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the African American history which notes a fugitive slave, Margaret Garner, who kills her daughter, then tries to kill her other children and herself rather than be returned to slavery. Working on this factual account, Toni Morrison has charted black history thus giving voice to the silence. The fiction describes how the central characters—Sethe Suggs and Denver and Paul D—try to come to terms with impossible memories. They struggle with the past that cannot, yet must, be remembered. On the part of the characters, there is the pressing need to tell and at the same time the desire to forget the past. The characters in the novel attempt to tell or say of their personal and historical past that they are having in the form of memory. Theirs is the memory of monstrous power that erupts and overwhelms their mind. Sethe Suggs' mind is overloaded with memory of slave life leading to her act of killing her daughter.

Memories that Sethe has in her mind belong to different places and time, and to different people. She recalls them in pieces and not as a whole because they are impossible memories. But when she is asked to tell about them, she does or sometimes she tells them by her own will. One of her memories is related to her mother who threw her children away except Sethe, and herself was hanged by the white master. Other is the memory of Sweet Home Plantation owned by the Garners in Kentucky and the slave men. Sethe doesn't think all these memories are important enough to tell. Of course certain memories are important enough to tell. But telling of memories seems a difficult task to Sethe so that she cannot go beyond a certain point and there she stops. The narrator observes:

She stopped.

Denver knew that her mother was through with it—for now any way. The single slow blink of her eyes; the bottom lip sliding up slowly to cover the top; and then a nostril sign, like the snuff of a candle flame—signs that Sethe had reached the point beyond which she would not go. (Walker 37)

Here what follows 'the point' is that part of the story which Sethe doesn't want to tell to her daughter.

The characters in the fiction make a deliberate attempt to keep certain truth of their past secret while they insist to know it. That is unspeakable truth and yet there is a longing to hear it. In this contradiction lies the narrative skill of the text of fiction. Denver knows that "[h]er mother had secrets—things she wouldn't tell; things she halfway told" (37-38). Denver senses these secrets when she tires to seek answers to her schoolmate

her like a cow or a goat. This is the story that Sethe wants to tell when she is asked about it. "Nothing to tell except school teacher", Sethe tells Denver (37). She carries that story with her in the form of scars on her back. Those are the scares of beatings that schoolteacher gave her. When the wound healed, it looked like a tree. Her story shocks Paul D who asks her, "They beat you and you was pregnant?" (17). Sethe tells it to Paul D because her story is his story as well so it needs "to tell, to refine and tell again" (99). There is desire in Sethe to tell the past as there is urge in her to know more of it. She wants to know more from Paul D of her husband Halle who disappeared on the appointed day. She says that there is more "that Paul D could tell me and my brain would go right ahead and take it and never say, No thank you" (70). Sethe's mind is loaded with the past; she is victim of it. Consequently she is not interested in future. The narrator tells that "her brain was not interested in the future. Loaded with the past and hungry for more, it left her no room to imagine...the next day" (70).

Truth in Sethe's story is truth in African American history. Through her story Toni Morrison unravels truth in that history. Sethe is found between an urge to tell it and her unwillingness not to do so because of its scandalous nature. Truth in her past haunts her throughout the narrative. At the same time it brings on her and Denver the spite of the colored men and women in Cincinnati. It causes separation between her and her sons; it keeps Baby Suggs away from attending Clearing mass. On learning it, Paul D leaves Sethe because it was "[t]oo rough for him to listen to" (203). Sethe kills her baby-girl because she feared her safety, her being taken to slavery. Killing is the only way Sethe knows to keep her baby-girl away from the terrible fate of slavery. Paul D knows how "Sethe talked about safety with a handsaw" (164). Sethe's act of killing in the context of black history is at once a denial of the institution of slavery and a measure of its power (Gray 693). She is a woman like any other one but with a difference pointed out by Paul D that her "love is too thick" (Morrison 164). Sethe's claim for love scares Paul D but Stamp Paid understands her situation. To him "[s]he ain't crazy. She love those children. She was trying to outhurt the hürter" (234). Her motherly love compels her to kill the baby-girl and it is the same that maddens her to attack Edward Bodwin. As a slave narrative the novel is a brilliant comment on the psychological, sociological and spiritual deformations of racism in America (Martin 159).

In *The Color Purple*, Alice Walker performs the similar task of articulating unspeakable story of her protagonist named Celie. However,

protagonist realize herself as well as others. Celie comes to know that even after her marriage with Albert, she is the object of man's sexual desire. Although she is tired by a day's work, her husband subjects her to his sexual desire. "He never ast me nothing bout myself. He clam on the top of me and fuck and fuck, even when my head bandaged" (117), Celie writes. Writing to God in a sense, Celie communicates with her other self that she calls God. That communication makes her realize her own being, her own person. Now she can understand that her marriage with Albert is not based on love. "Mr. ... marry me to take care of his children. I marry him cause my daddy made me. I don't love Mr. ... and he don't love me" (66). In such a loveless marriage Celie's condition is not better than that in her father's house. Both her father and her husband never treated her as human being. Celie's story is a story of black woman suffering in the patriarchal society which has upper hand over women. Before her marriage she is sexually oppressed and physically beaten up by her father and after marriage she is treated in the same way by her husband.

In letters Alice Walker delineates the character of Celie as a female victimization in the racist, classist and sexist society. She emphasizes on need to change which involves knowledge of one's self. Celie gets knowledge of her 'self' through telling her story and the stories of other women in the novel. Sofia's story teaches her the lesson of resistance to white and male oppression. Celie writes about Sofia's fight against her husband who tries to beat her. Also we learn from her how Sofia strikes the white Mayor when her dignity and individuality are challenged. Similarly the story of Shug Avery, a blue singer, teaches Celie about her female body offering her the possibility of sexual pleasure. Celie writes of Shug's telling her that there are no "nasty" feelings since "God love all them.... That's some of the best stuff God did" (203). Celie learns from Shug that divinity resides in the individual and not in the old white man worshipped in the church. The act of telling on the part of Celie becomes the act of learning. What she learns from Sofia and Shug helps her to find her 'self'. Her retaliation with her husband in the later part of the novel is a testimony of her having acquired the knowledge of 'self'. It is an act of self-expression that is central in letters. These letters provide her with means of understanding herself. And also they help her enter the public world denied her by her position (Fifer 155).

At the root of the narrative technique used in *The Color Purple* is Celie's attempt to tell her story. Alice Walker's use of the first person

and not to Butch Fuller who fathered it. This she cannot explain in words to her father and if she can, her father would not understand it. "Mattie knew there were no words for this, and even if there were, this disappointed and furious old man would never understand" (Naylor 22). Heading to the North Mattie wants to forget her past; all that happened to her but the child reminds her all that past. As opposed to her father, who is insensitive to her, her mother could understand Mattie. She tells her daughter that there is no shame in having a child, "Ain't nothing to be shamed of. Havin' a baby is the most natural thing there is" (20). Her mother secures her release from the violent father by firing a gun shot at him. The story of Mattie in the North is again a story of pain and humiliation. In the world of strangers, Mattie is humiliated by denying her request for home. She is denied home because she is a woman without husband and more, she has child from unknown father; that is not admitted.

The pain of living in the insensitive patriarchal society is mitigated for Mattie as she shares her experience with Miss Eva Turner, who in turn shares her own with Mattie. The narrator notes their mutual understanding, "Miss Eva unfolded her own life and secret exploits to Mattie, and... Mattie found herself talking about things that she had buried within her" (34). The emotional sharing of each other's makes the women of Brewster place understand to each other. As understanding grows between them, they desire to support the other. Gloria Naylor projects Mattie as a young black woman who has immense capacity to recover herself from any adverse situation. In the world of black women Mattie is the single woman who has only once succumbed to sexual desires. Mattie's control over her person no doubt facilitates her to have control over life. In spite of the fact that Mattie's only son abandons her she reappears in the next story "Etta Mae Johnson" not as an emotionally broken woman but as a woman living peaceful life. Mattie confers love on Etta whose life denies it to her. A young southern girl Etta claimed her independence from the white community. She reserved her 'sirs' and 'mams' for those she thought deserving. She leaves Rutherford County because she thought it was not a right place for her 'blooming independence'.

Etta Johnson's story shows her as a disillusioned woman who sees America as not a promised land. As she attempts to build her own future, she is fated to fail. After Etta's final disillusionment with Reverend Moreland Woods, she feels numbness of her body. She returns home, as never before, "with a broken spirit" (74). But Etta overcomes her dismayed condition

that the later is lesbian. Lorraine's being lesbian poses serious problem to her. She is rejected by her father and has lost job for the same reason. Her going through the trauma of rape by C.C. Baker and his friends has to do with her being lesbian. Lorraine falls prey to the society which she thinks would become friendly to her. What Lorraine had needed, according to Theresa, was showing guts and being independent. The story of the seven black women in *The Women of Brewster Place* is like the story of a phoenix which burns itself only to spring out of its ashes. Naylor uses this analogy at the beginning of the novel under the caption DAWN, "They come, they went, grew up, and grew old beyond their years. Like an ebony phoenix, each in her own time and with her own season had a story" (5).

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