

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

Université 8 Mai 1945 – Guelma
Faculty of letters and Languages
Language English & Letters of Department

جامعة 8 ماي 1945-قائمة
كلية الاداب واللغات
قسم الاداب و اللغة الانجليزية



**Double Otherness in Alice Walker's *Possessing*
The Secret Of Joy (2011)**

**A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of Letters and English Language in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for a Master's Degree in Anglophone Language,
Literature, and Civilizations.**

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2020

Dedication

To those who want to make change, to the voiceless, to the ones who are enslaved by tradition, and to all women, we dedicate our efforts.

Acknowledgments

With heartfelt appreciation we would like to express our deepest gratitude to Allah without whom this work could not be accomplished.

We are in debt to all the teachers we have met and learned from. A special gratitude goes to our kind, tolerant, and supportive supervisor, BOUALLEGUE Nadjiba, who devoted her time and energy to make this work possible. Her enthusiasm and constant guidance were as a source of comfort. We are truly grateful for all her efforts.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank our teachers at the Department of Letters and English Language. We would like to thank CHIHEB Amel, LAYADA Radia, SERHANI Meriem, TOULGUI Ladi, and ZIAYA Rima for their contributions in our intellectual growth and academic development.

We are immensely appreciative to the jury members Mrs. MAHTALI Ahlem and Mrs. MENIDJEL Rima for the time invested in reading our thesis.

With profound gratitude, we would like to thank Mrs. BELKHIRI Dalila for the French translation of the abstract.

Foremost we are ineffably indebted to our family members. We would like to acknowledge the love and the patience of our parents. We are sincerely grateful for all their prayers and kind wishes. We would never forget their support and tolerance.

With sincere appreciation, we would like to thank our siblings, Asma, Maya, Sana, Sirine, and Wail for their faith and pleasant distractions. A special thanks goes for my brother Islam, who has been my friend and companion, may God bless his days the way he blessed mine.

Our warm thanks and appreciation goes to our supportive friends, Belahouane Adlen, Bennacer Oussama, Bouchahdane Mostafa, Bouguessir Ibtissem, Djaber Ilhem, Guergah

Rania, Harrireche Nour El Houda, Maache Souha, Rmaiti Ali, Saber Mehdi, and Tolba Kawther, for their unwavering support. This work would have been more difficult without them.

We would like to extend our enduring gratitude to our classmate Badji El Wafi, for his generosity and significant assistance at early stages of this research.

Last but not the least, we would like to extend our deepest gratitude to all those who motivated us and helped to achieve this work both directly and indirectly. Thank you we are grateful beyond words.

Abstract

This study attempts to explore the status of African-American women, their experiences of oppression, and their endurance of cultural bigotry. Relatively, minor literature is used to investigate issues related to the Black woman through conceptions such as: racism, white supremacy, sexism and patriarchal dominance. The study examines the theme of 'Double Otherness' in Alice Walker's novel *Possessing the Secret of Joy* (2011). The analysis focuses on the intersection between gender and race, and their role in shaping the African-American woman's identity. A Remarkable attention is devoted to examine racial discrimination and gender oppression. The oppression of the female body is highlighted through the demonstration of the cruelty of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). The central aim of the study is to spread awareness about Black women's oppression and the impacts of Female Genital Mutilation. The importance of using 'Double Otherness' lies in the link it establishes between both race and gender, which is the fundamental base of any research on minority women.

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Introduction

Cultural diversity has influenced the identity, history and origins of individuals across the globe.

During the 1970s, in the United States, minorities such as Blacks often experienced the consequences of being different and treated inhumanely. 'Minor Literature' addresses the experiences, concerns, and the difficulties faced by the minor group in the host community.

Minor literature is a concept that refers to the literary conduct of a given minority produced in the major language of a particular dominant group. In their book *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari define minor literature on the basis of three determining characteristics; the deterritorialization of the language, the individual political immediacy, and the collective value. Accordingly, African American Literature, which is written by Americans of African descent, belongs to minor literature. The writers of the African American literature used the English language to portray the role of African-Americans and their experiences of racism, inequality and slavery in the American society.

One of the successful African-American writers is the female novelist and poet Alice Walker. Walker was born in Putnam County, Georgia, on February 9, 1944. As a public intellectual, Walker has many contributions in the American culture. She was both an activist and a teacher. Despite her poverty, Walker managed to continue her studies, with the support of her parents. Relatively, most of her works tackle issues of injustice, inequality and poverty. Walker's novel *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, thoroughly discusses the double otherness of the protagonist and her struggle to endure the oppression resulted from the intersection between her gender and race. The novel's protagonist "Tashi" first appears as a minor character in another literary work written by Walker, which is entitled *The Color Purple*. However, in *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, Tashi reappears as the protagonist. The novel follows the life events of Tashi, the African-American woman, and describes her experiences as an immigrant. It depicts Tashi's victimization

by the patriarchal system that enforces 'Females' Genital Mutilation'. Furthermore, the novel portrays the protagonist's search for self-actualization and provides the reader with illustrations of Black females' resistance, sacrifice, and solidarity.

This thesis is conducted to investigate the issue of 'Double Otherness' in relation to Black females' oppression. It demonstrates the alienation and the enslavement of the Black female by both the patriarchal and the capitalist systems. Alice Walker's novel *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, is used to illustrate the oppression experienced by Black females and to demonstrate the functionality of their skin color and gender in the construction of their subjugation. This study aims to prove the role of 'Double Otherness' in shaping Black females' 'Internalized Oppression'. The study questions and redefines social constructions such as race and gender, and portrays the consequences of the blind submissiveness to culture. The novel under study is chosen deliberately to raise awareness about females' circumcision, and to depict a shared experience of subjugation that is particularly faced by Black females; both adults and children.

Possessing the Secret of Joy is analyzed through numerous literary concepts. Gloria Anzaldúa's 'Borderlands', Alice Walker's 'Womanism' and William Du Bois' 'Double Consciousness' are some of the conceptions used in the analyses. For starters, Anzaldúa's 'Borderlands/ Mestiza Consciousness', illustrates the status of the African-American protagonist and her state of "in-betweeness". Furthermore, it depicts Tashi's struggle of rejection and alienation as a result of her "difference". Meanwhile, 'Double Consciousness' discusses the characters' confusion between their ethnic and American identity. In regards to Black women's oppression, Alice Walker's 'Womanism' reflects on Tashi's experiences of racial discrimination and her sense of solidarity with the other Black females. The previously mentioned literary conceptions are crucial for this study. However, 'Double Otherness' is the main concern of the study's analyses.

The study is carried through three chapters. The first chapter is merely theoretical. It is entitled “Identity Crisis” and divided in two sections. The first section will provide an overview of ‘Double Otherness’. The overview will include a number of feminist contributions such as ‘Womanism’ and ‘Borderlands’. The discussion of the theme under study will depend on concepts such as ‘Otherness’, ‘Othering’, and ‘The other’. The second section of the first chapter will be devoted to study the notion of ‘Double Otherness’ in minor literature. Accordingly, three literary conducts by minor authors will be introduced.

The analytical phase of the study will be divided between the second and the third chapters. The second chapter, which is entitled ‘Gender Oppression’ will be discussed in two sections. The first section will explore females’ oppression in patriarchal communities. Whereas, the second section will discuss issues relevant to the female’s body. In the third chapter entitled ‘Racial Oppression’, the notion of race will be dealt with in accordance to Black females’ racial oppression. The chapter will investigate the issue of racism in minority literature and tackle three important concepts which are; resistance, sacrifice, and solidarity. The latter will be analyzed in relation to the Black female. The analysis of both the second and the third chapters will be based on Alice Walker’s novel; *Possessing the Secret of Joy*.

The reductive factor of double otherness and its contribution in elevating Black females’ oppression is a central concern of this study. The depiction of Tashi’s ordeals as a Black African-American woman and her endurance of racial oppression and gender abuse provides diverse prospects for this research.

Chapter 1: Identity Crisis

The following chapter will discuss the concept of 'Double Otherness'. Relying on some of the feminist concepts such as 'Womanism', 'Borderlands' and 'The subaltern' the relationship between both race and gender is to be examined. Concepts such as 'Otherness', 'Othering', and 'The other' are convenient to this study because of the close relation they share with cultural domination and the issue of oppression.

1.1. Overview of Double Otherness

The binary opposition between the self and the other constitutes one of the most heated debates in the theory of literature. It is considerably represented in the literary field, as one of the most controversial issues discussed by minor writers. According to Sami Schalk; a feminist, poet and interdisciplinary scholar, the existence of another; a "not-self", allows the possibility or recognition of a self (197). In short, self-knowledge is based on comparing the different aspects of the self to that of the other. Thus, it is recognition of the self on the basis of the difference of the other. Here is another definition that stresses the importance of the other, "The existence of others is crucial in defining what is 'normal' and in locating one's own place in the world" (qtd. in Karen Simonsen and Jacob Nielson 120). Mark Freeman; Professor of Ethics and Society and Professor of Psychology, supports this claim in his proposal, which affirms the priority of the other in shaping human experience (165). Freeman's perspective opposes the ego-centric one, and it focuses on "the other . . . [as] the primary source of meaning and value" (5).

Several scholars in various fields have acknowledged the importance of 'the other' and identified it accordingly. One of many is Lajos Brons; a researcher and an adjunct Professor. In his article 'Othering, an Analysis', Brons declares that the concept of 'the other' was inspired from G.W.F. Hegel's "Master-Slave Dialectic". The German philosopher's dialectic deals with "two intertwined themes or dimensions: the political/historical dimension and the more

fundamental, psychological dimension” (qtd. in Brons 69). The notion of ‘the other’ was later introduced by the French feminist Simone De Beauvoir. The latter defines the other as “a construction opposing and thereby constructing the self” (qtd. in Brons 69). De Beauvoir’s definition concerns the idea of the other as a component of self-consciousness and it highlights one of its central characteristic, which is “difference”. Thus, De Beauvoir considers the female as an ‘Other’ in comparison to the male. In her book *The Second Sex* she writes, “the woman is the Other in which the subject surpasses himself without being limited, who opposes him without negating him; she is the Other who lets herself be annexed to him without ceasing to be the Other” (239-240). Thus, De Beauvoir perceives the difference between the male and the female, as a relation between the self and the other.

Hegel further explains the condition of the other as he confirms that, “self-identity [initiates from] the exclusion of everything other outside itself” (qtd. in Brons 69). The rejection of ‘the other’ is essential in determining oneself. However, at the social level, the omission of “others” usually creates a division in the social structure; everything that does not fit within “the norms of the social group” is to be denied and therefore exiled. Hegel insists that when it comes to self/other identifications, the notion of difference is essential. Stephen Frosh, a Professor of psychology and author of numerous books, and papers on psychological studies, states that, “the other is marked by difference [from the self], otherwise it would not be genuinely “other””. Frosh believes that this “difference” “is not just external to the subject; it is right there at its unconscious core”, in other words; “otherness within” (7).

Furthermore, Judith Butler; an American philosopher and gender theorist, describes in the following quote, the other as being separate, different, opposite to the self, and a proof of its existence, as well as a fundamental factor of the self-image. She says, “since I will not discover myself as the same as the “you” upon which I depend in order to be . . . your difference from me

becomes, as it were, the ground of my being” (qtd. in Frosh 6). Butler focuses on the role “the difference of the other” plays in constructing self-identity.

Many theorists have recognized the importance of ‘the other’ to the construction of the self. These theorists have proved that the difference of the other could be a reason behind exclusion and discrimination. On the reason behind the exclusion of the other Celesté Martinez; the Organizing Director for “United for a New Economy”, argues that, “Social superstructures have defined and created norms and morality of societies and cultures which then creates a division of those who fit these standards and those who do not” (153). Thus, those unable to fit within the socially constructed standards are labeled as “others”. According to Bill Ashcroft, et al., “The other is the excluded or ‘mastered’ subject created by the discourse of power” (156). Consequently, the standards of social categorization are the result of a reductive action made by those in power.

As a matter of fact, the difference of the other is the main reason of its exclusion. In this regard, Anne Lane states, “The other is understood to tend towards deviancy and undesirability in its Otherness” (3). ‘Otherness’ is crucial in self-awareness. It refers to the state of being different, and focuses on the other in determining the identity of individuals. Otherness can be a source of contradiction, which is unavoidable outcome of having two opposed systems of beliefs, values, perception, in ones’ multicultural society. The concept of ‘Otherness’ is often intertwined with marginalization; it is “premised on something that is not the same hence something outside” (Frosh 3). The ‘outside’ is dissimilar therefore, unfamiliar, alien, and stranger. The condition of otherness entails a state or feeling of non-conformity with the familiar, conventional, and usual in a given community, inclusive of its social norms. Both the feminist critic Simone De Beauvoir and the Marxist humanist Frantz Fanon tackled the link between the other and power relations. Jean-François Staszak claims that Both Fanon and De Beauvoir believe that:

The asymmetry in power relationships is central to the construction of otherness.

Only the dominant group is in a position to impose the value of its particularity (its identity) and to devalue the particularity of others (their otherness) while imposing corresponding discriminatory measures. Therefore, if the Other of Man is Woman, and if the Other of the White Man is the Black Man, the opposite is not true. (2)

The ideas stated above suggest that only those who possess power can have the ability of 'othering'. Colonial environments can demonstrate the condition of 'otherness' further through oppressed communities.

Oppressed communities are usually those, either colonized, or influenced by colonialism. Under the oppression of the colonial rule, those colonized become oppressed, strangers in their own land. While in post-colonial situations, even after being decolonized, people usually continue to suffer from oppression. Pablo Freire; a Brazilian philosopher, explains this continuity as he claims, "The oppressed, instead of striving for liberation, tend themselves to become oppressors, or 'sub-oppressors'" (qtd. in Myra Ramos and Donaldo Macedo 45). The conversion in the oppressor/oppressed duality; the transformation of victims into oppressors through adopting the colonial ways, allows both oppression and racism to further exist in post-colonial environments.

In post-colonial theory, identity is represented on the basis of mastery and submission. The self is superior, while the other is inferior. In this regard, the other can refer to "the colonized others who are marginalized by imperial discourse, identified by their difference from the center" (Ashcroft et al. 155). The imperial discourse is characterized by the existence of the dichotomy of the dominant and the subordinate, the agents and the targets, and overall, the center and the periphery. These binary dichotomies were created in order for the European colonial forces to remain as the center of power, while the colonies remain as the periphery or as the margins. The

centrality of Europe is demonstrated in the following quote, “Imperial Europe became defined as ‘the centre’ in geography at least as metaphysical as physical. Everything that lay outside that centre was by definition at the margin or the periphery of culture, power and civilization” (Ashcroft et al. 32). The division created between ‘the centre’ and ‘the periphery’ resembles the self’s rejection of ‘the other’. The construction of these dichotomies based on their “difference” establishes the continuity of oppression.

Marginality is the sequel of the discourse of power, the creation of marginals is one of the results of the exclusion of the other. The power of ‘othering’ maintained by the imperial discourse creates an “asymmetry of powers” and often times results in colonialism. Edward Said writes, “Imperialism means the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory; “colonialism” which is almost always a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlements on distant territory” (qtd. in Ashcroft et al. 40). One of the strategies applied by the imperialistic regime to expand western control is “the legalization of oppression”.

The normalization of colonialism is one of the forms used to conquer ‘the other’, through the excuse of an imperialistic right to civilize it. Colonial intentions are further revealed in the following quote, “The colonial mission, to bring the margin into the sphere of influence of the enlightened centre, became the principal justification for the economic and political exploitation of colonialism” (Ashcroft et al. 32). The oppression of the colonized countries is normalized through the creation of binary structures that advocate for the west’s superiority and development, and links inferiority and regression to non-western societies, such as third world countries. As Said proclaims, “Orientalism is the founding discursive maneuver by which “the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, ‘us’) and the strange (the Orient, the East, ‘them’) is established as a way to proclaim Western superiority” (qtd. in Joseba Gabilondo 147).

Consequently, oppression can take many forms; it can exist as a colonial force in colonial environments, or as a rejection of ‘the other’ in the realm of identity. The common point in all the situations of oppression is the rejection of “difference” which results in marginality.

In oppressed communities, racism is not the sole means of subjugating people. Sex could be a very dangerous means of oppression. The discrimination based on sex occurs when the victim becomes an oppressor. In this regard, Third world women and minority women are doubly marginalized. Gayatri Spivak; an Indian scholar, literary theorist, and a feminist critic, believes that the usual targets of oppression are those doubly marginalized people; those invisible to both the colonizer and the elite community. She writes, “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] female is even more deeply in shadow” (287). Although, females’ oppression varies in accordance with their social statuses and national situation; whether colonized or not, they are still oppressed, because of their gender.

Physical and biological attributions such as race and gender are common characteristics of oppression. Consequently, females of color are doubly victimized. However, Black females are considerably exposed to high levels of oppression, and have been more susceptible to sexual harassment than other women of color. This category of women has specifically experienced both racialized and sexualized discrimination. In the American society, the African-American woman is alienated and oppressed by the white man and her own people. Black women suffer from the burden of being black and female, this condition of alienation on the bases of gender and color can be labeled as ‘double otherness’. This chapter is going to examine ‘double otherness’ in relation to minor literature in general and African American literature in specific. Linda Gordon; an American feminist and historian, proclaims that, “The embodied subjectivities produced in the texts of women of color allow for an understanding of “Gendered Racial Identities” or

“Racialized Gender Identities” (qtd. in Lamia Hammad 303). Gordon indicates the reliability of the texts produced by minority writers, in expressing the intersected identity based on their own experiences. According to Anita Jones Thomas, et al., “Gendered racial identity (GRI) emerged as a construct used to describe Black women’s distinct intersected identity as Black and woman” (qtd. in Martinque K. Jones 1). (GRI) refers to the unique aspects that Black women experience at the intersection of their race and gender. It examines the importance of intersectionality in understanding the experience and identity development of Black women.

Understanding identity requires an analysis of societal factors and cultural differences, which contribute in identifying a person, both individually and in relation to his/her ethnic group. Perceptions of race and gender must be considered, additional to the recognition of the different aspects concerning the development of one’s intersected identity. These aspects are mainly related to ‘Culture’ and ‘Dominance’. In this regard, for a better understanding of ‘double otherness’, the following work by Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987) is going to be introduced. Anzaldúa is a Chicana writer, and a feminist scholar, known for her contributions in the field of cultural identity. As a woman of color her book “*Borderlands*” is proven to be a radical theory described by Norma E. Cantú; a Chicana postmodernist writer, as “a critique and a theorizing that offers a new lens for analysis” (113).

Borderlands theory tackles the issue of oppression in relation to social patriarchy, male dominance, and racism. It deals with the deconstruction, and reconstruction of personal, and social identity. However; its main focus is on cultural domination and women’s oppression. As stated by one critic in “Gender and Society”, “This book *Border Lands* speaks to the resilience of resistance to cultural domination among women” (qtd. in Elizabeth Jones et al. 3). In addition to the physical attributions of “Borderlands”, as a concept that is usually used to refer to a territory near, or at the frontiers, Anzaldúa broadens this meaning at several levels, including

psychological, spiritual, and sexual boundaries. Not to mention one's individual borders. The concept "border" is further demonstrated in the following quote written by Anzaldúa:

There is a rebel in me-the Shadow-Beast. It is a part of me that refuses to take orders from outside authorities. It refuses to take orders from my conscious will, it threatens the sovereignty of my rulership. It is that part of me that hates constraints of any kind, even those self-imposed. At the least hint of limitations on my time or space by others, it kicks out with both feet. (16)

Anzaldúa demonstrates a rejection of restrictions and boundaries, imposed by "the other" externally, and internally, referring to their psychological damage at the individual level. According to Anzaldúa this condition of 'otherness' results in a state of in-betweenness, characterized by a feeling of alienation from both the mother, and the dominant culture, and described as unsafe and confined place to live in (20).

Anzaldúa believes that due to the state of in-betweenness, which is characterized by multiplicity and having various frames of reference, it is impossible to have a single identity. Moreover, borderlands' theory is based on the claim that, the essence of all world's evil originates in the split established in life itself. This split is based on opposites such as "women versus men" and "Blacks versus Whites". The contradicted nature of these opposites establishes a rejection of difference. Anzaldúa suggests that the implementation of dualistic thinking in the individual and collective consciousness could provide a solution for the intolerance of difference. Anzaldúa explains, "the future depends on the breaking down of paradigms, it depends on the straddling of two or more cultures" (80). Anzaldúa reaffirms the impossibility of having a unified identity, by supporting the conception of "the non-unitary self"; Mestiza consciousness. She suggests a "border identity" that is characterized by belonging to neither the mother nor the dominant culture, but both cultures simultaneously (17). Accordingly, Stuart Hall; a British

Marxist sociologist and a cultural theorist, alludes for the possibility of another kind of “politics of difference”. He explains, “every identity is placed, positioned, in a culture, a language, a history” (qtd. in Hammad 303). Hall believes that “new political identities” should be based on difference and analyzed through individual backgrounds, which; in his opinion, demand more attention.

According to Anzaldua’s new consciousness, the acceptance of the other is achieved through creating, a border zone that allows contradictions to coexist. This zone advocates for unity over division (Hammad 307). It is a result of the breakdown of binary oppositions; a third space that is called “in-between-consciousness”, in which an individual belongs neither to the dominant nor to the mother culture as separate entities, but both, in a pluralistic mode of identity (Anzaldúa 79). Anzaldúa insists that the possibility of the new consciousness’ success can only be attained through developing a tolerance for contradictions and ambiguity (79). Borderlands theory provides a new sense of “exploring relationships of power and domination”, and it gives insights into the marginalized subjects’ experiences of anxiety and exclusion. It acknowledges “the anguish of otherness”, and sheds light at the struggle of feeling in between cultures, languages or places.

‘Double Otherness’ is closely related to Anzaldúa’s new consciousness in many ways. In terms of identity both concepts are related to the struggle of rejection and alienation; of belonging to neither the dominant culture “the center”, nor the marginal one “the periphery”. The establishment of a border zone is Anzaldúa’s means to create a weapon against ‘double otherness’. She creates a space for the minority woman who is excluded, because she is a woman of color. Her theory is a call for acceptance and tolerance of differences.

As stated earlier in this chapter, various concepts are going to be used to approach ‘double otherness’. In relation to patriarchal dominance and racial segregation Alice Walker’s

‘Womanism’ is going to be discussed. Womanism is generally coined for “women of color”. It specifically addresses Black woman’s experiences of racial discrimination and gender oppression. The movement concentrates on valorizing Black people’s culture and aims at elevating Black women’s existence and experiences. Moreover, Womanism is a movement that seeks to define, promote and achieve women’s equality with men. According to Walker a womanist is a “Black feminist” or a “feminist of color”, who appreciates and prefers women’s culture, emotional flexibility, and strength. Above all, a womanist is committed to “[the] survival and wholeness of [the] entire people, male and female” (qtd. in Aleksandra Izgarjan and Slobodanka Markov 305). The movement’s remarkable interest on Black women’s experiences and concerns is highly criticized. Accordingly, a number of feminists’ supporters have criticized “Womanism”. In this respect, Valerie Bryson states, “Womanists wanted to decenter white feminists and challenge the normality of their perspective” (qtd. in Izgarjan and Markov 308). Most of the movement’s critics rejected the exclusion of White women’s issues and ordeals.

Walker’s movement provides the Black woman with an opportunity to improve her social status, through displaying her importance and role as a productive member of the society. The movement is an effort, which aims to achieve equality and to confront the racial and gendered subjugation inflicted upon Black women. Moreover, womanism insists on expressing the individuality of the Black race in contrast to the white one. The goal of the womanist movement is to challenge gender and racial discrimination. The movement suggests a solidaristic behavior as a solution to the issue of ‘double otherness’.

1.2. Double otherness in Minor Literature

For several decades, a lot of works have been devoted to study the notion of ‘Double Otherness’ and its impact on people of color. The literary work of Maxine Hong Kingston entitled *The Woman Warrior* (1976) is an example. The novel portrays both the individual

experiences of Kingston as a Chinese immigrant in America and the general difficulties, which face the Chinese women in classifying their divided identity between the Chinese customs and the new American environment. The novel is composed of five chapters; the first one is entitled “No Name Woman”. This chapter depicts the firmness of the Chinese traditions and culture. It tells the story of the writer’s aunt who committed suicide, because of her illegitimate pregnancy. Due to the sin committed by Kingston’s aunt, the Chinese patriarchal community erased the aunt’s memory.

The second chapter entitled “White Tigers” represents the role of the warrior Fa Mu Lan against the baron army, and the successful triumph she achieves. “Shaman”, which is the title of the third chapter, narrates the journey of Brave Orchid Kingston’s mother from China to America. This chapter describes the shift of Brave Orchid’s image from a midwife doctor with spiritual powers, who fights ghosts in China, to an ordinary laundry worker, who lives with her husband in California. The title of the fourth chapter is “At the Western Palace”. This chapter is about Moon Orchid who moves from China to live with her husband in California. It describes Moon Orchid’s challenges in living with her husband in specific and within the American society in general. The last chapter, “A Song for a Barbarian Reed Ripe”, discusses the personal life of Kingston herself, and the difficulties she faces while trying to cope with the American culture.

‘Double otherness’ appears in the novel as Kingston starts to think of how to establish her identity. The narrator’s struggle for self-identification appears in her confusion of taking a choice, to whether adopt the new American or the ancestor’s Chinese identity. The narrator is neither in favor of the Chinese history; because of her mother’s stories about women’s sexist treatment in the Chinese patriarchal society, nor she accepts to be an American; due to the racism by the white race practice against people of color. In this regard, in her dissertation, “Chinese American Women amidst Cultural Confusion”, Nadjiba Bouallegue states that, “The narrator’s quest of

national identity complicates the search for the self . . . The narrator's acceptance of America is hampered because her parents keep distorting the image of America as a racist nation where minorities are oppressed" (45). The Chinese woman cannot accept her culture, because in her eyes China is the country of slaves and submissive wives. The struggle of the Chinese American woman and her inability to fit within the norms of both the host and the mother culture contributes in her alienation. Therefore, 'double otherness' is a frequent issue confronted by the minor woman.

The House on The Mango Street (1984) is another literary work which tackles 'double otherness'. It is a novella by Sandra Cisneros a Chicana writer who is interested in writing about the Chicana feminism; women experiences. Cisneros' works focus on issues such as race and gender. *The House on The Mango Street* is a novella about a Mexican-American female named Esperanza, who moves to live at the Mango Street in Chicago along with her family. Esperanza does not like the new environment and her family's arrival is not welcomed by the people of Chicago. Consequently, the family is racially discriminated. In this regard, it is stated that, "Those who don't know any better come into our neighborhood scared, think we're dangerous" (qtd. in Frederick Luis Aldama 261). Esperanza's family is victimized due to their difference. Females' gender oppression is demonstrated in Cisneros' novella in many scenes, one of them is the scene in which Esperanza is abusively kissed by an old man in the first day of work at "The Peter Pan Photo Finishers". One can also mention the role of patriarchy in oppressing women. In this respect, Sally's sufferance because of her father's animalistic treatment and abuse sets an example. On the reason behind females' oppression and discrimination, Esperanza states: "It wasn't as if I didn't know who I was. I knew I was a Mexican woman. But, I didn't think it had anything to do with why I felt so many imbalance in my life, whereas it had everything to do with it! My race, my gender, and my class!" (qtd. in Doyle Jacqueline 6). Esperanza realizes that

'double otherness' is one of the major reasons behind her oppression. She believes that the only way to escape her reality of "gender oppression" and "racial segregation" is through writing.

The African-American writer Toni Morrison, also has dealt with 'double otherness' in her novel *Beloved* (1987). Morrison discusses important "sensitive" issues, experienced by most African-American people in general and African-American women in particular. Her novel sheds light at the marginalization of Black women. It follows the life events of Sethe; a Black female slave who lives in the American society. Out of fear of the slavery that her daughter may experience, Sethe kills her little daughter named "Beloved". After her daughter's death, Sethe continues to live in a house hunted by the daughter's ghost and the memories of slavery. The novel depicts the oppression of the Afro-American women. It emphasizes "the particularly brutal form of double oppression suffered by black women on account of their race and gender" (qtd. in Khundrakpam Nirupama and Sangeeta Laishram 203).

The presence of a female slave in an alien society is used as a means of fulfilling the master's needs. The sexual oppression in the novel is presented through the Schoolteacher; the owner of "the sweet home plantation" in which Sethe works. The schoolteacher's abuse of his slaves is noticed in several occasions. The physical abuse faced by Sethe; after complaining about her stolen breast milk by the schoolteacher's nephew is one example. The female slave; Ella, has also experienced extensive sexual abuse for more than a year, after being kept in a room by a father and a son to fulfill their sexual desires. The racial discrimination in the novel is displayed through the exploitation of Black people, and their inhuman treatment due to their different skin color and gender. Sethe; the novel's protagonist, represents the burden of being both black and female. Her story indicates the role of intersectionality between 'race' and 'gender', in the contribution of the Black female's oppression.

The United States of America received a huge number of immigrants from all over the world due to colonialism, economic crisis, and other related issues. For some minorities the (USA) citizens are ideologically racist as a result of the country's system. Toni Cade in her book *The Black Woman: an Anthology* argues, "The system of capitalism (and its after birth racism) under which we all live has attempted by many devious ways and means to destroy the humanity of all people, and particularly the humanity of Black people. This has meant an outrageous assault on every Black man, woman, and child who reside in the United States" (109). Black people are susceptible to the segregation of the capitalist system more than other immigrants. The American settlers did not welcome the arrival of Blacks at their shores. They tried on many occasions, to deport these Black people back to their homelands. Consequently, Black immigrants were racially segregated and treated unequally. They were denied access to the same schools attended by Whites, and forbidden from equal work chances, and paid differently for doing the same work as the Whites.

The rejection of the presence of Blacks by the capitalist system, extended their segregation and oppression. In this regard, Cade declares, "capitalism found it necessary to create a situation where the black man found it impossible to find meaningful or productive employment . . . And the black woman likewise was manipulated by the system economically exploited and physically assaulted" (109). Consequently, the Black man's inability to perform his duties leaves the Black woman obliged to provide for her own family. Therefore, manipulated by the imperial system; which aims not only to deprive the Black man from labor, but also to exploit the Black female's body, the Black woman is doubly victimized; racially and sexually.

The United States' capitalist system is fundamentally crucial for Black women. Although the Black female's body was used for sexual pleasure and economic benefit, Black women were not considered "real females" in comparison to White women. In her speech at a Women's Right

Convention, Sojourner Truth, states, “Nobody ever help me into carriages, or ober mud puddles, or gives me any best places . . . and aren’t I a woman? Look at me look at my arm . . . I have plowed, and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me—and aren’t I a woman? I could work as much as a men (when I could get it), and bear de lash as well—and aren’t I a woman?” (qtd. in Cade 111). The later extract demonstrates the frustration of the Black woman, because of the mistreatment and inequality she endures. It describes the subjugation and devaluation of the Black woman in contrast to the white woman.

In order to achieve a deep understanding of the intersection between race and gender, and the intricacies of their relationship, which is called ‘double otherness’, Alice Walker’s novel *Possessing the Secret of Joy* is going to be analyzed. This thesis will offer an analysis of both race and gender in separate chapters, studying each notion in relation to oppression. The following chapter is dedicated to “Gender Oppression”.

Chapter 2: Gender Oppression

The following chapter is dedicated to ‘Gender Oppression’. One of the focal issues that mystified the numerous feminist critics and theorists, in their attempt to tackle the issue of identity, is how dominant traditions impose their conventions and legislation on women’s identities. Taking the female body as the center of our discussion, in this chapter we are going to deal with important concepts, which are relevant to our study. Feminist ideologies are going to be used to answer some of the fundamental questions raised by minority writers, in relation to the exploitation of the female body amidst cultural impositions and patriarchal oppression.

2.1. Females’ Oppression in Patriarchal Communities

Patriarchal and male dominant traditions, aspire to manipulate and control women, through using various strategies that seek to affirm the inferiority of the female gender and the normality of male dominance. Serene Jones defines Patriarchy as “the rule of men over women”. She writes, “‘Patriarchia’ which means ‘rule of the father’ [in Latin] . . . refers to the web of economic, political, social and religious regulations that enforces the domination of women by men throughout the ages” (qtd. in Loreen Maseno and Susan M. Kilonzo⁴⁵). Subsequently, ‘Gender Oppression’ is a common issue known in patriarchal communities.

The dominant system, which favors the man, makes the woman the subject of his quest for control. Diane Long Hoeveler and Donna Decker Schuster state, “In the case of women, cultural and national conventions marginalize them as a result of their bodily differences” (10). Women’s subjugation is based on their gender. Her body differentiates her from men, this very fact alienates the woman, therefore she is considered an ‘other’, rejected and oppressed. Simone De Beauvoir; a French writer and political activist, in her book *“The Second Sex”*, writes, “if there are other *Others* than the woman, she is still always defined as Other” (197). This indicates women’s absolute desolation.

The degradation of women is beyond mere hatred, Male dominant traditions simply regard women as purely evil. The following statement by Pythagoras of Samos proves this claim, “There is a good principle that created order, light, and man and a bad principle that created chaos, darkness, and woman” (qtd. in De Beauvoir 5). Pythagoras’s assumptions and inclinations to men raise questions about the basis of such absurd claims in regards to women. In this respect, some dare to assume, it began with the creation itself. As De Beauvoir writes, “and that, forever, was the order of precedence—Adam before Eve”. Consequently, men before women (10). As a matter of fact, the binaristic structure of opposites has always existed, since the creation of life and death, light and darkness, and male and female themselves. De Beauvoir writes: “What people have endlessly sought to prove is that woman is superior, inferior, or equal to man: created after Adam, she is obviously a secondary being, some say; on the contrary, say others, Adam was only a rough draft, and God perfected the human being when he created Eve; her brain is smaller, but relatively bigger” (35). The comparative equation of both “the supremacy of men” and “the inferiority of women” is a matter of debate. Nonetheless, women have always been inferior, while men were considered superior and more independent. De Beauvoir writes that Julien Benda in *Le rapport d’Uriel* (Uriel’s Report) argues, “A man’s body has meaning by itself, disregarding the body of the woman, whereas the woman’s body seems devoid of meaning without reference to the male. Man thinks himself without woman. Woman does not think herself without man” (26). Benda is clearly depersonalizing women, by regarding them as sexual objects that exist solely for men.

2.2. The Female’s Body

The woman is noticeably defined in accordance with her body’s biological functions. Her sex defines her identity and limits her opportunities. The woman’s sexualized identity is a man’s justification of her existence; a man thinks of a woman’s purpose in life, as that of a sexual being.

In his belief, the woman is destined to produce children and sexually satisfy her mate. Thus, sex, which is a “biological categorization”, is one of the main factors that contribute in women’s oppression (Eckert et. al 2). The woman’s sexualized identity is used automatically to justify the man’s superiority. Consequently, it is believed that men have been always “rulers” while women were their “subjects”. In this regard, De Beauvoir declares, “this world still belongs to men: men have no doubt about this, and women barely doubt it” (30). The man’s authority is taken as absolute; it is reinforced through “A tradition of resignation and submission” (De Beauvoir 165). This tradition targets women and render them responsible for their own oppression.

By preserving and submitting to the tradition of male dominance, the woman can act as both the victim and the agent of ‘Gender oppression’. Female’s capacity of oppressing her own gender is worth noting. Despite being a victim, the female can oppress her own gender by adopting and enforcing the patriarchal system’s beliefs on other females. The internalized beliefs of her sense of “duty”, transforms the female from a victim of the patriarchal system into one of its agents. This transformation is illustrated further through M’Lissa, the antagonist and one of the victims in *Possessing the Secret of Joy*. M’Lissa’s role in influencing the lives of the females in her tribe is crucial. She is considered a continuation to the patriarchal tradition of colonizing the female body through rituals. M’Lissa’s performance of the rituals that once damaged her body, and cost her to lose her left leg, reflects the degree patriarchal traditions succeeded to manipulate women and involve them in the making of their oppression. In this respect, Alyson R. Buckman writes, “Although [M’Lissa’s] body is marked and experienced as a site of male domination, she . . . becomes complicitous with the patriarchy . . . She believes the women themselves to be the agents of their own domination; in her eyes, if women are stupid enough to obey this tradition, then they deserve everything they get as a result” (91). Patriarchy organizes

women's oppression and it establishes their subjugation. Yet, M'Lissa believes that women are stigmatized because of their blind submissiveness to the patriarchal traditions.

Tashi is an example of the blind submissiveness to patriarchy. She is the novel's protagonist and one of M'Lissa's victims. Tashi expresses her pride of her culture, by willingly undergoing circumcision. "Female's circumcision" or "Genital mutilation" is an initiation ceremony known in patriarchal communities, it "ranges from nicking the clitoris to infibulation (the excising of all external genitalia and the sewing shut of the vulva-except for a tiny opening barely large enough to allow the passage of very small quantities of blood and urine)" (Buckman 90). M'Lissa is the *tsunga* responsible for Tashi's infibulation, "a *tsunga* is a word Walker coined to describe the woman who performs the ritual" (Buckman 90). As the whites' ideologies are spreading fast and invading every inch of her land, Tashi, motivated by her sense of "duty" towards her country; Olinka, decides that the only way to preserve her "tribal identity" is by getting circumcised. Despite being circumcised and suffering both physically and psychologically, Tashi does not regret her decision. In a conversation, she reveals to Olivia; her African-American friend, that "[by disobeying] you, the outsider, even if it is wrong, I am being what is left of myself. And that sliver of myself is all I now have left" (155). Tashi is convinced that preserving traditions is the solution against white's domination. However, she does not recognize her own domination by these traditions. In this respect, Buckman writes, "we have a woman who, in asserting and celebrating her tribal identity, is victimized by that tribal belief system" (91). Tashi's readiness to sacrifice her body in order to celebrate her pride of her culture reflects the success of patriarchy in normalizing women's oppression.

The origin of women's oppression lies within primitive civilizations. The man's physiology was needed to support the family. Thus, women's reliance on men for survival was considered tenuousness, and it established their domination by men. De Beauvoir explains the

continuity of women's oppression in the modern world as she states, "What determines women's present situation is the stubborn survival of the most ancient traditions in the new emerging civilization" (188). Subsequently, women's oppression is a result of their inherited marginalization. Mbatia, another friend of Tashi, denies the relevance of these inherited traditions and doubts their credibility in justifying women's oppression. For instance, she rejects the claim that "life itself started with mutilation". Mbatia denies the validity of such claims, she believes in the impossibility of witnessing the beginning of life by humans (143). Thus, the inherited traditions, which support females' inferiority are socially constructed, it is made by men. In fact, "all history was made by males" (De Beauvoir 30). Social standards and norms of behavior included.

A woman is oppressed from the day she is classified as a female; her oppression starts with her "gender". In this respect, De Beauvoir writes, "One is not born, but rather becomes, woman" (14). Society provides the child with instructions of how each gender is expected to behave and think. Thus, gender is not biological it is acquired; "socially constructed". In this regard, Candace West and Don H. Zimmerman write, "Gender is not something we are born with, and not something we have, but something we do", Judith Butler adds, "[Gender is] something we perform" (qtd. in Eckert et al. 1). Peoples' actions are directed by their gender. The child is raised to believe in certain aspects relative to 'Gender performance'. The learning about gender starts from the child's surroundings. The child defines him/herself in accordance with what it is socially accepted for his/her particular gender. Accordingly, "gender is a collaborative affair – that one must learn to perform as a male or a female, and that these performances require support from one's surroundings" (Eckert et. al 8). Thus, the actions of each gender are decided by both "social appropriateness" and "social acceptance". For instance, out of fear of rejection, Tashi undergoes circumcision "To be accepted as a real woman by the Olinka people". She says that

their leader said, “no Olinka man . . . would even think of marrying a woman who was not circumcised” (81). “Tashi would not have the shame of being unmarried” if she is circumcised, says M’Lissa (50). Consequently, one of the reasons, females undergo circumcision, is their desire to be accepted in their community.

Social structures assign roles for each gender. The awareness of the difference between masculinity and femininity sets the limits of gender performance. For instance, woman’s functions in the African society are attached to her role as a housewife and a spouse. The impact of ‘Gender roles’ can be detected easily as it is observed in the actions and the attitudes of people of both genders. This impact is illustrated extensively in *Possessing the Secret of Joy*. During his journey, Adam was captured by some of the African liberators called “the Mbeles”. He spent several months looking for Tashi, whose been said to be in one of the Mbeles’ camps. After arriving to the destined camp; in which Tashi was circumcised, Adam was held for investigation in one of its “isolated compounds”. Adam’s descriptions of his captives reflect the way cultural traditions shape and decide social functions based on gender. He says, “I knew they resented bringing the heavy jar of water to my hut. Partly because it was heavy, and had to be brought a good distance from the river, but also because the carrying of water was not a man’s job. It was a woman’s job” (36). While spending some time in the camp the protagonist discovered that these freedom fighters belong to different parts of Africa. The African soldiers’ mentality and actions are influenced by the social construction of ‘Gender’. In the African culture, each gender has a specific role to be performed; a man is responsible for security and hunt, while a woman is left for childcare and cookery. Thus, carrying the jars is one of women’s responsibilities. In fact, the carrying of jars is neither gender-exclusive nor sex-determinant. Consequently, “Gender is not based on sex, or the biological differences between men and women. [It] is shaped by culture,

social relations, and natural environments” (“Gender and Biodiversity”). Any violation of the “Gender roles”, which are culturally inherited and socially preserved, is not tolerated.

Gender is a social framework that is constructed by patriarchy. It is based on the social division of people and labeled as biological. Thus, gender oppression of females is considered natural. Patriarchy, which is at the centre of decision-making, is responsible for the spread of gender’s stereotypes. It oppresses women in the name of nature, religion, culture and uses tradition to manipulate and dominate women. For instance, in Olinka, the fictional village in which the events of *Possessing the Secret of Joy* take place, the tradition of oppressing the female’s body is enacted through cultural rituals. It is legalized by claiming that the female’s genitals are dirty and needs to be cleaned off by getting cut. The hazardous procedure of “female genital mutilation” is normalized by using the word “bathed” which is “a euphemism for the ritual” (Buckman 90). In this regard, Tashi argues, “If my sex organs were unclean, why was I born with them? I asked my mother this once, before I was circumcised. She just said everyone knew a woman’s vulva to be dirty. And to need to be removed” (143). The answer of Tashi’s mother; Nafa, proves women’s blind submissiveness to patriarchy and their ignorance of the reasons behind their oppression.

The lack of women’s awareness prepares the woman to believe in the normality of her oppression. In Tashi’s tribe, the male elders are responsible for normalizing the oppression of the female’s body. Accordingly, Tashi says,

Our Leader said we must keep ourselves clean and pure as we had been since time immemorial—by cutting out unclean parts of our bodies. Everyone knew that if a woman was not circumcised her unclean parts would grow so long they’d soon touch her thighs . . . Everyone believed it, even though no one had ever seen it. No one living in our village

anyway. And yet the elders, particularly, acted as if everyone had witnessed this evil, and not nearly a long enough time ago. (80)

The female's sexual organs are falsely accused of being dirty; there is no evidence that supports the claims in this regard. Therefore, the woman's corporeal differences are the main reason for her oppression. The elders enforce females' circumcision by spreading misconceptions about the female's gender and body. Thus, genital mutilation is one of the strategies used by patriarchy to oppress women.

The role of culture is evident in the creation and the spread of gender misconceptions. The use of "Legends" and "Mythology" facilitates the process of manipulation and control of peoples' collective and individual behavior and thought. One of the famous figures in the Greek mythology is "Pandora", the first mortal woman, who "opens the box of catastrophes" (350). De Beauvoir writes, "The pagan gods invent women, and Pandora, the firstborn of these female creatures, is the one who unleashes all the evil that humanity endures" (114). Again, another example that illustrates women as evil is presented. Since ancient times a woman's role, place, and worth in the society, she inhabits; as both an individual and a human being, is assessed mainly on the basis of her corporeal functions. De Beauvoir points to women's sexualized identity as she states, "she is nothing other than what man decides; she is thus called "the sex," meaning that the male sees her essentially as a sexed being; for him she is sex, so she is it in the absolute" (26). The woman's body is regarded as a sexual object, designed for reproduction and for man's satisfaction. Torabe; one of the male characters in Walker's novel, visualizes the patriarchal mentality which sexualizes the female. Adam describes Torabe and says, "He had not loved the majority of his wives; in fact, he didn't even hate them; he thought of them as servants in the most disposable sense. He barely remembered their names . . . Unfortunately for him

“love” and frequent, forceful sex were one” (104). Torabe’s treatment of his wives implies the influence of patriarchal ideologies on men’s attitudes towards women.

Ancient mythologies and patriarchal traditions have portrayed women as mere objects for reproduction. “Children are considered the crowning glory in an African marriage – the more children are conceived during the marriage, the greater the glory” (Magezi E. Baloyi and Matsobane J. Manala 1). Subsequently, having many children is a privilege in African families. Raye; Tashi’s friend and therapist, says, “you, as a woman, [was] expected to reproduce as helplessly and inertly as a white ant” (142). Raye’s use of the expression “white ant” has a connection with one of Tashi’s nightmares, in which Tashi sees herself in a dark tower, “trapped deep inside it, heavy, wingless and inert” (146). The dark tower represents “the termite hill”, and Tashi is its queen. Accordingly; Pierre the son of Adam and Lisette, says, “You are the queen who loses her wings . . . You being stuffed with food at one end—a boring diet of mushrooms—and having your eggs, millions of them, constantly removed at the other” (142). The metaphorical images of both “the queen” and its “eggs”, symbolizes the claim that a woman’s worth is decided by her ability of childbirth. The queen is valued by her worker termites because of the million eggs she produces, otherwise the queen is useless, and so is the woman.

In some communities, men use “pregnancy” as a means to control a woman’s body. The enslavement of the female body through pregnancy is indirectly engraved in the social memory by utilizing strategies such as “nursery rhymes”. Raye mentions one of these rhymes as she says, “Peter, Peter, pumpkin eater / Had a wife and couldn’t keep her / Put her in a pumpkin shell / And there he kept her very well”. Pierre explains, “It is about keeping a woman pregnant, [he] says, stretching out his arms and curving them into a pumpkin shape. Enslaved by her own body” (142). Indeed, women are sexually identified and oppressed, because of the stereotypical images patriarchy enforces, both directly and indirectly.

De Beauvoir mentions, a statement by an English scholar who wrote, “Women are not only not part of the race, they are not even half of the race but a sub-species destined uniquely for reproduction” (175). This particular statement accentuates the distorted image women represent in patriarchal communities. In such environments a woman is worthless if she does not produce children, “those who cannot bear children are regarded as abnormal and outcasts” (Baloyi and Manala 1). The inability to produce children alienates women. Moreover, having a female child is not valued in contrast with having a male one, women are more valuable if the child is a male; thus, a woman’s worth is decided by the gender of her inborn. In this respect Baloyi and Manala write, “Although childbearing is applauded, male children are given more priority than female children . . . the birth of male children, which is celebrated more than the birth of female children, contributes to undermining one gender in favour of the other” (1). This indicates the contribution of gender in externalizing women’s oppression.

Stereotypical images about women’s irrationality and weakness were conceived throughout the history. However, men were remarkably portrayed as wise and strong. Men’s assumed intellectual superiority entails women’s sexualized identity. Therefore, “sex” deprives women from their intellectual rights. In most cultures, women are prevented from education, and trapped in their houses to serve men and take care of children. Men consider women as biologically “infantilized” and “intellectually weak”, as described by Auguste Comte who regards femininity as a “prolonged childhood”. Comte refers to women’s intellect as that of a child. His proclamations give an insight to the stereotypical images that male dominant traditions, aspire to maintain in regards to women’s role in the society. He says, “Neither instruction nor education is suitable for her” (qtd. in De Beauvoir 159). This statement negates any possibility for woman’s intellectual progress and active engagement in performing different roles, apart from those traditionally imposed. In this respect Louis de Bonald declares, “Women belong to the

family and not to politics, and nature made them for housework and not for public service” (qtd. in De Beauvoir 159). Accordingly, woman’s biological nature; body and sexuality identify her role as a human being. Thus, women are oppressed in the name of femininity.

Bonald asserts male’s intellectual superiority, in stating that women’s lack of management; which is an intellectual ability, calls for man’s interference. He argues, “[women are] inept in all government even domestic” (qtd. in De Beauvoir 160). Subsequently, women as wives are functionally disabled, and men are the ones who “govern” the family. According to Walker, there were times when women took the lead in house management. However, it was considered inappropriate and even claimed to be “evil”. M’Lissa’s mother describes these ancient times as she says, “The house always belonged, in those days, to the woman, and there were never children without parents or a home. But somehow this was seen as evil” (134). The woman’s leadership is passively regarded in patriarchal communities, regardless of its good consequences. The woman’s authority threatens the continuity of male dominant traditions that focus on women’s dependence on men. Consequently, women are denied authority in all forms and domains. In this respect Honoré de Balzac says, “The married woman is a slave” (qtd. in De Beauvoir 161), and a slave has no role but to serve the master. Women as slaves are not required to be educated nor they need education. It is “The master” who thinks and decides for them. Balzac suggests a woman’s belonging to a man and her inadequacy in his absence. The woman has to obey whatever the man chooses for her. Consequently; women’s role is decided by men. De Beauvoir explains the rejection of a woman’s work outside the family as she writes, “Her instruction has to be limited” (160). This indicates men’s desire to control women.

‘Obedience’ is an important concept in male dominant traditions, a woman is obliged to obey her husband under the name of “duty”, regardless of her own preference and will. Subsequently, the wife is denied freedom except in occasions her husband allows. In a

monologue, Adam questions the word “obedience” vowed by the women in the marriage ceremony he says, “But why did the word [obey] exist, in a ceremony between equals and loved ones? Well, obviously because the woman, who was required to obey, was not considered equal” (31). Adam’s thoughts reflect women’s reality. The absence of equality entails inferiority; consequently, one gender is privileged, on the expense of the other. Thus, a married woman is de-privileged.

In an attempt to justify men’s exploitation of the female’s body, religious schemes, which are human made, are used to manipulate women. Raye declares, “Religion is an elaborate excuse for what man has done to women” (143). According to Raye, gender oppression can be established in the name of religion. Pierre; Adam’s son, exemplifies the religious normalization of women’s subordination to men when he reads for Tashi; his father’s wife, a passage from a book entitled “*Conversations with Ogotemmêli*”, by a French anthropologist named Marcel Griaule. The passage illustrates one of the myths about the universe’s creation. Pierre reads,

THE GOD AMMA, it appeared, took a lump of clay, squeezed it in his hand and flung it from him . . . The earth lies flat, but the north is at the top. It extends east and west with separate members like a foetus in the womb. It is a body . . . This body, lying flat, face upwards, in a line from north to south, is feminine. Amma, being lonely and desirous of intercourse with this creature, approached it. (109)

The connection between “ownership” and “the female gender” is established through “the gendering of the land”. Man’s temptations on proving the similitude between “bodies of women” and “bodies of land” shows the intentions of suggesting the possibility to master and colonize the female body. The God mentioned in the extract is the creator of the universe, as believed by the Dogon people of Mali. According to the myth, this God felt lonely and mated with the earth. Pierre continues, “God is all-powerful. He cut down the termite hill, and had intercourse with the

excised earth” (109). Amma’s intercourse with the earth symbolizes the beginning of life itself, which according to the myth, started with rape and mutilation. The mythological use of “God” acts as a religious excuse for subjugating the female’s body. A similar strategy is used by the elders of Olinka to justify the exploitation of the female’s body in the name of religion. In this regard, Tashi recalls a conversation; she witnessed as a small child, which shows the practice of religious symbology by the elders. In Tashi’s memory, the elders referred to the woman as a wingless queen owned by men, and designed to make their “offspring”. One of the elders says, “Let us . . . drink to the Queen who is beautiful, and whose body has been given us to be our sustenance forever” (144-5). The queen’s inability to fly, symbolizes her weakness and lack of freedom. The female’s body, which is claimed to be a male’s property offered by God, is used as a site of domination. The elders’ use of religion aims to eliminate the females’ individuality and independence.

Women are required to show great acceptance of cultural traditions. Obedience is a woman’s “duty” and obligation towards her husband and family. Those who fail to maintain order and control their women, are rejected and ostracized. Lisette; Adam’s mistress, recalls a story of Torabe the husband who terrorized his wife, and sexually abused her. The poor wife escaping from her terrible husband took refuge in her family “Her father instructed her mother to convince her of her duty. Because she was Torabe’s wife, her place was with him, her mother told her” (90). Exhausted and desperate the poor wife ended her life, “drowned herself, in water that didn’t even reach her knees, rather than return” (90). The story shows the burden of a woman’s duty. The following lines describe the terrible fate of those who do not abide by the social conventions of their culture:

Torabe was thrown out of the village because he lost control of his wife, a very evil thing to do in that society because it threatened the fabric of the web of life. At least the web of

life as the villagers knew it. He died deserted, filthy and in tatters. The girl's family too was ordered out of the village, and the girl herself was dragged from the river and left to rot, her body food for vultures and rodents. (91)

The story of Torabe and his wife reflects both male's dominance and female's resistance. It shows the relation between a woman's disobedience and a man's downfall. In patriarchal environments, a man's power is measured through the amount of control he has over his women. Therefore, the actions of women can determine their husbands and fathers strength or weakness. If a woman misbehaves, the man in charge of her would be held accountable. Torabe's story depicts the firmness of gender roles in patriarchal communities.

Ignorance plays a major role in determining the fate of women. In Olinka, women are victimized because of their ignorance in regards to the functionality of their bodies. Tashi declares, "My own body was a mystery to me, as was the female body . . . to almost everyone I knew" (80). The discussion of circumcision is a taboo. Consequently, women's unawareness of "the physical [and] psychic damage that would result from the ritual" "helps to keep the practice intact" (Buckman 90). Thus, women's ignorance facilitates their manipulation and domination by patriarchy. In addition to ignorance, women's sufferance is equally empowered through the tradition of silence. In this respect, Adam says, "They've made the telling of the suffering itself taboo" (104). The woman is silenced and prevented from voicing her oppression to meet the standards of her culture.

Extreme measures have been taken throughout the history to control women in the name of nature. On one hand, patriarchy normalized women's oppression, it insisted on women's difference and weakness as a justification for their domination. On the other hand, cultural traditions used manipulation to legalize its oppressive rituals against women. Gradually, the whole society participated in organizing women's oppression.

Chapter 3: Racial Oppression

Racial discrimination is often implicated within multiracial communities, in which a racial domination of a certain race over the other is observed. The following chapter is devoted to investigate the notion of race; precisely the racial oppression against African-American women. This chapter will explore the theme of race, which is frequently tackled in a number of literary works written by Alice walker. In addition, Black females' sacrifice, resistance and solidarity will be demonstrated through Walker's novel *Possessing the Secret of Joy* (2011).

3.1. 'Race' in Minor Literature

Racial discrimination is an issue that is mostly tackled in the works of African writers. Alice walker is among the writers who repeatedly investigate race in their works. *The Color Purple* (1983) is the title of the novel that has established Walker's popularity. The previously mentioned novel narrates the protagonist Celie's abuse by her stepfather. In the novel Walker shows how Celie's community imposes racist and patriarchal norms on women, rendering them powerless in the face of oppression. Through *The Color purple*, Walker asserts that, "The American society is a racist, sexist and colourist capitalist society, which operates on the basis of unnatural hierarchical distinctions. The oppression of Black women by their husbands, brothers, lovers etc. is an outcome of this system" (qtd. in Ataeiniya Azam and Somayeh Zare 22). Accordingly, the Black woman is a victim of the American capitalist system.

Race, which is a crucial factor in determining the fate of Black woman, is tackled in another literary work produced by Walker. The novel is entitled *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* (1970). Most of the characters in the works of walker are Black citizens. The characters of *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* are Blacks as well. The choice of Black descendants as the main characters in Walker's novels aims at reflecting the particularity of the violence endured by the Black race as a result of the racial oppression inflicted upon them. In this regard, in her work

Racial Oppression in *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*, Aravinda Reddy N argues, “Alice Walker interrogates the white race, the destructive behavior and humiliating position given to the African-Americans. She questions the demoralizing impact of their ruinous hegemony oppressive power and so-called racial superiority” (57). Walker’s depiction of the whites’ racial ideology and the torture endured by the Blacks as a result, targets the foundation of racial supremacy and its contribution in the oppression of whole communities and entire races.

Similar interest in racial concerns is noticed in Toni Morrison’s works. In an interview held by the Guardian News, Morrison defined and distinguished between the two terms “race” and “racism”. According to Morrison, racism is a social construction that privileges one race over the other and that can be seen in certain types of behavior. However, according to Morrison, race specifies shared physical qualities of a certain group of people. *The Bluest Eye* (1970) is one of Morrison’s novels, which tackle race. The novel tells the story of Pecola the little Black child who frequently observes her father’s abuse of her mother. In her neighborhood and within her friends, the protagonist “Pecola” is excluded and discriminated, because of the difference of her skin color. The stereotyped image of the beauty that lies in the white skin and the blue eyes makes Pecola insecure about her looks. Evidently, the little child grew to believe in the ugliness of her own black skin. In another interview about the reason behind Morrison’s drive to write her novel *The Bluest Eye* and the role the male African writer represents, Morrison’s answers were the followings:

I felt compelled at that time, this is at 1960s most of what was published by black man were very powerful, aggressive, revolutionary . . . and also they had a very positive, racially uplifting rhetoric...I thought they would skip over something...no one would remember that it was not always beautiful. No one is gonna remember how hurtful a certain kind of internecine racism is. (Visionary project 01:16-02:16)

Morison believes that the male writer cannot portray the suffering of the female, because in most cases the man is the reason behind the woman's misery. It is worth noted to mention that despite being a Black person, the level of oppression for both genders is different; the Black female is more subjugated. The neglect of women's experiences in the revolutionary and aggressive narratives written by African American male writers proves that only Black female writers can transmit a Black woman's pain. On this light, *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, the novel written by the African-American writer Alice walker can set an example of the success achieved by the Black female writers in addressing the Black woman's concerns.

In Walker's novel, the focus on the struggle against oppression and racism faced by the Black female is consistently advocated. The depiction of personal experiences of characters, such as the protagonist Tashi is highly influential in understanding the Black female's agony in the face of racial discrimination. For instance, after the death of her older sister "Dura", Tashi develops a psychological trauma that would hunt her for years. Due to her irresistible pain, Tashi finally decides to get some therapy. However, she is faced with discrimination instead. Her therapist, who is supposed to provide her with help, fails to recognize Tashi's African identity. He says, "NEGRO WOMEN . . . are considered the most difficult of all people to be effectively analyzed" (23). The doctor's statement reveals the stereotypical image held in accordance with Black women's identity; to him all Blacks are the same; they are all "Negros". In this regard, Tashi says, "I felt negated by the realization that even my psychiatrist could not see I was African" (23). Feeling disappointed by the later realization, Tashi reacts with silence; she no longer responds to her therapist's questions.

One's personal experience provides a better description for the unbearable circumstances of discrimination. For instance, the psychiatrist's inability to relate with Tashi's experiences prevents him from understanding her pain. Therefore; he is unable to provide any assistance. The

African-American scholar; W.E. Du Bois' conception of 'Double Consciousness', which is based on his own experiences within the American society, proves useful in demonstrating the challenges of assimilation. Remarkably 'Double Consciousness' explains the condition of double-identity and its impact on self-determination. In this concern, Du Bois states,

it is a particular sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness,- an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (qtd. in Rutledge Dennis 14)

The analyses of one's identity from two different perspectives; one that is built upon stereotypes and misconceptions, and another, which is quite more positive, creates confusion and makes it difficult to decide which system or ideology a person should adopt.

In the case of African Americans, Du Bois insists that "the negative perspectives of the outside society" determine the behaviors and beliefs of those African Americans (qtd.in Marc Black 394). In this regard, Adam and his sister Olivia can set an example. The Black American siblings are part of the missionary family that was sent to Olinka. Adam and Olivia are completely Americanized and unaware of their exploitation by the capitalist system. Thus, they take pride in spreading the standards of the culture in which they are subjugated. Alyson R. Buckman writes, "While Adam and Olivia are both black Americans and, thus, victims of oppression themselves, they are also agents of colonization" (91). The siblings and their missionary family's participation in the cultural invasion of Olinka is one of the consequences of their belief in the racist misconceptions, spread about the inferiority of Africans in comparison to the supreme American race. The siblings' attachment to their homeland; "America", and their

underestimation of Africa can be observed in the following quote. Olivia says, “YOU HAVE TO KEEP US in mind, Tashi would say. And we would laugh, because it was so easy to forget Africa in America” (19). The siblings’ pride of their American roots is undoubted. Accordingly; self-vision and individuals’ behavior are influenced by social environment.

Pride is one of the main concerns in *Possessing the Secret of Joy*. Both the Johnson siblings and Tashi, seems to value their culture and believe in its superiority. In one of her arguments with her friend Olivia, Tashi reveals her frustration regarding the so-called American superiority, she says, “Who are you and your people never to accept us as we are? Never to imitate any of our ways? It is always we who have to change” (26). Tashi refuses to submit to the American standards. She believes that her own culture deserves respect. Despite Tashi’s friendship with Olivia, she considers her as a “foreigner”, she says, “You are black, but you are not like us . . . You barely have your own black skin, and it is fading” (26). Tashi excludes Olivia and verbally insults her, because of the different beliefs she represents. The American background of both Adam and Olivia makes them untrustworthy in the eyes of Tashi. Thereby, Tashi declares, “They are right, I said to her from my great height astride the donkey, who say you and your family are the white people’s wedge” (25). Olivia’s efforts to stop Tashi from getting circumcised are wasted, because Tashi no longer trusts Americans. Eventually, Tashi undergoes circumcision to confirm her cultural identity and to prove its individuality. In this respect Olivia says, “Tashi was happy that the initiation ceremony isn’t done in Europe or America . . . That makes it even more valuable to her” (11). The hate that Tashi holds for the American culture transcends into an oppression of her own body. In addition, her obsession of maintaining “the individuality of Olinka” creates a gap in her friendship with the Johnsons. Accordingly, the intolerance of differences between cultures and individuals is one of the main reasons behind both racism and discrimination.

The difference in skin color between Americans and Africans was the main reason behind the existence of slavery in ancient America. In fact the history of America is full of stories about slavery. The victims of slavery are usually from African backgrounds. Many documentations, articles, books, and even films have depicted the tragic experiences of those enslaved. In this regard, Rudolph P. Byrd published a book entitled *The World Has Changed: Conversations with Alice Walker*. The book contains an interview of Paula Giddings with Alice Walker. The interview was about Walker's novel *Possessing the Secret of Joy*. Giddings suggests that the main reason for the criticism Walker's novel received lies in the author's focus on the depiction of the white Americans' racist attitudes against the Black race, and the Western intervention in African affairs. Walker defended her claims by stating that, "Slavery intervened, as far as I'm concerned, I am speaking for my great-great-great-great grandmother who came here with all this pain in her body" (118). In Walker's opinion the experiences of slavery cannot be questioned, because they are both inherited and engraved in the collective memory of the whole Black community. In fact the absence of slavery does not mean the absence of racism. For instance, Tashi recalls one of Adam's experiences of racial segregation, she says, "I remembered when we first arrived in America. [Adam's] excitement to be, finally, "safe" and back home. And his shock at being constantly harassed because he was black" (34). Despite his American citizenship, Adam is constantly abused, because of his "different" skin color.

Racism is problematic for both the male and the female. Yet, the minor woman; precisely the Black woman, faces additional discrimination, because of both her gender and skin color. In the case of those enslaved women, racism can prove to be dehumanizing at many scales. For instance, in one of Doctor Raye's sessions with Tashi, she introduces her to one of her patients named Amy Maxwell. Amy informs Tashi about the fate of those circumcised African enslaved women who were brought to America. She says,

Many African women have come here . . . many of them sold into bondage circumcised and infibulated. It was these sewed-up women who fascinated the American doctors who flocked to the slave auctions to examine them, as the women stood naked and defenseless on the block. They learned to do the “procedure” on other enslaved women; they did this in the name of Science. (117)

The enslaved Black female was considered a man’s property and her public harassment in the name of science was both justified and normalized.

In fact, considering the Black female as an experimental subject is similar to Tashi’s experience with Mzee, the character who guides Tashi “back to mental health”. In her first impression of “The old man”; as she likes to describe him, she says, “He is no longer actively practicing his profession as doctor of the soul. He is seeing me only because I am an African woman” (41). Even as a patient, the Black woman is treated differently and considered unequal to the other races. Black people are not viewed as individuals who possess separate qualities and attitudes; they are prejudged according to some prefixed misconceptions. In this regard, Tashi says, “He’d been taken aback by the fact that I had only one child. He thought this unusual for a colored woman, married or unmarried. Your people like lots of kids” (23). Remarkably, the Black female’s struggle against the stereotypical images regarding her body and race is continuous.

3.2. Black Females’ Resistance, Sacrifice and Solidarity

In the face of despair, inequality and oppression, the Black female’s efforts to change her poor-living circumstances can prove to be quite desperate. Accordingly, Tashi decides to fight for what is left of Olinka by showing that “[Olinka] still have their own ways . . . even though the white man has taken everything else” (11). Tashi’s choice of making self-sacrifice shows a blind compliance to the cultural norms of Olinka, this “blind compliance” is perceived by Tashi as

“pride”. The individual’s desire for acceptance results in a blind imitation of the main stream’s standards of behavior and ways of thinking, which explains Tashi’s sense of incompleteness as a young uncircumcised child and her readiness to be circumcised as an adult. In this regard, Adam says, “the operation she’d had done to herself joined her, she felt, to these women, whom she envisioned as strong, invincible. Completely woman. Completely African. Completely Olinka” (50). Tashi needed a sense of belonging in order to resist whites’ supremacy.

The individuals’ blind sacrifice for the sake of their culture leads to their victimization. Once again Tashi can be an example of such transformation. Tashi could not realize the meaning of her “sacrifice” nor understand the pain of a circumcised body, until the moment she experienced the consequences. On her way to be circumcised, Tashi visions herself as “a chief, a warrior” (25). She thought that by submitting to the tsunga’s knife her tribe and country would be saved, and her culture would survive. “It was only when she at last was told by M’Lissa . . . that she might sit up and walk a few steps that she noticed her own proud walk had become a shuffle”, says Adam (50). It is her ritual sacrifice that transforms her into a victim of “Female Genital Mutilation”, instead of a war heroine like she imagined.

Understanding the reason behind one’s oppression is the first step towards finding a solution. In the case of Tashi, the reason and the solution are a personification of the same individual. They both represent M’Lissa; the killer of Tashi’s sister and the reason behind her childhood’s trauma and long suffering. After years of physical pain and psychological trauma, Tashi discovers that the murderer of her older sister and the one who caused her a lot of pain is still alive and happy. Tashi says, “she was not only alive but a national monument. She had been honored by the Olinka government for her role during the wars of liberation . . . and for her unflinching adherence to the ancient customs and traditions of the Olinka state. No mention was made of how she fulfilled this obligation” (96). Tashi’s realization of the symbolic relation

between M'Lissa and "Female Genital Mutilation" increases her desire of killing the tsunga. Unable to control her grudge and driven by her Rage, Tashi decides that killing M'Lissa is the only solution to end her torment.

In fact, the murder of M'Lissa symbolizes Tashi's resistance to cultural bigotry and represents a call for solidarity. For instance, Tashi assumes that "the tsunga was to the traditional elders merely a witch they could control, an extension of their own dominating power" (168). Therefore, she asks of those victimized to join her in the fight against FGM and against those who cherish the patriarchal society's norms. Apparently, while numerous Black females still suffer, "the sacred tsunga" is rewarded for their pain. In this regard, Tashi declares, "World wars have been fought and lost; for every war is against the world and every war against the world is lost. But look, here lies M'Lissa, propped up like a queen" (98). Thus, Tashi believes that the murder of M'Lissa by one of her victims is only just.

Sacrifice is the soul means by which oppressed individuals can attain solidarity. In this regard, Arto Laitinen and Anne Birgitta Pessi claim, "In all situations, solidaristic behavior may require a sacrifice, a cost to oneself for the benefit of another individual or the whole group" (5). Accordingly, Tashi's murder of M'Lissa is a sacrifice that she had to make. The reasons to make such a sacrifice are varied, but the price is one; Tashi's life is the price, it is "the sacrifice". M'Lissa is highly respected by people of Olinka, the fact that she is killed by a woman who spent most of her life in America, makes the public enraged; they want Tashi to be dead. In this regard, Tashi says, "Mother Lissa was a monument! the voices hiss. Your wife has murdered a monument. The Grandmother of the race!" (102). M'Lissa represents the pride of Olinka, she represents its patriarchal traditions and ancient beliefs. Consequently; the value of one's sacrifice depends largely on the value of the subject of his/her sacrifice. For instance, Tashi's sacrifice is valuable, because of the value M'Lissa holds for Olinka. Thus, it is decided that "for justice to be

served”, the only price fitting for such a grave crime against both M’lissa and Olinka is for Tashi to be executed.

One might think that Tashi died for nothing, she murdered an already-dying old woman and her life was the cost. However, that is not the case. After M’Lissa was murdered and Tashi was sentenced to death, people from all over the world got interested in her case and several women from different parts of the country, and even outside of it, came to support Tashi. In this regard Olivia says, “Her days are busy. There are visits from women’s groups and the foreign press. Photographers from every part of the world come to snap her picture.” (152). At last, and after years of silence, Tashi now is able to share her story with the world. Inside the prison, Tashi can feel people’s support and see the hope in them. She says, “EVERY DAY NOW, down below my window in the street, there are demonstrations. I cannot see them, but the babble of voices rises up the wall of the prison and pours right through the iron bars”. She adds, “Even with my family beside me . . . without the noise of the battle from the street I [feel] alone” (121). The bond Tashi shares with other women is based on common “interests”, “which women, as a gender, do share”. These “concrete interests”; as described by Ann Whitehead, “are one basis for women’s solidarity” (6). Consequently; in the fight against oppression there must be a unified effort; a “solidaristic behavior”, directed toward the achievement of a unified aim.

Possessing the Secret of Joy discusses several subjects related to colonialism, racism, and gender oppression. The novel also deals with misconceptions and stereotypes about the Black race. For instance, in the first pages of the novel, the author mentions that, “There are those who believe Black people possess the secret of joy and that it is this that will sustain them through any spiritual or moral or physical devastation” (Alice Walker 10). The latter is extracted from a book entitled *African Saga*, written by Mirella Ricciardi; an Italian woman raised in Kenya. The same extract is read by Mbatia in her last visit to Tashi; a day before her execution. Accordingly, Tashi

says, “Tonight [Mbate] reads from the book of a white colonialist author who has lived all her life off the labor of Africans but failed to perceive them as human beings. [Mbate reads] “Black people are natural,” [The white colonialist] writes, “they possess the secret of joy, which is why they can survive the suffering and humiliation inflicted upon them”” (165). The White colonialist author claims to have an understanding of Black people. She considers them as quite simple. Therefore, they are denied “the complexity” of the human soul shared by all humans. Walker’s point of view regarding the excerpt is observed when Tashi says, “These settler cannibals. Why don’t they just steal our land, mine our gold, chop down our forests, pollute our rivers, enslave us to work on their Farms . . . devour our flesh and leave us alone? Why must they also write about how much joy we possess?”. Tashi’s reaction to the extract reveals her frustration toward the claims stated by the White colonialist author. However, Mbati promises to discover “the secret of joy”.

The overwhelming feeling of accomplishment makes a person unafraid of death. Actually, Tashi claims her own death to be an “eternity”. In this respect, she writes, “I was not able to comprehend death except as something that had already happened to me. Dying now does not frighten me . . . I will refuse the blindfold so that I can see far in all directions. I will concentrate on the beauty of one blue hill in the distance, and for me, that moment will be eternity” (169). Tashi’s seemingly-indifference about her execution is the result of her satisfaction. After the final rebellious act of murdering M’Lissa and witnessing Black women’s support as a result, Tashi does not feel bothered by death. In this regard, her last words are “I am no more. And satisfied” (170). Her satisfaction grows when Tashi discovers that “RESISTANCE IS THE SECRET OF JOY!” (170). In fact, resistance, sacrifice and solidarity complete each other. Tashi’s resistance required a sacrifice that enabled her to feel the pain of other circumcised females and their solidarity was a natural response to Tashi’s sacrifice.

In the end Tashi wants to confirm that Black females' struggle should not be perceived as a battle between races. Instead, she wants women's agony to be the center of attention. She wants to wear "Red" to symbolize her solidarity with the victims of FGM. In this regard, Olivia says, "TASHI SAYS she wants to wear a red dress to face the firing squad. I am sick to death of black and white. Neither of those is first. Red, the color of woman's blood, comes before them both" (126). Although, Tashi is a victim of Whites' supremacy and Blacks' hegemony, at the day of her execution, instead of perceiving her sacrifice as a punishment of a Black woman who lived most of her days in "America" and killed an "African" national monument, she wants the world to acknowledge the hazardous effects of 'Female Genital Mutilation'.

Conclusion

Numerous tales about inequality and injustice are encompassed in literature. For instance, minor literature explores issues related to oppression and marginalization. It provides minorities with a platform that enables them to express their anguish, and hardships. The concerns of minor literature are examined by African American authors in relation to experiences of racial discrimination and sexual harassment. Moreover, African American literature investigates central themes such as race, identity and class. The use of *Possessing the Secret of Joy* in this study helped in depicting the ordeals of the Black African-American woman and highlighted the consequences of racialized and gendered oppression.

This study examined the possibility of an intersectional connectedness between race and gender. It explored the relation between difference and marginalization, and illustrated the degree ‘Double Otherness’ influenced Black females’ experiences of racial and gender oppression. Through the analysis of Alice Walker’s novel *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, social constructions such as race, gender, and sex were investigated and explained. Furthermore, despite the focus on the double otherness of Black females, the study involved several literary works, which exemplified the issue of double otherness in different minority groups. For instance; *The Woman Warrior* by Maxine Hong Kingston and *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros, were discussed in the study, because of their thematic use of race and gender, .

The study centers on the influence of double otherness on Black females’ oppression. The issue of double otherness has proved to be a major factor in the formation of Black females’ internalized oppression. For instance, M’Lissa the antagonist of *Possessing the Secret of Joy* was presented as both a victim of ‘Female Genital Mutilation’ and an oppressor for her role as a circumciser. Furthermore, the novel depicted the hardships of Tashi as a victim of both patriarchy and whites’ supremacy, and an agent of her own victimization.

Alice Walker successfully depicted the double-oppression of the protagonist as a circumcised woman and an immigrant in America. Walker's portrayal of the American interference in Africa, patriarchal dominance, gender oppression, and racism served the accomplishment of this study. In *Possessing the Secret of Joy*, Walker provided the readers with insightful solutions to fight both 'Gender' and 'Racial' Oppression. In fact, the author's use of 'Female Genital Mutilation' to depict Black females' oppression is quite perceptive.

'Double Otherness' is applicable in a variety of contexts. This research has focused on the struggle of Black females in general. However, we would recommend an investigation of the notion "Disability"; studying the effects of double otherness in relation to people with special needs. In this regard, the procedure of 'Female Genital Mutilation' can be considered. The study of language effects on the social construction of oppression is as well recommended.

Accordingly, the role of constructing "Social Binaries" and "Gender Roles" in the sustenance of conflicts is to be analyzed.

The conduct of this study seeks to find solutions to the issue of 'Double Otherness' and to raise awareness in regards to 'Internalized Oppression', 'Female Genital Mutilation', and 'Cultural oppression'. Moreover, the study investigates constructions such as 'Race', 'Gender', and 'Sex', and aims to correct their social misrepresentations. In regards to double otherness, Anzaldúa's suggestion of a unified identity and a tolerance for ambiguity can provide a solution to this problem, along with the deconstruction of binary oppositions.

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Résumé

L'objectif de cette étude est d'explorer la situation des femmes américaines d'origine africaine et d'attirer l'attention sur leur comportement avec les différentes expériences d'oppression et d'intolérance culturelle. La littérature mineure met l'accent sur les différentes opérations concernant la femme au teint noir à travers les études des thèmes tels que le racisme, la maltraitance des blancs, le conflit des classes sociales, le sexisme et l'autorité paternelle. Cette étude s'appuie sur la compréhension du concept "la double altérité" dans le roman d'Alice Walker intitulé "possédant le secret de la joie" (2011). Le cote analytique de ce travail académique se concentre sur l'intersection entre le sexe et la race dans le but de façonner l'identité de la femme américo-africaine. Ce travail donne une importance remarquable à l'étude de la discrimination raciale et l'oppression sexiste. L'oppression du corps sera mise en évidence en montrant la cruauté de la pratique des mutilations génitales féminine (MGF). Pour conclure, le but de cette étude est de sensibiliser les gens sur la persécution de la femme américo-africaine et les effets secondaires de la pratique des mutilations génitales féminines. L'importance de l'utilisation du concept "la double altérité" consiste à étudier la race et le sexe qui est le pilier principal à n'importe quelle étude sur femme appartenant à des minorités.

المخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة الى استطلاع أوضاع النساء الأمريكيات من اصل إفريقي، واستبيان كيفية تعاملهن مع مختلف تجارب الاضطهاد وتحملهن للتعصب الثقافي. يساهم أدب الأقليات في تسليط الضوء على القضايا المتعلقة بالمرأة ذات البشرة السوداء من خلال مناقشة مفاهيم تتعلق بالتمييز العنصري، الصراع الطبقي، التفرقة الجنسية، الهيمنة الأبوية، وكذا التعسف الممارس من قبل ذوي العرق الأبيض. تركز هذه الدراسة على البحث في مفهوم "ازدواجية الآخر" من خلال العمل الأدبي للكاتبة أليس وولكر بعنوان "امتلاك سر الفرح" (2011). يتمحور الجانب التحليلي لهذا العمل الأكاديمي، حول مناقشة التداخل بين كل من العرق والجنس ودوره في تشكيل هوية المرأة الأمريكية ذات الأصل الإفريقي. يولي هذا العمل اهتماما ملحوظا لدراسة التمييز العنصري والقمع الجنسي. يتجسد القمع الممارس على جسد المرأة من خلال اظهار وحشية طقس "تشويه الأعضاء التناسلية للإناث". هذه الدراسة تسعى الى نشر التوعية حول قضايا الاضطهاد الممارس في حق النساء ذوات البشرة السوداء وتبيان الآثار الجانبية لطقس تشويه الأعضاء التناسلية الأنثوية. تكمن اهمية استعمال مفهوم "ازدواجية الآخر" في الرابط الذي يؤسسه المفهوم بين كل من الجنس و العرق والذي يعتبر الركيزة الاساسية لأي دراسة حول نساء الأقليات.