

Thorny Journey from Slavery to Salvation

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Abstract—Search for freedom is one of the most demanding requirements of the people who were under the hell of slavery in the past, particularly in America; nowadays slavery adopts different aspects in the contemporary era. Morrison is one of the Afro-American novelists who dedicated their literary works to uncover the tyranny imposed on the African Americans in the past and how they unfettered from its chains. This article explores a long journey from slavery to salvation argued in Tony Morrison's *A Mercy* and what its repercussions in the lives of enslaved people in America regardless of their race, religion, color or country. On the road of freedom, they would lack their honor, their home and their trust in themselves, even their faith in God to change their lives to better. They will be vulnerable religiously, socially, psychologically, and culturally and exposed to sever torment involved with physical, spiritual and psychological sides of their lives. The focus in this article is on such transformations that may change different aspects of the enslaved lives, particularly the females, under the pressure and tyranny of the slavery traders who cares only for their interests regardless of their breaching to the laws of humanity and human rights. It was found that the females are more vulnerable and a mercy of a man interferes to salvage their lives, however, that salvation and protection would not continue forever.

Index Terms—slavery, salvation, mercy, female, freedom, transformation, black, white

I. INTRODUCTION

Toni Morrison's *A Mercy* is an African American narrative that takes us back to the early age of slavery, to the seventeenth century, particularly the last two decades of that age. This narrative mingles between historical facts and creativity of Morrison in fiction that unveil the reality of slavery during that significant period of the history of America. It spots the light on old Virginia and the beginning of slavery, which had not restricted to specific place or specific race as narrated in this novel. Slavery written in the history would unveil the surface, the fact of slavery, but fiction probes deeply into what is below the surface of slavery, and what are its repercussions on the lives of enslaved people, females as powerless in particular. Bernatonyte (2012) pointed out that "in the works of Afro-American literature, historic events and traumatic experiences become subjective experience which are often based on actual events or are set in actual time and setting" (p.70). Slavery argued in this narrative is not involved with enslavement of the black or special race or group, however, it takes different aspects and it was practiced by different people with varied races and religions. In the narrative, Ortega is Portuguese, Jacob is Dutch, Lena is Native American, and Rebekka is an English woman. Morrison breaks the rule that the whites are in charge of black slavery because it refers to many nations and nationalities who are involved with merciless black slavery under the pretext of dominating the most powerful on the weakest black Africans or other weak races regardless their color, race or religion.

Slavery extended to encompass even the Native Americans or the whites who appeared powerless and helpless, particularly females. There is no astonishment to see a black free and the white enslaved. Our vision about slavery is shaken and the balance of slavery is overturned. The people are familiar with the rule that exhibits the white's domination and their enslavement of the black, however, this understanding is changed by Morrison's narrative, which makes slavery trade does not limited to white, or Americans but it contains different aspects of slavery. *A Mercy* comes to break our beliefs and thoughts about slavery trade and black people. It probes deeply into varied forms of slavery practiced with different communities and races. This narrative pulls our attention to the 1680s and 1690s when "Virginia still a mess. Who could keep up with the pitched battles for God, king and land? Even with the relative safety of his skin, solitary traveling required prudence" (*A Mercy*, p. 12). The trade of slavery was a profitable trade, it would not recognize humanity, here Morrison manifests a turning point in that trade which is claimed it has no moralities or mercy, however, Morrison reveals a sort of mercy, a mercy of human in dealing with slaves, females in particular. It shows a sort of mercy and humanity that would not find in other literary works discussing the slavery issues.

The focus in this present argument is on the concepts of slave/slavery and how Morrison managed to mingle the historical facts with her creativity in fiction. Many historical facts are reflected in this narrative to reveal the reality of slavery and its beginning in Virginia to spread later to many colonies in America. Ashcroft and et al (2002) pointed out that slave/slavery "it was of particular significance in the formation of many post-colonial societies in Africa and Caribbean" (p. 212). He added "over twelve million blacks were forcibly shipped in chains across the infamous Atlantic 'Middle Passage' to Brazil, the Caribbean and the United States" (p. 213).

The black writing enriches the American literature and gives reins for the writer's imagination. Toni Morrison is one of the writers who concentrate on the issue of slaves/slavery to call attention of the public to the 'power of blackness'. Morrison (1993) pointed out that "Black slavery enriched the country's creative possibilities. For in that construction of

blackness and enslavement could be found not only the not-free but also, with the dramatic polarity created by skin color, the projection of the not-me. The result was a playground of the imagination" (p. 39). Slavery, racism, and Africanist presence become brilliant materials for the narratives in its varied aspects.

II. BRIEF HISTORY OF SLAVERY IN AMERICA

The beginning of slavery trade in America referred back to 1619 when the African slaves brought to Virginia and Jamestown colony to be used in farming, particularly to take care of tobacco crop which was a profitable trade in the eyes of traders from different origins, for instance Dutch, white American and other nationalities whose greed turned out by their competition in slaves' trade. African slaves were cheaper and their capability was manifested in their work under sever conditions of nature. In 1619, slaves' profits became the concern of a lot of traders who considered that sort of trade profitable, whether by purchasing the slaves for the other traders who were interested in using them in planting crops such as tobacco or other kinds of crops as rice or by using slaves for themselves in planting tobacco which was a profitable trade in the eyes of greedy traders.

Many Africans had been brought on a Dutch ship to the British colony to be the beginning of slavery trade in America. Jamestown and Virginia colony was the first colonies which received the first group of slaves. The enslavement and slavery trade became rampant trade and the news of this sort of profitable trade reached to the other American colonies which had been initiated in competing in slavery trade. The slaves were used in planting tobacco, rice and later on cotton. The killing work under sever conditions, the oppression and ill-treatment of the slaves pushed some of them to revolt against their masters, against the merciless whites. For instance, one of those revolutions was led by Gabriel Prosser in Richmond in 1800, and the second by Denmark Vesey in Charleston in 1822, however, both attempts failed to fulfill their goals. There were another slaves' revolt led by Nat Turner in Southampton County, Virginia, 1831. It was the strongest, further, those attempts paid attention of the traders in other colonies to put strict disciplinary codes and sever penalty against who would attempt to revolt against his masters. Robert McColley in *Dictionary of Afro-American Slavery* (1988) argued that the black were claimed to be called servants as the white indentured servants. However, in early seventeenth century the English people used the word of work servants which was used in parallel to slaves in the black sense.

The existence of African slaves had revived the trade of tobacco and gave the slavery a sort of legality, particularly in Virginia and Maryland. That slavery brought prosperity and progress in Virginia and revived the tobacco planting which tempted many traders to continue in such trade to double their profits in very short period. However, it was not only the slavery trade limited to Afro-Americans but also it extended to encompass million of native Americans regardless their origins and color in many colonies in 1730. Small number of whites was enslaved under many pretexts such as crimes, they had committed or debts, they were not able to repay back to the owner. They would be taken under indentured servants. As soon as they spend their time of penalty, they would be released. (Klein, 1988)

In Compton's Encyclopedia online, it is argued "slavery had existed as a human institution for centuries, but the slaves were usually captives taken in war or members of lowest class in a society. The black African slave trade, by contrast, was a major economic enterprise. It made the trader rich and brought an abundant labor supply to the islands of the Caribbean and to American colonies". It is obvious, the enslavement reasons may be categorized into different aspects of enslavement such as famine, war, commercial bankruptcy, religious oppression, natural disasters and legal penalty. Morrison addressed many of enslavement aspects in her narrative's *A Mercy*, for instance, debt repayment, Jacob will admit Ortega's offer to take one of his slaves as a repayment of debt. Rebekka could not stand in England the religious intolerance and the two white men are indentured servants and they are native Americans. Lena escaped from natural catastrophe, epidemic that ended the lives of her people.

The slavery trade was globally prohibited from 1808 and the slavery trade became confined to African origin. In 1735, Georgia issued a new law to ban slavery; later on that law became effective in the other British colonies to halt the growing rebellions of slaves. Slavery spread in all British colonies and the whites used the slaves as laborers, craftsmen, and servants, whether in the farm or in the house. In 1786, all colonies except Georgia had prohibited the African slave trade but later on slavery ban became in force in Georgia in 1798. In the first half of 19th century, abolitionism movement emerged to put an end to slavery trade; however, the colonies differed from one to another in their responding to the constitutional laws and Congress amendment in 1865.

III. FROM SLAVERY TO FREEDOM

Morrison argues in *A Mercy* how slaves escape to slavery as a sort of protection and salvation. What Florens's mother has done with her daughter, Florens, is a sort of searching for protection and salvation for her little daughter. The mother is scared that her little daughter, at the age of eight years, could be abused or raped by Ortega or his men in the farm, for this reason, the mother favors to victimize her daughter and her accompany to send her to slavery with a man she anticipates good deeds from his eyes. Florens is supposed to be taken by Jacob Vaark, Dutch trader, as a part of repayment to the Ortega's debt who could not repay on time. Jacob is not concerned or trading in flesh or in slavery, he has no taste in such trade "my trade is goods and gold" (p. 28). "Flesh was not his commodity" (p. 25). Jacob has no best offer from Ortega, only to take this little girl, which is not tempting, offer. He favors the mother but the mother has

still her baby and she begs him to accept the offer because she sees in this offer a protection and refuge to her daughter while the daughter could not see her mother's act as a protection to her and would provide better future. As a result, Morrison gives a mouth to the mother at the end of the narrative to vent out her real reason that the little girl could not comprehend at that early age, leaving the reader with the echo of the mother's words that are more influential and more touching.

Despite the competition between the slaves' trader, however, Jacob reveals reservations towards this kind of trade and he could not see in such trade just breaching of humanity. However, he finds no better offer to get his debt repaid just to accept the offer of Ortega, the man who shows intense concern in slavery trade, his greed and mistreatment are clear from the Florens's mother offer to victimize her daughter to protect her from Ortega's abuse and mistreatment. Ortega does not manifest any mercy towards the mother and her daughter whereas Jacob accepts the mother's offer, on the hope this little girl could be a good compensation to his wife's loss of her children at the early age. "Take the girl, she says, my daughter- Me. Me. Sir agrees and changes the balance due" (p. 8). Morrison reveals the first sort of mercy is Jacob's mercy who appears more merciful and human. He accepts Ortega's offer out of mercy to protect him from legal questioning and accepts the mother's insistence to take her daughter who does not represent a tempting offer to Jacob Vaark.

The second escape to salvation is Rebekka, the English girl, who sent by her father from England and she finds only three open options: to be a prostitute, a slave, or a wife. She has chosen to be a wife a sort of salvation for her miserable life in England. She has married Jacob, the good man who treats her well as a respectful wife, not as a slave or a servant. Rebekka sees in leaving her country a sort of salvation from intolerant England. The third person Lena, a native white American female, who escaped from her people on the hope to save her life from the spreading disease that end most of the lives of her people, slavery for her a protection and salvation from disease and death. Leaving her people and land are a mercy to save her life in a place, where many people could not survive. Slavery for Lena and leaving her home are a sort of salvation. Slavery is a refuge to continue in her life peacefully. It is not a matter of slavery but the matter is what behind slavery. Slavery in the eyes of Florens's mother is a mercy and a refuge; it is also for Lena whereas Rebekka finds a refuge and better solution to her miserable life in marriage and leaving her home.

Sorrow is not in better situation than the others females, her name indicate the misery she lives in. She was found shipwrecked and taken to Jacob's house that represents a source of mercy for hopeless females in the novel. Morrison here argues the good side of human, particularly the whites who always represented in black writing as cruel and evil; however, the narrative highlights the good and human side of the whites that may change the views of the people towards slavery and slavery traders. Morrison depicts Jacob as merciful and helpful. The mother, Florens's mother, describes what he had done with her and her daughter "it was not a miracle. Bestowed by God. It was a mercy. Offered by a human" (p. 195). By these grateful words, we can realize the good side of human and white, which is represented by Dutch trader, Jacob Vaark.

IV. FEMALES AND FREEDOM

From the beginning of *A Mercy*, Florens narrates her journey, that thorny journey that pushed her to leave her mother and home to travel with a stranger she recognizes nothing about him. Morrison focuses in this narrative on females' characters that stand in this life powerless, helpless, but hopeless to change their fate in a thorny world. The mother, *Aminha mae* (Florens's mother), is abused and raped and Florens is a product of that rape. The mother is very careful not to let her daughter suffer or abuse by Ortega or his men in the farm. She victimizes her daughter's custody to give her a better life and a brilliant future away of that miserable life. The mother sees in this sort of slavery expected from Jacob a mercy and anticipated freedom. Freedom for female is to be under protection of merciful man even if the female is treated as a slave.

Rebekka as an English woman left her home in search for better opportunities in life. She considers her life as a wife better than the other choices open to her, to be a servant or a prostitute. Freedom in her eyes is to leave her home of misery and intolerance. Morrison categorize slaves in this narrative into three categories: slaves, which are the weakest category, represented by females who could not liberate themselves from the man power and they see in man's domination a sort of protection and salvation: the mother, the daughter, Lena, Rebekka and Sorrow. The second category is the indentured whites who suppose to finish their tasks to get freedom. The third category is free black Africans, who never enslaved such as blacksmith. The narrative does not expose the conflict between white and black or free and slave as much as it concentrates on a variety of nationalities adopt slavery business as a profitable trade. Slavery in that era, particularly the last two decades of seventeenth century were not restricted to African Americans but it invaded most of European countries and different nationalities such as Dutch, Portuguese, English, African American, the native Americans and other races and places. Most of the world civilizations are marked by slavery in one of its stages. Slavery is not confined to America or the white but it was rampant in different places over the world.

Morrison presents slavery from different perspective in this narrative. The white may not have options to be completely free and the black or the slaves have given space of freedom to make their voice hearable and their stories narrated by them such as Florens in this narrative. Morrison gives a mouth to the slaves from different categories white or black to narrate their enslavement stories. Simultaneously they would find in slavery a refuge from other inhuman practices or sometimes escape from disease or death, namely natural disasters as what happened with Lena and Sorrow,

who find no better solution to their complicated lives just to join strong power that may protect them from other life's threats. Florens sent by her mother to protect her from abuse and rape, Rebekka left her home for better life away of religious intolerance of England. Lena moving as slave in the house of Jacob was a refuge and survival from the disease that ended most of her people. Slavery and leaving their home are manifested as a sort of survival and salvation, but a sort of freedom from the miseries of their people and their place. Jacob's house and Jacob himself is a symbol of salvation and mercy that could not be obtained in slaves' homes.

Morrison depicts the females in the narrative powerless and helpless to change their fate, however, slavery would be a refuge and a salvation that give their lives a sense of stability and security that may not parallel to their lives in their home and among their people. Lena as a woman older than Florens and has more experience in life than her, addresses Florens to portray how females are powerless, "we never shape the world she says. The world shapes us...I am not understanding Lena. You are my shaper and my world as well" (p. 83). These words explain to what extent the females powerless to change the world or to change even their fates. Their submissiveness by the circumstances around them indicates their weakness and vulnerability. The females in the narrative drifted by the power of men and females are very weak to struggle to liberate themselves from slavery or men's domination so that they accept their destiny to be slaves but they see in slavery a salvation and protection that could not find in freedom. They appear dependant on men's power and their masters' domination. They do not want to struggle to escape from their destiny of slavery, "the world shapes us" this statement indicates the weakness and defeatism in the hearts of females' characters.

Probing deeply into the female's emotional side, Florens seems drifted by her love and lust towards blacksmith, the African who never enslaved. Blacksmith pays no much attention to Florens's love. Lena as a woman with experience in life warns Florens not to be drifted by her love and lust and she attempts to enlighten her "you are a leaf ion his tree...no I am his tree" (p. 71). Florens's love blinds her to see the reality of blacksmith's love to her. Morrison brings in this narrative many contradictions in the lives of slaves and non-slaves. Florens despite her slavery, she is literate and the free blacksmith is illiterate. Blacksmith is an African American but he is free but he is not given a name by the narrative to pay our attention to the real sense of slavery to be under the chains of your ignorance. Morrison discusses that slavery does not recognize a race or a religion. However, blacksmith's name is unknown whereas Florens is able to read and narrate her history. She scratches her story on the wall of one of Jacob's abandoned rooms, hoping blacksmith may learn and one day could come to read her story.

Blacksmith recognizes well that slavery is not restricted to the control of body but it is something involved with human mentality that could not be liberated from illusions. Florens writes on the wall what blacksmith told her in the past "you say you see slaves freer than free men. One is a lion in the skin of an ass. The other is an ass in the skin of a lion. That's the withering inside that enslaves and opens the door for what is wild" (p. 187). What inside the man/woman is that may determine his slavery. 'Manifestations are deceptive'. "a lion in the skin an ass", the real bravery and power inside human being that could make the human a lion. Blacksmith is free to go anywhere whereas Florens is confined to the directions of her master. Blacksmith defines slavery, not that slavery which controls human movements but man could be a slave to his lust and his love "I'm a slave because sir trades me. No. you have become one. How? Your head is empty and your body is wild" (p. 166). The real slavery that slavery could not control the desires of the body and human with such lust remain a slave. Florens could not want to see herself except a slave to her master or her lover. The sense of freedom is absent and she could not struggle to liberate herself. Florens requires thinking with her head not her heart. The females view slavery a refuge, they escape from oppression and abuse, searching for salvation and safety.

Some people prepared by nature to live the lives of slaves. If there is a space to liberate himself/herself, or enjoy a sort of freedom, he/she becomes scared to breathe the breeze of freedom. Females in *A Mercy* manifest powerless and submissive to the life of slavery, but they favor the life under men's protection. As a result, when Florens have an opportunity to bring blacksmith to heal her mistress, she does not think to run away or this little space of freedom does not encourage her to free herself or at least to enjoy these moments of freedom, "I am loose to do what I choose, the stag, the wall of flowers. I am a little scared of this looseness. Is that how free feels? I don't like it. I don't want to be free of you because I am live only with you" (p. 82). Freedom for females is a source of scare and loss. Florens wants to be a slave if not for her master, to her lover. She feels secure and safe under the protection of the man. Females are shaped by the nature that surrounds them: Florens, Rebekka, Lena, and Sorrow see their satisfaction under slavery despite their different origins, colors and races. Slavery is not tied by a race or a religion or color; it is open to all races and origins. Blacksmith is an African American he never enslaved; Willard and Scully are indentured whites, Lena a native American and slave.

V. TRANSFORMATIONS IN FEMALES' LIVES

Rebekka early life in England marked with her hate to the religious intolerance. Her moving to Jacob's home as a wife is a big rescue as their family called it. She becomes a part of the house and a part of this new land. Lena sees in this Rebekka's new life as their real home, "you and I, this land is our home, she whispered, but unlike you I'm exile here" (p. 69). Rebekka's moving as a wife marked her life with more stability and security whereas Lena escaped from the disease that inflicted her people as a salvation but this salvation is a sort of exile because she has no better opportunity as Rebekka. Rebekka favors to be a wife rather than a prostitute or a slave. After the death of Jacob, Lena,

Florens and Sorrow find no better refuge than their mistress who represents their survival in their lives. Their lives in Jacob's house are a mercy that could not match with their lives away of this house. When Lena and the other female slaves see their mistress' illness, they struggle to rescue her and try the best to heal her illness because Rebekka is a symbol of their survival and continue their lives in peace detached of abuse or torment. Despite the lives of slavery, they live in the house of Rebekka but they breathe the breeze of freedom and salvation and they could not imagine their lives away of this house. "none of them could inherit; none was attached to a church or recorded in its book. Female and illegal, they would be interloper, squatter, if they stayed after mistress died, subject to purchase, hire, assault, abduction, exile" (p. 68).

After peace and comfort in Rebekka and Jacob's house, Lena, Florens and Sorrow initiate to feel scared from blurred future. They become a part of this small community and its customs whether social or religious. Their psychological side of their personality finds refuge after very long thorny journey of loss and abuse. Every one of them has his thorny journey, escaping from human oppression and abuse to a sort of salvation in the hearts of some humans as Jacob. Rebekka herself is one of the people who find her marriage to Jacob a big rescue. She left England with a group of females, but she has better luck to move to better life as a wife whereas the rest members of group she finds them on the ship they have worse lives. The females by nature weak and could not resist the troubles of life and favor lives under the protection of human, even if their lives seem a sort of slavery, that slavery they have chosen to go in life smoothly and peacefully. The social entity they find themselves in, it is hard to disconnect themselves from this entity after a long life under human merciless domination or escaping from the natural disasters as Lena did, escaping from the disease that could not recognize a mercy for small or old, or for female or male. The weak social entity and religious intolerance make Rebekka search for any kind of escape. "her discomfort in garret full of constant argument bursts of enraged envy and sullen disapproval of anyone not like them made her impatient for some kind of escape. Any kind" (p. 90). From here, we can touch the enormity of the psychological burdens that Rebekka bears and makes her think of escape.

The religious intolerance left its influence in the heart of Rebekka and shakes her faith in God power to watch her or take care of her, "I don't think God knows who we are...but that's our business. Not God's. He's doing something else in the world. We are not in His Mind" (p. 94). This sort of blasphemy may not be accepted by the true believers in God, because the churchmen as her father called them not "separatists but Satanists" could not see in the religion tolerance and love. They force the people to follow their rituals even if these rituals do not belong to the truth of religion or to the practices of worshipping. Rebekka has weak faith as her body that could not resist illness and she has lost her trust in God to change her life for better. The separatists' religion and their domination shake Rebekka's faith and the God's power to help the weak and powerless. Rebekka has lost her children at very early age; she could not enjoy her life without the existence of her children. She refused to baptize the firstborn, some they see in her refusal a denial for the religious power, "weak as her faith was, there was no excuse for not protecting the soul of an infant from eternal perdition" (p. 92).

Florens could not realize what her mother had done to her is a mercy at the early age, to avoid putting her in the hands of Ortega and his farm's men who turns out their mercilessness and carelessness about females humanity. Morrison has given Florense and other females in the narrative a voice to narrate their pains and passions along with their journey of salvation, "you can think what I tell you is a confession, if you like, full curiosities familiar only in dreams and during this moments when a dog's profile plays in the steam of the kettle" (p. 3). Females marked with weakness and powerlessness, however, Morrison managed to gather the enslaved females to construct a small community and act as a family that let them share their pains and pleasures. They are physically and emotionally vulnerable and they have something in common, their long journey to salvation regardless their lives of slavery. Pains and passions make the females slaves accept the life of enslavement that viewed by the females as a refuge under a merciful man's custody who does not believe in slavery "flesh was not his commodity". Jacob treats them well and the reader may touch a well treatment that is matchless with the other masters who do not believe except in domination and oppression.

The focus of Morrison here is on the enslaved females as the weakest by nature and their opportunities for freedom are limited. Florens's mother expects better life for her little daughter with Jacob whose eyes glittering with mercy and humanity. The second journey is Florens's journey to bring blacksmith to heal her mistress. In this journey, we recognize about the hidden part of her personality, psychological and emotional parts that are manifested as vulnerable. She appears scared to be free and could not hide her uncontrollable passion towards blacksmith. To Florens, Freedom is a sort of scare away of human control. This journey has given Florens a golden opportunity to be free but she is scared of freedom and she could not feel security and safety away of human control. Florens longs to see her lover, blacksmith, who pays no attention to her love, and he views her love as wild and she could not be free from her slavery if she cannot control her passion. She may not imagine herself away of human's control. She is a slave to her lover and to her emotions.

In this journey, she unveils her fear from this little space of freedom given to her by this journey. Florens acts according to her heart and her passion that make her viewed by blacksmith as a wild girl who could not free herself from slavery controlled by her love and lust, "The shine of water runs down your spine and I have shock at myself for wanting to lick there. I run away into the cowshed to stop this thing from happening inside me. Nothing stops it. There is only you. Nothing outside of you. My eyes not my stomach are the hungry parts of me...I'm already kill by you. My

mouth is open, my legs go softly and the heart is stretching to break "(p. 44). She describes her hard journey to meet blacksmith by pains and sufferings, "seeing you stagger and I bleed I run. Then walk. Then float. An ice floe cut away from the riverbank in deep winter. I have no shoes. I have no kicking heart, no home, no tomorrow, I walk the day, I walk the night" (p. 185).

Here we realize the sense of Florens's emotional, psychological and physical pains, which did not stop her journey to meet blacksmith, which is a combination of formal errand directed by her mistress and informal directed by her love and lust. As soon as she meets blacksmith, Florens recognizes well blacksmith is not and will not be a part of her future life. Her writing on the wall of one of the abandoned rooms in Jacob's house that may time brings blacksmith to read, if he learns how to read, she is not a slave anymore, "See? You are correct. *Aminha mae* too. I am become wilderness but I am also Florens. In full. Unforgiven. Unforgiving. No ruth, my love. None. Hear me? Slave. Free. I last...*Mae*; you can have pleasure now because the soles of my feet are hard as cypress" (p. 189). Byerman (2005) argued that "contemporary narrative are trauma stories in that they tell of both tremendous loss and survival; they describe the psychological and social effects of suffering" (p. 3). This is true about the females in *A Mercy* who are in one way or another suffering a sort of traumatic experiences, Rebekka went through the experience of religious intolerance in England, Florens passed through deprivation of her mother and later her lover. *Aminha Mae*, Florens's Mother, and Sorrow suffered of rape and abuse. Lena was survived by escaping from the hell of epidemic that invaded her place and people; slavery is a mercy for her as it is a mercy for Florens and Sorrow. .

Females are more vulnerable physically and emotionally. There is no genuine everlasting protection to them, what they see protection is a temporary situation could not be a rule for the enslaved lives, particularly females, "there is no protection. To be female in this place is to be an open wound that cannot heal. Even if scars form, the festering is ever below" (p. 191). Cruelty of human beings, men in particular, is explicit; however, mercy is an exception. Men are viewed as intolerant, even the religious men who supposed to set a good example for the pious men who lead the people to God, sometime they misuse their authority. They estrange the people from their religion and drive the people to lose their faith in God and their confidence in themselves, "I think men thrive on insults over cattle, women, water, crops. Everything heats up and finally the men of their families burn we houses and collect those they cannot kill or find for trade...each time more trading, more culling, more dying" (p. 192). Females are treated in equal to non-human, such as animals and plants, the most significant thing to slavery traders is how to make use of the rest who will survive from their destruction in slavery trading, ignoring the sense of humanity and equality. The concept of mercy is an exception while injustice and oppression are the dominating rule in females' lives.

The narrative portrays Jacob's house as the Garden of Eden or a promised land, all the females settle in the house searching for salvation and safety, but this peace and security would not continue in the house and the evil anytime may invade the house and destroy their dream of everlasting peace. The blacksmith embodies the evil as snakes designed on the gate of the house that could disturb the settlers of the house any moment. In other words, no peace forever and no paradise without disturbances or evil. The house of Jacob becomes a paradise for the oppressed and powerless females who anticipate security and safety in the house of Jacob. The house is a symbol of refuge for many oppressed races regardless their color or origin, Rebekka as English woman finds her peace as a wife, Lena escapes from death to be a slave and she finds slavery is better than disease and death. Florens's mother takes risk to send her daughter with a stranger, anticipating protection for her daughter from abuse and rape in Ortega's house. Sorrow could not find better refuge for her and her illegal pregnancy only in the house of Jacob. Jacob died without an heir to maintain his name after his death and Rebekka could not survive from her illness. Florens could not marry the man she loves and she determines to get rid of her slavery to her wild love and lust.

The death of the master and the mistress is strong ultimatum to the powerless females to begin a new journey of struggle and the evil incarnated in the snakes designed on the gate of Jacob's house is about to disturb their safety and peace. The house of Jacob does not recognize racism, which is represented by the legal authority that gives the whites a permit to kill any black for any reason to protect whites from the others forever and by these actions, the American authority has escalated the hate and hatred in the hearts of the whites against the black people. *The Time Literary Supplement* writes about *A Mercy*, " *A Mercy* is a sinewy novel...Morrison played a tight game with the social, legal and personal connection between the chess set of characters, a game each word-and every detail- counts...Morrison renders to the ugly beautiful and the unimaginable real. She is a fine teacher".

VI. CONCLUSION

The world of slavery in *A mercy* does not contain specific race or specific color. However, it contains a variety of races and colors, particularly the helpless females, whatever their color or origin, whose fates controlled by men. Slavery becomes for females a refuge and a sort of salvation. Morrison breaks the familiarities about slavery and enslavement which always exposed by the conflict between the white and the black. She highlights what lies below the surface of slavery. It unveils the good side of a man whose mercy has been exposed in his well treatment for the powerless females who anticipate peace and security in his house. Despite the vulnerability of females in this narrative, but Morrison has given the enslaved females a voice to narrate their story and write their miserable history of slavery. Education becomes a power in the female's lives whereas some free people are not educated and becomes slaves to their

ignorance as blacksmith. Females seem powerless and weak in the narrative but they have been given the power of word and education.

Females have lost their trust in themselves, in their people, in their God on the thorny journey of salvation. The good side of men and the mercy could not guarantee peaceful lives for the females who become drifted with the strong tide of men's domination and control that could not provide them a permanent peace and safety. Females become socially, psychologically and religiously vulnerable after losing the mercy of human and eventually they look forward to the mercy of God.

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