grief and regret.

The triad of pain, guilt and death is reflected in her character and behavior. Phephelaphi's pain and loss drive her to kill her babies; regret brings her tears out and makes her choose the final departure. In Vera's *Butterfly Burning*, Phephelaphi describes her broken dream and broken self as:

> So, I have to forget about training as a nurse altogether and what else am I to become but nothing …. My being. My woman self tearing away. My sorrowful self. No matter my need, no matter which. I will not. Now he has broken my stem with this child he has given me. I am nothing. (2000: 145)

Fumbatha brings her destruction and disappointment instead of his promises of love and passion; she blames him for carelessness and indifference. He kills her and her babies when he underestimates her ambition and dream; when he makes her pregnant twice to lose the only opportunity to be somebody, to be different. Fumbatha is similarly guilty and he drives her to the triple murder: murdering her babies then herself immediately.

Besides, one of the extremely dark moments for Phephelaphi is when she knows about her real mother and the way she has abandoned her; it is a moment of grief, shock and distress especially after she discovers the reason of her rejection. A real mother does never reject her baby; Zandile gives her baby to Gertrude who is killed by a white man. Not surprisingly, both mothers disappoint her; Zandile for having multiple sexual

relations with men regardless whether these men are black or white, and Gertrude for being killed by a white policeman for betrayal excuses. Vera writes: "*Zandile did not want either this child who refused to be born or the bold magnificent scar left falling below her naval.*" (Ibid: 143)

The precious value of loyalty and faithfulness is absent in both mothers' conducts. Both mothers are prostitutes and Zandile is a homeless woman who goes through highly difficult conditions that force her to seek a safe refuge for her child; the act of giving the child away is, however, not always forgivable despite one's excuses: "*Zandile, who makes no distinction between white men and black men when it comes to pleasure and exchange can, however, tell the difference between sunrise and sunset: at dusk, she can curl her legs around the body of a white man and listen to police whistles passing by*" (Ibid: 40).

Phephelaphi is strongly consumed by psychache; over- thinking about the act of abandoning one's own baby and it affects her abortion decision. If she has been abandoned for the sake of enjoying sexual freedom, she is abandoning both of her babies for the fulfillment of her dream. Phephelaphi is lost inasmuch as she is manipulated by the sweeping power of ambition and the strong eagerness of success. More importantly, discovering that she belongs nowhere leaves a remarkable trace on her psyche and determines her destination and final decision of suicide.

Moreover, Phephelaphi expresses her numerous needs, the physical and the psychological and mourns her inability to fulfill them while Fambatha's absence deepens her trauma. His inability to understand her need of accomplishment and recognition quickens the separation; his attempts to belittle her strife for success create a

gap of silence and misunderstanding. The novelist thinks: "*He can consider each of her silences; a silhouette he cannot define. He watches her disappear into the gulf between them as though she has dived into a river.*" (Ibid: 129).

She also seeks fulfilling her need of independence, belonging and affiliation. The need for affection hurts her most because she grows up an orphan with less reciprocal emotions and Fumbatha short-term affection reaches the zero-level soon after marriage. Phephelaphi ends up to self destruction because she seeks independence and love similarly, she needs understanding not manipulation, freedom not hegemony. She needs to be herself, unique, specific and different.

From a sociological viewpoint, Phephelaphi is basically a self-immersed person who is interested only in her own life without paying attention to others. She isolates herself socially especially after she moves to live in a new neighborhood with Fambatha. Additionally, her life with Fumbatha is rendered as a collection of many silences; he is mostly absent and she is frequently silent. She is an orphan girl of a prostitute, and that makes her obliged to minimize the number of friends; she is aware that the prostitution symbol would follow her wherever she goes. She alienates herself at the last phase of her life as she perceives the meaninglessness of life and unimportance of sociability.

People may remind her over and over that she is alone, weak and hopeless. The writer claims: "*Phephelaphi seeks her own refuge. She is lightness, float like flame, with flame. The flames wrap the human form, arms, knees that are herself, a woman holding her pain like a torn blanket. An enticing spectacle of a severe horror.*" (Ibid: 148). In fact, Phephelaphi's suicide belongs to the egoistic type category as she behaves that

way as a result of her high level of egoism regardless of the baby inside her womb; she thinks only about herself and her dream. In fact, she is completely excused for being devoted to the fulfillment of her dream, but she is not excused when sacrificing the life

Phephelaphi refuses to construct a socialization process with people whom she does hardly need; she is self-satisfied of herself. She claims that she does not belong to the world she is found in; she does not want to stay in a world to which she does not belong. She does not belong to Rhodesia nor does she belong to Africa; she belongs nowhere and this is what drives her to leave the world of nonsense: "*I am not here. Here is a place you can belong. I no longer belong. I am not here.*" (Ibid: 146)

Conclusion

Feminist and Womanist ideologies are basically what the present chapter explores in addition to analyzing Toni Morrison's and Vera's novels in the light of the maxims of intersectionality and invisibility. It aims at finding out the indicators of invisibility and its impact on the black identity construction and liberation quest. The female protagonists perceive themselves as invisible women and they struggle to turn their invisibility and submission into success and power.

Pecola on the one hand spends her entire life looking for a pair of blue eyes, it is her ultimate dream that she can hardly exist without. Pecola is reflected as an invisible young black girl yearning for a beautiful eye color that might hide her black skin color. She thinks that the blue eyes would make her beautiful, would make her a fully recognized woman in her community. Pecola lives to accomplish her dream which gives meaning to her life; it protects her from suicidality.

On the other hand, Sula is a mature woman who spends her life fighting social aspects that dominate her destiny and direct her choices. She is a rebellious woman who refuses all social and racial differences; she rejects the family and friendship bonds for the sake of her own freedom and peace of mind. Morrison reflects Sula's longing for freedom from social obstacles and her obstinate endeavor to reach the ultimate meaning of her life as she feels socially, sexually and racially throttled. Despite the high suicide risk she is prone to, Sula's eagerness to be free and strong enables her to stay alive and prevents her from suicidal ideation.

Furthermore, Morrison's *Beloved* is also one of the best examples where death, guilt and pain meet together with the struggle to reach meaning. Sethe depicts the character whose ultimate meaning is to be free; freedom is so crucial for enslaved African Americans and their precious dream that requires sacrifice and patience. Sethe experiences various terrible types of pain under the concept of slavery; she has been dehumanized and tortured by the white owner to the extent that she runs away with her children in a deadly journey. However, Sethe is very far from suicidal thoughts because she lives at the dream of getting her murdered daughter again

Vera's female characters also have to fight segregation and patriarchy; Mazvita and Zhizha represent two types of African women who are extremely tormented but can do practically nothing except to hurt themselves. The raped Zhizha is doubly buried within her silence and submission after she is sexually violated by her father who is immediately killed by her mother. The girl blames herself even more as she attributes the responsibility of the family destruction to herself. Mazvita is forced by the power of freedom to murder her baby, put it on her back and take it back into the small village. She dreams of success and power; when she fails to accomplish that, she blames her

baby for interrupting her process of triumph and evolution. Vera's two characters do not commit suicide despite their sorrows.

The two female characters who commit suicide in the selected texts are Hannah and Phephelaphi. The two reach a high degree of psychache that drives them to escape at any expenses. Phephelaphi's lost dream and broken world make her kill herself and her baby inside her womb. Hannah's dissociation, loneliness and meaninglessness push her to seek a safe refuge though suicide. The two women set themselves into fire; they burn within the flames of loss, meaninglessness and hopelessness.

Chapter Four: Loss of the Self or

Escape from the Self

A word does not rot unless it is carried in the mouth for
too long, under the tongue.   (Yvonne Vera, 2002: 231)

Introduction

The last chapter is mostly concerned with ordering and organizing the study findings in relation to the selected literary texts. It deals with the protective factors that drive the black woman to resist and avoid suicidal thoughts believing in the slogan that what does not kill her makes her stronger. The current chapter is engaged with the suicide paradox rather than the suicide behavior itself; and it relates suicidality to self-emancipation to find out whether it is ultimate target of the black woman suicide. Besides, it seeks to explore the utilization of the protective factors within literary plots. Does suicide free the black woman? If it is the case, it frees her from what exactly?

The last section of the chapter is more concerned with suicide prevention, suicide survivors and suicide notes. It highlights the importance of implementing the American program 'Zero Suicide Plan' to fight the catastrophic phenomenon beside some crucial strategies by considerable organizations and associations of mental health problems and prevention. American suicidologists indeed rely heavily on the 'Zero Suicide Plan' that is being enhanced to reach a society with zero suicide cases.

I. Suicide Plots in Black Literature

Suicide as a topic has been overwhelmingly analyzed by scholars of different research fields but because the present thesis is based on the study of suicide in literature, it is preferable to integrate, in the literature review, some hints about some literary works to see how they treat and present such a subject. Literary men also take into consideration the importance of fighting that phenomenon with words. It is the duty of each single individual in the world to contribute in preventing suicide; we are all concerned and we are all responsible.

If the imaginary visualization of authors allows them to create characters and events based on the suicidal ideation, the real world also embraces real people as intellectuals, celebrities and famous personalities who end up their lives by suicide; some of them are unfortunately writers and poets. Ernest Hemingway, Jack London, Anne Sexton, Virginia Woolf, Romain Gary, Primo Levi, Yukio Mishima, Walter Benjamin, David F. Wallace and many others decide for several reasons to put an end to their lives. Sylvia Plath is also one of the famous writers and she deliberately decides to end her life different times claiming in one of her poems "Lady Lazarus":

Dying

Is an art, like everything else.

I do it exceptionally well.

I do it so it feels like hell.

I do it so it feels real.

I guess you could say I've a call (1992: 278)

Besides, a considerable number of black African and African American writers have shown a fundamental interest in writing about suicide in their fiction. It is a modest attempt by a certain category of intellectuals to raise consciousness among people and to put a hand on the wound in order to help save people at high risk of committing suicide. Black writers are known for their audacity to face and unveil social sensitivities for the sake of protecting the youth and saving more lives. Suicide is one of the substantial themes that the literature of Blacks involves; it is part of their past and present. It is indisputable that people attempt suicide in the moments of weakness as a result of powerlessness, estrangement and despondency; this is what puts suicide at the core of black literature due to the difficult conditions they had to survive in the past.

James Baldwin is one of the African American authors who shed light on suicide in their novels. Baldwin himself attempted suicide many times in his life; his attempts drew from despair and suffering. It is actually an interest that emerges from Baldwin's own personal experience and his horror of death and suicidality; he explains it as:

> And this was perhaps the first time in my life that death occurred to me as a reality… I had thought of suicide when I was much younger, as, possibly, we all have, but then it would have been for revenge, it would have been my way of informing the world how awfully it had made me suffer. (1990: 109)

Baldwin also refers to the act of killing oneself and focuses on the psychological suicide that the oppressed individuals usually maintain as a consequence to prejudice and dehumanization. It can be said that Baldwin is the writer who includes a good number of suicidal characters in his fiction; he has been deeply affected by the characters he had created and imagined like Rufus, Franc, Richard, Francis and others.

The social dangers and the fury lead to despair which is considered as the spark that ignites the desire to end one's life. According to the writer, America is the reason why a black young man has to think regularly about suicide and he confirms in his sixth novel "Just Above my Head": "*The car ahead of me has a bumper sticker reading, AMERICA: LOVE IT OR LEAVE IT*" (1980: 35).

The African American famous novelist transcends the function of looking for the cryptic motives of the phenomenon to coupling any attempt of resistance with life and any decline toward despair with death; there is no third option either to live or to die. It is another way to assure that admitting a deadly life equates death for the individual who would incline instinctively to the easiest and the quickest solution that is

suicide. Sarah Beebe Fryer condemns that: "*The despairing living death Baldwin refers to throughout his works can manifest itself in a variety of ways: some violent-crime, madness, drug addiction, (often unjust) incarceration, others more passive-simply succumbing to the daily grind*" (1986: 24).

The black man's ability to survive is due to his consciousness of being a member in the American society; the more conscious of his negritude he is, the more integrated he can be and the less likely to attempt suicide he should be consequently. People want only to stop the pain when they commit suicide, that's it; the American author Teffanie DeBartolo claims: "*I was depressed," he said with a smirk. "Did you really want to die?" "No one commits suicide because they want to die." "Then why do they do it?" "Because they want to stop the pain*" (2005: 68)

Furthermore, Some other African American writers such as Richard Wright, W. E. B. Du Bois, Alice Walker, Maya Angelou, bell hooks and Ralph Ellison integrate ideas of self-harm and self- destruction in their writings in an attempt to clarify the perdition of the phenomenon on individuals, families and communities. Black African writers also endeavor to highlight the suicidal thoughts in their works; Chinua Achebe, Bessie Head, Ama Ata Aidoo, Ayi Kwei Armah, Wole Soyinka, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Ngugi Wa Thiongo and Ben Okri are known for their involvement in the challenge of fighting self-destruction attempts and preventing suicidal acts using their fiction as an artistic weapon.

Suicide is globally rejected whether in real life or in artistic achievements; literature has a tremendous impact on the readers' stream of thoughts and writers are responsible in a way for the awareness of people. Most artists get inspiration from the pain their communities contend and they do justice when they share the pain and work

to convene the wound.

The American novelist David Foster Wallace suffers from depression and puts an end to his life as a result of it. Out of his own experience comes the deep meaning of suicide; the image that he depicts for the suicidal victim as a trapped person who is threatened by flames is eloquently sufficient to answer all the probable questions.

> The person in whom its invisible agony reaches a certain unendurable level will kill herself the same way a trapped person will eventually jump from the window of a burning high-rise. Make no mistake about people who leap from burning windows. Their terror of falling from a great height is still just as great as it would be for you or me standing speculatively at the same window just checking out the view; i.e. the fear of falling remains a constant. The variable here is the other terror, the fire's flames: when the flames get close enough, falling to death becomes the slightly less terrible of two terrors. It's not desiring the fall; it's terror of the flames. (2009: 932)

He summarizes the marvelously painful enigma in the best way.

II. The Suicidal Paradox and Non-Suicidal Black Female Characters

It is repeatedly claimed that the black woman is subjected to multiple stressors that turn her life into hell; these stressors are varied as varied the places they belong to or emerge from. These stressors may be found inside the individual him/herself, within the family, in the job place or even in the streets. Suicide is a solution for some people but it is an unforgiveable sin for others, it is an escape for some but a salvation for others; for black women, its meaning is unique and different.

Although suicide is foreseen by some women as a solution to major problems or an easy cut toward relief, it is viewed by the majority of black women as a coward act

to fly away and avoid encountering difficulties this is why some of them contemplate it while more others do not. That part seeks exploring what protects black female characters from committing suicide despite multiple life stressors. How do Morrison and Vera strengthen their women characters to resist suicidal ideation? What justifies the suicide paradox inside the selected literary texts? What are the major protective factors in the selected novels? The following headings answer these questions.

In Morrison's *Sula*, there are various black female characters who do not commit suicide but the main focus would fall on the double version of the same coin: Eva, and Sula; Hannah is to be excluded in that part because she commits suicide and she does not reflect the suicide paradox. In *Beloved*, Sethe and Baby Suggs are maintained for analysis but in *The Bluest Eye*, Pecola is the most appropriate character for exploration. Besides, Vera's fiction does not allow enough space for secondary characters to manifest. In both novels *Without a Name* and *Under the Tongue*, the two female protagonists Mazvita and Zhizha do not commit suicide due to certain factors. What prevents these black women from suicide behaviors?

In fact, the theoretical chapter focuses on three main protective factors to be considered in analysis: meaning, family and faith. One's family can protect one's life from suicide as it provides support and the sense of integration; it also fulfills the need for belonging and involvement. Faith is the religious background that one might lay at during the difficult times as it fills individuals' spiritual hole and supplies them with satisfaction and peace. Besides, meaning as a protective factor refers to somebody or something that an individual lives for; it also implements one's target or goal. When the suicidal individual maintains the notion of meaning for prevention or even therapy, he/she might be easily saved. Creating meaning can also be attained through fulfilling

one's needs whether they are physical, psychological or even spiritual. In the selected literary works, most of the black female characters do not commit suicide in virtue of various factors; they can successfully avoid suicide thoughts and save their lives.

II.1. Family

In fact, African American and black African families endure educational, economic, health difficulties; the dilemma grows more significantly urgent. The impact of these conditions affects the unity of the basic social unit that is the family; it affects its consistency and connectedness. Moynihan refers to the 'family breakdown' and 'social meltdown' that stand for the deteriorating value of the black family connectedness but his report (1965) is rejected by several social critics.

When the black American family is compared with the white American one, the former asserts higher level of integration, connectedness and unity. More importantly, research about the negro families manifests that the black woman is highly connected to family and friends, the social network of people around her increases the level of her psychological comfort and satisfaction. It is crucial to highlight the role of unity as it serves as a protective shield against delinquency, crimes and suicide. Black women are almost the center of their houses; they stand behind each member to provide necessary comfort, care and love.

In Morrison's *Beloved* for example, the role Sethe plays to protect her children is enormous even after the death of her husband; she remains strong to take care of the children. Sethe has frequently been through terribly overwhelming events like her escape from the white owners, the act of killing her baby to protect her from being a slave in addition to her two sons running away because of the ghost. More significantly,

the ghost of Sethe's murdered daughter named Beloved returns to the house then disappears. All these incidents are enough to drive anyone to seek a refuge through suicide because they all serve as good factors to increase the risk. However, Sethe manifests her extraordinary strength and she could resist her difficulties, if it is for someone, it is surely for the unity of her family. Despite the absence of her three other children (the ghost Beloved and the two sons), Sethe promises to keep waiting for their coming back.

Not surprisingly, it does not only protect Sethe's family from destruction and bankruptcy; it also protects Sethe herself from any suicidal thoughts or attempts. It is because she always puts her family at the top of her priorities that she struggles to stay alive for. Sethe survives for the unity of her family and her family serves as a protective factor against suicidal ideation. She has not wished to be dead or to disappear even in the most complicated moments.

Eva is another example of the black American woman whose family gives her a reason to stay alive. Though Eva seems to be a cold hearted mother who does hardly care about the well being of her family, she is deeply a careful mother whose logic and interpretation might seem exceptional. It is because she wants to improve the family conditions that Eva puts her leg under the train for the insurance money. It is also because of her deep love of Plum that she does not want to see his weakness; she wants him to be a man and she is unable to put it back in her womb and give him a second birth opportunity that she sets her son into fire. Despite her distorted logic of love, Eva lives for the sake of her family and she endeavors to keep its members united; this is what protects her from suicidal ideation. She could save her life when she ties it to her

family's unity and connectedness. In spite the fact that Eva fails to preserve the unity of her family, she succeeds in preserving her own life against self-murder.

II.2. Faith

If religion serves, in any way, as one of the protective factors that may prevent people from ending their lives, Islam is one of the religions that strictly forbids suicide and considers it as one of the greatest unforgivable sins, and so does Christianity. Muslims and Christians believe that God is the Supreme Creator and he has given life to the human being, and he is the only one to take it away from him. Man is not allowed to decide when and where to leave, it is only up to God's decision and will. The people who commit suicide are destined to be severely punished for having done something they do not have the right to do.

Religion serves as a considerable protective factor that saves millions of lives especially when the individual has a strong faith in God and accepts what destiny dictates willingly. As explained in the theoretical part, black women are highly religious if being compared with other races. Their religiosity provides them with serenity, peace of mind and soul. Contributing in the various religious services and attending religious activities is part of the religious life of a large number of black women. Strong faith in God and destiny may protect black women from suicide ideation and attempts; it is a spiritual power that supplies them with relief and satisfaction.

In Morrison's *Beloved*, the female character Baby Suggs is a symbol of repentance and religiosity inasmuch as she symbolizes patience against oppression and dehumanization. Baby Suggs has greatly suffered at the hands of white Americans before she is freed from the shackles of slavery. She decides since then to provide

assistance through various religious activities. She has been deprived of her nine children to be sold to white slave owners and she is freed when Halle promises to buy her freedom through working extra time for some years. She could turn her exhaustion into triumph and cooperation with the black community; she starts her duty as a preacher.

Thanks to her good virtues, Baby Suggs becomes a healer of spiritual and physical wounds and she could successfully win the hearts of the town's people. They even attend her Clearings to be purified spiritually and to enjoy the collectiveness of black people. However, everything changes after the incident of Sethe murdering her daughter. The black community in Cincinnati consequently decides to break away with both women regardless of Baby Suggs' previous efforts to help and heal them.

She gets depressed when she is isolated by the people of the area but she soon recovers thanks to her faith, patience and morality. Her religiosity has always guided her throughout the dark times; her work to gather people and perform some preaches so that they all help each other and stay collected strengthen her immunity against suicidal ideation. Baby Suggs' faith serves as a protective factor that saves her life against self murder. Despite the suffering and misery of slave and after slave life, Baby Suggs remains safe from suicidal thoughts thanks to her own religiosity.

II.3. Meaning

Meaning is the key to success and to survival; without meaning life becomes unbearable. Meaning is crucial in the life of the human being as it prevents him/her from falling within the existential vacuum and the chains of alienation and void. When

one struggles to achieve a dream or attain a target or even fulfill a need, he/she is moving toward assuring the value of that meaning in his/her life.

In Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, the young girl Pecola is an example of the struggle to attain one's dream. Her dream is to be beautiful with a pair of blue eyes; blue eyes make her life significant and her face attractive. The pair of blue eyes is meant to attribute her life with meaning; despite the modesty of her dream but it is sufficient to give her a push to survive. Additionally, Pecola has a strong faith that she will reach her dream one day; she gazes at the mirror and imagines herself with that pair. Pecola is subjected to rape, violence and dehumanization inside and outside her house; she might easily be ascending the risk scale of suicidality, what protects her from self- murder is her dream.

A pair of blue eyes might change her whole life; and for this dream Pecola survives. That dream is constructed at the basis of her need for recognition. Pecola is frequently oppressed and treated badly by people around her; her mother treats the white master's daughter excellently but not her own daughter. Pecola believes that the blue eyes would assure her not only the required beauty but also the expected recognition. She survives to achieve her dream that attribute her life with meaning; meaning protects her from self destruction.

Moreover, in Vera's *Without a Name* the protagonist Mazvita has already planned for a prosperous future that turns her into a free, strong and successful woman. Despite the terrible experience of rape, she moves to the town wishing that life would be better. She meets Joel and moves to live with him. However, her life with Joel lacks

the passion and understanding; he is silent most of the time and she feels lonely and depressed.

After Mazvita knows she is pregnant, she turns mad because she is aware the baby would interrupt her plan for freedom and success. Differently from Phephelaphi who aborts her baby and kills herself simultaneously, Mazvita gives birth to the child then kills it, puts it on her back and buries it in her destroyed village. Mazvita feels terribly broken that she breaks the neck bone of the baby; the ugliness of the murder deprives her from any sense of motherhood. She kills the baby that emerges as an obstacle in her way but she does not commit suicide because she still believes in her potential and desire to fulfill her dream of independence and advance.

Similarly, Zhizha's silence ignites her desire to wait for the day when she gets back her voice, the day when she can express all her feelings and speak about her wishes, sorrows and pain. She also has a very enormous dream that deserves her resistance and survival; that dream gives a meaning to her life and that meaning serves as a protective factor that saves her life. For Zhizha, who has lost her voice under the shock of rape and violence, the secret that gives her sufficient protection against self destruction is her dream to speak one day.

To conclude, Pecola and Mazvita share the same protective factor that saves their lives and give them hope to pursue the survival struggle; it is the meaning they attribute to their lives. Sethe and Eva seek a refuge in the family integration and collectiveness; belonging to a family protects them from suicide. Baby Suggs finds refuge in her faith to stay protected from suicidality and to survive a peaceful and joyful life.

More interestingly, Morrison's Sula and Hannah do not differ in character and personality to a great extent. One is the mother and the other is her daughter but one of them commits suicide whereas the other prefers to stay alive; what is then the secret behind that variety in spite of the multiple commonalities between them? Sula is an example of an ardent independence woman who disregards social conventions and ignores the social connectedness; the way she destroys her relation with her friend Nel is an evidence. Besides, she represents the evil woman in her town as she makes relations with white and black men. Sula inherits the love of making multiple sexual relations from her mother; and the two do not wait to abuse couples' lives by attracting the male partners.

Hannah and Sula disregard the social values and underestimate the feeling of belonging to a family; they live and die lonely. The two have a meaningless life that lacks creation, ambition and hope; void surround them all the time. However, if Hannah commits suicide due to the psychache she bears since her childhood and she decides to surrender at a moment of alienation and loss, Sula is stronger and more stubborn than any call of surrender and than psychache and disorder. Sula is the type of the woman whose evil spirit protects her from suicide ideation; her immunity mechanisms are constructed at the basis of wickedness and ugliness; meaning, family and faith are all despised by her.

III. Suicide and Self-Emancipation for Black Women

Though the main focus of the present work is to explore the way the suicide paradox is reflected in literature, but it is also crucial to shed light on whether suicide is an escape endeavor or a self emancipation attempt. The black woman may prefer to

escape life difficulties and unbearable pain as she does not possess the sufficient courage and mechanisms to face them. However, she may also seek self-emancipation because she is driven by her willingness to be freed from masculine hegemony and racial segregation but not through suicide. Black women seek survival that is loaded with the magnificent quest of self emancipation; when they end up with self-murder, they recognize their inability to bear the unbearable, they escape silently.

Is suicide a form of self-emancipation for the black woman? Does suicide free the black woman's body? Does it free her mind? Does it signify an escape toward a better world? If suicide is a form of self-emancipation, it emancipates her from what exactly? Why does the black woman escape life when she is known to be a persistent and resistant struggler? In fact, people commit suicide not because they want to end their lives but because they want to end the pain.

III.1. Coward Escape or Self-Emancipation

Research shows that the majority of suicidal people and those at high risk of suicide do not truly intend to end their lives nor do they want to kill themselves; they do not seriously set a goal to stop being alive. A certain category of suicidal people merely want to attract attention by their death attempts; these people usually have several successive failed attempts as they choose non lethal methods of self murder. For these people, suicide has nothing to do with emancipation as they only want love and care; when the need for care is not fulfilled, they threaten to kill themselves in a coward escapist attempt.

The researcher Kamesha Spates points at certain coping strategies against compelling conditions such as poverty as it may increases the risk of suicidality and the vulnerability of anxiety toward being alive for more time. Being dominated by various

social, economic and psychological stressors and lacking the adequate coping mechanisms also increases the suicide risk. The researcher also centers her study about suicide on the black woman and she contemplates the role of resistance to decrease the risk; resistance serves as one of strengths of the black woman that protects her life. Besides, she suggests classifying the black woman's resistance into passive and active types according to the way each one is employed in society: "*Active resistance can be seen through the notions of hostility and success, and passive resistance happens when the black woman reacts in a way to lessen the impact of difficulties in a relationship*" (2009: 43) Active resistance then turns one's torment into triumph but passive resistance turns oppressive conditions into more frustrating conditions and failure.

Psychologists such as Roy Baumeister claim that the truthful goal of suicidal people is to escape painful feelings and thoughts tied to their lives. It might be assimilated to the physical pain that gets reduced by some medical pills. The suicidal call, however, does not eradicate its signal unless the individual makes a real suicidal attempt or he/she silence that voice forever. The researcher is among many scholars who conceive the role of self-talk and internal thoughts in increasing the risk especially when the individual is unable to stop the depressed self talk flood. The best way then to process one's negative thoughts and get the minimum influence is to escape them.

People escape negative distressing thoughts positively or negatively depending on their psychological vulnerability and response. The positive influence may be manifested in making use of the mind skillfully whereas the negative influence of self talk might be through alcohol, drugs, self hurt or even overeating; escapism is one of the negative options. Despite the fact that these options erase the pain momentarily but pain persists and self talk consumes the mind to persuade the concerned person that the

only remaining solution is to end his/her life cowardly, easily and quickly. However, the suicidal person may succeed in ending his/her life and eradicate the pain but he/she in fact transmits the pain to the survivors but it is doubled after the suicidal loss.

Baumeister believes that suicide is an escape from the painful self-awareness that results from one's failure to accomplish what has been expected: "*Awareness of the self's inadequacies generates negative affect, and the individual therefore desires to escape from self-awareness and the associated affect*" (1990: 90). Suicide is the easier cut to deceive the mind. Then he acclaims: "*Suicide can be seen as an ultimate step in the effort to escape from self and world.*" (Ibid)

If suicide is an escape from painful emotional or psychological states, may it signify self-emancipation anyhow? If it is the case, it frees the black woman from what exactly? By assuming that the chains that constraint the black woman's liberty are restricted to her physical freedom, racial discrimination and masculine hegemony are two essential forces that constrict her liberty and equality. These calls are, for an elevated number of black women, very necessary and crucial but people do not die when they lack complete freedom or equality.

Besides, the black woman is a symbol of resistance and strength; she struggles for her survival seeking life over death and being over non-being. Moreover, the escapist suicide type does not contradict with emancipatory suicide type; if one of them is chosen by a smaller category of people, the other one is the largest group's preference. If the black woman escapes pain, distress and suffering through a suicidal act, she does barely think of suicide as a form of self-emancipation; she seeks freedom while alive. Suicide is the escapist decision of cowards and the black woman has never

been coward; she has always fought for the freedom of the country, the race and the gender.

III.2. Suicidal Hannah Vs Suicidal Phephelaphi

That part of the work is concerned with whether self-emancipation can be the target of suicide. The black woman does not commit suicide to free herself from hegemony or racism; she struggles while alive this is why she strives first to survive then to resist death attractiveness. Both writers succeed in presenting the origin of their black female characters' strength and resistance; they both reflect the dilemma that a black woman endures in order to be free. Morrison's Hannah sets herself into fire the same way Vera's Phephelaphi does; the two utilize fire while committing suicide.

Eleni Coundouriotis interprets Phephelaphi's suicide: "*The heroine immolates herself and is freed from the body that has trapped her as a sexual object in a patriarchal society.*" (2005: 64) However, Phephelaphi's egoistic suicide does not truly seek to emancipate her from Fumbatha's hegemony or her responsibility toward the unborn baby. She kills herself when she realizes that her world has broken immediately after the lost dream breaks her heart; she recognizes that the only thing that keeps her alive disappears, that renders her into a hollow meaningless walking corpse. The emotion dysregulation she experiences after Fumbatha decides to leave her explodes a traumatic volcano of regret and void inside her.

Phephelaphi's suicide is a coward escape as she can hardly bear that enormous mass of psychache. Realizing her triple loss: her dream of being a nurse, her first baby and her husband causes her to be unable to take the right decision in that moment. Phephelaphi is strong enough that she could have preferred to stay alive to struggle for self-emancipation rather than to die intentionally for it. She stands on the intersection of

pain, death and guilt; the pain of the missing nurse training with the needless death of her first baby inside her womb beside the resulting feeling of regret.

> Grandmother says that a woman cannot point to the source of her pain, saying, it is here and there. A woman finds her sorrow in her dream and everywhere. She is wounded even in her awakening. Sorrow is not like clay which is put beneath the sun to dry. It has no shape. It is only tears. Slowly she cries, slowly she weeps, sleeps and wakes. (2002: 162)

The Tragic Triad throws her into an endless existential vacuum that adds to her psychache to persuade her that death is the ideal solution. She escapes silently after she perceives that there is nobody to stay for and nothing to live for. Psychache indeed drives one to think of a way to escape everything as Yvonne Vera entails in her *Under the Tongue*.

Morrison's Hannah represents the character of the widowed woman who manifests no affection to her daughter; her sad memories of childhood grow the mother-daughter complex inside her. She can hardly forget that her mother has left them in the neighbors' house for one year and a half; that pain grows into a tough carelessness and disintegration. Her fissured psyche drives her to look only for men with whom she sleeps but she does rarely plan for anything else. She is the type of subservient woman for whom female independence and strength do barely have a central importance in life. Hannah proves to be unable to bear the unbearable pain and this is the reason behind her coward escape as Morrison's claim: "*It was a fine cry - loud and long - but it had no bottom and it had no top, just circles and circles of sorrow.*" (2004: 174).

IV. Suicide Preventive Measures in the USA and Africa: Zero Suicide Plan

Although the present work is an attempt to explore the mysterious land of suicide and to unveil the various dialectics of the suicide phenomenon, and although the core body of analysis starts from and builds on literary texts, it is similarly important to shed light on the universal efforts maintained by governments around the world to protect humans from that tyrannical death. Suicide should no longer be chained by the shackles of taboos and forbidden issues; it is high time to launch the call for action as well as to give voice to the cry of pain that people at high risk of suicide frequently release.

IV.1. Suicide Prevention

It is highly important to have suicide prevention strategies and frameworks developed around the world because a definite strategy is a key to understand the existing gap between people and their governments. It is additionally important to prepare a roadmap to drive the crisis to its lowest degrees or to get its impact diminished. An effective preventive strategy is should be multisectoral regarding the nature of the suicide issue; various sectors are supposed to be implemented within the plan: education, politics, justice, social welfare and more essentially media.

The strategy not only should be tailored and adjusted to the country's social, cultural and economic background, but it also requires an adequate action plan that can be applicable to the inhabitants of the area. An effective fruitful strategy should be designed on a definite target and short term objectives that are reachable, a determined timeline and a reasonable budget beside divided responsibilities are also crucial in the process. Any progress in suicide prevention is an indicator of the effectiveness of the settled action plan beside the perseverance and continuity of performance.
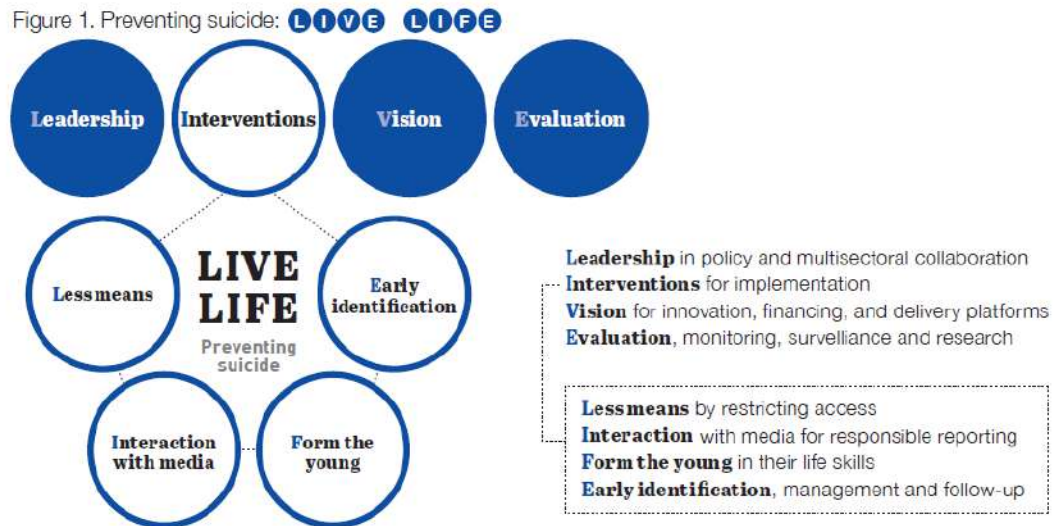
Not surprisingly, the institutional programs and governmental plans that the US devotes to stop the flow of people toward intentional death might seem extraordinarily enormous if it is compared with the ones maintained in African countries. While Americans have succeeded to overcome the taboo obstacle by exposing solutions and alternatives for prevention, most African countries, namely Zimbabwe and Algeria, still struggle to remove the taboo shadow and suggest preventive measures. That type of issues destroy societies and they should no longer be regarded as untouchable topics while the statistics of people who die by suicide outnumber 80,000 in the world every year; which means one person every 40 seconds. Effective measures have to be launched even if at a small scale with single attempts at the local level.

Regarding the suicide motives and the factors that put individuals at high risk, it is necessary to fight, stop or remove the causes first as to decrease the risk and save more lives. Suicide is preventable and the WHO suggests various protective measures beside the ones acclaimed by other associations such as the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), the National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention (Action Alliance), the AAS (American Association of Suicidology) and the AFSP (American Foundation for Suicide Prevention) with its sections spread around the American states. These associations decide on a national common objective that is to reduce the suicide rate 20% in the US by 2025.

The WHO's "National Suicide Prevention Strategies: Progress, Examples and Indicators" explains some applicable prevention measures and implements the LIVE LIFE that is a strategic approach based on the key ingredients sufficient for prevention. It addresses the old and the young categories similarly and it aims at a maximum level of protection through involving a set of interconnected mechanisms and interventions.

The LIVE LIFE strategy is meant for all countries which have already initiated prevention frameworks

Figure 9: Suicide Preventing Strategy: LIVE LIFE

Figure 1. Preventing suicide: LIVE LIFE

Leadership Interventions Vision Evaluation

Less means LIVE LIFE Early identification Preventing suicide

Interaction with media Form the young

Leadership in policy and multisectoral collaboration
Interventions for implementation
Vision for innovation, financing, and delivery platforms
Evaluation, monitoring, surveillance and research

Less means by restricting access
Interaction with media for responsible reporting
Form the young in their life skills
Early identification, management and follow-up

Source: WHO, National Suicide Prevention Strategies: Progress, Examples and Indicators. 2018.

Furthermore, The CDC, for example, suggests a protective plan against all types of crisis, suicide being one of them; that plan is made up of four fundamental elements: science, data, action and collaboration:

Figure 10: Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan

SCIENCE ACTION COLLABORATION DATA
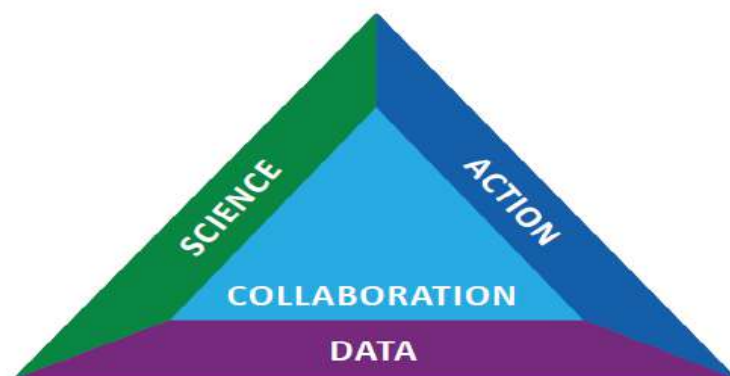
Source: CDC: Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan FY2020-2022

-By data, CDC scholars refer the necessary information and statistics about who is concerned and what the factors that increase and decrease suicide rates are.

-By science, CDC scholars indicate the possibility to analyze, test and evaluate the maintained measures of prevention; it is about providing evidence and applying theoretical approaches to real samples to achieve reliable conclusions.

-By action, they claim that the availability of data and the scientific interference facilitate the transition to tangible action; looking for a continuous improvement of plans and strategies at the basis of the received feedback is a priority in that phase.

-Collaboration signifies that efforts should be gathered for the same predestined objective because an extremely sensitive issue such as suicide requires governmental and public collaboration around the nation. Inside each one of the four phases, there are certain short term objectives that anticipate a regular progress though s on a smaller scale.

National engagement and local partnership cooperate together with an influential manipulation of data, science and action; that would sincerely save more lives and decrease the intensity of its impact.

The role associations and mental health centers play for suicide prevention in the US is incomparable as to declare that even though the governmental contribution is robustly enlarging and expanding, individual imprints are also elementary in the prevention process; this is what gives sense and raise awareness of the voluntary service ideation American citizens endow for prevention.

A strongly effective instrument that truly helps to reduce suicide rates and protect vulnerable categories is the devotion of a wide-reaching communication network locally and nationally in the US. The hotline, lifeline or crisis line are various

names to point out to the centers that receive free calls from people at crisis or emotional distress seeking immediate psychological assistance. These centers are available seven days a week and 24 hours a day and they provide immediate support free counseling.

Besides, the second effective criterion adopted by the American citizen is the predisposition to serve voluntarily in various public and social missions; it is grounded in the collective identity and it is a largely appreciated moral act. Contributing in the good of society requires high moral standards and strong sociable connectedness; Americans perceive suicide as everybody's concern and they believe they are all requested to give a hand. The CDC determines some important conditions and strategies that might help decrease suicide rates; they are highly planned and effectively practical (**Appendix F**):

- Strengthen economic supports.

- Strengthen access and delivery of suicide care.

- Create protective environments.

- Promote connectedness.

- Teach coping and problem-solving skills.

- Identify and support people at risk.

- Lessen harms and prevent future risk (CDC: Suicide Prevention Strategic Plans, 2020)

However, suicide prevention in most of the African countries does not truly go through a strategic plan that preserves people's lives. Most attempts are embodied in single and separate efforts from certain institutions which do not promote to the degree of the required efficiency and worthiness. The difficulty of getting a designed strategy applied to the real context lays in the fact that the multisectoral cooperation is

interrupted at any level; which hinders the action plan from being accomplished. The prevention processes and strategies are prevented from being fulfilled due to certain conditions such as: the situation of the public services, infrastructure, health and educational systems, required qualifications and the sense of stigmatization and taboo, and above all the fragmentation African countries reveal after independence.

Within the African region, Namibia was the first country to introduce a strategic plan for prevention hiring specific teams for the purpose of counseling, training and awareness raising. The main objective is reach a nation free of suicides through a sufficient multifaceted support of people at high risk. Special attention addressed to vulnerable individuals psychologically, financially and spiritually may even diminish the rates to zero suicide cases in countries with very low rates; efforts should be multiplied for the purpose.

A research prepared by Joseph Osafo, K. O. Asante and C. S. Akotia, implementing 18 African countries reveals that only four countries provide official statistics of suicide rates and only three of them are in the process of developing a prevention strategy. (2020: 53). The paper also demonstrates that only one country has a national center for suicide research and prevention; training programs and counseling units are very limited in the entire region (Ibid) Because the number of countries that provide statistics is small, it can hardly be a measure to generalize the provided grades and data on the whole continent; Zimbabwe is, however, taken as a sample for study relying on its available data.

In Zimbabwe and during the last decade, there have been many calls urging the government to take the lead in the prevention process and the youth protection from suicide. The Zimbabwe National Association of Mental Health (ZNAMH) coordinator,

Ignatius Murambidzi claims that despite the alarming rates, many of them go unreported, little attention is paid to the issue; suicide is hardly considered as a major health problem in the country. (Interview, 2014) The ZNAMH attributes the higher rates of suicide to the stress associated with the socio-economic conditions families have to handle; this may even explain the higher suicide rates of men than the ones of women in Zimbabwe.

In fact, both African governments and peoples are urged to be conscious of the dangers that suicide causes wherever it spreads, it is like an epidemic that destroys the good and the bad. Since prevention is better millions of times than cure, African nations are required to pay more attention and to devote more financial and human resources to prevent suicide rather than losing hundreds of inhabitants to suicide every year.

IV.2. Zero Suicide Plan

The "Zero Suicide: An International Declaration for Better Healthcare" provides the following definition for the zero suicide approach to prevention: "*Zero Suicide reflects a commitment by healthcare leaders to strive to make suicide a "never event" so that not one person dies alone and in despair.*" (2016: 4) Despite national efforts and multiple initiatives to reduce suicide rates, they continue to thrive enormously. However, the American government launches the "Zero Suicide Plan" which aims at reaching the "No lives lost to suicide" state. It is quietly hard to achieve zero suicide cases, mainly in the US, but it is a long term objective that anticipates attaining the lowest possible rates.

The Zero Suicide is a project initiated basically by the SPRC "Suicide Prevention Resource Center" in order to reduce the suicide rates to the minimum level;

it is similarly adopted by the "National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention" as a crucial priority. The fundamental slogan for the project researchers is that suicide is preventable for individuals who are under care of health systems. The project constitutes seven main elements and it prioritizes bridging the gap between the health care phases people at high risk are exposed to for healing.

Figure 11: Systematic Suicide Care: Bridging the Gaps

-**Source**: National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention, 2010.

The seven elements of suicide care are constructed on one basic objective that is to interrupt the flow or the move toward self-destruction deeds. The National Action Alliance suggests the seven phases as follows (2010):

1-Lead system-wide culture change committed to reducing suicides

2-Train a competent, confident, and caring workforce.

3-Identify individuals with suicide risk via comprehensive screening and assessment.

4-Engage all individuals at-risk of suicide using a suicide care management plan.

5-Treat suicidal thoughts and behaviors using evidence-based treatments.

6-Transit individuals through care with warm hand-offs and supportive contacts.

7-Improve policies and procedures through continuous quality improvement.

Figure 12: Elements of Suicide Care for Health and Behavioral Health Care Systems to Adopt

-**Source**: National Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention, 2010.

Additionally, European countries have developed a similar action plan like the 'Zero Suicide Plan' and it is called 'Vision Zero Policy'. The latter exhibits a governmental plan suggesting that no individual should be found in such vulnerability to think of suicide as a solution; it is definitely preventive as it basically focuses on the pre-suicidal phase when the suicide idea is being brainstormed. That plan has been launched exactly in Sweden and it was sometimes misunderstood and misinterpreted as if it determines people's freedom of choosing suicide instead of any other option or it is against the basic human right of being free.

The exposed critique indeed is paradoxical because the plan is meant for protecting human life and freedom exceedingly; it aims at giving man a chance to live and enjoy his freedom. Moreover, 'Towards Zero Suicide' is another strategic approach to suicide prevention and a key priority maintained in Australia to achieve zero cases

between 2020 and 2025. Similarly, the Australian plan helps educate health professionals, counselors and trainers to assist vulnerable cases; it is a call to action denoting that no suicide is fated, all suicides are preventable. The British version of the plan is called "Project Zero" and it draws similar conditions and pathway to realize zero cases of suicide; the number zero, unusually, saves lives that time.

In spite the various versions of the zero suicide plan, a highly important question imposes itself: is it attainable? Is it possible to achieve the zero cases in a certain context? Some clinicians and researchers may claim that it is unattainable and unrealistic. The answer is however affirmative; it is possible to achieve a maximum level of reduction that indicates no suicidal cases in certain areas. A remarkable result is achieved in the American state of Tennessee, exactly in Centerstone, Nashville where suicide rates decrease dramatically from 31 to 11 per 100.000 within the timeline of 20 months after implementing Zero Suicide Plan.

Besides, the program posited by the American HFHS (Henry Ford Health System) for prevention succeeds in reducing the suicide rates from 89 to 22 per 100.000. It signifies that the perseverance and continuity will surely lead to the zero suicide cases. In fact, prevention programs, policies and plans ensure that everyone does his/ her best within the limits of their potential to treat, preserve and save people at high risk.

V. Suicide Notes and Suicide Survivors

What makes that part of the chapter truly important is the need to highlight the situation of suicide survivors; those who are left to discover and read the suicidal note also experience equal suffering. The pain suicide survivors feel after the incident is

doubled as they do not only have to mourn the lost beloved, but they do blame themselves for having been unable to discover that the lost person has been at high risk of suicide seeking unavailable assistance.

These people are usually the family members, partner, children, parents, siblings, relatives or else; they spend the first period after death absorbing an unbearable shock with feelings of bewilderment and astonishment. They feel regret as they could not provide necessary support, they have been absent despite factual presence; they could not save a life that is lost forever. Some scholars use the expressions: "Suicide Loss Survivors and Suicide Attempt Survivors" to assure the distinction between the two categories. Statistically, the number of suicide survivors in the US is 5.4 million in 2019. Moreover, the state of being exposed to a suicidal case has been highly influential; 13.2 million adults claimed that they knew someone who died by suicide in the previous 12 months; this estimates around 425 adults were exposed to the intentional death incident. (Crosby and Sacks, 2002)

Suicidal notes represent the words suicidal people write before their departure to express the things they could not say while alive. They reveal many facts and mostly describe the hidden motives of their intention to get self-murdered; they may even write to ask for forgiveness for the pain their death causes (**Appendix A** and **Appendix B**) Many scholars indeed have been struggling to decipher the riddle and explore its enigmatic variables through suicide notes. Edwin Shneidman is one of the psychologists who tried to unlock the suicide mystery depending on the suicide notes; his analysis would be more psychologically inclined though. Shneidman argues that when a person comes to commit suicide, his faculties of attention are constricted. There is a narrowing

of focus of his perceptual field and he suffers from what might be called tunnel vision. (1973: 383). He assimilates the notes to the postcards sent from graves or catacombs.

Because suicidal individuals move through different phases before they finally die, their disordered psychological state specifically results from a narrow constricted perception of a determined self-destructive intention. For that reason, suicide notes are not a real source of insightful documentation for suicidologists; they additionally exhibit no meaningful thread of self-murder that might persuade the survivors. When parents, siblings and friends are highly affected after the loss of the suicidal individual, their eagerness to know the causing factors ignites and drives them to investigate and seek the truth; the truth might be revealed in suicide notes as it might equally be buried with the suicidal person forever.

Genuine and specific notes are highly eloquent, philosophical and poetic like parodies or stanzas which convey the suicidal idea tenderly; the writers of these notes demonstrate a high spirit of beauty, sympathy, love and conformity that reveal their extraordinary wisdom and prudence. The following sample provided in Edwin Shneidman's research paper is an example:

> *Ladies and Gentlemen: I am unhappy to be here today. I guess that I am gathered here to bespeak myself. What shall I say? I had it so clearly in mind just a short while ago. Now all I can say is that actions will have to speak louder than words. I sign this note as one who will soon no longer be himself.*
> *George*
> (Ibid: 385)

However, actual and ordinary suicide notes, however, are more reflective and expressive; writers tend to manifest the inner struggle that drives them to take such a decision. Typical statements such as: 'I am sorry', 'Do not blame it on me', 'I love you all' or 'I lost the way' are frequently found in more realistic notes. Shneidman includes in the same paper:

To my wife Mary: As you know, like we've talked over before our situation, I'll always love you with all my heart and soul. It could have been so simple if you had have given me the help that you alone knew I needed. This is not an easy thing I'm about to do, but when a person makes a few mistakes and later tried to say in his own small way with a small vocabulary that he is sorry for what has happened and promises, to' remember what has happened and will try to make the old Bill come home again, and do his best to start all over again, and make things at home much better for all concerned, you still refuse to have me when you as well as I know that I can't do it by myself, then there's only one thing to do. I'm sorry honey, but please believe me this is the only way out for me as long as you feel as you do-This will put you in good shape. Please always take care of Betty and tell her that her Daddy wasn't too bad a guy after all. With all the love that's in me. Yes, Mommie, now you have your car and a lot more too, even more than you had hoped for. At least you are better off financially than you were 6 years ago. The only pitiful thing about the whole situation is the baby and the nice car that I bought with blood money. I only hope I do a good job of it. Then your troubles will be over with. I know this is what you have been hoping for a long time. I'm not crazy, I just love you too much! ! !
I love you-Daddy-   Goodbye forever.
 (Ibid: 389)

Furthermore, David Lester has also devoted a part of his research to understanding the nature and motives of suicide through exploring the content of suicide notes. Together with Silvia S. Canetto, Lester writes a paper about the difference between men's and women's suicide notes. Lester and Canetto confirm that suicide notes can be a potential source of information about the individual's motives, age, gender and circumstances. Lester assures that there is no significant difference in the content of suicide notes written by men and women, (Lester, 1989, 1997)

It is claimed that only one third of people who die by suicide write suicide notes (Shneidman, 1957). Additionally, Tokishi Shioiri et al estimate in a study maintained in Japan about the relation between suicide rates and the number of suicide notes that around 30% only leave a note. They also find out that: "*The incidence of note-leaving remains constant despite increasing suicide rates may suggest that the reasons for suicide do not affect note-leaving. There are cross-cultural, ethnic, and racial variations in suicidal behaviors.*" (2005: 226). Though the study is applied specifically to people in Japan, it illustrates that there is no correlation between the suicide rates and

suicide note rates. The researchers build their hypothesis on Pearson's work about the same issue and they all deny any influence of suicide reasons on the note-leaving act.

In fact, linguists, sociologists and psychologists endeavor to collect statistics from the suicide notes that enable them to make conclusions but the case is not always possible. The sensitivity and security that surround the notes recovered after any suicide make them as sacred and private as diamonds. Usually, survivors believe that the content of the note belongs to them; it is part of the family heritage and commonalities that should be saved in private. The difficulty of collecting suicide notes also stems from the mentalities of various communities and the definition of suicide in each of them. It also rests in persuading people to participate in saving more lives by sharing the content of the notes for studies and researches.

Beside the aforementioned information about suicide notes, it is similarly important to analyze the suicide notes left by the suicidal individual in the literary selected texts. However, the two black female characters who commit suicide in Morrison's and Vera's fiction have not written notes. Morrison's Hannah is psychologically depressed and existentially alienated at the suicide moment. Vera's Phephelaphi is also trying to absorb the unbearable pain which costs her the life of her baby, her dream, her husband and most importantly her own life. Their suicidal behaviors reveal the unspeakable, they have nothing under the tongue for their survivors. Both women have less to say in their last days, but they have much to think about. They are completely consumed that they prefer to stay silent until the day of their final departure.

Conclusion

Suicide is a social phenomenon that is spreading and increasing successively due to the global conditions and the rising accumulating difficulties that human beings all over the world face. It is universally rejected and denied, though differently, but despite all the material and systematic capacities utilized to stop suicide, it still marks high rates that may assure that all what has already been done is not enough.

The last chapter aims at putting ends together; it explores the suicide paradox in relation to the black female characters of both writers. It also concludes the protective factors necessary for the African and African American woman to stay safe from suicidal ideation. Besides, it relates suicide to self-emancipation and escapism. The last phase is meant to provide certain prevention measures and plans beside analyzing suicide notes and the content that suicidal individual leave to their survivors.

Conclusion

Alice Walker opens her book *In Search of Our Mothers'*s *Gardens* with a couple of questions about racial and feminist issues. At the tongue of a young girl, the writer asks then replies: "*Mama, why are we brown, pink, and yellow, and our cousins are white, beige, and black?*" Then she told her "*The colored race is just like a flower garden, with every color flower represented.*" (1983: xi) The garden metaphor signifies that men, women, blacks, whites, Africans, Asians or any other race have to coexist for the best of their communities despite the ethnic differences and the cultural distinctiveness.

They are like the flowers of the garden having various colors and shapes but they all coexist giving an artistic and esthetic touch to the garden. A one-color garden would hardly be more beautiful than a garden of different colors and shapes of flowers; variety is the essence of beauty, difference is a grace not a curse. As a womanist activist, Walker fights for the black woman's equality not separation, freedom not degradation, coexistence not domination.

In a world that is loaded with contradictions and absurdity, man is driven to question the surrounding assumptions and structures that are prone to any change, let alone the radical imperial systems that control all of his choices. Being drowned within the triviality and meaninglessness of man's nihilism, the human life is then associated with death not life

In an unconscious attempt to double the woman's prejudice and deepen her marginalization, an enormous set of studies about suicide center their attention on the white male as the most appropriate sample for analysis. Not knowing that suicide rates

of the black woman are highly attractive because they stimulate scientific thirst to discover the secret of what is known as the suicide paradox.

Observing the issue of suicide, it is evident that most of the researches are based on the social categories that commit the act in great numbers and higher rates; studies focus considerably on the white youth more than any other groups. However, turning the interest toward the black woman would give research a renewed dimension that seeks the hidden truths behind that abstention.

Suicide is not only a matter of an intentional death of one person or more; it rather implements the suffering of many people at the same time. It does not always signify the individual's weakness or cowardice; it may entail an accumulated mass of pain, anguish and grief that does not have a way out of one's heart until it kills him/her.

The black woman fights hard to be able to live with dignity and liberty. Despite all the social difficulties, prejudices and oppression, she succeeds to overcome her life hurdles ignoring suicidal thoughts and attempts. She succeeds to make her voice a cry for freedom, pride and glory; if her skin does not grant her the right to be, then her voice does.

The objective of the study is to explore the black woman's protective factors against suicide ideation that reveals the hidden hints of the suicide paradox. The study also aims at uncovering the literary depiction of the paradox. Toni Morrison and Yvonne Vera portray the black fighting woman whose strength enables her to avoid existential escapism and overcome meaninglessness.

The black woman's strength lies first in her faith and religious bondage, differently from the black man and from the white people, the black woman proves to

possess highly spiritual convictions and principles; her religiosity saves her life from self-destruction deeds. Additionally, she usually respects the regular habit of attending the church and contributing to the religious practices and activities.

On the other hand, the woman's ability to get integrated within social groups assures her an elevated protection and immunity against suicidal thoughts. Social integration does not only necessitate belonging to a larger community but it also signifies belonging to a family. The strong relationship between the family members is among the protective factors that prevents her from suicide attempts and commitment; it provides the human being with an emotional support. Moreover, social regulation is as much important as integration because it makes the balance between the individual 'Ego' and the collective 'Ego.'

Furthermore, despite the black woman's suffering, torment and distress, she has to create meaning in her life so that she can avoid falling within the shuckles of existential escapism. The strife to make meaning is also an effective protective mechanism against suicide. The quote summarizes the black woman's struggle in a eloquent way: *"The voice of a Black woman should always be HERSELF...No edits – no erasure - no pressure - no expectations – no additions–no intruders."* (Malebo Sephodi, 2017:99)

In the literary works, Morrison on the one hand could perfectly reflect the authenticity of the suicide paradox throughout the choice of her female characters and the plots of her novels. Her characters endeavor to survive despite the unbearable suffering, unforgettable guilt and unavoidable death. First, Pecola survives as she

attributes meaning to her life and she insists to have the pair of blue eyes so that she keeps looking for the day of achieving her dream.

Second, Sethe does not think of suicide even in the most frustrating moments of her life, despite the crime and feelings of guilt, despite the death of her daughter and the pain of loss and regret; she struggles for the sake of her other kids. Third, Sula is thrown into the world of the absurd, she escapes toward her alienated world; but she does not try to commit suicide though. Not surprisingly, Morrison's Hannah sets herself into fire because she lives in the void; emptiness and meaninglessness destroy her in addition to the constricting psychache.

On the other hand, Yvonne Vera also endeavors to create a rhythmic motion in her novels; her female characters succeed in approving the reliability of the suicide paradox in the postcolonial African context. First, Phephelaphi fights hard for her own dream, the dream of becoming somebody, becoming a nurse. Fumbatha breaks the dream and breaks the girl. Phephelaphi commits suicide as a result of dissociation and grief; she feels lonely and sad, silence and psychache destroy her that she kills herself and her unborn babies. Love brings Phephelaphi to life and love kills her. Her partner is absent from the role that a lover should play; he breaks her dreams and breaks her accordingly.

Second, Mazvita could not find the love and care she seeks with people whom she loves; she cries again and again but in vein. She is driven to kill her baby but despite her crime and her pain, suicidal thought do not cross her mind. Third, Zhizha is an exceptional story of enormous amounts of suffering, suffering in silence, suffering that one's parents cause to their daughter. The girl is forced to stop talking after she is raped

by her father who is killed by the astonished mother. Zhizha has been through an incomparable experience of pain coupled with death and guilt; the girl however does not commit suicide. She lives a silent life.

The selected novels of both writers can thus reflect the reality of the black woman to a large extent. The black woman is strong enough to hold herself, her family and her community when necessary; she is always present at the times of crises. The literary texts do not alter the truth of the suicidal paradox that exists in reality. In fact, suicide can in no way be considered by the black woman as a form of self emancipation as it is not a solution to her problems; it is not even an option for her.

The black woman, whether an African or an African American, does rarely think of suicide as a an escape from life even in the worst conditions of life; when she does, it is due to an incredible pain that she can no longer be holding. When she thinks of suicide, she seeks a safe refuge from pain, loneliness and frustration. Suicide is not a form of self-emancipation for the black woman as she seeks survival associated with freedom and not the opposite.

In fact, one of the limitations of the work posits in the unavailability of Vera's novels and the limited studies about her fiction, themes and characters. Though she is a well known eloquent Zimbabwean writer, research papers about her writings are approximately rare even in online libraries. Moreover, a second limitation is related to the set of prepared interviews that were supposed to be maintained with African American and black African women; the step failed due to certain circumstances though it could have truly enriched the analysis and elevated the study reliability.

Suggested recommendations for future research in the field of suicidality might be around:

First, a discourse analysis of suicide notes might be of great interest particularly if the notes are collected recently. Second, it is quite important to analyze the suicide paradox from a purely religious perspective instead of the race, gender factors. It is similarly significant to interpret suicide behaviors in the literature written by Muslim writers, Christian writers and Jewish writers. At last, I would also like to recommend studying the suicide issue in Algerian literature; that would a motivational boost to explore the reality of suicide in the Algerian society.

Finally, pain is in fact a grace not a curse; and man is created not only to enjoy and taste the beauty and pleasure but also to suffer and feel pain. Suffering teaches individuals better than any other school or teacher. It brings the best of the individual out of him as well as it helps him develop his personal expertise about the philosophy of life. Finding meaning in suffering means trying to get benefits from it and turning tragedy into triumph.

Suicide may seem a quick, easy and short cut toward another world where there is no frustration or pain, but it remains discarded and abhorred by all the norms, laws and books in the world.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Ruth Ann Kingman's story of her suicidal attempts, an American white adult woman.

When I was a young woman in my late 20's there was a time where I was out of work and I felt my life was falling apart, because I could not pay my bills, so I felt like committing suicide. I had 3 dogs at the time. I gave two of them away, which made me very sad, and placed the third one with my parents, so I could get her back later. I could not afford to feed them.

I made some plans of how I would kill myself, but never really did it because I realized how selfish that would be for my family. I thought to myself how many people are in even worse situations and they turn things around, so I should do the same. I told myself that my thoughts of suicide were selfish - like a pity party. I finally found work, got my one dog back, and moved from an apartment to a real house.

But years later I was suicidal again. This was different. I was 39 years old, pregnant and very sick. I could not eat. I was throwing up every day, all day long, and loosing a lot of weight. I had lost my job. I was moved away from my family and placed with my husband's parents. I was cut off from all my friends and relatives. I was not sure my husband loved me, and I was miserable.

One day my husband left me alone because he was hitch hiking back to another city to pick up my car. He thought that if I had my own car back at the farm, that I would feel better. But I was so distraught that I was pacing up and down the banks of a creek called Wolf Creek, and wondering how I could kill myself. My husband was a strange man. He also did not have a job, and I wondered how we were going to survive. We had no money to pay doctor bills. I was starving all the time, and could not keep food in my body. I just wanted it to all stop - the hunger pains and the loneliness of being separated from my family and friends.

I had lost so much weight that I could not even keep water down. I was dehydrated. I looked like a walking skeleton. Everyone was begging me to eat. I would sit at the table for hours with a plate of food in front of me, with tears running down my face. My mother would say to me over the phone, that I had to eat because of the baby growing inside me. I did not care anymore. I was ready to meet God and all the Angels. I was having hallucinations.

I had fasted for so long that my body did not want food anymore. I only ate one meal each week for three weeks in a row. I could not think straight. All I wanted to do was die. I was ready to leave this planet. I didn't know this at the time, but my husband and his mother were planning on taking me to hospital the next day and force feeding me intravenously.

But that very day I snapped back to reality and realized l could not kill myself and take an innocent baby with me. It was a turning point. I asked for some soup and a potato. They brought it to me and it took me a long while to eat that. They had mixed mashed brown rice into the soup and potato, which I did not like. I was upset that they did that. But I had decided to live, so l had to eat it all.

My recovery was slow. The midwives told me my baby would be born very small. But l struggled to prove them wrong. Anna was born a beautiful 7# instead of the 5# they predicted. I have never thought about suicide since then, even though l have had bad times in my life. I realized that suicide is a pity party where you are feeling sorry for yourself. Lots of people have bad times in life.

But after this experience I had much more sympathy to others who wanted to kill themselves. I saw how it could happen to anyone. I have heard stories of people who said they were going to commit suicide and then they really did, so yes, it is important to listen when someone says they are even thinking about killing themselves.

A friend of mine had a wife who threatened suicide so many times that he was tired of hearing her say that. But one day Vickie called John at work and threatened again. He told her someone (a social worker would check on her in a couple of hours because he was so tired of having to leave work to check on her. When the social worker arrived Vickie had indeed shot herself. She was not a stable person, and was grieving the loss of a baby girl that had died earlier.

I also had an experience with a very young boy who was depressed and killed himself. He hung himself in the basement of his parents house. He was a very handsome child. It was very sad. He did not know how to ask for help. He wanted to talk to me, but I told him he needed to talk to his parents or an older sister. I felt terrible when I found out that Charlie had hung himself. That affected me deeply because I wondered if I could have helped him.

Appendix B

Cheyenne Allison's suicidal note

To the man and women who adopted a helpless child when she was brought to them;

To the teachers who never really cared and ignored my problems;

To my fellow "sluts", "misfits", et. Who will no doubt receive more abuse upon my passing, as my tormentors will no longer have me to push around; To those who never cared, never spoke, probably never knew my name;

To the one true friend, whose caring was the only thing that prevented this even from happening sooner; To the God, if he does exist, who chose to play a cruel, cruel joke on me when he placed me where he did and surrounded me with so many uncaring faces; to all of you, goodbye;

I am leaving a world to which I never truly belonged or fit in. Do not weep for me, or mourn my passing. I say this not because I expect to be missed, but to allow those who truly did not care go on with their lives with a clean conscience and dry eyes. I know you don't want to weep for me. So don't. But I do ask you to listen to the final words of a young girl who has taken charge of her own destiny.

Perhaps my parents might feel something inside which causes them to shed tears. They may pretend that it's sorrow for their "loss", but I hope it is something else. Perhaps sorrow for bringing a child into this world when they really didn't have the time or desire to raise her. I wasn't the product of love, born of a desire to prepare another human being to grow and lead the human race. I was merely the next acquisition, the next task, the next project on their list of things that bring significance.

No child should be brought into this world for the mere purpose of being just another possession. I am not an asset to be catalogued and listed on your tax forms beside your house and car, or fought over during your divorce proceedings. I am a human being. I'm sorry that it took this to make you realize that. If you don't yet get it, then I'm even sorrier.

What about my teachers? Will they be sorry to see another student become a statistic? Certainly the administration and Principal will mourn, as my death will not reflect well on them as an institution. Well, I apologize for making the statistics for your administration worse. But I don't expect an apology for the false sympathies of people.

As for my fellow students, those who made a more significant impact on my life, I know better than to expect my tormentors to mourn.

But if I'm going to address those who belittled me, I'd be remiss if I failed to include the people in my life. I guess that's not entirely accurate, as the ones I refer to fall in two basic categories: those who refused to be in my life, and those who I would rather have excluded from my life. In the former category James Scott, Chevy Kerr, and dear Euan Scott, Whom used me for his own pleasure and threw me away, humiliating me in front of I don't know how many other classmates. In the latter category are too many to mention, though I must single out Baylee Bevins and Tylah Forbes for their tremendous dedication to the cause of destroying any shred of self-esteem I might dare to foster. Why can't you accept the things that make other people different rather than insisting everyone conforms to your will?

Sure, some did offer friendly gestures. Drew Wilson often would greet me and ask about my life. Not that I ever felt comfortable enough to tell her anything; I never trusted her enough to give her the chance. What was the purpose? Did you really give a flip about the supposedly slutty, Weird kid who sat by you? Or was it

all about creating an illusion that you care, just to guarantee my help on tests.

I can only conceive of one person in this world who will truly be sad at my parting. Charlotte, my best friend, you talked me out of this decision three times before. That is why I did not tell you anything this time, and why I do this in secret, alone. I wish you were coming with me on this great adventure, into the final frontier. Where ever I go, yours will be the one face I carry with me. The one soul I will miss. Yours is also the only forgiveness I ask and beg for as I depart from this life. I love you, and always will.

There's another group I have not yet addressed: those not like me who left me alone. Or I should say ignored me. I appreciate your sparing me any further harassment, but your inaction, your withheld hellos and how you's are did more to hurt than any name calling. Your inaction effectively excluded me from student life, from the human race. You left me isolated and alone, and no words I could say can convey to you the suffering you caused. I could name names, but in doing so, I would do more now for you than you ever did for me in life.

I do not know if what awaits me when I get down off this rope. Will there be a void? Or will I come face to face with God? I just don't care anymore. If you're anything like your people, I wouldn't want to know you. You preached to love one another, yet I've felt everything except love from Christians. Even if I could know you were different, well, I still reject you. You have left your "followers" to treat people like me poorly. You have allowed so many of the people you "love", including me, to suffer. So you want me to trust you with my life? I don't want to spend eternity with a careless deity like you, or with the company you keep. As my final moments tick away, I wonder what impact these words will create. It depends first on this web site being found, as I doubt whether school administration will want such venom

spoken publicly about their lack of caring. Still, the Internet is a remarkable place where even the least significant individual can be heard. Will anyone listen? Will anyone take action? Will students pause and pay attention to the hurting hearts around them? And even if they do, will it be a temporary salve for their egos, to convince themselves they're really not bad people or will real change happen?

My heart certainly goes out to my fellow outsiders. With me gone, some of you will certainly feel more of the pain and hurt that I did. No one understands you. No one cares how your day is going. No one bothers to get to know you as anything more than a nerd, a geek, a loser. You can do nothing for their social status, save the occasional boost to the ego they get from putting you in your place. Some of you, like Chloe Strum, will find outlets in music. Some, like Matthew Ohlson, will have an escape in Drugs. Some, like Hailie Duncan, will live their lives pursuing unicorns that they will never, ever catch. I never had a talent to lose myself in, or a dream or unicorn to chase, and so I have taken the path most dreaded. Some of you may soon join me, and I look forward to welcoming a brother or sister to the land where you will never suffer the loneliness and rejection that faces you now.

Farewell forever. I am going to another place. Where, I do not know. But logic dictates that it can only be an improvement. Perhaps my passing will only prove a footnote in a school yearbook. Then again, perhaps the sacrifice of one might bring hope to others. If my death makes life for one person a little more bearable, or a little more enlightened, do I really die in vain?

"The needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few, or the one."

Appendix C

Morrison, Toni: Biography

Chloe Anthony Wofford was born in 1931 in Lorain, Ohio. Family life featured storytelling and music. After graduating with honors from Lorain High School, she went to Howard University and she left it in 1953, with a major in English and a minor in classics, to attend Cornell University, where, in 1955, she received an M.A. in English. She wrote her thesis on the fiction of William Faulkner and Virginia Woolf. Between 1955 and 1965, she married and was divorced from Harold Morrison; had two sons; and taught English at Howard University and Texas Southern University. In 1967, she became a fiction editor at Random House; then, she edited The Black Book. Encouraged by a group of writers, she expanded a short story into her famous novel *The Bluest Eye* (1970). Morrison followed it with *Sula* (1973) which was nominated for the National Book Award. Morrison delineates many of the economic, social, and psychological issues that confront African-Americans. *Song of Solomon* (1977), winner of the National Book Critics' Circle Award, is more ambitious, and with it Morrison's status as one of the leading contemporary fiction writers in America was firmly established. These works were followed by *Tar Baby* (1981), *Beloved* (1987) that won the Pulitzer Prize. The latter was followed by *Jazz* (1992), *Paradise* (1998), *Love* (2003) and many other fictional and non-fictional works. She remains one of the African American icons in the world of literature. Morrison's novels deeply satisfy readers in their bold examinations of the difficulties and the possibilities of finding viable identities and meaningful living spaces.

Source: Encyclopedia of African American Literature, 2007: 366.

Appendix D

Vera, Yvonne: Biography

Yvonne Vera (1954–2005) is a Zimbabwean short-story writer and novelist, born in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, and educated at Luveve and Mzilikazi Secondary Schools. She held a doctorate in literature from York University, Canada, and was a writer in residence at Trent University, Canada, in 1995. After her return to Zimbabwe, she devoted most of her time to creative writing. She was Director of the National Gallery in Bulawayo from 1997–2003, and she received several awards and honors, including the2004 Swedish PEN Tucholsky Prize, the 2003 Premio Feronia—Citta di Fiano, Italy, the 2002 Initiative Li Beraturpreis, Germany, the 2002 Macmillan Writer's Prize for Africa for The Stone Virgins, and the 1997 Commonwealth Writers Prize (Africa Region, Best Book). Her first publication entitled *Why Don't You Carve Other Animals?* (1992) depicts vulnerable people who are caught in the conflict, such as men anxious to hold onto the little they have and women dreaming about fulfillment and achievement for their children. Her second publication *Nehanda* (1993) is a novel based on the 1893 uprising in Zimbabwe. Nehanda becomes the center of African resistance. In *Without a Name* (1994), a woman is raped during the liberation war and later commits infanticide. Her novel *Under the Tongue* (1996) deals with a young girl's intense, painful relationship with her father. She wrote additionally: *Butterfly Burning* (1998), *The Stone Virgins* (2002), *Opening Spaces: An Anthology of Contemporary African Women's Writing* (1999), and a novel titled *Obedience*, which she did not complete before her death in 2005.

Source: Student Encyclopedia of African Literature, 2008: 305.

Appendix E

Self-Directed Violence Surveillance: Uniform Definitions and Recommended Data Elements

Nonsuicidal self-directed violence	Behavior that is self-directed and deliberately results in injury or the potential for injury to oneself. There is no evidence, whether implicit or explicit, of suicidal intent.
Other suicidal behavior including preparatory acts	Acts or preparation toward making a suicide attempt, but before potential for harm has begun. This can include anything beyond a verbalization or thought, such as assembling a method (e.g., collecting pills) or preparing for one's death by suicide (e.g., writing a suicide note, giving things away).
Self-directed violence	Behavior that is self-directed and deliberately results in injury or the potential for injury to oneself.
Suicidal ideation	Thoughts of engaging in suicide-related behavior.
Suicidal intent	There is evidence (explicit and/or implicit) that at the time of injury the individual intended to kill self or wished to die and that the individual understood the probable consequences of his or her actions.
Suicidal plan	A thought regarding a self-initiated action that facilitates self-harm behavior or a suicide attempt. This will often include an organized manner of engaging in suicidal behavior such as a description of a time frame and method.
Suicidal self-directed violence	Behavior that is self-directed and deliberately results in injury or the potential for injury to oneself. There is evidence, whether implicit or explicit, of suicidal intent.
Suicide	Death caused by self-directed injurious behavior with any intent to die as a result of the behavior.
Suicide attempt	A nonfatal, self-directed, potentially injurious behavior with any intent to die as a result of the behavior. A suicide attempt may or may not result in injury.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury

Prevention and Control, 2011.

Appendix F

Strategies and Approaches to Prevent Suicide

Strategy	Approach/Program, Practice or Policy	Best Available Evidence			Lead Sectors[1]
		Suicide	Suicide Attempts or Ideation	Other Risk/ Protective Factors for Suicide	
Strengthen economic supports	**Strengthening household financial security**				Government (local, state, Federal)
	Unemployment benefit programs	✓		✓	
	Other income supports	✓			Business/Labor
	Housing stabilization policies				Government (local, state, Federal)
	Neighborhood Stabilization Program			✓	
Strengthen access and delivery of suicide care	**Coverage of mental health conditions in health insurance policies**				Government (local, state, Federal)
	Mental Health Parity Laws	✓		✓	
	Reduce provider shortages in underserved areas				
	National Health Service Corps (NHSC)			✓	
	Telemental Health (TMH)			✓	Healthcare
	Safer suicide care through systems change				Social Services
	Henry Ford Perfect Depression Care (Pre-cursor to Zero Suicide)	✓		✓	
Create protective environments	**Reduce access to lethal means among persons at risk**				Government (local, state)
	Intervening at suicide hot spots	✓			
	Safe storage practices		✓	✓	Public Health
	Emergency Department Counseling on Access to Lethal Means (ED CALM)			✓	Healthcare
	Organizational policies and culture				Business/labor
	Together for Life	✓			Justice
	US Air Force Suicide Prevention Program	✓		✓	Government (local, state, Federal)
	Correctional suicide prevention	✓			
	Community-based policies to reduce excessive alcohol use				Government (local, state)
	Alcohol outlet density	✓		✓	Business/labor
Promote connectedness	**Peer norm programs**				Public Health
	Sources of Strength			✓	Education
	Community engagement activities				Public Health
	Greening vacant urban spaces			✓	Government (local)

Strategy	Approach/Program, Practice or Policy	Best Available Evidence			Lead Sectors[1]
		Suicide	Suicide Attempts or Ideation	Other Risk/ Protective Factors for Suicide	
Teach coping and problem-solving skills	**Social-emotional learning programs**				Public Health Education
	Youth Aware of Mental Health Program		✓	✓	
	Good Behavior Game		✓	✓	
	Parenting skill and family relationship approaches				Public Health Education
	The Incredible Years			✓	
	Strengthening Families 10–14			✓	
Identify and support people at risk	**Gatekeeper training**				Public Health Health Care
	Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training			✓	
	Garret Lee Smith Suicide Prevention Program	✓	✓		
	Crisis intervention				Public Health Social Services
	National Suicide Prevention Lifeline		✓	✓	
	Treatment for people at risk of suicide				Healthcare Social Services Justice
	Improving Mood – Promoting Access to Collaborative Treatment (IMPACT)		✓	✓	
	Collaborative Assessment and Management of Suicidality (CAMS)		✓	✓	
	Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT)		✓	✓	
	Attachment-Based Family Therapy (ABFT)		✓		
	Translating Initiatives for Depression into Effective Solutions project (TIDES)			✓	
	Treatment to prevent re-attempts				Healthcare Social Services
	ED Brief Intervention with Follow-up Visits	✓			
	Active follow-up contact approaches	✓	✓		
	CBT for Suicide Prevention		✓		
Lessen harms and prevent future risk	**Postvention**				Healthcare
	StandBy Response Service		✓	✓	
	Safe reporting and message about suicide				Public Health Media
	Media Guidelines	✓			

Source: CDC, Preventing Suicide: A Technical Package of Policy, Programs and Practices. 2017

الملخص   **Appendix G**

تتناول الدراسة الحالية ظاهرة اجتماعية وجودية بامتياز ألا وهي ظاهرة الانتحار في الوسط النسوي الأفروأمريكي والإفريقي على حد سواء. إن المرأة الزنجية تكافح أيما كفاح في سبيل البقاء والتعايش مثلها مثل بقية نساء الأرض لكنها تضحي تضحيات جسيمة من أجل الحصول على كامل حقوقها والتخلص من التبعية للرجل والاستبداد الذي يمارسه عليها المجتمع الذكوري والشريحة البشرية من ذوي البشرة البيضاء.

قد تلجأ المرأة في بعض الأحيان إلى اقتراف فعل شنيع كالانتحار هربا من الألم والظلم والقهر والمحاباة لاسيما أن المرأة التي تركز عليها هذه الدراسة تنتمي إلى أكثر الفئات المجتمعية هشاشة كونها تعرضت لتمييز و تسلط كبير في الماضي الأمريكي و الإفريقي مما أدى بها إلى العيش على هوامش الوجود مضطرة و مكرهة على تقبل التسلط الذكوري اللامنتهي. وعلى عكس ما يتوقعه القارئ, فإن المرأة الزنجية قد أثبتت قوتها في مواجهة الصعاب بكل أنواعها والتصدي لكل الإنزلاقات المؤدية إلى الموت المتعمد باستعمال أية وسيلة. سجلت المرأة الأفريقية والأفروأمريكية أقل نسب الانتحار بين جميع الفئات البشرية والأعراق حيث أنها لا تفكر بهذا الخيار كحل لمأساتها مثل ما تفعل بقية الفئات والتي تنعم بأسلوب حياة رغيدة على عكسها.

الهدف الاول من الدراسة هو معرفة دوافع و محفزات السلوك الانتحاري أولا ثم الأسباب الكامنة وراء إعراض المرأة الزنجية بالذات عنه رغم متاعب الحياة والصعوبات التي يفرضها عليها لون البشرة الداكن المرادف لقابلية الخضوع والخنوع لدى الأفراد بيض البشرة بالإضافة إلى الاضطهاد المضاعف الذي يسلط عليها بحكم التاريخ الطويل للعنصرية في أمريكا والتجربة الاستعمارية المريرة في إفريقيا.

السر وراء قوة المرأة الزنجية عائد إلى عدة عوامل يشرحها العلماء والدارسون في عديد المجالات. تركز هاته الدراسة على ظاهرة الانتحار من ثلاثة جوانب: الجانب الفلسفي الذي يركز على التداخل بين مفاهيم الحياة والموت و الوجود و اللاوجود، تأخذ الدراسة في هاته الناحية الفيلسوف والباحث فيكتور فرانكل كعينة من الباحثين الذين حاولوا شرح مفهوم الحياة وأهميتها لشحن شغف الناس بها ومساعدتهم على تجنب الأفكار الانتحارية ومسببات الأذى النفسي. اعتمد الباحث فيكتور فرانكل على نظرية "العلاج بالمعنى" للتخلص من "الثالوث المأساوي" الذي يؤدي بدوره إلى "الهروب الوجودي". معالجة الأشخاص بالمعنى تصب أساسا في محاولة الحفاظ على النفس البشرية سليمة من تطرف الأفكار فيحاول المعالج مع المريض ليجد أو يخلق معنى لحياته فيجعل لها طعما وسببا يدفعه للبقاء على قيد الحياة. يتكون الثالوث المأساوي الذي ركز عليه الباحث من ثلاثة أقطاب هي : الموت، الألم والذنب، عندما يتقاطع الثلاثة في نقطة ينأى فيها الفرد بعيدا بأفكاره إلى نفق اللامعنى واللاوجود ويستقر فيه إلى درجة الاقتناع بعدم جدوى الحياة فيختار الانتحار كحل سهل ومريح. الجانب الثاني من الدراسة يركز على المذهب السوسيولوجي الاجتماعي حيث ينبه عالم الاجتماع إيميل ديركايم إلى أهمية العلاقات الاجتماعية وضرورة الروابط العائلية السليمة من أجل تجنب إشباع المجتمع بأفراد يدفعهم الفراغ العاطفي أو الوحدة أو أي انفصال في العلاقات إلى ارتكاب الفعل الانتحاري. يركز ديركايم في دراسته أيضا على حث الفرد على الاندماج في مجموعات من شأنها تعزيز ثقة الفرد بنفسه إلى جانب إشراكه في نشاطات جماعية ترفع عنه كل ميول أو رغبة في العزلة لأنها

غالبا مصدر للسلوك الانتحاري الذي يحاربه الفرد والمجتمع. أما الجانب الثالث للدراسة فيركز على النظرية النفسية البسيكولوجية والتي يلخصها الباحث إدوين شنايدمان في مفهوم الألم النفسي الذي يولد داخل الشخص رغبة في الخلاص بأي وسيلة كانت. يركز شنايدمان أيضا في نظريته على التفكك الذهني الذي يصاحبه انفصال في الملكات الذهنية للفرد والذي يدفعه وعيه أو لاوعيه جراء صدمة ما إلى الانعزال العقلي ويصبح أكثر عرضة لارتكاب فعل مضر به أكثر من أي وقت مضى. يركز بالإضافة إلى شنايدمان الباحث هنري موراي على الحاجات النفسية للفرد والتي تجعل منه عبدا لشهوته الانتقامية ويمكن أن تقوده إلى أذية نفسه.

تم تقسيم الدراسة إلى أربعة فصول أساسية تتضمن قاعدة نظرية وجزءا تطبيقيا بالإضافة إلى المقدمة وعرض بسيط لمختلف الدراسات السابقة حول موضوع الانتحار في المجتمع الأمريكي والإفريقي. تم بناء المنهجية على البعد النوعي لا الكمي من أجل تحليل أسباب الظاهرة ومقارنتها مع الإحصائيات المتاحة ومحاولة ربط المتغيرات بالأعمال الأدبية المنتقاة للغرض دون السعي إلى إجراء مقارنة إحصائية براغماتية

قوة المرأة الزنجية هو ما يجعلها أبعد الفئات المجتمعية عن التفكير والسلوك الانتحاري، وقوتها تكمن في إيمانها بحقها في الصراع من أجل الحياة، قوتها تكمن في إصرارها الدائم على الاندماج في المجتمع والمحافظة على تماسك الأسرة التي تعطيها معنى وسببا لوجودها أكثر من نساء الأعراق الأخرى. قوة المرأة الداكنة البشرة تكمن في محافظتها على عقيدتها الدينية التي تعطيها حافزا معنويا قويا لوجودها. هذا ما يعرف بالمفارقة الانتحارية والتي تأتي عكس كل التوقعات و التخمينات العامة بأن معاناة المرأة الزنجية سيكون سببا في هروبها من الحياة، إلا أنها لا تفكر بالانتحار إلا نادرا ولا تلجأ إليه إلا بعد نفاذ كل السبل.

لأن الدراسة في الأصل أدبية بحتة فإنها تحاول تطبيق المفاهيم النظرية الآنفة الذكر على الأعمال الأدبية المنتقاة للكاتبتين الزيمبابوية إيفون فيرا والأمريكية توني موريسون وهذا من أجل معرفة مدى قدرة الكاتبتين على تصوير ظاهرة الانتحار والمفارقة الانتحارية لدى المرأة الزنجية من خلال شخصيات الروايات اللواتي يختلفن في الانتماء الجغرافي، الاجتماعي، الثقافي، الفكري و حتى الديني. تجمع الدراسة، دون غاية المقارنة بين البعدين الإفريقي والأمريكي و بين شخصيات الروايات لتلخص أن معاناة المرأة الزنجية لا تقودها بالضرورة إلى الانتحار بل تزيدها قوة وإصرارا وتتأتى هاته المقاومة من الطبيعة الاندماجية و السلوك الاجتماعي للمرأة خلافا للرجل ومن محاولاتها المتواصلة لخلق معنى لحياتها. مقاومة المرأة الزنجية للأفكار الانتحارية هو أيضا نتيجة إيمانها القوي الذي يمنحها توازنا عقليا يمتص الصدمات الحياتية المباغتة. أثبتت المرأة ذات البشرة الداكنة في الأعمال الأدبية المختارة للدراسة أنها تصبح أقوى بعد كل الصعوبات فما لا يقتلها يجعلها أقوى وهذا ما نجحت في تصويره إلى حد كبير الكاتبتان عن طريق الشخصيات والحبكات الأدبية. من هنا تبرز خلاصة الدراسة أن الانتحار وإن كان بالنسبة للبعض وسيلة للخلاص وتحرير الذات من المشقة والعذاب إلا أنه بالنسبة للمرأة الزنجية خيار غير وارد ألا نادرا لأنها تلوذ بالفرار إلى مكامن قوتها وتحديها في سبيل تحرير نفسها من قيود السيطرة الذكورية والعرقية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الانتحار، المفارقة الانتحارية، المرأة الزنجية، فيكتور فرانكل، إيميل ديركايم، إدوين شنايدمان، الوجودية، الاندماج الاجتماعي.