Effects of Racism on the Traumatic Experiences of Black Women: Maya Angelou’s “I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings” in Focus

Abstract

This paper attempts to explore the effects of racism on sexual traumatic experiences of black women. Actually, the term racism incorporates negative beliefs about women and people belonging to third world countries. As it is suggested by Showalter (1986), Mohanty (2003), Spivak (1999) and Crowley (1991) that women are suffering from male prejudice and this male prejudice leads them towards mental trauma, in this situation, the racist attitudes of the white towards the black prove to be the prejudice leading to last nail in the coffin. This paper seeks to explore the effects of racism on the traumatic experiences of women keeping in view Angelou’s novel “I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings”. The study is qualitative in nature and uses the framework of Post-Colonial Feminist writer Mohanty (2003) in order to analyze the text of the novel selected through purposive sampling technique. Moreover, the finding of the study revealed that the after-effects of both male prejudice and racism lead the black women towards resistance and courage against this process of “double colonialization”. Through the framework of “Post-Colonial Feminism” many other issues such as displacement, segregation, sexual hes towards all women especially women of colour because heory approach harassment, rape and diaspora of non-western women besides the issue of identity crises can be explored by the future researchers.

Key Words: Black women, double colonization, ideology, male prejudice, racism.

1. Introduction

In this article, the conceptual framework of “Post-colonial Feminist theory approaches towards all women especially women of colour because these women suffered “double colonization” in the so-called male dominating society. Actually post-colonial feminist approach gathers all women to stand against the patriarchal world and tries to set up equality among them. Moreover,

1. Haniya Munir
2. Asmat A. Sheikh
this study will try to explain the efforts and purposes of ‘Post-Colonial Feminist’ writers such as Maya Angelou who are taking initiative to unify all „Black Women” to exercise all wrongful racist oppressions imposed by both „Black” and „White” world.

In some cases, Post-Colonialism has superseded in presenting itself as a „serious” and „difficult” area within critical theory. However, many Post-Colonial Feminists have argued both against this stance of postcolonial theory as amasculine subject and against the claim that the colonial atrocities can be described only from the perspective of male subject. Angelou in her novel shows many instances of identity crisis that clearly depict the horrible picture of racial and sexual atrocities by explaining the bitter experiences of female subjects.

Post-Colonial Feminists only deal with issues of women belonging to „Third World Countries” as the suffer social, patriarchal, cultural, traditional, sociological, psychological and mental traumatic experiences. They, moreover, deal with the false generalizations of the West which they are propagating all over the world and they are also trying to incorporate these typical gender stereotypes in the minds of all men and women in the world either from the first world or the third world. Actually Western Feminists are trying to paralyze the thoughts of non-western women to make them silenced and stereotyped in the eyes of the whole world. And Post-Colonial feminists are struggling hard to make non-Western women aware of their rights.

Furthermore, Post-Colonial Feminists also work for the betterment of the Black women and women all over world in general. They struggle hard to tell the world that the Westerns are judging the non western people on the basis of racial differences rather than their other preferences.
European Colonialism is defined as appropriation and manipulation of native races by European Colonial powers as it destroys native cultures or alters them significantly, often producing new hybrid forms. Similarly, „Post-Colonialism” and „Post-Colonial Feminism” came in the wake of Colonialism. At the very start, there came a separation between Third World Feminism and Western Feminism. This occurred because Western Feminism was formed by liberal feminist speculations. They argue that women are oppressed only by their gender roles that often bind them to the household and domestic work. But the Third World Feminism proposes that women should challenge this oppression by fighting against their traditional roles in the household through becoming educated and strong.

Most of the critics such as Mohanty (2003 in her work „Under the Western Eyes”, Crowley (1991) in her work „Third World Women and the Inadequacies of Western Feminism” and Collins (2014) in her work „Black Feminist Thought” give their consensus on one point that the novel „I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings” (1969) by Angelou depicts the solitude of the Black girl who is trapped in a cage like a bird and this is mostly illustrates humiliation, disgraces, atrocities and forces that are imposed on the Black people by the racist views of the White community. Moreover, the novel under investigation would be significant because Angelou points out how racism has a great effect on the identities and traumatic experiences of „Black Women” or women in general. In the beginning of the story, the character „Maya” declares that:

“"The town reacted to us as its inhabitants had reacted to all things new before our coming. It regarded us a while without curiosity but with caution". (Caged Bird, p. 6)
Angelou’s autobiographical novel “I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings” describes women as the marginalized beings and it also paints them as entangled in the prevailing issues of their identities in Western and Patriarchal pandimonium. Hence, while discussing the novel under the framework of „Post-Colonial Feminism”, it is taken as a target of an investigation in detail of the nature of experiences of the „marginalized” found in the autobiographical fictions. Many Afro-American feminist raised questions regarding issue of identity crisis due to marginalized and traumatic experiences of „Black Women” in many of the postmodern writings, but how these questions will be sorted out – and how their voices will be heard aloud are questions to be answered in detail. The present study is an attempt to find answers to these questions and for this purpose the framework of „Post-Colonial Feminist Theory” has been used.

2. Literature Review

The history of Western Colonialism is the history of manipulation of non-western others (Tyagi, 2014). If the novel “I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings” is analyzed from the above perspective; we come to know about the mutilated conditions of colonized people especially women belonging to Third World countries who have been marginalized by exploitative racist nature of colonialism..

So for this purpose, a new term „Post-Colonial Feminism” has been introduced that focuses on the racial, ethnic and sexual oppression in different colonized societies (Tolan, 2006). Actually, „Post-Colonial Feminists” have defined different contexts of women’s lives, work and sexualities (Navid, 2014). Th this study, discussions have been made to explore those factors through which women suffer „Double Colonization” at the hands of patriarchy and racism.
Due to the first initiative taken by Angelou; it was felt by the Post-Colonial feminists belonging to once colonized territists that much time had passed and now it is nonsensical to be represented by aliens; they should represent themselves in their own well-defined terms (Young, 2000).

Mekonnen (2000), explains the female characters in the narratives of women writers as they are doubly colonized, i.e. victims of racism among cultures of their societies and oppressed by patriarchy. The novel under inquiry portrays the picture of a woman „Marguerite” who was once a victim of racial and patriarchal hatred but later on she will emerge as a strong and independant woman. The researchers have also analyzed this aspect of the novel under the framework of „Post-Colonial Feminism’ (Unpublished thesis).

Mulumbe (2002), analyzes the oppression of women at the hands of cruel and ignorant men. Throughout the discussion, it is proved that women can escape from patriarchal domination and racism of culture through strong and sustained resistance. In the end of the novel “I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings” by Angelou, we can see how the character „Marguerite” faces all difficulties and atrocities and comes up with the broader vision through the realization of her own „Self”.

Postcolonial feminism argues the same thing that the use of the term “women” as a universal group, is only defined by gender, social class, race, ethnicity, or sexual differences and not by self or character.

The novel “I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings” depicts the situation of a woman who is bound to live within the boundaries of a domestic household and she is made to satisfy the male – sexual appetite. Most of the female characters are represented as fragile, shallow, and sexual objects (Amasu, 2004).
But Angelou represents the same fragile and shallow woman as strong and independant in the end of the novel by showing the strength of her character „Marguerite when she takes her decision lonely and independantly without any consent of male dominated society. If we can understand the main purpose behind presenting her character strong and independant, we can also understand the main agendas of „Post-Colonial Feminism”.

Ruthyen (1984 states that Angelou’s autobiography “I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings” is worth reading because it unveils the racial atricities of White people against Black American women. According to her, the representations of the women of colour in the novel have been criticized because they are made on various axes of power. So these generalized miscoceptions should be unveiled by the women.

When Barbara (1990) spoke a few years ago against the „racist attitude of Westerns”. She brought up the link between identity issues and feminist theory by insisting that people of colour have always theorized but differently: “I am inclined to theorizing (and I intentionally use the verb rather than the noun) is often in narrative forms, in the stories we create, in riddles and proverbs, in the play with language, since dynamic rather than fixed ideas seem more to our liking”.

Crowley (1991), states how Western feminism is wrong when it comes to Third World women. Her major problem with Western feminism is that it takes too much time in the ideological “nit-picking” rather than formulating measures to redress the prevailing problems. The most prominent point that Crowlry makes in her article is that cultural study would be essential to solve the problems. Angelou (1969) explains the same thing in her novel and asks wome to solve their problems themselves.
Tamale (1995), attempts to describe the various voices which are raised by the Third World women in the teeth of earlier Western strategies that they used to marginalized and suppress the women. Actually Colonialism and Patriarchy have their deep roots in society; so it becomes necessary to follow a new framework in order to make people, especially women, aware of their rights. By following the same line, Angelou (1969) takes the initiative while writing the novel “I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings” to solve the problems of women.

Angelou’s portrayal of the strong and unified Black community of Stamps shows how African-Americans challenge oppressive atrocities to refuse to go along with racism. However, she demonstrates how a Black child develops a racial hatred, common in the narratives of many contemporary Black novelists and autobiographers. At first, she herself wishes that she could become white, since growing up Black in America is unsafe; later on she gets rid of her self-hatred and embraces a strong radical identity.

Patricia Hill Collins (2014) is a great Black feminist writer who believed that women are considered as „outsider“ within their own societies and this is done only through the domestic manipulation of women and moreover, they are considered and perceived as a separate entity from the so-called White elite who imposed their sovereignty and dominance over them. They also observe that there is a difference between the suffering of the White women and and Black women. So, as a corollary of Black Women’s suffering and White people’s oppression. It becomes necessary to take drastic steps in order to solve the issues of identity crisis regarding women of colour prevailing in each and every society. And therefore, due to the distinctive experiences of Black women, it is essential for Collins to raise voice against prevailing oppression.
Colomo (2008) seems to believe that it is not only being used as a means of degradation but also as a token of empowerment and self-importance. By ignoring these differences Western feminists try to create more of a rift between all social movements and other feminist movements particularly in case of torture against women where the purpose of torture is inter-related with the false assumptions of race and class.

According to many, Mirza’s (2014) assaults on one’s identity are in real the assaults on the inner soul that is now wounded by the racial groups, women and sexual atrocities that have been used to suppress and oppress the identities in order to make oneself superior to all the other races. This provides a platform for the freedom of self expression and a place to live in to those who feel dislocated in a colonized society. Another solution of identity restoration is given by the group of Black feminists is the formation of groups and safe places for Black women. In the 1980s, literacy rate among Black women has been raised and it promotes the writings of Black Women as an outlet for Post-Colonial Feminist narratives from where they raise their voices against the prevailing atrocities. As a corollary, Black women find solace in safe places that are given to them for the freedom to discuss the issues of identity and marginalization that would ultimately leads to the identity of Black women world-wide.

With the wide applause and critical reception of “I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings”, Angelou bridged the world. Angelou has tried to bridge the gap between life and art, to make Black women aware of their rights, their values, their cultures and their identities and she asks them to get their identities acknowledged by expressing themselves all over the world. Angelou has tried to express the sufferings of Black women in her times. She protested against racism, sexism and classism in her autobiographies, and she became a model for Black women and Black autographers and female writers in the late 20th century. Collins (2014) also commented on
Angelou’s autobiographies that “they rescue not only her personal history, but the collective history of all Black women.”

3. Methodology

This section gives a detailed description of the methods used in this study. In fact, a new framework of „Post-Colonial Feminism” for analyzing the selected data has also been introduced. The study with a significant amount of proposed study is qualitative in nature. Moreover, it also supports the study with a significant amount of historical and international research to interpret the purpose of study through the conceptual framework of „Post-Colonial Feminism”. In fact, Post-Colonial Feminists ask non-Western women to raise their voice against the inadequacies of Western Feminism to resolve their issues regarding their lost identities. They have to fight against colonialism not only as a colonized subject but also as a woman because they suffer „double colonization” at the hands of patriarchy and colonialism.

3.1 Conceptual Framework of the Study

Post-colonial feminism has developed as a response to the concept that feminism seemed to focus solely on the experiences of women in Western cultures. It seeks to find the strategies through which racism and the long-lasting political, economic, and cultural impacts of colonialism affect non-white, non-Western women in the postcolonial world. It originated as a critique of feminist theorists in developed countries to point out the universalizing tendencies of mainstream feminist ideas against the misrepresentation of non-white women. Certainly different from the dominant white male theories is the most appropriate framework for analysis of literary texts produced by the blacks. And for this purpose, the researchers have used Mohanty’s (2003) framework. She opines that in the process of homogenization and systemization of the
oppression of women in the third world where power is exercised in much of recent Western feminist discourse, and now this power needs to be defined and named. She also criticises Western hegemonnic culture and racism in particular. In a number of Western feminist writings, she detected the so-called „colonialist move” of presenting the “Third World” woman as a singular and monolithic subject.

Secondly, Mohanty (2003) states that this notion of power through which these Western feminists mention women as oppressed and men as oppressors is inadequate as it only focuses on the traditional notion of patriarchy and stresses the binary position of “maneuvers us women”. Furthermore, it does not take into account the different socio-political contexts in which women are „robbed” of their cultural and personal identity. She demands that we adopt a new framework for the analysis of Black women’s writings through which their identities will be established.

„Thirdly, Mohanty (2003) condemns Western strategies and over-simplified practices in support of the notion of the Third World women as powerless and oppressed victims. Moreover, she is also against the basic assumption of “sisterhood” that is made by Western Feminists to imply a false notion that all women are oppressed only by patriarchal dominance. This idea certainly cannot be true as stated by Mohanty (2003) as it only makes the women paralyzed.

Mohanty (2003) resists the nomination of the “Third World Women” as a singular monolithic entity in some recent Western feminist texts. Moreover, She asserts that she is trying to draw the attention to the similar effects of various textual strategies used by particular writers that codify „Others’ as non-Western and hence themselves as Western. According to her, it is a directly political and ideological practice in that it shows “Woman” - a cultural and ideological
composite „Other” constructed through diverse representational discourses (scientific, literary, juridical, linguistic, cinematic, etc.) and “women” as real, material subjects of their collective histories that is one of the central questions that the practice of feminist scholarship seeks to address.

The same is the case with „I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings” in which Angelou tells us how the character „Marguerite” has been considered as an „ideological composite other” and how much racist attitude can disturb the sexually harassed women?

3.2 Research Question

- How racism affects the sexual traumatic experiences of women this novel?

4. Data Analysis

The researchers have collected fourteen quotations from the text of the novel „I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings” through purposive sampling technique in order to analyze the effects of racism on the traumatic experiences of women described in the novel. The major theme of the novel revolves around the concept of racism and this concept of racism gives the clear concept of identity crisis. As it is stated in the novel:

“Negroes could not buy vanilla ice-cream as it is „white” (Caged Bird, p.49).

At the very start of the novel, Angelou (1969) highlights the internalized sense of the character of being „Other” when Marguerite becomes aware of her ugly confinements of------

“A dress made from the plain ugly cut-down from a white woman”s once-was-purple throw away, —with skinny legs, greased with
Blue Seal Vaseline and powdered with Arkansas red clay.”

(Caged Bird, p.2)

and dreams of waking up as a transformed beautiful white girl with blond hair and blue eyes.

“I was really white and because a cruel fairy step mother, who was understandably jealous of my beauty, had turned me into a too-big Negro girl, with nappy black hair, broad feet and a space between.....”

(Caged Bird, p.3)

Angelou (ibid) in her novel points out the deep-rooted hatred of „Black people” against racism so that each and every character of the novel wishes to become white. According to Post-Colonial Feminists, they did so to make them recognizable in the world of the whites, but the whites consider themselves so superior that they feel humiliating in joining hands with blacks.

Mohanty (2003) asserts the same thing that racism and sexism are two obnoxious elements that lead to the oppression and marginalization of black women in such a way that they never open their eyes to the bitter truth and lose hope to find solutions but they are of the opinion that women must fight for their identity to make them equal and identifiable in the world of the racists. Remer (2014) also pinpoints:

“White seeks any outlet to assuage their blood stained consciences, contorting languages and names themselves in a futile attempt to legitimize slavery or power and conceives themselves that [white power] is justified.”

In the very next lines, the novelist tells about the painful living of the black women in general and Marguerite in specific. She, moreover, wants to make women aware of the fact that not only
their living in their domains is afflictive but also their exile or displacement. As the character Maya states that:

“If growing up is painful for the Southern Black girl, being aware of her displacement is the rust on the razor that threatens the throat.” (Caged Bird, p.4)

Postcolonial feminists reject the portrayals of women in non-Western societies as passive and voiceless victims and the portrayal of Western women as modern, educated and empowered.

Mohanty (2003) opines that Black women should not confine themselves to the ethnocentric tools of Western Feminism but they should go for „Post-Colonial Feminist‘ framework. She also says that Western women portray non-western women in order to fit them into their own self-made models. She, moreover, asserts that the real oppression is found firstly at the personal and local levels i.e. in the terrain of mind, the home and the local community. Hence we should celebrate the differences instead of creating sameness among women.

The following lines refer to the event when Marguerite and Bailey had to leave their home when their father came to take them away from their home in Stamps, Arkansas. As they reached California, the ultimate reaction of Maya was:

“The town reacted to us as its inhabitants had reacted to all things new before our coming. It regarded us a while without curiosity but with caution, and after we were seen to be harmless it closed in around us, as a real mother embraces a stranger”s child.” (Caged Bird, p. 6)
Here Mohanty (2003) also points out that the Black people are so much adhered to their traditions, cultures and places that they feel very lonely at the time of leaving their homes and places. She is actually against the bitterness of the racial attitudes of the White people. She also opines that women of color should engage themselves in the anti-racist and anti-sexist struggle in order to make the world just and socially equitable.

What Angelou calls „po-white-trash’ girls make fun of Maya’s grandmother by comparing the physical appearance of the old mother as an ape. They continue the act of laughing at Momma without covering their body in front of Momma. Angelou further explains how Western people make fun of non-western people in order to fulfill their needs. The researchers have analyzed the selected text to show how non-Western women suffer from identity crisis.

“They came finally to stand on the ground in front of Momma. At first they pretended seriousness. Then one of them wrapped her right arm in the crook of her left, pushed out her mouth and started to hum. I realized that she was aping my grandmother. Another said, “Naw, Helen, you ain”t standing like her. This here”s it.” Then she lifted her chest, folded her arms and mocked that strange carriage that was Annie Henderson. Another laughed, “Naw, you can”t do it. Your mouth ain”t pooched out enough. It”s like this.”

(Caged Bird, p. 29)

Mohanty (2003) asserts that "women as an oppressed group" mostly lose their identities in the whirlpool of „Western hegemonic racial discrimination‟. Moreover she is of the view that the self-presentation of the Western Women alone makes them the true “subject” all over the world.
Unlike Western Women, Third World Women, never rise above their generality and their "object” status.

Another incident of the novel highlights the racial attitude of the west due to which the identity of black people is shattering badly. This incident refers to a man who was haunted down for assaulting White woman. Later, he was questioned in the court and replied that he took refuge in Mrs. Henderson’s store and the reaction was:

“The judge had really made a gaffe calling a Negro woman Mrs. But then he was from Pine Bluff and couldn’t have been expected to know that a woman who owned a store in that village would also turn out to be colored. The whites tickled their funny bones with the incident for a long time, and the Negroes thought it proved the worth and majesty of my grandmother.” (Caged Bird, p. 48)

By analyzing the selected text of the novel under study through ”Post-Colonial Feminist‘ framework it is revealed that Angelou has artistically demonstrated the clear theme of racism and she takes the „caged bird” metaphorically to highlight the theme of racial prejudice of white people towards blacks. Moreover she wants to show the craving of the caged bird for freedom and for this purpose she delineates the characters of Momma and Maya who resist against racial atrocities throughout the novel.

The following lines refer to the incident where Maya comes to know what makes white people different and in the church she finds the difference when she suddenly realizes that there are only Blacks to attend the sermon in the church. Angelou points out that Maya’s world is so much
about the Black community that she often finds it harder to imagine what white people look like. They appear to her as ghosts with exotic powers and splendid possessions than as Black human beings. As it is mentioned in the novel:

“A light shade had been pulled down between the Black community and all things white, but one could see through it enough to develop a fear-admiration-contempt for the white “things”—white folks’ cars and white glistening houses and their children and their women. But above all, their wealth that allowed them to waste was the most enviable.” (Caged Bird, p. 47-48).

Mohanty (2003) also opines that the only solution for the challenging demands of Black women is to adopt the framework of „Post-Colonial Feminism’ through which the identities of Black women all over the world might restore and form a new atmosphere for Black women in which they breathe freely.

In the following lines of the novel, there are many examples regarding identity issues such as in Mrs. Collins’ house, it is prohibited to share any house hold utensils even drinking ones with the white family members. Moreover, it is ordered to keep the glasses of blacks separately from that of whites”.

“I had a glass to drink from, and it sat with Miss Glory’s on a separate shelf from the others”. (Caged Bird, p.103).

Mohanty (2003) opines that the act of racism spreads the misrepresentation of Blacks as non-humans who have no right to be served equally with whites who call themselves as civilized
humans. Moreover, she suggests that blacks should not be judged by the same criteria as used to judge the whites. The identity of „Blacks” should be defined by analyzing the common features of the Black people rather than the whites.

It seems that Maya has to endure the insult of her name being changed to Mary by a racist employer when she utters:

“Every person I knew had a hellish horror of being called out of his name. It was dangerous practice to call a Negro anything that could be loosely construed as insulting because of the centuries of their having being called niggers, jigs, dinges, black birds, crows, boots and spooks.” (Caged Bird, p.109)

Naming is an essential part of one’s identity, if any one purposely changes one’s name; it is taken as a disrespect of one’s identity. If we take example from the novel, we come to know that a White woman easily changes Maya’s name from „Marguerite” to „Mary” without any permission of Maya. This act seems unethical as Mohanty (2003) points out that White People define Black people as „primitive”, „uneducated’ and „uncivilized”; so as to define themselves as superior.

As Mohanty (2003) has already pointed out that Black people of the same gender, of the same classes and cultures, are somehow socially entitled as a homogeneous group before the process of analysis. According to her, this is an assumption made by the Western Feminist discourses which analyzes Black people on the basis of sociological universals rather than biological universals.
In her novel, Angelou (ibid) gives the full description of the suffering of Black people by analyzing the different tactics of the Western people. Angelou (ibid) opines that Western people form a superficial framework in order to cater their own needs and then fit the colored people into that frame and moreover, they make these people realized of their limitations and reservations. The following lines explain the same thing by depicting the thoughts of the character Marguerite in the way that she considers it an obnoxious crime to be a Negro. As it is mentioned in the novel:

“It was awful to be a Negro and have no control over my life. It was brutal to be young and already trained to sit quietly and listen to charges brought against my color with no chance of defense.”

(Caged Bird, p.180)

Mohanty (2003) argues that the Westerns use „the model of power” against the powerless. She also opines that the most heinous act is the act of „silence of the victim‘ because this silence will lead them to their dark and doomed future. Moreover, she favors the „Post-Colonial Feminist” approach because this approach gives the solution of breaking the silence of the victim. Post-Colonial Feminists are of the view that the experiences of non-western women implied by Colonialism are different than those of the Westerns” and non-westerns women also suffer „Double Colonization” but the Western women only suffer patriarchy and are free from the aftermath of Colonialism. They also argue that Western Feminists do not pay any heed to such issues as race and double colonization.

The investigators have taken another extract from the novel in which Angelou (ibid) depicts the feelings of Black people as they want to restore their identities that were lost many times ago at
the cruel hands of Colonialism and Patriarchy. It has also been observed by the researchers that the only solution to restore the identities of Black people is to raise voices against cruelty. As it is mentioned in the novel:

“We were on top again. As always again. We survived. The depths had been icy and dark, but now a bright sun spoke to our souls. I was no longer simply a member of the proud graduating class of 1940; I was a proud member of the wonderful, beautiful Negro race.” (Caged Bird, p.184)

Mohanty’s model (2003) have been used to analyze the issues of identity crisis described in the novel. In her model, she uses a compiled approach against Western Feminism that clearly explains that non-western people especially Black women are exploited and manipulated by the Westerns in order to cater their needs. She is actually of the view that women should fight against the racial attitude of the Westerns.

One of the major abuses occur in Stamps when Momma takes Maya to a white and only dentist to whom she once lent a money refuses to give treatment to Maya’s severe toothache. He tells them:

“Annie?” “Yes, sir, Dentist Lincoln.” He was choosing words the way people hunt for shells. “Annie, you know I don’t treat nigra, colored people.” “I know, Dentist Lincoln. But this here is just my little grandbaby, and she ain’t gone be no trouble to you ...”

“Annie, everybody has a policy. In this world you have to have a
policy. Now, my policy is I don’t treat colored people... My policy ...
” He let go of the door and stepped nearer Momma. The three of us were crowded on the small landing. “Annie, my policy is I’d rather stick my hand in a dog”s mouth than in a nigger”s.” He had never once looked at me. He turned his back and went through the door into the cool beyond (Caged Bird, p. 188-189)

Mohanty (2003) asserts that it is shameful to think that Western people apply racist atrocities so bitterly that it seems difficult for Black women to restore their identities. The researchers have analyzed the above quoted lines from the common viewpoint of Mohanty (ibid) who is right in saying that Western people make non-western people degraded in comparison with themselves. Hence, she argues that „Post-Colonial Feminism‘ is the only medium to challenge the racial atrocities. Angelou (ibid) states that Black women not only suffer the triple threat of sexism, racism, and Black powerlessness, but also the concurrent process of “common atrocities of nature” that are confusing for all children. Maya has had to grow up more quickly on her way towards becoming “a formidable character” as a result of many attacks in “her tender years,” but Angelou (1969) prepares Maya to meet the hindrances of adolescence, sexuality, and teenage pregnancy to make her strong in the male-dominating society. As it is mentioned in the novel:

“The Black female is assaulted in her tender years by all those common forces of nature at the same time that she is caught in the tripartite cross-fire of male prejudice, white illogical hate and black lack of power.” (Caged Bird,p.272)
Mohanty (2003) believes that mostly people belonging to West categorize Women from the continent of Africa as "Women of Africa." According to her, this categorization of Women as a homogeneous sociological group on the basis of shared dependencies or powerlessness arises problems that can be solved by analyzing women as an independent being rather than a monolithic being. Moreover, she states that „Black Women” also suffer double colonization because they are categorically dependent and oppressed and this process of double colonization usually removes the difference between the victims and the oppressors.

5. Conclusions and Future Recommendations

Findings indicate that the study endeavours to provide satisfactory answer to the research question posed at the beginning of the study by the fact that the novel „Why the Caged Bird Sings” by Maya is a clear example of resistance literature. The description of various experiences of women throughout the selected text helped the researchers to explore the ways of resistance and courage in the harsh circumstances of racism and patriarchy. Moreover, the researchers have tried to find the answers to the questions raised by Angelou in the novel and it is also hoped that this study has gone some way to provide the best solution in the form of „Post-Colonial Feminism” in order to redress the effects of racism on the traumatic experiences of Black Women.

Future researchers can explore many other issues of non-western women besides the issue of racism on the sexual traumatic experiences of black women by using the same framework. This theory of „Post-colonial Feminism” can be applied to examine other texts as well. This study can also be helpful in undertaking further research on the comparative study of Post-colonial and Post-colonial feminist theories.
References

Amasu, Y. (2004). The Portrayal of Women in Selected Novels of Peter Abrahams, Addis Ababa University.

Angelou, M. (1969). I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, Random House New York.

Barbara, S. (2014). The Bonds of Love and the Boundaries of Self in Toni Morrison's Beloved. Analyzing the different voice. Feminist Psychological Theory and Literary Texts,207-22.

Collins, P. H. (2014). Black Feminist Thought, Knowledge, Consciousness and the Politics of Empowerment, New York: Oxford University.

Crowley, E. (1991). Third World Women and the Inadequacies of Western Feminism. Trocaire Development Review, Dublin.

Colomo, R.S. (2008). Border crossing subjectivities and research, through the prism of feminists of color: Miami University, Oxford, USA.

Mekonnen, Z. (2001). Images of Women and Plot Structure in the First Four Novels in Fikremarkos Desta. Addis Abada University.

Mirza, H.S. (2014). Plotting a history: Black and Post-Colonial Feminism in „new times”: University of London. UK.

Mohanty, C.T. (2003). Under western eyes: feminist scholarship and colonial discourses. In Third World Women and the politics of feminism. Bloomington: Ind. Univ. Press.

Mulumebet, Z. (1996). “A Comparative Analysis of the Images of Men and Women in the works of some Ethiopian women writers.” Addis Abada University.

Navid, S. (2014). Critical Theory Today: A User Friendly Guide. (2nd edn.). New York: Routledge.
O"Neal, S. (2004). The Perception of Black Women. In Bloom’s Guides: Comprehensive Research and Study Guides. Google Book Search. Retrieved on January 20, 2012.

Remer, S. (2014). Call me my name": The role of nomenclature in Toni Morrison's' Beloved'. AP English, 2, 1-13.

Ruthven, K.K. (1984). Feminist Literary Studies. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Showalter, E. (1986). Toward a Feminist Poetics. The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature and Theory. London Virago Press.

Spivak, G. C. (1999). A Critique of Postcolonial Reason, Harvard University Press.

Tamale, S. (1995). Gender Trauma in Africa, Enhancing Women’s Links to Resources: New York Routledge.

Tolan, F. (2006). „Feminisms“ Literary Theory and Criticism. Ed. Patricia Waugh. New York Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Tyagi, R. (2014). Understanding postcolonial feminism in relation with postcolonial and feminist theories. International Journal of Language and Linguistics, 1(2), 45-50.

Young, R. (2003). Post-Colonialism : A Very Short Introduction, New York: Oxford University.